

Interviews of Joseph Smith, 1830-1844

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Peter Bauder at Fayette, New York, 1830

Peter Bauder, *The Kingdom and Gospel of Jesus Christ: Contrasted with that of Anti-Christ* (Canajohrie, New York: Printed by A. H. Calhoun, 1834), 36-37. The account is reprinted in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 1:16-18.

In October 1830, the month after the second church conference, a minister named Peter Bauder spent a full day at the Peter Whitmer Sr. home in Fayette, New York. He spoke with Joseph Smith personally and published his recollection in 1834:

I will name some of the particular discoveries which through Divine Providence I was favored with in an interview with Joseph Smith, Jr. at the house of Peter Whitmer, in the town of Fayette, Seneca County, state of New York, in October, 1830. I called at P[eter]. Whitmer's house, for the purpose of seeing Smith, and searching into the mystery of his system of religion, and had the privilege of conversing with him alone, several hours, and of investigating his writings, church records, &c. I improved near four and twenty hours in close application with Smith and his followers: he could give me no christian experience, but told me that an angel told him he must go to a certain place in the town of Manchester, Ontario County, where was a secret treasure concealed, which he must reveal to the human family.¹

He went, and after the third or fourth time, which was repeated once a year, he obtained a parcel of plate resembling gold, on which were engraved what he did not understand, only by the aid of a glass which he also obtained with the plate. by which means he was enabled to translate the characters on the plate into English. He says he was not allowed to let the plate be seen only by a few individuals named by the angel, and after he had a part translated, the angel commanded him to carry the plate into a certain piece of woods, which he did—the angel took them and carried them to parts unknown to him.

The part translated he had published, and it is before the public, entitled the Book of Mormon: a horrid blasphemy, but not so wicked as another manuscript which he was then preparing for publication, which I also saw. He told me no man had ever seen it except a few of his apostles: the publication intended was to be the Bible!!! The manner in which it was written is as follows:—he commenced at the first chapter of Genesis, he wrote a few verses of scripture, then added delusion, which he added every few verses of scripture, and

¹ One of the main focuses of Bauder's pamphlet was his understanding that Christian churches had throughout history lost the spirit of personal forgiveness and instead turned to domineering priestcraft. Therefore, he found it important that he could find no such experience of personal salvation in his conference with Smith.

so making a compound of scripture and delusion. On my interrogating him on the subject, he professed to be inspired by the Holy Ghost to write it.²

Nancy Towle at Kirtland, Ohio, 1831

Nancy Towle, *Vicissitudes Illustrated, in the Experience of Nancy Towle* (Charleston: Printed for the authoress, by James L. Burger, 1832), 144-45, emphasis omitted.

In October 1831 Nancy Towle, an evangelist, and Elizabeth Venner visited Kirtland, Ohio. The ladies were entertained by Elizabeth Godkin Marsh. Mrs. Marsh was born in Ireland and was thirty-one years old. She, with her husband Thomas B Marsh, had previously lived in Boston, Massachusetts. Towle came to investigate the sect and spoke to a number of church members including William W. Phelps, Martin Harris, Sidney Rigdon, and Joseph Smith. Towle's brief interview with Joseph Smith occurred on October 16, 1831:

Ques[ti]on]. "Mr. Smith,—Can you, in the presence of Almighty God, give your word by oath—that, an Angel from Heaven, shewed you the place, of those Plates:—and that, you took the things, contained in that Book, from those plates: and at the direction of the Angel, you returned the Plates, to the place, from whence you had taken them?"³

Ans[wer]. "I will not swear at all!"

Upon this, being about to leave the place, he turned to some women and children in the room; and lay his hands upon their heads; (that they might be baptized of the Holy Ghost;) when, Oh! cried one,* to me, "What blessings, you do lose!—No sooner, his hands fell upon my head, than I felt the Holy Ghost, as warm-water, go over me!"

But I was not such a stranger, to the spirit of God, as she imagined; that I did not know its effects, from that of warm water! and I turned to [Joseph] Smith, and said "Are you not ashamed, of such pretensions? You, who are no more, than any ignorant, plough-boy of our land! Oh! blush, at such abominations! and let shame, cover your face!["]

He only replied, by saying, "The gift, has returned back again, as in former times, to illiterate fishermen." So he got off, as quick as he could. He recollected himself, wherefore, and returned to pass the compliment of 'Good-by.' A good-natured, low-bred sort of a chap: and that seemed to have force enough, to do no one, any harm. Another, of their Elders threatened, to put us off the ground; and that he would have no more such blasphemy there. I said, "Sir, you need not trouble yourself to do that; we will go without: we were invited to this place, by

² Peter Bauder examined the ten page manuscript of the revision of Genesis. Old Testament MS 1, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri.

³ 1830 BOM, p.111; LDS 2 Nephi 27:22; RLDS 11:144: "then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hid it up unto me." When William Smith was interviewed in 1841 he said: "At length he was directed by a vision to bury the plates again in the same manner; which he accordingly did." *Congregational Observer* 2 (July 3, 1841):1; as cited in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 1:479.

the woman of the house; and did not think of being carried out, by any other person."

* E[lizabeth]. M[arsh]. formerly of Boston: but born in Ireland.

Interview at Geneseo, New York, 1834

M.L.P., "Interview with the Mormon Prophet," *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* 5 (April 5, 1834):107, Utica, New York, emphasis omitted. The interview was contained in a letter to the editors by "M.L.P.," of Henrietta, Monroe County, New York, and dated March 17, 1834.

Joseph Smith recorded in his journal on February 26, 1834 that he "Started from home to obtain volenteers [volunteers] for Zion." Parley P. Pratt traveled with Smith through Erie County, Pennsylvania to New York. They arrived at Alvah Beeman's home in Avon, Livingston County, New York on March 15 and the next day "Brother Sidney [Rigdon] preached to a very large congregation in <Geneseo>."⁴ Joseph Smith was interviewed on March 16, 1834 at Geneva. The unnamed person who spoke with Smith did not have a high regard for him.

Messers. EDITORS—Yesterday I attended a Mormon meeting in Geneseo, at which was present, for the first time in that place, the foundation, main pillar, and corner stone of Mormonism, the doughty Jo. Smith, Jun.

A multitude was assembled to hear what this impudent ignoramus would say; most of whom were surprised that he said so little and made so ordinary an appearance. He did not attempt to preach, but made some few statements with regard to himself and his clumsy compilation of pretended oracles.

He said many would disbelieve that a recent revelation had been made to him, and in view of himself: and the "Book of Mormon," would raise the cry of false prophet! delusion!! (!!!) &c., but that a revelation from heaven was given to him, and by him had been faithfully transcribed, for the benefit of all who should receive his testimony!

In his person, he is about six feet in height, neither attenuated nor corpulent. His eyes are rather dull than expressive, hair of a light brown, and his countenance unmarked by any peculiar expression indicative of intense thought or extraordinary intellect. He is said to be about twenty-seven years of age. His manner is ungainly, his diction coarse, and his delivery slow and labored. There is nothing in his appearance or language to excite much attention, save his presumptuous impiety.

Having a short distance to walk, on the dispersion of the multitude, it so happened that my route lay in the same direction pursued by this wonder-working impostor. Embracing the opportunity thus thrown in my way, the following colloquy, substantially and almost verbatim, ensued between us.

Self. Sir, is your name Jo. Smith, Jun.?

⁴ Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Journal, 1832-1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 2:21, 25; also in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002, 36, 39. Angled brackets <> indicate word(s) written above the line.

Mormon Prophet. That is my name, Sir.

S. [Self] Have you a mission from God to this generation?

M. P. [Mormon Prophet] That question I shall leave you to answer, at present. You heard my testimony to-day.

S. [Self] But not being convinced of the truth of that testimony, I have embraced this opportunity to obtain more satisfactory evidence that your mission is from above; or more ample proof that you are an impostor. Ought you not to "be ready always to give me an answer" and "a reason to every man that asketh you?"

M. P. [Mormon Prophet] When put in a good spirit and at a proper time, I should be ready to answer. You commenced this conversation abruptly.

S. [Self] The questions were proposed in a spirit of candor. I do not reside in this neighbor-hood, and probably may never meet you again: I therefore, have seized on such a time as circumstances have permitted. The importance of the subject matter to which my interrogatories had reference, must apologize for the abruptness of manner.

Here this Baal of the Mormonites, irritated and vexed by the manner in which the conversation had been carried on, murmured out something which became inaudible in the distance, as he urged on his horse and was soon out of the reach of my voice; leaving me to the full enjoyment of my disbelief in the truth of his testimony, or, if perchance I should find a pair of "stone spectacles," aided by their magical powers, to pore through his book of falsehoods in search of truth, as might best suit mine inclination. M. L. P.

Henrietta, March 17, 1834.

Interview at Nauvoo, Illinois, 1840

"A Glance at the Mormons," *Boston Courier* 14 (July 16, 1840), "From the Alexandria Gazette," emphasis omitted. No copy of the *Gazette* is extant. The article was republished in *The North American and Daily Advertiser* 2 (July 22, 1840):1, Philadelphia; *The Friend; a Religious and Literary Journal*, July 25, 1840; *The Sun*, July 28, 1840, New York City; *Supplement to the Courant* 6 (August 29, 1840):139-40, Hartford, Connecticut; and the *Quincy Whig* 3 (October 17, 1840):1, Quincy, Illinois.

In late April 1840 the writer, evidently David W. Kilbourne of Montrose, Iowa Territory, sent his report to the *Gazette* of Alexandria, Virginia about his visit with Joseph Smith in the river town of Nauvoo, Illinois.

It was a beautiful morning, towards the close of April last, when the writer of the foregoing sketch, accompanied by a friend, crossed the Mississippi river, from Montrose, to pay a visit to the prophet. As we approached his house, we saw him ride up and alight from his beautiful horse; and handing the bridle to one of his followers in attendance, he waited in front of the gate to receive us. A number of the principal men of the place soon collected around, apparently anxious to

hear the words which fell from his lips. His bearing towards them was like one who had authority; and the deference which they paid him convinced us that his dominion was deeply seated in the empire of their consciences. To our minds, a profound knowledge of human nature had evidently taught him that, of all principles, the most omnipotent is the religious principle; and to govern men of certain classes, it is necessary to control their religious sentiment.

After he had shown us the fine grounds around his dwelling, he conducted us, at our request, to an upper room, where he drew aside the curtains of a case, and showed us several Egyptian mummies, which we were told that the church had purchased, at his suggestion, some time before, for a large sum of money. The embalmed body that stands near the centre of the case, said he, is one of the Pharaohs, who sat upon the throne of Egypt; and the female figure by its side, was probably one of his daughters. It may have been the princess Thermutis, I replied, the same that rescued Moses from the waters of the Nile.

It is not improbable, answered the prophet; but my time has not yet allowed me fully to examine and decide that point. Do you understand the Hebrew language, said he, raising his hand to the top of the case, and taking down a small Hebrew Grammar of Rabbi Seixas. That language has not altogether escaped my attention, was the reply.

He then walked to a secretary, on the opposite side of the room, and drew out several frames covered with glass, under which were numerous fragments of Egyptian papyrus, on which, as usual, a great variety of hieroglyphical characters had been imprinted. These ancient records, said he, throw great light upon the subject of Christianity.

They have been unrolled and preserved with great labor and care. My time has hitherto been too much taken up to translate the whole of them, but I will show you how I interpret certain parts. There, said he, pointing to a particular character, that is the signature of the patriarch Abraham.

It is indeed a most interesting autograph, I replied, and doubtless the only one extant. What an ornament it would be to have these ancient manuscripts handsomely set, in appropriate frames, and hung up around the walls of the temple which you are about to erect in this place.⁵

Yes, replied the prophet, and the translation hung up with them.

Thinking this a proper time to propose a few inquiries relative to some of his peculiar tenets, I observed that it was commonly reported of him, that he believed in the personal reign of the Messiah upon earth, during the millennial era.

I believe in no such thing, was his reply. At the opening of that period, I believe that Christ will descend; but will immediately return again to heaven. Some of our elders, he continued, before I have found time to instruct them better, have unadvisedly propagated some such opinions; but I tell my people that it is absurd to suppose that Christ "will jump out of the frying-pan into the fire." He is in a good place now, and it is not to be supposed that he will exchange it for a worse one.

Not a little shocked at the emblem employed by the Prophet, we

⁵ As early as April 1840 Joseph Smith was planning on building a temple at Nauvoo.

descended from his chambers and the conversation turned upon his recent visit to Washington, and his interview with the President of the United States. He gave us distinctly to understand that his political views had undergone an entire change; and his description of the reception given him, at the executive mansion, was any thing but flattering to the distinguished individual who presides over its hospitalities.⁶

Before he had heard the story of our wrongs, said the indignant Prophet, Mr. Van Buren gave us to understand that he could do nothing for the redress of our grievances, lest it should interfere with his political prospects in Missouri. He is not as fit, said he, as my dog, for the chair of state; for my dog will make an effort to protect his abused and insulted master, while the present chief magistrate will not so much as lift his finger to relieve an oppressed and persecuted community of freemen, whose glory it has been that they were citizens of the United States.

You hold in your hands, I observed, a large amount of political power, and your society must exert a tremendous influence, for weal or woe, in the coming elections.

Yes, said he, I know it; and our influence, as far as it goes, we intend to use. There are probably not far short of an hundred thousand souls in our society,⁷ and the votes to which we are entitled throughout the union must doubtless be extensively lost to Mr. Van Buren.

Not being myself disposed in any way to intermeddle in party politics, I made no definite reply; but, immediately taking leave, we returned to Montrose, abundantly satisfied that the society over which he presides has assumed a moral and political importance which is but very imperfectly understood. Associated on the religious principle, under a prophet and leader whose mysterious and awful claims to divine inspiration make his voice to believers like the voice of God; trained to sacrifice their individuality; to utter one cry; to think and act in crowds; with minds that seem to have been struck from the sphere of reason on one subject, and left to wander, like lost stars, amid the dark mazes and winding ways of religious error; these remarkable sectaries must necessarily hold in their hands a fearful balance of political power. In the midst of contending parties, a single hand might turn their influences, with tremendous effect, to whichever side presented the most potent attractions; and should they ever become disposed to exert their influence for evil, which may Heaven prevent, they would surround

⁶ John Reynolds wrote about Joseph Smith first seeing President Martin Van Buren: "It fell to my lot to introduce him to the President, and one morning Smith, the prophet, and I called at the White House to see the Chief Magistrate. When we were about to enter the apartment of Mr. Van Buren, the prophet asked me to introduce him as a 'Latter Day Saint.' It was so unexpected and so strange to me, the 'Latter Day Saints,' that I could scarcely believe he would urge such nonsense on this occasion to the President. But he repeated the request, when I asked him if I understood him. I introduced him as a 'Latter Day Saint,' which made the President smile." *My Own Times, Embracing also, the History of My Life* (Belleville, Illinois: B. H. Perryman and H. L. Davis, 1855), 575. Brought to my attention by Erin B. Jennings.

⁷ This number is high but during the Nauvoo era large numbers were used to impress outsiders.

our institutions with an element of danger, more to be dreaded than an armed and hundred-eyed police.

Interview at Nauvoo, Illinois, 1841

"Mormons and Mormonism," published in *St. Louis Republican* 20 (November 25, 1841), St. Louis, Missouri, date of interview November 3, 1841, emphasis omitted, typed copy. The interview was contained in a letter to "Dear Sir," by "D.," of St. Louis, Missouri, and dated November 4, 1841. Republished in the *Pittsburgh Gazette* 57 (December 10, 1841), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the *Liberator*, January 7, 1842.

An anonymous writer (a preacher) and his companion visited Joseph Smith in his home at Nauvoo on November 3, 1841. The following is the visitor's report:

NAUVOO, Nov. 4, 1841.

DEAR SIR: -- We were yesterday enjoying the hospitality of Joseph Smith, the leading Prophet of the Latter Day Saints, the Mormons. We are, this morning, on the declivity of Zion's Hill, taking a last look at their city. We stand among heaps of limestone rock, that are fast rising into a temple -- a facsimile of that Temple which was built by Solomon, and trod by the Savior. -- The devoted Mormons are hammering busily at the work, and giving to it each the tenth of his time; and from this up, the half, or even the whole, both of time and property. Before us, is the beginning of a great city -- a noble bottom land, already half covered with cabins. Higher up, also, the bluffs and timber are thickly scattered with them, extending back a couple of miles or more. Crowds of people, from England, many of them poor, are pouring in. How they are to support themselves, or be supported, Heaven only knows. It seems as if they must be driven, by sheer necessity, to "spoil the Egyptians;["] (i. e. all who are not Mormons about them;) and it is not surprising that their name is in bad odor with their neighbors. The notion that there is a community of property among them, is altogether false; and many must and do suffer. Some few I have met at St. Louis, hastening back to England, "while their money holds out."

The Mormon gathering is a singularly interesting phase of our times. They are, too, say what you will, a singularly interesting people. As a people, I am ready to believe all good of them. Would that there were among them as much of Christian intelligence as of the Christian spirit.

Of their leaders, or rather their chief leader, Joseph Smith, I say nothing by way of private opinion. At your request, however, I give th[r]ough you, somewhat reluctantly, I confess, an account of my interview with him. As he promptly discovered and revealed to me that I was worthy of no man's confidence, I can certainly betray no confidence in this case, try as I may. The facts, as they lie fresh in my memory, are simply these: Yesterday afternoon, in company with a friend, I entered the house of this strange man, intending to trespass but a few minutes on his hospitalities. I expected to have seen a person of some dignity and reserve, and with at least, an outside of austere piety. The Prophet was asleep, in his rocking chair, when we entered. His wife and children were busy about the

room, ironing, &c., and one or two Mormon preachers, lately returned from England, were sitting by the large log fire. After having been introduced, the following talk ensued:

A. "You have the beginning of a great city here, Mr. Smith."

[Here came in the more prominent objects of the city. The expense of the temple, Mr. Smith thought, would be \$200,000 or \$300,000. The temple is 127 feet side, by 88 feet front;⁸ and by its plan, which was kindly shown us, will fall short of some of our public buildings. As yet, only the foundations are laid. Mr. Smith then spoke of the "false" reports current about himself, and "supposed we had heard enough of them?"]

A. "You know, sir, persecution sometimes drives "the wise-man mad."

Mr. S[mith]. (laughing,) "Ah, sir, you must not put me among the wise men; my place is not there. I make no pretensions to piety, either. If you give me credit for any thing, let it be for being a good manager. A good manager I do claim to be."

A. "You have great influence here, Mr. Smith."

Mr. S[mith]. "Yes, I have. I bought 900 acres here, a few years ago, and they all have their lands of me. My influence, however, is ecclesiastical only; in civil affairs, I am but a common citizen. To be sure, I am a member of the City Council, and Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion. I can command a thousand men to the field, at any moment, to support the laws. I had hard work to make them turn out and form the 'Legion,' until I shouldered my musket, and entered the ranks myself. Now, they have nearly all provided themselves with a good uniform, poor as they are. By the way, we had a regular 'set to' up here, a day or two since. The City Council ordered a liquor seller to leave the place, when his time was up; and, as he still remained, they directed that his house should be pulled down about his ears. They gave me a hand in the scrape; and I had occasion to knock a man down more than once. They mustered so strong an opposition, that it was either 'knock down,' or 'be knocked down.' We beat him off, at last; and are determined to have no grog shops in or about our grounds." [The conversation flowed on pleasantly, until my friend, to fill a pause that occurred, referred to my calling as a preacher.]

Mr. S[mith]. "Well, I suppose (turning from me) he is one of the craft trained to his creed."

A. "My creed, sir, is the New Testament."

Mr. S[mith]. "Then, sir, we shall see truth just alike, for the scripture says, 'They shall see, eye to eye.' All who are true men, must read the bible alike, must they not?"

A. "True, Mr. Smith; and yet I doubt if they will see it precisely alike. If no two blades of grass are precisely alike, for a higher reason, it seems that no, two intellects are,"

Mr. S[mith]. (getting' warm) "There -- I told you so. You don't come here to seek truth. You begin with taking the place of opposition. Now, say what I

⁸ These dimensions are probably accurate. Don F. Colvin explained that various measurements are considered correct "depending on where (at what height) the measurement was taken." *Nauvoo Temple: A Story of Faith* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2002), 132.

may, you have but to answer, 'No two men can see alike.'"

A. "Mr. Smith, I said that not that no two men could see alike; but that no two could see, on the whole, precisely alike."

Mr. S[mith]. "Does not the scripture say, 'They shall see, eye to eye?'"

A. "Granted, sir; but be good enough to take a case; The words 'all' and 'all things' were brought up as meaning, at one time, universal creation. And again: 'One believeth that he may eat all things,' i. e. any thing, or, as we say, every thing."

Mr. S[mith]. "You may explain away the bible, sir, as much as you please. I ask you, have you ever been baptized?"

A. "Yes, sir; I think I have."

Mr. S[mith]. "Can you prophesy?"

A. "Well, sir, that depends on the meaning you give the word. I grant that it generally means to foretell; but I believe that it often means, to preach the gospel. In this sense, sir, I can prophesy."

Mr. S[mith]. "You lie, sir, and you know it."

A. "It is as easy for me to impugn your motives, Mr. Smith, as for you to impugn mine."

Mr. S[mith]. "I tell you, you don't seek to know the truth. You are a hypocrite: I saw it when you first began to speak."

A. "It is plain, Mr. Smith, that we differ in opinion. Now, one man's opinion is as good as another's, until some third party comes in to strike a balance between them."

Mr. S[mith]. "I want no third party, sir. You are a fool, sir, to talk as you do. Have I not seen twice the years that you have? [Joseph Smith is 36 years old; the speaker, A., was 10 years younger.]⁹ I say, sir, you are no gentleman. I would'nt trust you with my purse across the street."

[Here my friend interposed, saying, "I don't believe, Mr. Smith, that this gentleman came to your house to insult you. He had heard all sorts of accounts of your people, and came simply to see with his own eyes."]

Mr. S[mith]. "I have no ill feelings towards the gentleman. He is welcome in my house; but what I see to be the truth, I must speak out; I flatter no man. I tell you, sir, that man is a hypocrite. You'll find him out, if you're long enough with him. I tell you, I would'nt trust him as far as I could see him. What right has he to speak so to me? Am I not the leader of a great people? He, himself, will not blame me for speaking the truth plainly."

[Here kind expressions passed on both sides, and we were rising to go.]

Mr. S[mith]. "Don't be going, gentlemen. Do take bread and salt with us; our tea is on the table."

We staid, accordingly, and made up around his smoking and well piled table. I have been carefully, especially towards the close of this talk, to give the words that were used, omitting nothing but conversational by-play, and some of the filling up. The skeleton is complete. So much for this man at his own fireside. D.

⁹ Joseph Smith was thirty-five years old at the time.

Peter Cartwright at Springfield, Illinois

Peter Cartwright, manuscript of the Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, Chapter 22, original (Call No. MSS 639) is in the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, pages 642-48. Angle brackets < > indicates words written above the line. Words that were crossed through are omitted. Published in *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, the Backwoods Preacher* (New York: Published by Carlton & Porter, 1857), 341-46.

Peter Cartwright was a well known Methodist preacher. Joseph Smith visited Springfield a number of times. The actual date of his interview is unknown. In his autobiography Cartwright wrote: "I commenced keeping a journal, and kept it up for several years, till at length several of our early missionaries to the Natchez country returned, and many of them, I found, were keeping a journal of their lives and labors, and it seemed to me we were outdoing the thing, and under this conviction I threw my manuscript journals to the moles and bats. This act of my life I have deeply regretted, for if I had persisted in journalizing, I could now avail myself of many interesting facts, dates, names, and circumstances that would greatly aid me in my sketch." Therefore no accurate date can be given of the conversation between Peter Cartwright and Joseph Smith.

Grand Imposter Joseph [S]mith who was and is claimed as the Mormon Prophet. Permit me to make a few Remarks about the Blasphemous organization called the mormon[s] or Latter day saints The original absurdity and trifling c[h]aracter of Joe Smith and his coadjutors, is [a] matter of History, known and understood of all the intelligent reading com[m]unity that have sought information on the subject and therefore need not be stated here by me, But there are a few facts I will state that <have> come under my own personal knowledge for it has fallen to my lott to be appointed to travel in the region of Country in Illinois most infested with this Imposture, after the mormons were driven from Misouria for the infamous and unlawful deeds they fled to Illinois Jo Smith and all and Established themselves at Nauvoo or the foot of the Lower rapids on the East side of the Mississippi At an Early day after they were driven from Misouria and took up their residence in Illinois it fell to my lott to become acquainted with Jo Smith Personally, and very many of their leading men and Professed followers, On a certain occasion I fell in with Jo. Smith and was formally, and officially introduced to him, in Springfield then, our county town we soon fell into a free Conversation on the subject of religion and Mormonism in Particular. & found him to be a very Illiterate and impudent, desperado in morals but, at the same time he had a vast fund of Low Cunning in the first Place he made his onsett, on me by flattery and he laid on the soft sadder thick and fast he Expressed great and almost unbounded Pleasure in <the> high Privilege of becoming acquainted with me, one, of whome he had he[a]rd so many great & good things and he had no doubt I was one among God[']s noblest Creatures an honest man <he believed> that among all the churches in the world the methodist was the nearest wright [right], and that as far as they went they were wright [right], but they had stop[p]ed short by not claiming the gifts of toungues, of Prophecy and of miricles and then quoted a Batch of Scripture to Prove his Positions correct

Upon the whole he <did > Pretty well for clumsy Joe I gave him <rope> as the sailors say and indeed I seem[e]d to lay this flattering unction Pleasurably to my soul indeed said Joe, if the methodist would only advance a step or two further they would take the world, we latter day saints are Methodist as far as they have gone only we have adva[n]ced further, and if you would come in and go with us we could sweep not only the Methodist Church but all others, and you would be look[e]d up too as one of the Lord[']s greatest Prophets, you would be Honored by Countless thousands and have of the good things of this world all that heart could wish

I then began to Enquire into some of the tenets of the latter day saints He Explained, I criticised his Explanations till unfortunately we got into high debate and he cunningly concluded that his first Bait would not take, for he Plainly saw I was not to be flatter[e]d out of Common sense and Honesty The next Pass he made at me was to move upon my fears. He said that in all ages of the world the good & right way was was Evil spoken of and that it was an awfull thing to fight against God now said he if you will go with me to Nauvoo, I will show you many living witnesses that will testify that they were by the saints cured of Blindness, lameness, deafness, dumbness, and all the diseases that human flesh is Heir too, and I will show you <said he> that we have the gift of tongues and can speak in unknown languages and that the saints can drink any deadly P[o]ison and it will not hurt them, <and he closed by saying> the Idol stor[i]es you hear about us <are> nothing but sheer Persecution,

I then gave him the following History of an Encountre I had at a camp meeting in morgan county some time before with some of his mormons and I <assured him> I could Prove all I said by thousands that were Present The camp meeting was numerously attended and we had a good and gracious work of religion going on among the People. on Saturday there came some <twenty> or <thirty> Mormons to the meeting <During> the intermission after the 11, oclock sermon they collected in one corner of the encampment, and began to sing, and they sang well. As fast as the People rose from their dinners they drew up to hear the singing and the scattering crowd drew up until a large company surrounded them. I was buisy regulating matters <connected with> the meeting.

At len[g]th according (I have no doubt) to a Preconcerted Plann an old lady mormon began to shout, and after shouting a while she swoon[e]d away and fell into the arms of her Husband, the old man Proclaimed that his wife had gone into a trance and that when she came too she would speak in an unknown tongue and that he would interpret. This Proclamation Produced considerable Excitement and the multitude crowded thick around Presently the old lady arose and began to speak in an unknown tongue shure Enough. Just then my attention was called to the matter I saw in one moment that the whole maneuver was intended to bring the mormons into notice and Break up the good of our meeting I advanced Instantly to<wards> the crowd, and asked the People to give way & let me in to this old lady who was then being holden in the arms of her Husband.

I came right up to them and took hold of her arm and ordered her P[e]rem[p]torily to hush that gib[b]erish that I would have no more of it that it was Presumptuous, and Blasphemous nonsense I stop! very suddenly her

unknown tongue she opened her Eyes, took me by the hand and said "my Dear friend I have a mes[s]age directly from God to you." I stop[p]ed her short and said I will have none of your messages, if God can speak through no better medium than an old Hipocritical lying woman I will hear nothing of it. Her Husband who was to be the interpreter of her message flew into a mighty rage and said, "Sir this is my wife and I will defend her at the risk of my life." I repl[i]ed "Sir, this <is> my camp meeting and I will maintain the good order of it at the risk of my life, if this is your wife take her off from here, and clear your selves in five minutes, or I will have you under guard.["] The old lady slip[pe]d out, and was off quickly the old man stayed a little and began to Pour a tirade of abuse on me.

I stop him short and said "Not another word of abuse from you sir. I have no doubt you are an old thief and if your Back was Examined no doubt you carry the marks of the cow hide for your villa[i]ny,["] and sure Enough as if I had spoken by inspiration he in some of the old states had been <lashed to> the whip[p]ing Post for stealing, and I tell you the old man began to think other Persons had visions besides his wife but he was very clear from wishing to interpret my unknown tongue. To cap the climax a young gentleman stept up and said he had no doubt all I said of this old man was true and much more, for he had caught him stealing corn out of his father[']s cribb. By this time such was the old <man[']s> Excitement that the great drops of swett ran down his face and <he> called out "don[']t crowd me gentlemen it is [might]y warm." said I "open the way gentlemen and let him out.["]

<When the way was opened I> cried "Now start and don[']t show your face here, <again> nor one of the mormons if you do you will get Lynch's Law.["] They all disappear[e]d and our meeting <went on>Prosperously a great many were converted to God and the Church much revived and Built up in her Holy faith

My friend Joe Smith became very restive before I got thro[ugh] with my nar[r]ative and when I closed his wrath Boiled over and he cursed me in the Name of his God, and said I will show you sir that I will raise up a government in these United States <which> will overturn the Present government, <&> I will raise up a new religion that will overturn Every other form of religion in this country yes, said I unckle Joe <but> my Bible tells me "the Bloody and deceitfull man shall not live out half his days"¹⁰ and I Expect the Lord will send the devil after you some of these days and take you out of the way, "No sir" said he "I shall live and Prosper, while you will die in your Sins," "well sir" said I "if you live and Prosper you must quit your Stealing, and abominable whoredoms." Thus we Parted to meet on Earth no more

¹⁰ The passage referred to by Peter Cartwright reads in the King James Version: "But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee." Psalm 55:23.

Henry Caswall at Nauvoo, Illinois, 1842

Henry Caswall, *The City of the Mormons; or, Three Days at Nauvoo, in 1842* (London: Printed for J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1842), 34-37, emphasis omitted. There were various reprints of Caswall's account.

Another visitor who spent three days at Nauvoo was Henry Caswall, an ordained clergyman in the Episcopal Church. He brought with him an old Greek Psalter of the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament, written on parchment, with a purpose to test Joseph Smith and see what he could find out during about him. The three days that Henry Caswall visited were April 17-19, 1842. Caswall saw the Egyptian papyri and later Lucy Mack Smith showed him the four Egyptian mummies including one she said was a king of Egypt. Caswall's published accounts expanded after the first printing. For this reason the 1842 edition is used which preserve his observations on Nauvoo and his meeting with Smith on April 19, 1842.

On landing at Nauvoo, I proceeded with the Doctor¹¹ along the street which I mentioned before as bordering on the strand. As I advanced with my book in my hand, numerous Mormons came forth from their dwellings, begging to be allowed to see its mysterious pages; and by the time I reached the prophet's house, they amounted to a perfect crowd. I met Joseph Smith at a short distance from his dwelling, and was regularly introduced to him. I had the honour of an interview with him who is a prophet, a seer, a merchant, a "revelator," a president, an elder, an editor, and the general of the "Nauvoo legion." He is a coarse, plebeian person in aspect, and his countenance exhibits a curious mixture of the knave and the clown. His hands are large and fat, and on one of his fingers he wears a massive gold ring, upon which I saw an inscription. His dress was of coarse country manufacture, and his white hat was enveloped by a piece of black crape as a sign of mourning for his deceased brother, Don Carlos Smith, the late editor of the "Times and Seasons."¹² His age is about thirty-seven. I had not an opportunity of observing his eyes, as he appears deficient in that open, straightforward look which characterizes an honest man. He led the way to his house, accompanied by a host of elders, bishops, preachers, and common Mormon.

On entering the house, chairs were provided for the prophet and myself, while the curious and gaping crowd remained standing. I handed the book to the prophet, and begged him to explain its contents. He asked me if I had any idea of its meaning. I replied, that I believed it to be a Greek Psalter; but that I should like to hear his opinion. "No," he said; "it ain't [isn't] Greek at all; except, perhaps, a few words. What ain't Greek, is Egyptian; and what ain't Egyptian, is Greek. This book is very valuable. It is a dictionary of Egyptian Hieroglyphics." Pointing to the capital letters at the commencement of each verse, he said: "Them figures is Egyptian hieroglyphics; and them which follows, is the interpretation of the hieroglyphics, written in the reformed Egyptian. Them characters is like the

¹¹ Willard Richards.

¹² Don Carlos Smith, the youngest brother to Joseph Smith, was twenty-five years old when he died unexpectedly on August 7, 1841.

letters that was engraved on the golden plates."¹³ Upon this, the Mormons around began to congratulate me on the information I was receiving. "There," they said; "we told you so—we told you that our prophet would give you satisfaction. None but our prophet can explain these mysteries." The prophet now turned to me, and said, "this book ain't of no use to you, you don't understand it." "Oh yes," I replied; "it is of some use; for if I were in want of money, I could sell it, and obtain, perhaps, enough to live on for a whole year."

"But what will you take for it?" said the prophet and his elders. "My price," I replied, "is higher than you would be willing to give." "What price is that?" they eagerly demanded. I replied, "I will not tell you what price I would take; but if you were to offer me this moment nine hundred dollars in gold for it, you should not have it." They then repeated their request that I should lend it to them until the prophet should have time to translate it, and promised me the most ample security; but I declined all their proposals. I placed the book in several envelopes, and as I deliberately tied knot after knot, the countenances of several among them gradually sunk into an expression of great despondency. Having exhibited the book to the prophet, I requested him in return to show me his papyrus; and to give me his own explanation, which I had hitherto received only at second hand. He proceeded with me to his office, accompanied by the multitude. He produced the glass frames which I had seen on the previous day; but he did not appear very forward to explain the figures. I pointed to a particular hieroglyphic, and requested him to expound its meaning. No answer being returned, I looked up, and behold! the prophet had disappeared.

The Mormons told me that he had just stepped out, and would probably soon return. I waited some time, but in vain: and at length descended to the street in front of the store. Here I heard the noise of wheels, and presently I saw the prophet in his waggon [wagon], flourishing his whip and driving away as fast as two fine horses could draw him. As he disappeared from view, enveloped in a cloud of dust, I felt that I had turned over another page in the great book of human nature.

George Moore at Nauvoo, Illinois, 1842

George Moore Journal, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Excerpt published in the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser and Journal*, August 11, 1842 and "A Visit to Joe Smith," *Times and Seasons* 3 (September 15, 1842):926.

Rev. George Moore was an ordained Unitarian Minister and became pastor of the Unitarian Church in Quincy, Illinois. During a visit to Nauvoo he talked to Joseph Smith on June 3, 1842. The following is from his journal:

Nauvoo, Friday, June 3rd.

Visited the Mormon Temple. The situation is beautiful, commanding an

¹³ It is probable that the poor grammar attributed to Joseph Smith was provided by Henry Caswall.

extensive view - about a half mile back from the river, on the bluff - overlooking a large bend of the river - the city of Nauvoo - and a fine prairie on the other side of the river. Dimensions about 100 feet by 70. The basement of this temple is laid - and in the basement is the baptismal font, supported by 12 oxen. In this I learned that persons are baptized for the dead, and for restoration to health.

Saw the basement of the "Nauvoo House", on the river bank, near Jo Smith's house. Dimensions, 120 feet by 100, or thereabouts. This is to be 4 Stories high - and of Stone. Called on the "Prophet Jo Smith." His carriage was at the door, and he was about going away, but he received me very kindly, and asked me into his house. I remained about 10 minutes. He was very communicative. We conversed about the gold plates, wh[ich] he professes to have dug up and translated into the Book of Mormon. "Those plates are not now in this country," he said - "they were exhibited to a few at first for the sake of obtaining their testimony - no others have ever seen them - and they will never again be exhibited." He showed me some specimens of the hieroglyphics, such as, he says, were on the gold plates.

He asked me if I was a clergyman - and of what denomination - and what were the fundamental doctrines of our faith - On my telling him that we believed in divine Unity - in one God in one person - he said, we don't agree with you there. We believe in three Gods, equal in power and glory. There are three personages in heaven, but those three are not one. I suppose, from what I hear, that Smith makes it a point not to agree with any one in regard to his religious opinions, and adapts himself to the person with whom he talks for the time being. This "prophet" is a man of large frame - tending to corpulency - has blue eyes, light complexion, one or two of his front teeth gone - he has a rather benevolent expression of countenance. He expressed a desire to have a long conversation with me, but he had an engagement, and I was soon going away, so that we could not have much conversation. Our interview was short but pleasant.

Samuel C. Mazzuchelli at Nauvoo, Illinois, 1843

[Samuele Carlo Mazzuchelli], *Memorie storiche ed edificanti d'un Missionario Apostolico* [Historical and Edifying Memories of an Apostolic Missionary], Translated by Sister Maria Michele Armato, O.P., and Sister Mary Jeremy Finnegan, O.P., as cited in Michael W. Homer, ed, *On the Way to Somewhere Else: European Sojourners in the Mormon West, 1834-1930* (Spokane, Washington: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2006), 37.

Samuele Mazzuchelli was a Catholic missionary who established twenty-one frontier churches. Mazzuchelli's account was written in the third person and when translated this was changed to the first person. He visited Nauvoo in February 1843.

The false prophet and heresiarch,¹⁴ Joseph Smith, founder of the sect of Mormons or "Latter-Day Saints" is a man of thirty nine [37] years, tall and well-proportioned. His expression does not indicate friendliness nor good judgment,

¹⁴ preacher

his looks show anything but piety, his manners are somewhat rough. Born of poor parents, he did not have the advantages of an ordinary education. He has a wife and children. His influence over the sect is almost unlimited, and he seeks by every means to keep the Mormons in the belief that he is a prophet of the Most High, with whom he says he has frequent conversations and by whose inspiration he directs and governs the new church of the Latter-Day Saints. On the occasion of my visit to him, he solemnly declared that he had many times seen God face to face and had more revelations than the Apostle Saint Paul, to whom, he asserted, he was not inferior in goodness. So flagrant was his imposture and effrontery that in one sermon, he proclaimed himself great as Moses and as Jesus Christ.

Interview at Nauvoo, Illinois, Summer 1843

“The Mormon Population of Montrose and Nauvoo,” *Daily Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts), 15 (January 20, 1844). The newspaper gives as its source: “[From a private journal of a tour last summer.]” The following is an extract from the newspaper article.

We were rowed across the river to Nauvoo, and on la[n]ding, inquired the way to Joe’s house as he keeps tavern. We found that we were questioning the Prophet himself, who was somewhat shy in conversation, until we told him that we were strangers, who, having heard much of his celebrity, could not pass without paying our respects. He invited us in, but in reply to our interrogations, said, that he “had something else to do besides answering the questions of strangers.”

In regard to his religion, *he believed it*, and didn’t care whether any one else did or not, and if we desired to know what his faith was, we could ascertain by buying the book of Mormon, which I did for 10s. He showed us four mummies from which he had unfold[d]ed the cerements, and said that one was king *so and so*, and another his sister, &c, &c. He also showed us some *hieroglyphics*, which he said formed the record and signature of Joseph when in captivity!

David Nye White at Nauvoo, Illinois, 1843

David Nye White, "The Prairies, Nauvoo, Joe Smith, the Temple, the Mormons, &c.," *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette* 58 (September 15, 1843):3, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, correspondence dated August 30, 1843, typed copy. Reprinted in *New York Spectator*, September 23, 1843 and *Painesville Telegraph* 9 (October 4, 1843), Painesville, Ohio.

David White and a friend traveled to Hancock County and spent part of two days at Nauvoo. His interview with Joseph Smith occurred on August 29, 1843.

As we neared the city, about six o'clock in the evening, we passed an immense herd of cows which were being driven into the city from the prairie, to supply the inhabitants with milk. We also passed a large number of wagons loaded with hay, the produce of the natural grass of the prairie. About three miles

from the river, we entered the "kingdom of Nauvoo;" it being about four miles long, up and down the river, and three miles broad. The part near the prairie, about a mile and a half from the river, is quite broken up with ravines; nevertheless, it is all laid out in acre lots, and more or less settled. We drove down near the river, and put up at a very respectable tavern, kept by one of the elders -- a temperance house. After ten we walked out past the house of the prophet who has a very good garden containing about an acre, with a very fine fence around it, painted white, as is also his house, a moderate sized and humble looking frame dwelling. Near the prophet's house, on the other bank of the river, is the site of the "Nauvoo House," building by revelation. The basement is finished. It is built of a good, hard, white-stone. The front on the river is about 140 feet, and is entirely above ground, of cut stone. It has a wing running back about 100 feet. All this work is of the best and most substantial character. When this building is finished, it will be equal to any hotel in the western country. By special revelation, the prophet and his heirs are to have a suite of rooms in this house forever.

The next morning, after breakfast, we paid a visit to the prophet. We were received in a common sitting room, very plainly furnished, where the prophet and the older members of the family had just been breakfasting, and his numerous children and dependents were then sitting at the table. He received us in quite a good humored, friendly manner, asked us to sit down, and said he hoped for a better acquaintance. On the gentleman who accompanied me asking him how he prospered, he replied, "None can get ahead of me, and few can keep behind me," He seemed to think he had said something very witty, for he laughed very heartily. We spent about an hour conversing on various subjects, the prophet himself with amazing volubility, occupying the most of the time, and his whole theme was himself.

Let us give whatever turn to the conversation, he would adroitly bring it back to himself. The gentleman who accompanied me is a strong Whig, and as the Mormon vote had been given at the recent election to the Locofoco member of Congress, thereby defeating Cyrus Walker, Esq., Whig, who had defended "Joe" in several law suits with the Missourians, we spoke of politics at first. "Joe" professed to be a strong friend of Mr. Walker, and said he had voted for him, but would not interfere with his people in the matter. He said he had never asked the Lord any thing about politics; if he had done so, the Lord would have told him what to do. "The Lord," said he, "has promised to give us wisdom, and when I lack wisdom I ask the Lord, and he tells me, and if he didn't tell me, I would say he was a liar; that's the way I feel. But I never asked him anything about politics. I am a Whig, and I am a Clay man. I am made of Clay, and I am tending to Clay, and I am going to vote for Henry Clay; that's the way I feel. (A laugh.) But I won't interfere with my people, religiously, to affect their votes, though I might to elect Clay, for he ought to be President. I have sworn by the eternal gods -- it's no harm to swear by the gods, because there is none; if there is only one God, there can't be gods, and it's no harm to swear by nothing. (a laugh) -- I have sworn by the eternal gods that I will never vote for a democrat again; and I intend to swear my children, putting their hands under the thigh, as Abraham swore Isaac, that they will never vote a democratic ticket in all their generations. It is the meanest lowest

party in all creation -- There are five-sixths of my people so led away by the euphonious term "democrat," that they will vote the Locofoco ticket. I am a democrat myself. I am a Washington democrat, a Jefferson democrat, a Jackson democrat, and I voted for Harrison, and I am going to vote for Clay. The Locofocos are no democrats, but the meanest, lowest, most tyrannical beings in the world. They opposed me in Missouri, and were going to shoot me for treason, and I had never committed any treason whatever. I never had any thing bigger than a jack-knife about me, and they took me prisoner of war, and had twenty men to guard me. I had nothing to do with fighting. Our men six hundred strong, were in arms under Col. Hinckle. When the Missourians came marching up, Col. Hinckle ordered us to retreat, when I lifted up my hand, and said, 'Boys, I think we won't go yet; we'll stand our ground,' and they stood firm, but Col. Hinckle run like the very devil. For doing this they charge me with treason."

In this manner, the prophet ran off, talking incessantly, Speaking of revelations, he stated that when he was in a "quandary," he asked the Lord for a revelation, and when he could not get it, he "followed the dictates of his own judgment, which were as good as a revelation to him; but he never gave anything to his people as revelation, unless it was a revelation, and the Lord did reveal himself to him." Running on in his voluble style, he said: "The world persecutes me, it has always persecuted me. The people at Carthage in a public meeting lately, said, 'as for Joe, he's a fool, but he's got some smart men about him.' I am glad they give me so much credit. It is not every fool that has sense enough to get smart men about him.

The Lord does reveal himself to me. I know it. He revealed himself to me first when I was about fourteen years old, a mere boy. I will tell you about it. There was a reformation among the different religious denominations in the neighborhood where I lived, and I became serious, and was desirous to know what church to join. While thinking of this matter, I opened the testament promiscuously on these words, in James, "Ask of the Lord who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." -- I just determined I'd ask him. I immediately went out into the woods where my father had a clearing, and went to the stump, where I had stuck my axe when I had quit work, and I kneeled down, and prayed, saying, 'O Lord, what church shall I join?' Directly I saw a light, and then a glorious personage in the light, and then another personage, and the first personage said to the second, 'Behold my beloved son, hear him.' I then, addressed this second person, saying, 'O Lord, what church shall I join?' He replied, 'don't join any of them, they are all corrupt.' The vision then vanished, and when I came to myself, I was sprawling on my back; and it was some time before my strength returned. When I went home and told the people that I had a revelation, and that all the churches were corrupt, they persecuted me, and they have persecuted me ever since. They thought to put me down, but they haven't succeeded, and they can't do it.

When I have proved that I am right, and get all the world subdued under me, I think I shall deserve something. My revelations have proved to be true, because they have been delivered before they came to pass, and they came to pass exactly. I had a revelation in Missouri which was fulfilled to the letter. The

Missourians had got us all prisoners, and were threatening to kill us. The principal men of us were lying under a log, with a guard standing around us in the night. I fell into a trance. I call it a trance. I heard a voice which said, 'Joseph, fear not; you and all your friends shall be delivered without harm, and shall yet stand upon the hills of Zion.' When I awoke out of the trance, I aroused Elder Rigdon, and said, I have a revelation, we shall all escape. Elder Rigdon shouted, and told it to the next one, and in the morning it was told to my family and all our friends, and they all rejoiced. -- That revelation came to pass, although they were holding a council at the time I had the trance, and had resolved to kill me. They can't harm me. I told my family lately, before I left home for Dixon, that if I was taken up, the Lord would deliver me, didn't I, Emma -- (appealing to his wife, who was standing behind his chair, playing with his hair, and who answered him in the affirmative) -- and when they took me I was passive in their hands, and the Lord compelled them to bring me right to Nauvoo. They couldn't help themselves, although they gnashed their teeth with rage.

Speaking of the temple, which he is erecting, he said, "I don't know how the world will like it, it suits me; I have no book learning; I'm not capacitated to build according to the world, I know nothing about architecture, and all that, but it pleases me; that's the way I feel."

A good deal of conversation of a similar character took place, the prophet occupying nearly the whole time, and talking of himself incessantly. Judging from his conversation, manner, and appearance, I should think him a man of small capacity, smaller acquirements, and a dupe to his own impostures. -- His language is rude and vulgar, and his conduct light and trifling. He is fond of his own jokes and low wit, and laughs immoderately when he thinks he has said a good thing. He is a large fleshy man, with a fine blue eye, large and sensual looking mouth and lips, with an evident predominance of the animal propensities.

It was surprising to see the awe with which his followers approached him with hat in hand, contrasted with the cavalier and heartless style of his treatment of them. A poor man came to the door while I was there, and with evident trepidation addressed the prophet. He wished to obtain some information as to what he had best to do with his family, having just arrived. "Had I better come into the town, and settle on one of the lots, or stay on the prairies?" "If you are going to farm it, you had better stay on the prairie," was the reply of the Prophet. "I wish to buy a piece of land, for which I will pay trade of various kinds to the amount of \$500; will you sell some?" "My lands are all good titles, and I must have the money for them," was the reply of the Prophet, as he turned on his heel and left the man to reflect on the christian politeness and courtesy of one whom he esteemed a prophet of the Lord, and to obey whom, he had left early home, and braved the hardships of a western life. It is surprising that the conduct of the pretended prophet does not open the eyes of his poor, deluded followers. "Joe" is profane and vulgar in his conversation, and frequently gets drunk, and yet he is venerated as the favorite of heaven, and his revelations put on a par with divine writ.

James M. Sharpe at Nauvoo, Illinois, February 1844

James M. Sharpe Journal, 34-35, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

James Sharpe visited Nauvoo on February 25, 1844 and wrote his short account in his journal two months later.

I walked about the City of the Holy Joe until I found the Prophets House the "Nauvoo Mansion" where I "put up". I Sold my goods in Nauvoo at Auction. remained in Nauvoo about two weeks. the City Contains about 17000 inhabits as I was informed and Suppose to be near the truth – Joe Smith the Mormon Prophet is a large tolerably good looking man 38 years of age - light hair light eyes nothing very extraordinary in his appearance - quite boyish in his Conduct fond of fun polich & trandy - prides himself much upon his physical powers – loves to Contend with any one in wrestling – Scuffling "Pulling Stick" "Casting Stone" "throwing the axe" or any Such Gymnastic exercise - fond talking and being listened to by the Gaping Staring – astonished ignorant Croud - proud of his notoriety – [unclear word] of the most astonishing degree of vanity. and unblushing imprudence and Confidence. neither dignity, humility or Solemnity in his walk or Conversation - violently abusive and reveng[e]ful disposition - uses much profane & vulgar language - denounces every one who does not agree with him – asserts boldly and openly that all Sectarians are notorious fools ignoramuses – blockheads - that all Missourians are infernal Scoundrels - hellish rascals and [unclear word], jobbers and murderers - His authority and power among the Mormons is unlimited his word and commands and requests the word, commands & requests of the Almighty to the Saints - I have not time to dwell upon this Subject or any other now

Interview at Nauvoo, Illinois, April 1844

The following visit to Nauvoo comes from a letter to the editor of the St. Louis *Evening Gazette*, circa April 26-27, 1844, published in the issue of May 11, 1844. No copy of the *Evening Gazette* has been located at the present time. What follows comes from a publication that contained the article in German, which was translated back into English. The book from which this interview is taken has as its author Henry Lewis, published under the title *Das Illustrirte Mississippithal* (Dusseldorf, 1857) and translated from the German by A. Hermina Poatgieter and notes by Bertha L. Heilbron under the title *The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1967), 248-52. Quotation marks and italic words retained. The visit occurred circa April 25-27, 1844.

["]Joseph Smith, prophet, priest, prince of the Mormons, generalissimo of the armies of the faithful and—!! number one innkeeper of the holy city!

["]On April 26, 1844, we had the honor to be presented to this high and

mighty ruler. Our party consisted of twelve young people,¹⁵ one of whom boasted of a long-standing and intimate friendship with the 'general' and who did pride himself not a little about it.

["]Conducted by this worthy, who was, by the way, considerably 'lit up,' we were ushered with repeated scrapings, countless bowings, and similar compliments into the '*Mansion House*' (inn) of Nauvoo. The Prophet received us at the threshold and welcomed us within his four walls with an appearance of utter benevolence and with expression of extreme courtesy

["]The first impression the Prophet made on us was not at all satisfactory to me and certainly not flattering to our host. 'Is this the Mormon hero,' we thought, the far-famed founder of the new and strange sect, the Mohammed of the nineteenth century, the 'veiled Prophet' (if all the tales are true), the prince of Nauvoo?¹⁶ Truly this was not the man we had expected to see. But one is usually disappointed in such cases by one's preconceptions.

["]'General Smith,' for as such he announced himself, is a tall, well-proportioned man. His figure could be called a fine one, although by no means distinguished for symmetry or grace; his gait and movements are really awkward. On that day he was dressed entirely in black, with no ornament, and with a clumsily knotted, ordinary chintz cravat tied around his throat, pressing a small collar, stiff as a board, tightly against his cheeks. His chest and shoulders are broad and muscular, although his arms and hands seem never to have been developed by physical toil, and the latter are very small for his proportions. His foot, however, is large and broad enough to make up for the symmetry disturbed by the size of the hands. His head is a long oval in shape, with a high crown, indicating a determined will; the nape bone and back of the head full, denoting powerful impulses; and the forehead low and receding, although the region which phrenologists declare to be the seat of capacity for thought stands out unusually. He said that his head had often been examined by phrenologists, but he did not believe in this science. Indeed, he entered into a long (but unintelligible) argument to prove that neither phrenology nor mesmerism had the slightest claims to be called science. His forehead is white and smooth and, notwithstanding the small facial angle, almost symmetrical. It was impossible to detect a single line of care or of thought in his face, or a single cloud on its smooth expanse. His hair is very light and fine, complexion pale, cheeks full, temperament evidently sanguine, lips thin rather than thick and definitely not indicative of boldness or determination of character, teeth white but not regular, and one of the right incisors was missing - a

¹⁵ Note by Bertha Heilbron: Letter dated April 26, 1844, in the *Gazette*, May 11, 1844. In Joseph Smith's journal for April 27, Willard Richards recorded, "A large company of Gentlemen from St Louis- and other places on the river, called at the Mansion. and when they returned to the boat it was gone.- and they returned to the Mansion." Joseph Smith, Journal, April 27, 1844, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁶ Note by Bertha Heilbron: In describing Smith as a modern Mohammed, the translator took liberties with the English original, which branded the Mormon leader as the "very Moka[n]a of Nauvoo." The reference is to an imposter known as the "veiled Prophet of Khorassan," in Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, E. Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 585 (London,, 1870).

lack which is noticed at once and somewhat mars the expression of the mouth. But the Prophet's most remarkable feature is his eye; not because it is very large, bright, thoughtful, or restless, or particularly expressive or deep-set – for strangely enough, it does not possess any of these characteristics – but because anyone accustomed to reading character in the eye would surely see at first glance that the Prophet's eye did not belong to an ordinary man. The color is light hazel, and it is shaded by long, thick, but light lashes. His *beetle brows* are light and thick, and the general expression of the Prophet's eyes shows the utmost degree of cunning and craft, especially when he half closes them, which he often did during our conversation, as though he wanted to conceal his innermost thoughts from us. Taken all together, the general's figure aspect are genteel, and his manners, though dignified, easy and courteous. He may be about forty years old. The Prophet's voice in ordinary conversation is soft and low, and his smile would be exceptionally agreeable if his appearance were not marred by the loss of a front tooth as soon as he opens his mouth. We were several times on the point of advising the holy man to put himself for a few hours into the hands of our friend, the dentist *Dr. [Edward] H[ale]* of St. Louis, and have the lost tooth replaced by a little piece of ivory.

["]Our conversation with the Prophet, which extended over the greatest variety of subjects, was fortunately uninterrupted; thus we had sufficient time to observe him carefully – a fact which can hardly have escaped him. In the course of the conversation the Prophet mentioned the unusually rapid increase of the Mormon colony. 'Four years ago,' he said, 'there was hardly a habitation on the site of Nauvoo, and now the city extends over six square miles, and has a population of 25,000 souls!' – an estimate exaggerated at least by 10,000. He declared the fighting strength of the Mormons to be 4,000 men – a figure which doubtless also was exaggerated. After the exodus of his people from Mount Zion in Missouri, he himself had bought the site on which Nauvoo stands, but since he was unable to make the payments on time, part of the land went back to its former owners. For this and other reasons, a large part of the plain on the west shore of the *Point* is still unoccupied.

["]In the course of the conversation, we asked the Prophet whether, in his capacity as *mayor*, he ever experienced difficulty in keeping peace and order. This question served as an excuse to test the Prophet, for we knew very well that only the day before he had been called to quell a revolt against his person and authority, on which dangerous occasion he had conducted himself most courageously. 'Only yesterday,' he said, 'an infuriated man who sought my life held a loaded double-barreled pistol to my heart.'¹⁷ Thereupon he related the details of the incident as follows: A certain [Orson] Spencer, a poor, crippled, but worthy and intelligent man, brought a complaint against his brother [Augustine Spencer] for beating and otherwise maltreating him in his own house. The Prophet at once sent an official to arrest the accused, and, in the meantime, he prepared the warrant. Spencer resisted arrest without a writ from the mayor, though the arrest would have been legal in accordance with an express ordinance

¹⁷ Note by Bertha Heilbron: For Smith's account of this incident, see his journal for April 26, 1844. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church*, 6:344.

of the city. Thereupon an armed posse of Mormons started out, led by the Prophet and his coadjutor [Orrin P.] Rockwell. The prophet ordered the arrest of Spencer. Instantly three men, a certain [Chauncey L.] Highbee and the two Foster brothers [Robert D. and Charles], came to Spencer's rescue. A hand-to-hand fight ensued, and the younger drew his pistol, and swore that he would shoot the Prophet on the spot, calling him a villain, murderer, impostor, and tyrant. An eyewitness told us that the Prophet calmly approached the enraged man, seized the pistol by the breech, and wrenched the weapon from his grasp. In doing so, he hurt his hand somewhat on the sharp angle of the lock. The result was that the rioters were arrested and taken [before the mayor] in the Masonic Hall, [tried,] pronounced guilty, and each of them fined \$100.¹⁸ Besides they had to deposit considerable sums for bail, to insure their peaceful behavior during the next six months. After this verdict, the Prophet rose from his judgment seat and addressed the crowd. He said that he was not a despot, assassin, swindler, nor scoundrel, and they could be sure that he was also no coward, for the fear of man was not in him. He loved his people, he said, and mourned the delusions of his foes. It grieved him to have to use severity, but sooner than have his authority resisted and his laws broken, he would risk his life – yes, he would do that as long as he lived! Then he informed the offenders that they were 'blind fools' and told them to go home. The ones who had been punished obeyed humbly enough; the crowd dispersed; order was restored, and – the Prophet in triumph returned to his tavern to deal out the whisky, three cents a glass!!["]

Charles Francis Adams at Nauvoo, Illinois, May 1844

What follows is from the Charles Francis Adams Journal located in Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. In 1952 a journal extract was published in Henry Adams, "Charles Francis Adams Visits the Mormons in 1844," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 68.

It was Dr. William Gano Goforth of Belleville, Illinois who persuaded Josiah Quincy IV and his distant cousin Charles Francis Adams to visit Nauvoo.¹⁹ Willard Richards recorded, "Wednesday May 15th 1844. [Joseph Smith] At home. Much rain this A M. A son of John Quincy Adams [Charles Francis Adams,] Mr [Josiah] Quincy. & Dr Goforth visited at the Mansion" and that evening Joseph Smith "rode to the upper Landing with Mr Adams. Quincy. & H[iram]. Kimball."²⁰ The following is from the journal of Charles Adams:

¹⁸ Note by Bertha Heilbron: The words in brackets were omitted in the German translation. They are added here from the English original in the *Gazette*, May 11, 1844.

¹⁹ On the recollections of Charles Adams and Josiah Quincy, see John J. Hammond, "Re-Examining the Adams/Quincy May 1844 Visit to Nauvoo," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 30 (2010):66-95.

²⁰ Joseph Smith Journal, entry of May 15, 1844, LDS Church History Library.

Wednesday, 15th Joe Smith - Visit the temple.

It was about one o'clock when we got into the very indifferent room which the labors of our tall and thin Doctor²¹ had procured for us in a house on the bank of the river. For at so late an hour we determined not to attempt to disturb the great prophet himself, although he was the keeper of the tavern. We threw ourselves on the outside of the bed allotted to Quincy and myself and slept until five o'clock when the day light roused us. Shortly afterwards the carriage of the prophet which had been sent for by the D^r was announced as ready to take us up. We rode up in company with the D^r and two other passengers who had stopped with us. There was also on the outside one of the leaders of the sect who was called General White. The day was cloudy and it soon after set in to rain and rained in showers until night.

At the door of a two story wooden house with a sign post before it, we stopped and were introduced to the celebrated Joe Smith. A middle aged man with a shrewd but rather ordinary expression of countenance, unshaved and in clothes neither very choice nor neat. The whole air of the man was that of frank but not coarse vulgarity. He received us civilly and forthwith introduced us into his house, trying one room after another without success as they all appeared to contain occupants. At last we were ushered into one where a man in bed whom he very abruptly slapped on the shoulder and notified to quit. The awkwardness of this scene was relieved by a call to breakfast which we all obeyed. The table was amply provided as usual in the Western Country but without order or delicacy.

Upon our return from the meal we were introduced into another chamber which had been prepared in the interval, and here we sat down and held a long conference with the prophet upon himself, his doctrines and his projects. He then took us down into his mother's chamber and showed us four Egyptian mummies stripped and then undertook to explain the contents of a chart or manuscript which he said had been taken from the bosom of one of them. The cool impudence of this imposture amused me very much. "This," said he, "was written by the hand of Abraham and means so and so. If anyone denies it, let him prove the contrary. I say it." Of course, we were too polite to prove the negative, against a man fortified by revelation. His mother looked on with attention and aided in the explanation whenever the prophet hesitated, from which I inferred that she was usually the exponent of the writings to strangers. At the close, he notified us that for this instruction, his mother was in the habit of receiving a quarter of a dollar a piece from them, which sum we paid forthwith.

Then came another long conversation in which a brother of his²² and some other persons joined detailing the severe and shocking persecution which they suffered at the time of their cruel expulsion from Missouri four years ago. This is one of the most disgraceful chapters in the dark history of Slavery in the United

²¹ William Goforth. Martha Nelson Goforth, wife of William, was a Latter-day Saint having been baptized on April 7, 1844. Jed Woodworth, "Josiah Quincy's 1844 Visit with Joseph Smith," *Brigham Young University Studies* 39 (2000):84, footnote 10. William Goforth was baptized and ordained a high priest on April 8, 1845. *History of the Church* 7:394.

²² Possibly Hyrum Smith

States, and shows that the spirit of intolerance[,] religious and political can find a Shelter even in the fairest professions of liberty.

We dined at one and after dinner, at our request we went up in his carriage to see the stone temple and the font which the prophet is causing to be built. I is a massive edifice on a most commanding site, about half finished. The architecture is original – and curious. It is built by the contribution of one tenth of labor and goods. The prophet seems to have drawn his ideas largely from the Jewish system. One of the persons who accompanied us from the boat, proved a travelling Methodist preacher and he by his turn for dispute elicited much amusement to us. This on our return to the tavern took the shape of a specie of address to a parcel of the sect who were hanging about the door, half jest, haft earnest which appears to be habitual with Joe. I was not so well able to judge of it as I had been called upstairs to meet a gentleman by the name of Johnson, who was in the employment of the government of the United States and had come here to catch a defaulter supposed to be in Joe Smith's territory. He asked me for advice supposing me to be a lawyer - told me that he had thought it wisest to apply at once to Joe himself, being convinced that without his aid he should not succeed in his object - so well has Joe fenced himself in here from the ordinary course of law, by concessions made to him by the dominant party in the State in consequence of the control he exercises over the elections.

There is a mixture of shrewdness and extravagant self conceit, of knowledge and ignorance, of wisdom and folly in this whole system of this man that I am somewhat at a loss to find definitions for it. Yet it is undoubted that he has gained followers at home and abroad - and boasts of having twenty-five thousand at Nauvoo and two hundred thousand in the Union. This is an extravagant estimate, but the number must be large. His theological system is very nearly Christian Unitarianism - with the addition of the power of baptism by the priests of adults to remit sin, and of the new hierarchy of which Smith is the chief by divine appointment. After tea, as we expected the Steamer to take us off in the night, we returned to the wretched quarters we left in the morning - and bid good bye to the prophet who accompanied us to them in his carriage. On the whole I was glad I had been. Such a man is a study not for himself, but as serving what turns the human mind will sometimes take.

Josiah Quincy at Nauvoo, Illinois, May 1844

Letter by Josiah Quincy

Josiah Quincy to "My dear darling wife" [Mary Jane Miller Quincy], May 16, 1844, Davenport, Iowa, as cited in Jed Woodworth, "Josiah Quincy's 1844 Visit with Joseph Smith," *Brigham Young University Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000):84-87. Original in Quincy-Howe Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

As we found we had a day to spare we determined to devote it to the service of the Mormon prophet Joe Smith, and accordingly landed at his city of Nauvoo at midnight between Tuesday & Wednesday. As we were some distance from his residence we stopped at a poor tavern at the landing, under the guidance of a D^r Goforth, the most perfect personification of Don Quixote that was ever seen. He had been a surgeon in Gen^l Jackson's army at the battle of New Orleans, & seemed simple as a child with a strong inclination to the Mormon faith. The City of Nauvoo the promised land of the Mormons, is situated on a bend of the Mississippi, that commands a view for miles in both directions. Five years ago there was not fifty inhabitants on it, now they say there are twenty five thousand, & I should think there might be half that number The town is laid out with perfect regularity & every house has attached to it an acre of land. Of course the prophet[,] priest & king, who is the head of the sect & who numbers of 200,000 followers²³ in his train could not but be an object of interest.

D^r Goforth at early morning dispatched a messenger for "the chariot of the prophet" which soon appeared not like that Elisha saw, but on four good wheels with a substantial pair of sturdy horses. We entered & soon arrived at the seat of this [""]prophet, priest, king, Mayor, Lt General & tavern keeper for as each & all of these is he inspired to act.

The door was surrounded by dirty loafers, from among which our Quixotic guide²⁴ selected a man, in a checked coat, dirty white pantaloons, a beard of some three days growth and introduced him as General Smith He had the name but certainly but in few respects the look of a prophet. He however blessed us & requested us into his mansion, which was about as dirty as the prophet himself. As the lower floor was crowded he invited us to ascend & throwing open a chamber door, we entered, a close uncured room on the bed of which lay one of the faithful, sound asleep, and we had the evidence of more than one sense that the Mormon saints were not freed from some of the necessities of humanity. This however was a small matter for a prophet. He covered his disciple as well as he could with the bed clothes and down we sat to theological conversation. Breakfast was soon announced & when it was finished we found "an upper chamber" properly prepare for our reception.

We passed the whole day in his society, & had one of the most extraordinary conversations I ever participated in, he preached for us, prophesied for us, interpreted hieroglyphics for us, exhibited his mummies and took us to his temple which he is now erecting on a most majestic site of hewn stone. Every inhabitant dedicates the labor of his tenth day to its structure, it will be finished within a year & whether Mormonism expires or not, must remain a massive memorial of its existence for centuries.

I have neither time nor space to describe the faith or works of this most extraordinary man but reserve them for a future occasion. The power he exercises both civilly & religiously is immense, & is a living proof of the insceptibility of human nature to imposition.

²³ The actual number of church members on the rolls is unknown but it is doubtful if it was more 50,000.

²⁴ Dr. William Goforth

Notes of Henry Halkett

An individual by the name of Henry Halkett wrote some notes of Quincy's visit to Nauvoo about 1845. No further information is known concerning Halkett. The original manuscript is titled "Henry's notes upon Joe Smith the Prophet," located in Misc. Collection 1841-1844, Box 36, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. These notes were published by Colton Storm in "A Boston Quincy Goes to Nauvoo: A Visit to Joseph Smith, 1844," *Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review*.²⁵

Storm wrote: "On at least one occasion, Quincy told the story of his visit to Nauvoo in considerable detail. The listener, Henry Halkett, promptly recorded what he remembered of Quincy's account. That manuscript is now in the Clements Library. It varies enough from Quincy's record to seem worth printing. Halkett might be suspected of embroidering the tale, but several passages are so close to Quincy's printed version that we can believe Halkett was an accurate reporter."²⁶ The following are Henry Halkett notes on Josiah Quincy's visit to Nauvoo in May 1844. Words that are crossed out in the original are omitted.

Mr Quincey Junior informed me[?] that he had paid Joe Smith the Mormon prophet a visit.

He was a large overgrown bluff-looking man, with a beard of several days old & dressed in a common style. He took Mr Quincy to see his temple then in the course of erection. There were a number of unfinished pillars with crescents representing moons at their bases, & there were to be representations of the sun for capitals in the style which that luminary is usually represented in public – house signs. Joe Smith was evidently very proud of his temple and said chuckling to Mr Quincy "I consider myself a greater man than Solomon, he had the help of Hiram King of Tyre, now I am building this all by myself."

Every Mormon in Nauvoo contributed a tenth day's labour & so the town was divided into ten sections. Joe Smith then conducted Mr Quincey to one of the workshops; where a man was working at one of the capitals, a broad fat cheeked face with rays about it. The man in a tone of reverence addressed Joe Smith "General, is this like the face you saw in the vision" The General having examined it with the look of a con[n]oisseur answered. "Well it is very well, but the nose is a thought too broad." Mr Quincy here observed that the head was to be looked at from a distance. Joe Smith then said "Very true, it will do, it will do very well." Mr Quincy said that his deportment to his followers was quite perfect, a mixture of great kindness with dignity.

In this temple there was a large pine tub supported on 12 oxen carved in wood, in imitation of the Jewish original Here all his followers were immersed & this baptism be asserted to be necessary for salvation. Some one hinted to the prophet that perhaps Mr Quincy ould like to hear him preach. He answered "Oh! to be sure with great pleasure, he then took [blank space] and began – some minister who was present, contradicted his several times & at last addressed him thus. "You say that baptism is "absolutely necessary for salvation, but our Saviour

²⁵ *Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review* 60 (10), December 5, 1953, pp. 71-75. Courtesy of James E. Crooks.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

said "to the penitent thief; "This day shalt thou be with me in "paradise" "It is perfectly clear that he could not have "been baptised" Joe now answered sharply. "How do you know "but he may have been baptised first & then stolen afterwards" But he continued more seriously. "In the original Greek "the word which is translated Paradise does not necessarily "mean the final state of happiness, but as these gentlemen well "know" (referring to Mr Quincy & Mr Adams) "may mean an "intermediate state, here it was that the thief was baptised" There was great quickness in his reply as well as cleverness in getting his assertion endorsed by <with> the names of Mr Quincy the son of one of the late Presidents of the United States.

The temple was situated on a very beautiful spot with a fine view of the river on both sides & a beautiful prairie opposite studded with what are called islands which are clumps of trees. The party were afterwards driving together, & passed near a kind of amphitheatre with seats where the services were performed till the temple should be ready. Here the clergyman addressing the prophet, said he supposed he allowed no one to preach there. "Oh no objection whatever, I let anybody preach that likes" & went on to say that if the clergyman chose he should address the people from his own pulpit & that he would insure him an attentive audience. The clergyman asked if he might say any thing he liked & whether Joe Smith would preach after him. Joe Smith replied that he might say whatever he liked, that he himself did not fear that the faith of his followers would be hurt, being too firmly founded &c but that he should reserve to himself the right of reply, at the same time it was not likely that he should find it necessary to do so. The clergyman then said he could not come the next Sunday, but that he would come the Sunday after. Shortly after Joe Smith & the clergyman entered into some argument or other & Joe thinking that he had made a triumphant reply slapped his opponent on the knee & said "If you preach like this & have no better arguments" "I shall not reply to you, for there is not a follower of" "mine that could not a<n>swer you."

Some time after this the clergyman reported that he had on some occasion said: viz. "You might as well believe in Joe "Smith as in the Book of Mormon" The prophet very gravely asked him "Did you say Joe Smith?" "Yes I "did." Well it would have been more polite if you "had said Lieutenant-General Joseph Smith"

Joe related that on one occasion he was travelling by stage, (I think towards Washington) when the horses ran away, he claimed out of the window of the stage & succeeded in stopping the horses, the ladies begged to know to whom they were indebted for the preservation of their lives. & were amazed to hear that Joe Smith was their preserver, as he was to them a kind of [blank space] Joe seemed to be much pleased with the [illegible] he had produced on that occasion.

On Mr Quincy's return to Joe's house (which was the Hotel or Public House), he said they would perhaps like to see his curiosities, on their assenting, he took them down to his cellar, where there were several common pine presses, he opened these & to their astonishment they saw several black corpses. "That one" said Joe "is the body of Pharaoh Necho" Joe it seem had imported four mummies & having taken off the wrappers, had stuck them upright in these

presses. He then opened the little boxes which are always found about a mummy & took out some papyrus. "This" said he "is the handwriting of Abraham, that one is Moses" and so on. "These are hieroglyphics, nobody can read them but myself, I can read all writing & all hieroglyphics." Mr Quincy pointed to one of them which had a representation of a man, a woman &, a tree & a [-] non-descript animal. "That" said Joe "is the creation of the World, there is Adam "Eve the Tree of Knowledge & the Serpent." Mr Quincy asked him how it could be a serpent as it had legs. Joe answered "Oh you know that serpents originally had legs like chickens, "but afterwards God said "'Upon the belly shalt thou crawl' and "so he lost his legs" Mr Quincy speaks of Joe having an extraordinary acquaintance with the Bible & that he was very ready in reply, & clever in supporting his notions by quotations & reasoning.- After the exhibition was closed Joe said "Persons who "see my curiosities usually give my mother a quarter of "a dollar."

This mother of his was a fine venerable looking lady. He seemed to entertain very strong feelings of love towards her. pointing her out to them he said "This is the woman "who was compelled to walk three hundred miles with "scarcely any clothes." This referred to some transactions in the State of Missouri, where was his original settlement & from which he had been driven by violence & lynch law. He then came to Illinois & bought land & founded Nauvoo, he laid out the town, with streets at right angles each of the compartments contained four acres, and one acre was given or sold to each settler, these in process of time became valuable town lots, so that his followers were in general rich enough people for that country. Joe Smith said that Nauvoo contained 25,000 inhabitants, & his followers in the immediate neighbourhood amounted to 300,000.

The parties in the State shortly before this being about equal, Joe Smith with his followers held the balance. The man whom he supported, & was by his means <influence> elected governor of the State and in return gave him all the offices in Nauvoo, he was mayor, Lieutenant General of the Militia, judge, and in short every thing he liked. Joe Smith said that a great many of his followers came from England & that he had missionaries every where even in the Sandwich Isles.

Mr Quincy found in an outhouse a great heap of letters directed to Joe Smith and as they seemed to be not cared for he helped himself to a few. Amongst them was a letter from an organist of a Cathedral in England begging the Prophet's acceptance of several presents and stating the writer's intention of joining him some day. There was also another apparently from his legal advisor telling that as long as he kept[?] at Nauvoo he was safe having all the law &c on his side. advising him also to have always by him half a dozen armed men, to let no one know where he intended to sleep, & to change his abode frequently and is on quite a la Cromwell fashion. Unfortunately for Joe he did not follow this advise. Some one having set up a newspaper in his own town abusing him through thick & thin, Joe destroyed his printing office. The man prosecuted him in a neighbouring court, & Joe surrendered himself to the Governor of the State knowing that he could be released by an Habeas Corpus from the district court of Nauvoo, & thus the trial being removed to his own country he would of course be acquitted. This Governor owed his place to the votes of the Mormons & Joe naturally placed confidence on him. A guard of Militia was placed over the jail to

protect him, but these being his enemies deserted their posts, and a party of rascals entered the jail and murdered Joe & his brother the Patriarch. Mr Quincy however did not suppose that the Governor intended to betray him.

The notes stop here, but I remember Mr Quincy telling me that one of the bystanders said to Joe "Perhaps these gentlemen would like to hear you prophesy" Upon which Joe answered "To be sure," to be sure, let's see, what shall I prophesy about, "O, I prophesy that Tyler will not be reelected, there are some "things which are probable & other which are (only) probable "but it is neither probable nor possible that Tyler can be "re-elected." Tyler had been elected Vice-President at the time that General Harrison <had been> elected President. Harrison dying soon after, Tyler succeeded him, without an election such being the constitutional Law. Tyler was not a man of sufficient influence to have been chosen by any party as a candidate for the Presidentship, & Joe Smith prophecy was not a very wonderful one, & it did not turn out a false one.

Mr Quincy shewed me a plan of Nauvoo, & the design for the temple. Nauvoo is situated at a place where the river takes a sharp turn round a cliff or high bank. At the bottom of the bank there is considerable strip of alluvial land. The temple is placed at the extreme point of the cliff, & the town is planned both on the alluvial ground and on the bank. The temple itself is the most common looking thing without the least originality except about the pillars. It looks very like a bad specimen of the Anglo-Roman style, with rather a dumpy belfry placed over the tympanum.

Mr Quincy also shewed me the Book of Mormon that he had bought of Joe with his autograph in it. The book had the look of a small thick octavo pocket bible, the print was small & as the book seemed about 2½ inches thick, there must have been a good deal of composition in it; the story however is that Joe did not write it himself, but that it was written by a clergyman during a long confinement in bed as an amusement, & that Joe after the clergyman's death got hold of the MSS. The story does not seem likely, & Joe himself seems to have been quite capable of writing such a work, which after all would not acquire much talent. You have a little account of Joe where a blunder about a compass &c is noticed

Lectures by Josiah Quincy

The Portsmouth Journal of Literature & Politics, Vol. LXV, No. 4, January 28, 1854, page 1, Portsmouth, New-Hampshire.

THE MORMONS—A SKETCH OF THEIR HISTORY.

BY HON[.] JOSIAH QUINCY, JR.

...

I once visited Nauvoo, in my passage up the Mississippi—it was early in

the morning that I landed.²⁷ On proceeding to the tavern, I saw standing in the front door, a man about six feet in height, and of good proportions. He wore duck pants and a pepper and salt coat[.] His beard was long²⁸ and his hair not combed, and his personal appearance was that of a common working man[.]—This was Joseph Smith, the landlord, the lawgiver, commander-in-chief of the Nauvoo Legion, the Supreme Judge of the Mormons, a Priest after the order of Melchisedek, the only living prophet of the most high God[.] He was in no way disconcerted by our approach at that unceremonious hour of the day[.] He greeted us cordially, gave us his benediction, invited us in, passed a few words with us in a social, easy and dignified manner, and then left us to ourselves. After breakfast he again made his appearance, shaved, and in a suit of black[.] Not long after breakfast he preached a sermon from the steps of the tavern. His text was from Mark 16[:]15—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"[.] He commenced in a stentorian voice, and no sooner was the sound of his voice heard, that the Mormons began to congregate about him from all quarters of the city.

His sermon was of the mixed nature of a harrangue [harangue] and exhortation, interladed [interlaced] with a profusion of quotations from the Mormon Bible and the Holy Scriptures[.]

His knowledge of the latter was wonderful[.] He appeared to be perfectly familiar with all the writings of the Old and New Testament, and there was no thought or expression that he did not seem able to back by a text[.]

In the course of his sermon, he dictated upon the necessity of baptism to salvation[.] He was interrupted by a clergyman of the Methodist persuasion, who was of our company[.] He asked the prophet, how he got over the promise of our Saviour to the malefactor[.] (Luke 23[:]43—"Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise,['']") as he had never been baptised and was then dying[.]

"Ah," said the prophet without any hesitation, "you do not comprehend the nature of Paradise — Paradise is an intermediate place between Earth and Heaven, where all who need the remission of sin can receive baptism[.]"

While there the Methodist Minister asked the Prophet if he allowed men of different persuasion to preach to his people[.] Oh yes, he replied, he should be happy to gratify him, and told him if he would appoint any time, that he would insure him a large and attentive audience[.]

"Why," said the Methodist gentleman, "you don't mean to say that you would let me preach to your people without interruption, do you?[']" "Certainly," said the prophet, "[']I might say a few words after you had concluded by way of explanation, if it was necessary[.]" The prophet accompanied us to the temple[.] It is situated upon an elevation somewhat above the level of the city. Having viewed it, we tarried for a few moments to admire the landscape which opened before us—the Mississippi stretching to the North and the South as far as the eye could

²⁷ Quincy in his May 16, 1844 letter to his wife Mary Jane wrote that he landed "at midnight." As cited in Jed Woodworth, "Josiah Quincy's 1844 Visit with Joseph Smith," *Brigham Young University Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000):84.

²⁸ Smith's had "a beard of some three days growth" (Ibid.).

reach, the rising city teeming with busy hands and the fruits of industry[,] the extended fields in all directions, crowned with beauty and plenty[.] For a moment, the eye of the prophet dilated with pride, and his chock was suffused with joy. Said he, ["]I don't know but I am a great a man as was Solomon. He built a temple to the Lord, but he had Hiram, the king of Tyre, to help him, and all the wealth of his kingdom, but I have built this temple without the help from anybody[.]"

...

He [Joseph Smith] also received a commission from the Governor, appointing him Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion[.]²⁹ The prophet showed me this commission and shrewdly remarked, that as by the military code no officer could be tried for abuse of his authority, except by officers of equal grade, he did not see how they could ever try him, if he should err for he was the only Lieut[.] General in the United States[.]

I told him I thought it was unsafe that any man should have as much power as he possessed, although it was not exercised over a very large community[.] I remarked to him that, he seemed to be the law-maker, the law expounder, and the law-executor—that he was at the head of the Church, the State and the Military.³⁰

He replied, that he was the only perfect man in the world—that it would be dangerous to entrust such power with me—and that he was the only man on the earth whom it would be safe to trust with absolute authority.

He had a military force of several thousands, whose evolutions, a U. S. officer, who reviewed them remarked, were in most respects performed as well as those of the soldiers of the regular service[.]

He professed to understand all languages[.] In proof of his claim he took from a book case volumes in divers oriental tongues, which he read with fluency and explained with the utmost assurance and gravity. And inasmuch as we were all unacquainted with the languages ourselves, we could not dispute the prophet's claim. But he had sagacity enough not to introduce the Latin, Greek, Hebrew and German tongue, or any other language which we did understand.

Before leaving he took us into an interior apartment of his dwellings, and opened a closet, he showed us three mummies, which he said he had procured from Egypt, at an expense of \$6000[.]³¹—One of them he said was Adam, one was Eve, and the third, which was a sort of duck-legged object, he said was the serpent[.]³² "Why," said I, "hat cannot be a serpent, for that was a snake." "O, no!" said the prophet, "not before the fall; the serpent walked upon legs like a chicken before the fall[.] But after he tempted our first mother to eat the forbidden fruit, then God cursed the serpent "above every breast of the field, and said, upon thy

²⁹ Joseph Smith received his commission, as Lieutenant General on February 5, 1841 from Governor Thomas Carlin. The oath of office was administered to Smith in March 1841. Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church History Library.

³⁰ Joseph Smith was not the head of the state. Thomas Ford was Governor from 1842-1846.

³¹ The cost was \$2,400. In Quincy's 1881 account he also mentioned the figure of \$6,000.

³² This would be referring to images on a papyrus and not to the mummies.

belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life[.]” For this exhibition he blandly told us that spectators usually paid his mother a quarter of a dollar[.]

He also showed us three pieces of hieroglyphic writing upon parchment, of a very antique appearance. The first, he said, was the hand-writing of Abraham, the father of the faithful; and he pointed out to me a scrawl at the bottom, which he said was the autograph of Abraham. The next, he said, was one of the letters of Moses, and the other was the chirography of Pharoah [Pharaoh] Neco [Necho].

He said they were called Egyptian hieroglyphics by vulgar minds, because those [sic] was no ordinary mortal who could read them[.] He told me that he was the only man in the world capable of reading them[.]

He also claimed the power of healing the sick by the imposition of hands, but when desired to give a practical illustration of this, he said that it would be a sin in the sight of heaven, to work a miracle to gratify the curiosity of a Gentile—that it was only done for the glory of God[.]

When we left he waited on us to the landing on the bank of the river, gave us his benediction and we parted.

New York Herald, January 18, 1857, p. 3. The lecture by Quincy was delivered on Tuesday, January 13, 1857.

The Mormons and Their Prophet.
A LECTURE BY JOSIAH QUNICY, JR., TO THE MERCANTILE LIBRARY.

Josiah Quincy, Jr., delivered a lecture on the Mormons and their Prophet, before the Mercantile Library Association, on Tuesday evening, in Clinton Hall. The lecture was peculiarly interesting, from the fact that Mr. Quincy had a personal knowledge of the Mormon Prophet, and was thoroughly conversant with the principles of the Mormon creed. It was listened to with earnest attention, and the pungent parts excited the frequent laughter of the audience. The lecturer commenced by giving a brief history of the rise of Mormonism, and proceeded as follows:—

In the month of May, 1844, in company with a friend, (said he,) I ascended the Mississippi. Day after day, night after night, we had been ploughing our way up its rapid, monotonous and turbid waters. A projecting point, covered with small houses, and watched over by a large unfinished stone building, attracted our attention for many miles before we reached it. We at length landed, and after passing through the streets, where the depth of the mud gave striking evidence of the fertility of the soil, we reached a two story wooden tavern. At the door stood the landlord, the Mayor, the General, the Preacher, the President, the Prophet, the civil, military, religious head of the community, Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet. Joe Smith's career illustrated the Yankee character on a royal scene. His countrymen have always been ready to make a profit. Joe was the only one of the nation who undertook to be a prophet himself, and the sagacity he showed and the effects he produced were most remarkable, considering his origin

and the disadvantages under which he labored. Smith had not the advantage of having, like other impostors, any mystery about his birth or parentage. He came from Vermont, and in passing through and sojourning in the State of New York on his way to the West, gained more notoriety than reputation. As Joe could not avail himself of the magical paraphernalia of the necromancers of old, he trusted to his native wit, and, like a skilful juggler, deceived by his apparent openness. He received us, not in a mysterious hail at midnight, but at the door of a tavern, at that most unromantic of all periods, half an hour before breakfast. His official garb consisted of a striped jacket and duck pantaloons, and his beard had the majestic length of one belonging to a man who had not shaved for a week. (Laughter[.]) His manners were as unlike as his appearance to those of the ancient sages. He gave us his benediction, expressed the greatest delight at our visit, and hurried us into the house. As I have before stated, it was early in the morning, and the general resurrection of the Saints had not as yet taken place[.] He opened the first door he came to. It contained two beds and four Mormons. The room was small and ill ventilated. The Catholics teach that a delightful fragrance, called the "odor of sanctify," surrounds the bodies of dead saints, but to the nostrils of a Gentile like myself, coming from the open air, this particular evidence of the sanctify of these living ones was not vouchsafed. (Laughter.) The Prophet made not the slightest apology, but went to the next, where we met with precisely the same result. On a third trial we were more successful, for we found a room that contained but one bed and one sleeper. The Prophet entered, drew the bed covers over the head of the occupant, and ordering him to be still, handed us chairs and entered into conversation with as much complacency as if we had been seated in a hall of state. Breakfast was soon after announced, and while we partook of it in the kitchen of the tavern, the first party of Mormons we had visited arose, the beds were made, the rooms aired, and by the time we had finished our repast, was ready for our reception; and in the same time the Prophet had divested himself of his beard and changed his [illegible word] costume for a suit of black. He began his history with [illegible word] at the time he first collected his followers together in Missouri. According to his account, they purchased from the government some of the best lands in the State, and followed their various [illegible word] in peace and quietness. Their prosperity excited the jealousy of the rude population of the frontier, who [illegible word] to take [illegible word] of the lands they had cleared. One aggression followed another, until finally an organized mob broke in upon them in the night, burnt [illegible words] drove off their cattle, and left them with their women and children desolate in the prairie, exposed to the rigors of winter, and hundreds of miles distant from any place where th[e]y could [illegible word] succor. In the Prophet's mind, and is still inculcated among his followers, who are taught that when the fulness of time is come they will be by Divine Providence led back across the desert and [illegible word] in their original possession in Jackson county, in Missouri, driving out the Gentiles, even as the Jews drove out the heathens from the land of Canaan—a faith that may in time deluge that section of the country in blood, and shake the Union to its centre. He felt that his followers must be kept together, [illegible word] that they must have a location where they would be free from the action of

[illegible word] violence, or where they could resist it with [illegible word] and effect.

[many illegible words in this section of the article]

Joe Smith was of course elected and commissioned as Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion., and of the militia of the State of Illinois. He showed me his commission, and, with a smile, remarked, that as by law [n]o officer could be tried except by his equals in degree, it would

[many illegible words in this section of the article]

But even, said he, if this faith should pass away as rapidly as it has spread, its effects must remain ; and when in future times it shall [b]e asked what American of the nineteenth century exerted the greatest influence on his country and his age, it is not impossible—it is even probable—that the answer will be, the Mormon Prophet, Joseph Smith.

Josiah Quincy's Recollection Based in Part on His Journal

About thirty-five years later Josiah Quincy expanded on his ten pages of journal he kept of his visit. Quincy's account was printed as "Leaves from Old Journals," *Independent* 33 (December 29, 1881):4-5 and "Leaves from My Journal," *ibid.*, 34 (January 19, 1882):2-4. The *Independent* was a New York magazine. Reprinted in Josiah Quincy, posthumously published in *Figures of the Past, From the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 376-400.

The Independent 33 (December 29, 1881):4-5.

LEAVES FROM OLD JOURNALS.

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JOSEPH SMITH AT NAUVOO.

I.

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BY THE HON. JOSIAH QUINCY.

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It is by no means improbable that some future text-book, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: *Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet*. And the reply, absurd as it, doubtless, seems to most men now living, may be an obvious common-place to their descendants. History deals in surprises and paradoxes quite as startling as this. The man who established a

religion in this age of free debate, who was and is to-day accepted by hundreds of thousands as a direct emissary from the Most High—such a rare human being is not to be disposed of by pelting his memory with unsavory epithets. Fanatic, imposter, charlatan he may have been: but these hard names furnish no solution to the problem he presents to us. Fanatics and imposters are living and dying every day, and their memory is buried with them; but the wonderful influence which this founder of a religion exerted and still exerts throws him into relief before us not as a rogue to be criminated, but as a phenomenon to be explained.

The most vital questions Americans are asking each other to-day have to do with this man and what he has left us. Is there any remedy heroic enough to meet the case, yet in accordance with our national doctrines of liberty and toleration, which can be applied to the demoralizing doctrines now advanced by the sect he created? The possibilities of the Mormon system are unfathomable. Polygamy may be followed by still darker "revelations." Here is a society resting upon foundations which may at any moment be made subversive of every duty which we claim from the citizen. Must it be reached by that last argument which quenched the evil fanaticisms of Mülhausen and Münster? A generation other than mine must deal with these questions.

Burning questions they are, which must give a prominent place in the history of the country to that sturdy self-asserter whom I visited at Nauvoo. Joseph Smith, claiming to be an inspired teacher, faced adversity such as few men have been called to meet, enjoyed a brief season of prosperity such as few men have ever attained, and finally, forty-three days³³ after I saw him, went cheerfully to a martyr's death. When he surrendered his person to Governor Ford, in order to prevent the shedding of blood, the prophet had a presentiment of what was before him. "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter," he is reported to have said; "but I am as calm as a Summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offense and shall die innocent."³⁴

I have no theory to advance respecting this extraordinary man. I shall simply give the facts of my intercourse with him. At some future time they may be found to have some bearing upon the theories of others who are more competent to make them. Ten closely written pages of my journal describe my impressions of Nauvoo, and of its prophet, mayor, general, and judge; but details, necessarily omitted in the diary, went into letters addressed to friends at home, and I shall use both these sources to make my narrative as complete as possible. I happened to visit Joseph Smith in company with a distinguished gentleman, who, if rumor may be trusted, has been as conscientious a journal-writer as was his father. It is not impossible that my record may one day be supplemented by that of my fellow-traveler, the Hon. Charles Francis Adams.

It was on the 25th of April, 1844, that Mr. Adams and myself left Boston for the journey to the West which we had had for some time in contemplation. I omit all account of our adventures—and a very full account of them is before me—until the 14th of May, when we are ascending the clear, sparkling waters of

³³ Joseph Smith was killed on June 27, 1844 which would have been fifty-seven days after Quincy saw him.

³⁴ See LDS D&C 135:4.

the Upper Mississippi in the little steamboat "Amaranth." With one exception, we find our fellow-passengers uninteresting: The exception is Dr. Goforth. A chivalric, yet simple personage is this same Doctor, who has served under General Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans and is now going to Nauvoo, to promote the election of the just nominated Henry Clay. It is to this gentleman we owe our sight of the City of the Saints, which, strangely enough, we had not intended to visit. Though far from being a Mormon himself, Dr. Goforth told us much that was good and interesting about this strange people. He urged us to see for ourselves the result of the singular political system which had been fastened upon Christianity, and to make the acquaintance of his friend, General Smith, the religious and civil autocrat of the community.

"We agreed to stop at Nauvoo," says my journal, "provided some conveyance should be found at the landing which would take us up to General Smith's tavern, and prepared our baggage for this contingency. Owing to various delays, we did not reach the landing till nearly midnight, when our friend, who had jumped on shore the moment the boat stopped, returned with the intelligence that no carriage was to be had, and so we bade him adieu, to go on our way. But, as we still lingered upon the hurricane deck, he shouted that there was a house on the landing, where we could get a good bed. This changed our destiny and just at the last moment we hurried on shore. Here we found that the 'good bed' our friend had promised us was in an old mill, which had been converted into an Irish shanty. However, we made the best of it, and, having dispossessed a cat and a small army of cockroaches of their quarters on the coverlet, we lay down in our dressing-gowns and were soon asleep."

We left our lowly bed in the gray light of the morning, to find the rain descending in torrents and the roads knee-deep in mud. Intelligence of our arrival had in some mysterious manner reached General Smith, and the prophet's own chariot, a comfortable carryall, drawn by two horses, soon made its appearance. It is probable that we owed the alacrity with which we were served to an odd blunder which had combined our names and personalities and set forth that no less a man than ex-President John Quincy Adams had arrived to visit Mr. Joseph Smith. Happily, however, Dr. Goforth, who had got upon the road before us, divided our persons and reduced them to their proper proportions, so that no trace of disappointment was visible in the group of rough-looking Mormons who awaited our descent at the door of the tavern. It was a three-story frame house, set back from the street and surrounded by a white fence, that we had reached after about two miles of the muddiest driving.

Pre-eminent among the stragglers by the door stood a man of commanding appearance, clad in the costume of a journeyman carpenter, when about his work. He was a hearty, athletic fellow, with blue eyes standing prominently out upon his light complexion, a long nose, and a retreating forehead. He wore striped pantaloons, a linen jacket, which had not lately seen the washtub, and a beard of some three days' growth. This was the founder of the religion which had been preached in every quarter of the earth. As Dr. Goforth introduced us to the prophet, he mentioned the parentage of my companion. "God bless *you*, to begin with!" said Joseph Smith, raising his hands in the air and letting them descend

upon the shoulders of Mr. Adams. The benediction, though evidently sincere, had an odd savor of what may be called official familiarity, such as a crowned head might adopt on receiving the heir presumptive of a friendly court. The greeting to me was cordial—with that sort of cordiality with which the president of a college might welcome a deserving janitor—and a blessing formed no part of it. "And now come, both of you, into the house!" said our host, as, suiting the action to the word, he ushered us across the threshold of his tavern.

A *fine-looking man* is what the passer-by would instinctively have murmured upon meeting the remarkable individual who had fashioned the mould which was to shape the feelings of so many thousands of his fellow-mortals. But Smith was more than this, and one could not resist the impression that capacity and resource were natural to his stalwart person. I have already mentioned the resemblance he bore to Elisha R. Potter, of Rhode Island, whom I met in Washington, in 1826. The likeness was not such as would be recognized in a picture; but rather one that would be felt in a grave emergency. Of all men I have met, these two seemed best endowed with that kingly faculty which directs, as by intrinsic right, the feeble or confused souls who are looking for guidance. This it is just to say with emphasis; for the reader will find so much that is puerile and even shocking in my report of the prophet's conversation that he might never suspect the impression of rugged power that was given by the man.

On the right hand, as we entered the house, was a small and very comfortless-looking bar-room; all the more comfortless, perchance, from its being a dry bar-room, as no spirituous liquors were permitted at Nauvoo. In apparent search for more private quarters, the prophet opened the door of a room on the left. He instantly shut it again, but not before I perceived that the obstacle to our entrance was its prior occupancy by a woman, in bed. He then ran up-stairs, calling upon us to follow him, and, throwing open a door in the second story, disclosed three Mormons in three beds. This was not satisfactory; neither was the next chamber, which was found, on inspection, to contain two sleeping disciples. The third attempt was somewhat more fortunate, for we had found a room which held but a single bed and a single sleeper. Into this apartment we were invited to enter. Our host immediately proceeded to the bed, and drew the clothes well over the head of its occupant. He then called a man to make a fire, and begged us to sit down. Smith then began to talk about himself and his people, as, of course, we encouraged him to do. He addressed his words to Mr. Adams oftener than to me, evidently thinking that this gentleman had or was likely to have political influence, which it was desirable to conciliate. Whether by subtle tact or happy accident, he introduced us to Mormonism as a secular institution before stating its monstrous claims as a religious system.

Polygamy, it must be remembered, formed no part of the alleged revelations upon which the social life at Nauvoo was based; indeed, the recorded precepts of its prophet were utterly opposed to such a practice. And it is, at least, doubtful whether this barbarism was in any way sanctioned by Smith.³⁵ Let a man

³⁵ Quincy may not have heard rumors of polygamy, for example, published in John C. Bennett's book *The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842).

who has so much to answer for be allowed the full benefit of the doubt; and Mormonism, minus the spiritual wife system, had, as it has to-day, much that was interesting in its secular aspects. Its founder told us what he had accomplished and the terrible persecutions through which he had brought his people. He spoke with bitterness of outrages to which they had been subjected in Missouri, and implied that the wanton barbarities of his lawless enemies must one day be atoned for. He spoke of the industrial results of his autocracy in the holy city we were visiting, and of the extraordinary powers of its charter, obtained through his friend, Governor Ford. The past had shown him that a military organization was necessary. He was now at the head of three thousand men, equipped by the State of Illinois and belonging to its militia, and the Saints were prepared to fight, as well as to work.

"I decided," said Smith, "that the commander of my troops ought to be a lieutenant-general, and I was, of course, chosen to that position. I sent my certificate of election to Governor Ford, and received in return a commission of lieutenant-general of the Nauvoo Legion and of the militia of the State of Illinois. Now, on examining the Constitution of the United States, I find that an officer must be tried by a court-martial composed of his equals in rank; and, as I am the only lieutenant-general in the country, I think they find it pretty hard to try me."

At this point breakfast was announced, and a substantial meal was served in a long back kitchen. We sat down with about thirty persons, some of them being in their shirt-sleeves, as if just come from work. There was no going out, as the rain still fell in torrents; and so, when we had finished breakfast, the prophet (who had exchanged his working dress for a broadcloth suit while we lingered at the table) proposed to return to the chamber we had quitted, where he would give us his views of theology. The bed had been made during our absence and the fire plentifully replenished. Our party was now increased by the presence of the patriarch, Hiram Smith; Dr. Richards, of Philadelphia,³⁶ who seemed to be a very modest and respectable Mormon; Dr. Goforth; and a Methodist minister, whose name I have not preserved. No sooner were we seated than there entered some half dozen leaders of the sect, among whom, I think, were Rigdon and Young; but of their presence I cannot be positive. These men constituted a sort of silent chorus during the expositions of their chief. They fixed a searching, yet furtive gaze upon Mr. Adams and myself, as if eager to discover how we were impressed by what we heard. Of the wild talk that we listened to I have preserved but a few fragments.

Smith was well versed in the letter of the Scriptures, though he had little comprehension of their spirit. He began by denying the doctrine of the Trinity, and supported his views by the glib recitation of a number of texts. From this he passed to his own claims to special inspiration, quoting with great emphasis the eleventh and twelfth verses of the fourth chapter of Ephesians, which, in his eyes, adumbrated the whole Mormon hierarchy. The degrees and orders of ecclesiastical dignitaries he set forth with great precision, being careful to mention the interesting revelation which placed Joseph Smith supreme above them all. This information was plentifully besprinkled with cant phrases or homely

³⁶ Willard Richards was born in Hopkinton, Massachusetts.

proverbs. "There, I have proved that point as straight as a loon's leg." "The curses of my enemies run off from me like water from a duck's back." Such are the specimens which my journal happens to preserve, but the exposition was constantly garnished with forcible vulgarisms of a similar sort. The prophet referred to his miraculous gift of understanding all languages, and took down a Bible in various tongues, for the purpose of exhibiting his accomplishments in this particular. Our position as guests prevented our testing his powers by a rigid examination and the rendering of a few familiar texts seemed to be accepted by his followers as a triumphant demonstration of his abilities. It may have been an accident, but I observed that the bulk of his translations were from the Hebrew, which, presumably, his visitors did not understand, rather than from the classical languages, in which they might more easily have caught him tripping.

"And now come with me," said the prophet, "and I will show you the curiosities." So saying, he led the way to a lower room, where sat a venerable and respectable-looking lady. "This is my mother, gentlemen. The curiosities we shall see belong to her. They were purchased with her own money, at a cost of six thousand dollars,"³⁷ and then, with deep feeling, were added the words "and that woman was turned out upon the prairie in the dead of night by a mob." There were some pine presses fixed against the wall of the room. These receptacles Smith opened, and disclosed four human bodies, shrunken and black with age. "These are mummies," said the exhibitor. "I want you to look at that little runt of a fellow over there. He was a great man in his day. Why, that was Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt!" Some parchments inscribed with hieroglyphics were then offered us. They were preserved under glass and handled with great respect.

"That is the handwriting of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful," said the prophet. "This is the autograph of Moses, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron. Here we have the earliest account of the Creation, from which Moses composed the First Book of Genesis."³⁸ The parchment last referred to showed a rude drawing of a man and woman, and a serpent walking upon a pair of legs. I ventured to doubt the propriety of providing the reptile in question with this unusual means of locomotion. "Why, that's as plain as a pikestaff," was the rejoinder. "Before the Fall snakes always went about on legs, just like chickens. They were deprived of them, in punishment for their agency in the ruin of man." We were further assured that the prophet was the only mortal who could translate these mysterious writings, and that his power was given by direct inspiration.

It is well known that Joseph Smith was accustomed to make his revelations point to those sturdy business habits which lead to prosperity in this present life. He had little enough of that unmixed spiritual power which flashed out from the spare, neurasthenic body of Andrew Jackson. The prophet's hold upon you seemed to come from the balance and harmony of temperament which reposes upon a large physical basis. No association with the sacred phrases of

³⁷ The correct amount was \$2,400. As far as known Lucy was not involved in the purchase.

³⁸ One source mentions that the papyri contained some "history of Josef [Joseph] while in egypt and also of Jacob and many of their prophesies Delivered by them." Albert Brown to "Dear Parents," November 1, 1835 reproduced in Christopher C. Lund, "A Letter Regarding the Acquisition of the Book of Abraham," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 (Spring 1980):403.

Scripture could keep the inspirations of this man from getting down upon the hard pan of practical affairs. "Verily I say unto you, let my servant, Sidney Gilbert, plant himself in this place and establish a store."³⁹ So had run one of his revelations, in which no holier spirit than that of commerce is discernible. The exhibition of these august relics concluded with a similar descent into the hard modern world of fact. Monarchs, patriarchs, and parchments were very well in their way; but this was clearly the nineteenth century, when prophets must get a living and provide for their relations. "*Gentlemen,*" said this *bourgeois* Mohammed, as he closed the cabinets, "*those who see these curiosities generally pay my mother a quarter of a dollar.*"

WOLLASTON, MASS.

The Independent 34 (January 19, 1882):2-4.

LEAVES FROM OLD JOURNALS.

JOSEPH SMITH AT NAUVOO.

II.

BY THE HON. JOSIAH QUINCY.

THE clouds had parted when we emerged from the chamber of curiosities, and there was time to see the Temple before dinner. General Smith ordered a capacious carriage, and we drove to that beautiful eminence, bounded on three sides by the Mississippi, which was covered by the holy city of Nauvoo. The curve in the river enclosed a position lovely enough to furnish a site for the Utopian communities of Plato or Sir Thomas More; and here was an orderly city, magnificently laid out, and teeming with activity and enterprise. And all the diligent workers, who had reared these handsome stores and comfortable dwellings, bowed in subjection to the man to whose unexampled absurdities we had listened that morning. Not quite unexampled either. For many years I held a trusteeship which required me to be a frequent visitor at the McLean Asylum for the Insane. I had talked with some of its unhappy inmates, victims of the sad but not uncommon delusion that each had received the appointment of vicegerent of the Deity upon earth. It is well known that such unfortunates, if asked to explain their confinement, have a ready reply: "I am sane. The rest of the world is mad, and the majority is against me." It was like a dream to find one's self moving through a prosperous community, where the repulsive claim of one of these pretenders was respectfully acknowledged. It was said that Prince Hamlet had no need to recover his wits when he was dispatched for England, for the demented denizens of that island would never detect his infirmity. If the blasphemous

³⁹ See LDS D&C 57:8.

assumptions of Smith seemed like the ravings of a lunatic, he had, at least brought them to a market where all the people were as mad as he. Near the entrance to the Temple we passed a workman who was laboring upon a huge sun, which he had chiseled from the solid rock. The countenance was of the Negro type and it was surrounded by the conventional rays.

"General Smith," said the man, looking up from his task, "is this like the face you saw in vision?"

"Very near it," answered the prophet, "except" (this was added with an air of careful connoisseurship that was quite overpowering)—"except that the nose is just a thought too broad."

The Mormon Temple was not fully completed. It was a wonderful structure, altogether indescribable by me. Being, presumably, like something Smith had seen in vision, it certainly cannot be compared to any ecclesiastical building which may be discerned by the natural eyesight. It was built of limestone and was partially supported by huge monolithic pillars, each costing, said the prophet, three thousand dollars. Then in the basement was the baptist[e]ry, which centered in a mighty tank, surrounded by twelve wooden oxen, of colossal size. These animals, we were assured, were temporary. They were to be replaced by stone oxen as fast as they could be made. The Temple, odd and striking as it was, produced no effect that was commensurate with its cost. Perhaps it would have required a genius to have designed anything worthy of that noble site. The city of Nauvoo, with its wide streets sloping gracefully to the farms enclosed on the prairie, seemed to be a better temple to Him who prospers the work of industrious hands than the grotesque structure on the hill, with all its queer carvings of moons and suns. This, however, was by no means the opinion of the man whose fiat had reared the building. In a tone half-way between jest and earnest and which might have been taken for either at the option of the hearer, the prophet put this inquiry: "Is not here one greater than Solomon, who built a Temple with the treasures of his father David and with the assistance of Hiram, King of Tyre? Joseph Smith has built his Temple with no one to aid him in the work."

On returning to the tavern, dinner was served in the kitchen where we had breakfasted. The prophet carved at one end of the board, while some twenty persons, Mormons or travelers (the former mostly coatless), were scattered along its sides. At the close of a substantial meal a message was brought to the effect that the United States marshal had arrived and wished to speak to Mr. Adams. This officer, as it turned out, wanted my companion's advice about the capture of some criminal, for whom he had a warrant. The matter was one of some difficulty, for, the prophet being absolute in Nauvoo, no man could be arrested or held without his permission. I do not remember what was the outcome of this interview, which was so protracted that it caused Mr. Adams to miss one of the most notable exhibitions of the day.

"General Smith," said Dr. Goforth, when we had adjourned to the green in front of the tavern, "I think Mr. Quincy would like to hear you preach." "Then I shall be happy to do so," was the obliging reply; and, mounting the broad step which led from the house, the prophet promptly addressed a sermon to the little group about him. Our numbers were constantly increased from the passers in the

street and a most attentive audience of more than a hundred persons soon hung upon every word of the speaker. The text was Mark xvi, 15, and the comments, though rambling and disconnected, were delivered with the fluency and fervor of a camp-meeting orator. The discourse was interrupted several times by the Methodist minister before referred to, who thought it incumbent upon him to question the soundness of certain theological positions maintained by the speaker. One specimen of the sparring which ensued I thought worth setting down. The prophet is asserting that baptism for the remission of sins is essential for salvation. "*Minister*: Stop! What do you say to the case of the penitent thief?" "*Prophet*: What do you mean by that?" "*Minister*: You know our Saviour said to the thief, 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,' which shows he could not have been baptized before his admission." "*Prophet*: How do you know he wasn't baptized before he became a thief?" At this retort the sort of laugh that is provoked by an unexpected hit ran through the audience; but this demonstration of sympathy was rebuked by a severe look from Smith, who went on to say: "But that is not the true answer. In the original Greek, as this gentleman (turning to me) will inform you, the word that has been translated paradise means simply a place of departed spirits. To that place the penitent thief was conveyed, and there, doubtless, he received the baptism necessary for his admission to the heavenly kingdom." "The other objections of his antagonist were parried with a similar adroitness, and in about fifteen minutes the prophet concluded a sermon which it was evident that his disciples had heard with the heartiest satisfaction.

In the afternoon we drove to visit the farms upon the prairie which this enterprising people had enclosed and were cultivating with every appearance of success. On returning, we stopped in a beautiful grove, where there were seats and a platform for speaking. "When the weather permits," said Smith, "we hold our services in this place; but shall cease to do so when the Temple is finished." "I suppose none but Mormon preachers are allowed in Nauvoo," said the Methodist minister, who had accompanied our expedition. "On the contrary," replied the prophet, "I shall be very happy to have you address my people next Sunday, and I will insure you a most attentive congregation." "What! Do you mean that I may say anything I please and that you will make no reply?" "You may certainly say anything you please; but I must reserve the right of adding a word or two, if I judge best. I promise to speak of you in the most respectful manner." As we rode back, there was more dispute between the minister and Smith. "Come," said the latter, suddenly slapping his antagonist on the knee, to emphasize the production of a triumphant text, "if you can't argue better than that, you shall say all you want to say to my people, and I will promise to hold my tongue, for there's not a Mormon among them who would need my assistance to answer you." Some back-thrust was evidently required to pay for this; and the minister, soon after, having occasion to allude to some erroneous doctrine, which I forget, suddenly exclaimed: "Why, I told my congregation the other Sunday that they might as well believe Joe Smith as such theology as that." "Did you say Joe Smith in a sermon?" inquired the person to whom the title had been applied. "Of course, I did. Why not?" The prophet's reply was given with a quiet superiority that was overwhelming: "Considering only the day and the place, it would have been more

respectful to have said Lieutenant-General Joseph Smith." Clearly, the worthy minister was no match for the head of the Mormon Church.

I have before me some relics of my visit to Nauvoo. Here is the Book of Mormon, bearing the autograph which its alleged discoverer and translator wrote, at my request; and here are some letters addressed to the same personage, which I came by strangely enough. I took them from a public basket of waste-paper, which was placed for the service of the inmates of the tavern. Three of these abandoned epistles I asked leave to keep as memorials of my visit, and no objection was made to my doing so. The most interesting of these letters is dated "Manchester, August 29, 1842," and comes from an English convert to Mormonism. The man writes four pages of gilt-edged paper to his "beloved brother in the Lord," and sends him by the favor of Elder Snider the following presents: "A hat, a black satin stock with front, and a brooch." He would fain join the prophet in Nauvoo; but the way is blocked by that not-unheard-of obstacle, a mother-in-law, and until this excellent lady "falls asleep" the disciple must deny his eyes the sight of the master's face. The account of himself given by this correspondent shows with what pathetic sincerity the divine commission of Smith was accepted by a class of men which would seem to be intellectually superior to so miserable a delusion. Suppressing the name of the writer, I shall give a portion of this letter, as it furnishes food for reflection, and shows that the secret of the Mormon prophet is not to be fathomed at a glance:

"I take the liberty of writing a few lines, being assured that you are a man of God and a prophet of the Most High, not only from testimony given by the brethren, but the Spirit itself beareth witness. It is true that mine eyes have not seen and mine ears heard you; but the testimony I have received shows plainly that God does reveal by his spirit things that the natural man has not seen by his natural eyes. You may, perhaps, wonder who the individual is that has written this letter. I will tell you, in a few words: My father died about twenty-four years since, leaving my mother a widow, with seven children. . . . I remember her teachings well, which were these: Fear God, be strictly honest, and speak the truth. I remember, when about three or four years old, being with her in a shop. I saw a pin on the floor. I picked it up and gave it to her. She told me to give it to the shopman, with a sharp reprimand, showing me that it was a sin to take even a pin. The remembrance of this slight circumstance has followed me from that time to the present. [An account of the writer's conversion to Mormonism follows, after which he goes on thus.] Previously to joining this Church, I was a singer in the Church of England, had eight pounds a year, and a good situation in the week-time at a retail hat shop. My wife's brother told me I was robbing my children of their bread in giving up the eight pounds. I told him I was not dependent on that for bread, and said unto him the Lord could make up the difference. He laughed at me; but, Beloved Brother, in about one month from the time I left the Church of England my master raised my wages four shillings a week (which was about one shilling per week more than that just sacrificed), and this has continued on ever since, which is now two years this month, for which I thank the Lord, together with many other mercies."

I have quoted enough to show what really good material Smith managed to draw into his net. Were such fish to be caught with Spaulding's tedious romance and a puerile fable of undecipherable gold plates and gigantic spectacles? Not these cheap and wretched properties, but some mastering force of the man who handled them, inspired the devoted missionaries who worked such wonders. The remaining letters, both written a year previous to my visit, came from a certain Chicago attorney, who seems to have been the personal friend as well as the legal adviser of the prophet. With the legal advice come warnings of plots which enemies are preparing and of the probability that a seizure of his

person by secret ambush is contemplated. "They hate you," writes this friendly lawyer, "because they have done evil unto you." "My advice to you is not to sleep in your own house, but to have some place to sleep strongly guarded by your own friends, so that you can resist any sudden attempt that might be made to kidnap you in the night. When the Missourians come on this side and burn houses, depend upon it they will not hesitate to make the attempt to carry you away by force. Let me again caution you to be every moment upon your guard." The man to whom this letter was addressed had long been familiar with perils. For fourteen years he was surrounded by vindictive enemies, who lost no opportunity to harass him. He was in danger even when we saw him at the summit of his prosperity, and he was soon to seal his testimony or, if you will, to expiate his imposture by death at the hands of dastardly assassins. If these letters go little way toward interpreting the man, they suggest that any hasty interpretation of him is inadequate.

I should not say quite all that struck me about Smith if I did not mention that he seemed to have a keen sense of the humorous aspects of his position. "It seems to me, General," I said, as he was driving us to the river, about sunset, "that you have too much power to be safely trusted to one man." "In your hands or that of any other person," was the reply, "so much power would, no doubt, be dangerous. I am the only man in the world whom it would be safe to trust with it. Remember, I am a prophet!" The last five words were spoken in a rich, comical aside, as if in hearty recognition of the ridiculous sound they might have in the ears of a Gentile. I asked him to test his powers by naming the successful candidate in the approaching presidential election. "Well, I will prophesy that John Tyler will not be the next President, for some things are possible and some things are probable; but Tyler's election is neither the one nor the other." We then went on to talk of politics. Smith recognized the curse and iniquity of slavery, though he opposed the methods of the Abolitionists. His plan was for the nation to pay for the slaves from the sale of the public lands. "Congress," he said, "should be compelled to take this course, by petitions from all parts of the country; but the petitioners must disclaim all alliance with those who would disturb the rights of property recognized by the Constitution and foment insurrection." It may be worth while to remark that Smith's plan was publicly advocated, eleven years later, by one who has mixed so much practical shrewdness with his lofty philosophy. In 1855, when men's minds had been moved to their depths on the question of slavery, Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson declared that it should be met in accordance "with the interest of the South and with the settled conscience of the North. It is not really a great task, a great fight for this country to accomplish to buy that property of the planter, as the British nation bought the West Indian slaves." He further says that the "United States will be brought to give every inch of their public lands for a purpose like this." We, who can look back upon the terrible cost of the fratricidal war which put an end to slavery, now say that such a solution of the difficulty would have been worthy a Christian statesman. But, if the retired scholar was in advance of his time when he advocated this disposition of the public property, in 1855, what shall we say of the political and religious leader who had committed himself, in print, as well as in conversation, to the

same course in 1844? If the atmosphere of men's opinions was stirred by such a proposition when war-clouds were discernible in the sky, was it not a statesmanlike word eleven years earlier, when the heavens looked tranquil and beneficent?

General Smith proceeded to unfold still further his views upon politics. He denounced the Missouri Compromise as an unjustifiable concession for the benefit of slavery. It was Henry Clay's bid for the presidency. Dr. Goforth might have spared himself the trouble of coming to Nauvoo to electioneer for a duelist who would fire at John Randolph, but was not brave enough to protect the saints in their rights as American citizens. Clay had told his people to go to the wilds of Oregon and set up a government of their own. Oh! yes, the saints might go into the wilderness and obtain justice of the Indians which imbecile, time-serving politicians would not give them in the land of freedom and equality. The prophet then talked of the details of government. He thought that the number of members admitted to the Lower House of the National Legislature should be reduced. A crowd only darkened counsel and impeded business. A member to every half million of population would be ample. The powers of the President should be increased. He should have authority to put down rebellion in a state, without waiting for the request of any governor; for it might happen that the governor himself would be the leader of the rebels. It is needless to remark how later events showed the executive weakness that Smith pointed out—a weakness which cost thousands of valuable lives and millions of treasure; but the man mingled Utopian fallacies with his shrewd suggestions. He talked as from a strong mind utterly unenlightened by the teachings of history. Finally, he told us what he would do, were he President of the United States, and went on to mention that he might one day so hold the balance between parties as to render his election to that office by no means unlikely.

Who can wonder that the chair of the National Executive had its place among the visions of this self-reliant man? He had already traversed the roughest part of the way to that coveted position. Born in the lowest ranks of poverty, without book-learning and with the homeliest of all human names, he had made himself at the age of thirty-nine a power upon earth. Of the multitudinous family of Smith, from Adam down (Adam of the "Wealth of Nations," I mean), none had so won human hearts and shaped human lives as this Joseph. His influence, whether for good or for evil, is potent to-day and the end is not yet.

I have endeavored to give the details of my visit to the Mormon prophet with absolute accuracy. If the reader does not know just what to make of Joseph Smith, I cannot help him out of the difficulty. I myself stand helpless before the puzzle.

WOLLASTON, MASS.

John C. Calhoun at Nauvoo, Illinois, June 1844

John C. Calhoun, Jr. to My dear brother" [James Edward Calhoun], July 19, 1844, as cited in Brian Q. Cannon, "John C. Calhoun, Jr., Meets the Prophet Joseph Smith Shortly before the Departure for Carthage," *Brigham Young University Studies* 33, no. 4 (1993):776-77. The complete letter was first published in Clyde N. Wilson, ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, 21 vols. (Columbia: University of South Caroline Press, 1959-1993), 19:397-99.

John Calhoun, Jr. and his brother Patrick Calhoun, sons of John C. Calhoun, met Joseph Smith on June 22, 1844.⁴⁰ The visit was briefly mentioned by John Calhoun, Jr. in a letter dated July 19, 1844.

From Quincy [Illinois] we started for Nauvoo, and arrived there after dark, it was the evening after the Governor⁴¹ had sent to ar[r]est Joe Smith, and the City in consequence in a great state of excitement, a large number of us being anxious to see the Prophet, begged the Captain of the boat to wait two or three hours for us, and in a few minutes after, found ourselves in an omnibus, rowling [rolling] rapidly through [W]ater [S]treet, and soon our horses were drawn up before the door of the Hotel, kept by the Prophet himself, at first he thought we were spies sent by the Governor, so he kept 300 men armed round the house, and sent the Marshall⁴² to disperse us, but upon telling him the purpose of our visit, he invited us to the drawingroom, where he soon joined us, he gave us a full description of his difficulties, and also an exposition of his faith, frequently calling himself the Prophet, in the course of conversation.

⁴⁰ *History of the Church* 6:545, note; *Ibid.*, 7:78.

⁴¹ Thomas Ford

⁴² John P. Greene