

CHAPTER III.¹

MORMON DIFFICULTIES
AND DEATH OF THE PROPHET.

Ford's account—Double treachery in the Quincy district—New and startling developments in Nauvoo—Tyranny of Joe Smith—Revolt of a portion of his followers—The "Expositor"—It is declared "a nuisance" and "abated"—Flight of apostates—Warrants issued for Smith and other Mormons—Constables driven out of Nauvoo—Militia called for—Nauvoo fortified—Mormon war imminent—Governor Ford takes the field in person—Flight of the Prophet and Patriarch to Iowa—Their return and arrest—The Governor pledged for their safety—In his absence the jail is attacked—Death of the Smiths—Character of the Prophet—Comments.

AS from this point nearly everything connected with the Illinois history of the Mormons is official and political, I here take up Governor Ford's account:—

"It appears that the Mormons had been directed by their leaders to vote the Whig ticket in the Quincy, as well as the Hancock district. In the Quincy district, Judge Douglas[s] was the Democratic candidate, and O.H. Browning the candidate of the Whigs. The leading Mormons at Nauvoo having never determined in favor of the Democrats until a day or two before the election, there was not sufficient time, or it was neglected, to send orders from Nauvoo into the Quincy district, to effect a change there. The Mormons in that district voted for Browning. Douglas[s] and his friends, being afraid that I might be in his way for the United States Senate in 1846, seized hold of this circumstance to affect my party standing, and thereby gave countenance to the clamor of the Whigs, secretly whispering it about that I had not only influenced the Mormons to vote for Hoge, but for Browning also. This decided many of the Democrats in favor of the expulsion of the Mormons.

¹ Original chapter page numbers: 89-121.

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“No further demand for the arrest of Joe Smith having been made by Missouri, he became emboldened by success. The Mormons became more arrogant and overbearing. In the winter of 1843-[']4, the Common Council passed some further ordinances to protect their leaders from arrest, on demand from Missouri. They enacted that no writ issued from any other place than Nauvoo, for the arrest of any person in it, should be executed in the city, without an approval endorsed thereon by the Mayor; that if any public officer, by virtue of any foreign writ, should attempt to make any arrest in the city, without such approval of his process, he should be subject to imprisonment for life, and that the Governor of the State should not have the power of pardoning the offender without the consent of the Mayor. When these ordinances were published, they created general astonishment. Many people began to believe in good earnest that the Mormons were about to set up a separate government for themselves in defiance of the laws of the State. Owners of property stolen in other counties made pursuit into Nauvoo, and were fined by the Mormon courts for daring to seek their property in the holy city. To one such I granted a pardon. Several of the Mormons had been convicted of larceny, and they never failed in any instance to procure petitions signed by 1,500 or 2,000 of their friends for their pardon. But that which made it more certain than everything else, that the Mormons contemplated a separate government, was that about this time they petitioned Congress to establish a territorial government for them in Nauvoo; as if Congress had any power to establish such a government, or any other, within the bounds of a State.

“To crown the whole folly of the Mormons, in the spring of 1844, Joe Smith announced himself as a candidate for President of the United States. His followers were confident that he would be elected. Two or three thousand missionaries were immediately sent out to preach their religion, and to electioneer in favor of their prophet for the Presidency. This folly at once covered that people with ridicule in the minds of all sensible men, and brought them into conflict with the zealots and bigots of all political parties; as the arrogance and extravagance of their religious pretensions had already aroused the opposition of all other denomina-

tions in religion. It seems, from the best information that could be got from the best men who had seceded from the Mormon church, that Joe Smith about this time conceived the idea of making himself a temporal prince as well as spiritual leader of his people. He instituted a new and select order of the priesthood, the members of which were to be priests and kings temporally and spiritually. These were to be his nobility, who were to be the upholders of his throne. He caused himself to be crowned and anointed king and priest, far above the rest; and he prescribed the form of an oath of allegiance to himself, which he administered to his principal followers. To uphold his pretensions to royalty, he deduced his descent by an unbroken chain from Joseph the son of Jacob, and that of his wife from some other renowned personage of Old Testament history. The Mormons openly denounced the gover[n]ment of the United States as utterly corrupt, and as being about to pass away, and to be replaced by the government of God, to be administered by his servant Joseph. It is at this day certain, also, that about this time, the prophet re-instituted an order in the Church called the 'Danite Band.' These were to be a body of police and guards about the person of their sovereign, who were sworn to obey his orders as the orders of God himself.

"Soon after these institutions were established, Joe Smith began to play the tyrant over several of his followers. The first act of this sort which excited attention, was an attempt to take the wife of William Law, one of his most talented and principal disciples, and make her a spiritual wife. By means of his Common Council, without the authority of law, he established a recorder's office in Nauvoo, in which alone the titles of property could be recorded. In the same manner and with the same want of legal authority, he established an office for issuing marriage licenses to Mormons, so as to give him absolute control of the marrying propensities of his people. He proclaimed that none in the city should purchase real estate to sell again, but himself. He also permitted no one but himself to have a license in the city for the sale of spirituous liquors; and in many other ways he undertook to regulate and control the business of the Mormons. [¶] This despotism, administered by a corrupt and unprincipled man, soon became intolerable. William Law, one of the most eloquent

preachers of the Mormons, who appeared to me to be a deluded but conscientious and candid man, Wilson Law, his brother, Major-General of the Legion, and four or five other Mormon leaders, resolved upon a rebellion against the authority of the Prophet. They designed to enlighten their brethren and fellow-citizens upon the new institutions, the new turn given to Mormonism, and the practices under the new system, by procuring a printing-press and establishing a newspaper in the city, to be the organ of their complaints and views. But they never issued but one number; before the second could appear, the press was demolished by an order of the Common Council, and the conspirators were ejected from the Mormon Church.

“The Mormons themselves published the proceedings of the Council in the trial and destruction of the heretical press; from which it does not appear that any one was tried, or that the editor or any of the owners of the property had notice of the trial, or were permitted to defend in any particular.

“The proceeding was an *ex parte* proceeding, partly civil and partly ecclesiastical, against the press itself. No jury was called or sworn, nor were the witnesses required to give their evidence upon oath. The councillors stood up one after another, and some of them several times, and related what they pretended to know. In this mode it was abundantly proved that the owners of the proscribed press were sinners, whoremasters, thieves, swindlers, counterfeiters and robbers; the evidence of which is reported in the trial at full length. It was altogether the most curious and irregular trial that ever was recorded in any civilized country; and one finds difficulty in determining whether the proceedings of the Council were more the result of insanity or depravity. The trial resulted in the conviction of the press as a public nuisance. The Mayor was ordered to see it abated as such, and if necessary, to call the Legion to his assistance. The Mayor issued his warrant to the City Marshal, who, aided by a portion of the Legion, proceeded to the obnoxious printing-office, and destroyed the press and scattered the types and other materials.

“After this, it became too hot for the seceding and rejected Mormons to remain in the holy city. They retired to Carthage, the county-seat of Hancock County, and took out warrants for

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the Mayor and members of the Common Council, and others engaged in the outrage, for a riot. Some of those were arrested, but were immediately taken before the Municipal Court of the city on *habeas corpus*, and discharged from custody. [...]

“On the seventeenth day of June following, a committee of a meeting of the citizens of Carthage, presented themselves to me with a request that the militia might be ordered out to assist in executing process in the city of Nauvoo. I determined to visit in person that section of country, and examine for myself the truth and nature of their complaints. No order for the militia was made; and I arrived at Carthage on the morning of the 21st day of the same month.

“Upon my arrival, I found an armed force assembled and hourly increasing, under the summons and direction of the constables of the county, to serve as a *posse comitatus* to assist in the execution of process. The general of the brigade had also called for the militia, *en masse*, of the counties of McDonough and Schuyler, for a similar purpose. Another assemblage to a considerable number had been made at Warsaw, under military command of Col. Levi Williams.

“The first thing which I did on my arrival was to place all the militia then assembled, and which were expected to assemble, under military command of their proper officers. I next dispatched a messenger to Nauvoo, informing the Mayor and Common Council of the nature of the complaint made against them; and requested that persons might be sent to me to lay their side of the question before me. A Committee was accordingly sent, who made such acknowledgments that I had no difficulty in concluding what were the facts.

“It appeared clearly, both from the complaints of the citizens and the acknowledgments of the Mormon Committee, that the whole proceedings of the Mayor, the Common Council, and the Municipal Court, were irregular and illegal, and not to be endured in a free country; though, perhaps, some apology might be made for the Court, as it had been repeatedly assured by some of the best lawyers in the State, who had been candidates for office before that people, that it had full and competent power to issue writs of *habeas corpus* in all cases whatever. The Common Coun-

cil violated the law in assuming the exercise of judicial power; in proceeding *ex parte* without notice to the owners of the property; in proceeding against the property *in rem*; in not calling a jury; in not swearing all the witnesses; in not giving the owners of the property, accused of being a nuisance, in consequence of being libelous, an opportunity of giving the truth in evidence; and in fact, by not proceeding by civil suit or indictment, as in other cases of libel. The Mayor violated the law in ordering this erroneous and absurd judgment of the Common Council to be executed. And the Municipal Court erred in discharging them from arrest.

“As this proceeding touched the liberty of the press, which is justly dear to any Republican people, it was well calculated to raise a great flame of excitement. And it may well be questioned whether years of misrepresentation by the most profligate newspaper could have engendered such a feeling as was produced by the destruction of this one press. It is apparent that the Mormon leaders but little understood, and regarded less the true principles of civil liberty. A free press, well conducted, is a great blessing to a free people; a profligate one is likely soon to deprive itself of all credit and influence by the multitude of falsehoods put forth by it. [...] In addition to these causes of excitement, there were a great many reports in circulation, and generally believed by the people. [...]

“Fortunately for the purposes of those who were active in creating excitement, there were many known truths which gave countenance to some of these accusations. It was sufficiently proved in a proceeding at Carthage whilst I was there, that Joe Smith had sent a band of his followers to Missouri, to kidnap two men who were witnesses against a member of his Church then in jail, about to be tried on a charge of larceny. It was also a notorious fact, that he had assaulted and severely beaten an officer of the county, for an alleged non-performance of his duty, at a time when that officer was just recovering from a severe illness. It is a fact also, that he stood indicted for the crime of perjury, as was alleged, in swearing to an accusation for murder, in order to drive a man out of Nauvoo, who had been engaged in buying and selling lots and land, and thus interfering with the monopoly of the

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Prophet as a speculator. It is a fact also, that his Municipal Court, of which he was Chief Justice, by writ of *habeas corpus*, had frequently discharged individuals accused of high crimes and offences against the laws of the State; and on one occasion had discharged a person accused of swindling the Government of the United States, who had been arrested by process of the Federal Courts; thereby giving countenance to the report, that he obstructed the administration of justice, and had set up a government at Nauvoo, independent of the laws and Government of the State. This idea was further corroborated in the minds of the people, by the fact that the people of Nauvoo had petitioned Congress for a Territorial Government to be established there, and to be independent of the State Government. It was a fact also, that some larcenies and robberies had been committed, and that Mormons had been convicted of the crimes, and that other larcenies had been committed by persons unknown, but suspected to be Mormons. Justice, however, requires me here to say, that upon such investigation as I then could make, the charge of promiscuous stealing appeared to be exaggerated.

“Another cause of excitement, was a report industriously circulated, and generally believed, that Hiram [*sic*] Smith, another leader of the Mormon Church, had offered a reward for the destruction of the press of the ‘Warsaw Signal,’ a newspaper published in the county, and the organ of the opposition to the Mormons. It was also asserted, that the Mormons scattered through the settlements of the county, had threatened all persons who turned out to assist the constables, with the destruction of their property and the murder of their families, in the absence of their fathers, brothers and husbands. A Mormon woman in McDonough County was imprisoned for threatening to poison the wells of the people who turned out in the posse; and a Mormon in Warsaw publicly avowed that he was bound by his religion to obey all orders of the prophet, even to commit murder, if so commanded.

“But the great cause of popular fury was, that the Mormons at several preceding elections had cast their vote as a unit; thereby making the fact apparent, that no one could aspire to the honors

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or offices of the country within the sphere of their influence, without their approbation and votes. [...]

“As my object in visiting Hancock was expressly to assist in the execution of the laws, and not to violate them, or to witness or permit their violation, as I was convinced that the Mormon leaders had committed a crime in the destruction of the press, and had resisted the execution of process, I determined to exert the whole force of the State, if necessary, to bring them to justice. But seeing the great excitement in the public mind, and the manifest tendency of this excitement to run into mobocracy, I was of opinion, that before I acted, I ought to obtain a pledge from the officers and men to support me in strictly legal measures, and to protect the prisoners in case they surrendered. I was determined, if possible, the forms of law should not be made the catspaw of a mob, to seduce these people to a quiet surrender, as the convenient victims of popular fury. I therefore called together the whole force then assembled at Carthage, and made an address, explaining to them what I could, and what I could not, legally do; and also adducing to them various reasons why they as well as the Mormons should submit to the laws; and why, if they had resolved on revolutionary proceedings, their purpose should be abandoned. The assembled troops seemed much pleased with the address; and upon its conclusion, the officers and men unanimously voted, with acclamation, to sustain me in a strictly legal course, and that the prisoners should be protected from violence. Upon the arrival of additional forces from Warsaw, McDonough, and Schuyler, similar addresses were made, with the same result.

“It seemed to me that these votes fully authorized me to promise the accused Mormons the protection of the law in case they surrendered. They were accordingly duly informed that if they surrendered they would be protected, and if they did not, the whole force of the State would be called out, if necessary, to compel their submission. A force of ten men was despatched with the constable to make the arrests, and to guard the prisoners to headquarters.

“In the meantime, Joe Smith, as Lieutenant-General of the Nauvoo Legion, had declared martial law in the city; the Legion was assembled, and ordered under arms; the members of it resid-

ing in the country were ordered into town. The Mormon settlements obeyed the summons of their leader, and marched to his assistance. Nauvoo was one great military camp, strictly guarded and watched; and no ingress or egress was allowed except upon the strictest examination. In one instance, which came to my knowledge, a citizen of McDonough, who happened to be in the city, was denied the privilege of returning, until he made oath that he did not belong to the party at Carthage, that he would return home without calling at Carthage, and that he would give no information of the movements of the Mormons.

“However, upon the arrival of the constable and guard, the Mayor and Common Council at once signified their willingness to surrender, and stated their readiness to proceed to Carthage next morning at eight o’clock. Martial law had previously been abolished. The hour of eight o’clock came, and the accused failed to make their appearance. The constable and his escort returned. The constable made no effort to arrest any of them, nor would he or the guard delay their departure one minute beyond the time, to see whether an arrest could be made. Upon their return, they reported that they had been informed that the accused had fled, and could not be found. [...]

“In the meantime, I made a requisition upon the officers of the Nauvoo Legion for the State arms in their possession. It appears that there was no evidence in the quartermaster-general’s office of the number and description of the arms with which the Legion had been furnished. Dr. Bennett, after he had been appointed quartermaster-general, had joined the Mormons, and had disposed of the public arms as he pleased, without keeping or giving any account of them. On this subject I applied to General Wilson Law for information. He had lately been the Major-general of the Legion. He had seceded from the Mormon party; was one of the owners of the proscribed press; had left the city, as he said, in fear of his life, and was one of the party asking for justice against its constituted authorities. He was interested to exaggerate the number of arms rather than to place it at too low an estimate. From his information I learned that the Legion had received three pieces of cannon, and about two hundred and fifty stand of small arms and their accoutrements. Of these, the three pieces of can-

non and two hundred and fifty stand of small arms were surrendered. These arms were demanded because the Legion was illegally used in the destruction of the press, and in enforcing martial law in the city, in open resistance to legal process, and the *posse comitatus*.

“I demanded the surrender also, on account of the great prejudice and excitement which the possession of these arms by the Mormons had always kindled in the minds of the people. A large portion of the people, by pure misrepresentation, had been made to believe that the Legion had received from the State as many as thirty pieces of artillery and five or six thousand stands of small arms, which, in all probability, would soon be wielded for the conquest of the country, and for their subjection to Mormon domination, I was of opinion that the removal of these arms would tend much to allay this excitement and prejudice; and in point of fact, although wearing a severe aspect, would be an act of real kindness to the Mormons themselves.

“On the 23d or 24th day of June, Joe Smith, the Mayor of Nauvoo, together with his brother Hyrum and all the members of the Council, and all others demanded, came into Carthage and surrendered themselves prisoners to the constable, on the charge of riot. They all voluntarily entered into a recognizance before the Justice of the Peace, for their appearance at court to answer the charge. And all of them were discharged from custody except Joe and Hyrum Smith, against whom the magistrate had issued a new writ, on a complaint of treason. They were immediately arrested by the constable on this charge, and retained in his custody to answer it. [...]

“Soon after the surrender of the Smiths, at their request I dispatched Captain Singleton with his company, from Brown County to Nauvoo, to guard the town; and I authorized him to take command of the Legion. He reported to me afterwards, that he called out the Legion for inspection; and that, upon two hours' notice, two thousand of them assembled, all of them armed; and this after the public arms had been taken away from them. So it appears that they had a sufficiency of private arms for any reasonable purpose.

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“After the Smiths had been arrested on the new charge of treason, the Justice of the Peace postponed the examination, because neither of the parties were prepared with their witnesses for trial. Meanwhile he committed them to the jail of the county for greater security. [...] The jail in which they were confined, is a considerable stone building; containing a residence for the jailor, cells for the close and secure confinement of prisoners, and one larger room not so strong, but more airy and comfortable than the cells. They were put into the cells by the jailor; but upon their remonstrance and request, and by my advice, they were transferred to the larger room; and there they remained until the final catastrophe. Neither they nor I seriously apprehended an attack on the jail, through the guard stationed to protect it. Nor did I apprehend the least danger on their part of an attempt to escape. For I was very sure that any such an attempt would have been the signal of their immediate death. Indeed, if they had escaped, it would have been fortunate for the purposes of those who were anxious for the expulsion of the Mormon population. For the great body of that people would most assuredly have followed their Prophet and principal leaders, as they did in their flight from Missouri.²

“The force assembled at Carthage amounted to about twelve or thirteen hundred men, and it was calculated that four or five hundred more were assembled at Warsaw. Nearly all that portion resident in Hancock were anxious to be marched into Nauvoo. This measure was supposed to be necessary, to search for counterfeit money and the apparatus to make it, and also to strike a salutary terror into the Mormon people, by an exhibition of the force

² Footnote by Ford: “I learned afterwards that the leaders of the anti-Mormons did much to stimulate their followers to the murder of the Smiths in jail, by alleging that the Governor intended to favor their escape. If this had been true, and could have been well carried out, it would have been the best way of getting rid of the Mormons. The leaders would not have dared to return, and all their church would have followed. I had such a plan in my mind, but I had never breathed it to a living soul, and was thus thwarted in ridding the State of the Mormons two years before they actually left, by the insane fury of the anti-Mormons. Joe Smith, when he escaped from Missouri, had no difficulty in again collecting his sect about him at Nauvoo; and so the twelve apostles, after they had been at the head of affairs long enough to establish their authority and influence as leaders, had no difficulty in getting nearly the whole body of Mormons to follow them into the wilderness two years after the death of their pretended prophet.”

of the State, and thereby prevent future outrages, murders, robberies, burnings, and the like, apprehended as the effect of Mormon vengeance on those who had taken a part against them. On my part, at one time, this arrangement was agreed to. The morning of the 27th day of June was appointed for the march; and Golden's Point, near the Mississippi river, and about equi distant from Nauvoo and Warsaw, was selected as the place of rendezvous. I had determined to prevail on the Justice to bring out his prisoners, and take them along. A council of officers, however, determined that this would be highly inexpedient and dangerous, and offered such substantial reasons for their opinions as induced me to change my resolution.

"Two or three days' preparation had been made for this expedition. I observed that some of the people became more and more excited and inflammatory, the further the preparations were advanced. Occasional threats came to my ears of destroying the city and murdering or expelling the inhabitants. [¶] I had no objection to ease the terrors of the people by such a display of force, and was most anxious also to search for the alleged apparatus for making counterfeit money; and, in fact, to inquire into all the charges against that people, if I could have been assured of my command against mutiny and insubordination. But I gradually learned to my entire satisfaction, that there was a plan to get the troops into Nauvoo, and there to begin the war, probably by some of our own party, or some of the seceding Mormons, taking advantage of the night to fire on our own force, and then laying it to the Mormons. I was satisfied there were those amongst us fully capable of such an act, hoping that in the alarm, bustle and confusion of a militia camp, the truth could not be discovered, and that it might lead to the desired collision. [...]

"All these considerations were duly urged by me upon the attention of a council of officers, convened on the morning of June 27th. I also urged upon the council, that such wanton and unprovoked barbarity on their part would turn the sympathy of the people in the surrounding counties in favor of the Mormons, and therefore it would be impossible to raise a volunteer militia force to protect such a people against them. Many of the officers admitted that there might be danger of collision. But such was the blind

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fury prevailing at the time, though not showing itself by much visible excitement, that a small majority of the council adhered to the first resolution of marching into Nauvoo; most of the officers of the Schuyler and McDonough militia voting against it, and most of those of the County of Hancock voting in its favor.

“A very responsible duty now devolved upon me to determine whether I would, as Commander-in-Chief, be governed by the advice of this majority. I had no hesitation in deciding that I would not; but on the contrary, I ordered the troops to be disbanded, both at Carthage and Warsaw, with the exception of three companies, two of which were retained as a guard to the jail, and the other to accompany me to Nauvoo. [...]

“I ordered two companies under the command of Captain R.F. Smith, of the Carthage Grays, to guard the jail. In selecting these companies, and particularly the company of the Carthage Grays for this service, I have been subjected to some censure. It has been said that this company had already been guilty of mutiny, and had been ordered to be arrested whilst in the encampment at Carthage; and they and their officers were the deadly enemies of the prisoners. Indeed it would have been difficult to find friends of the prisoners under my command, unless I had called in the Mormons as a guard; and this I was satisfied would have led to immediate war, and the sure death of the prisoners. [...]

“Although I knew that this company were the enemies of the Smiths, yet I had confidence in their loyalty and integrity; because their captain was universally spoken of as a [most] respectable citizen and honorable man. The company itself was an old independent company, well armed, uniformed and drilled; and the members of it were the elite of the militia of the county. I relied upon this company especially, because it was an independent company, for a long time instructed and practiced in military discipline and subordination. I also had their word of honor, officers and men, that they would do their duty according to law. Besides all this the officers and most of the men resided in Carthage; and in the near vicinity of Nauvoo; and, as I thought, must know that they would make themselves and their property convenient and conspicuous marks of Mormon vengeance, in case they were guilty of treachery.

“I had at first intended to select a guard from the County of McDonough, but the militia of that county were very much dissatisfied to remain; their crops were suffering at home; they were in a perfect fever to be discharged; and I was destitute of provisions to supply them for more than a few days. They were far from home, where they could not supply themselves. Whilst the Carthage company could board at their own homes, and would be put to little inconvenience in comparison. [...]

“It is true also, that at this time I had not believed or suspected that an attack would be made upon the prisoners in jail. It is true that I was aware that a great deal of hatred existed against them, and that there were those who would do them an injury if they could. I had heard of some threats being made, but none of an attack upon the prisoners while in jail. These threats seemed to be made by individuals not acting in concert. They were no more than the bluster which might have been expected, and furnished no indication of numbers combining for this or any other purpose. [...] Having ordered the guard and left Gen. Deming in command and discharged the residue of the militia, I immediately departed for Nauvoo, eighteen miles distant, accompanied by Colonel Buckmaster, Quartermaster General, and Captain Dunn’s company of dragoons.

“After we had proceeded four miles, Col. Buckmaster intimated to me a suspicion that an attack would be made upon the jail. He stated the matter as a mere suspicion, arising from having seen two persons converse together at Carthage with some air of mystery. I myself entertained no suspicion of such an attack; at any rate, none before the next day in the afternoon; because it was notorious that we had departed from Carthage with the declared intention of being absent at least two days. I could not believe that any person would attack the jail whilst we were in Nauvoo, and thereby expose my life and the life of my companions to the sudden vengeance of the Mormons, upon hearing of the death of their leaders. Nevertheless, acting upon the principle of providing against mere possibilities, I sent back one of the company with a special order to Captain Smith to guard the jail strictly, and at the peril of his life, until my return.

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“We proceeded on our journey four miles further. By this time I had convinced myself that no attack would be made upon the jail that day or night. I supposed that a regard for my safety and the safety of my companions would prevent an attack until those to be engaged in it could be assured of our departure from Nauvoo. I still think that this ought to have appeared to me to be a reasonable supposition. [¶] I therefore determined at this point to omit making the search for counterfeit money at Nauvoo, and defer an examination of all other abominations charged on that people, in order to return to Carthage that same night, that I might be on the ground in person, in time to prevent an attack upon the jail, if any had been meditated. To this end we called a halt; the baggage wagons were ordered to remain where they were until towards evening, and then return to Carthage.

“Having made these arrangements, we proceeded on our march, and arrived at Nauvoo about four o’clock of the afternoon of the 27th day of June. As soon as notice could be given, a crowd of the citizens assembled to hear an address which I proposed to deliver to them. The number present has been variously estimated at from one to five thousand.

“In this address I stated to them how, and in what, their functionaries had violated the laws. Also, the many scandalous reports in circulation against them, and that these reports, whether true or false, were generally believed by the people. I distinctly stated to them the amount of hatred and prejudice which prevailed everywhere against them, and the causes of it, at length.

“I also told them plainly and emphatically, that if any vengeance should be attempted, openly or secretly against the persons or property of the citizens who had taken part against their leaders, that the public hatred and excitement were such, that thousands would assemble for the total destruction of their city and the extermination of their people; and that no power in the State would be able to prevent it. During this address some impatience and resentment were manifested by the Mormons, at the recital of the various reports enumerated concerning them, which they strenuously and indignantly denied to be true. They claimed to be a law-abiding people, and insisted that as they looked to the law alone for their protection, so were they careful themselves to ob-

serve its provisions. Upon the conclusion of this address, I proposed to take a vote on the question whether they would strictly observe the laws, even in opposition to their Prophet and leaders. The vote was unanimous in favor of this proposition.

“The anti-Mormons contended that such a vote from the Mormons signified nothing; and truly the subsequent history of that people showed clearly that they were loudest in their professions of attachment to the law, when they were guilty of the greatest extravagances; and in fact, that they were so ignorant and stupid about matters of law, that they had no means of judging of the legality of their conduct, only as they were instructed by their spiritual leaders.

“A short time before sundown we departed on our return to Carthage. When we had proceeded two miles, we met two individuals, one of them a Mormon, who informed us that the Smiths had been assassinated in jail, about five or six o'clock of that day. The intelligence seemed to strike every one with a kind of dumbness. As to myself it was perfectly astounding; and I anticipated the very worst consequences from it. The Mormons had been represented to me as a lawless, infatuated and fanatical people, not governed by the ordinary motives which influence the rest of mankind. If so, most likely an exterminating war would ensue, and the whole land would be covered with desolation. ¶ Acting upon this supposition, it was my duty to provide as well as I could for the event. I therefore took [ordered] the two messengers in[to] custody[, and to be returned] back [with us] to Carthage, [this was done] in order to gain [get] time and [to] make such arrangements as could be made, to prevent any sudden explosion of Mormon excitement [before they could be written to by their friends at Carthage]. I also despatched messengers to Warsaw, to advise the citizens of the event. But the people there knew all about [the matter] it [before my messengers arrived.], and, [they] like myself, feared [anticipated] a general attack [all over the country]. The women and children were moved across the river, and a committee despatched that night to Quincy for assistance. The next morning by daylight, the ringing of the bells in the city of Quincy announced a public meeting. The people assembled in great numbers [at an early hour]. The Warsaw com-

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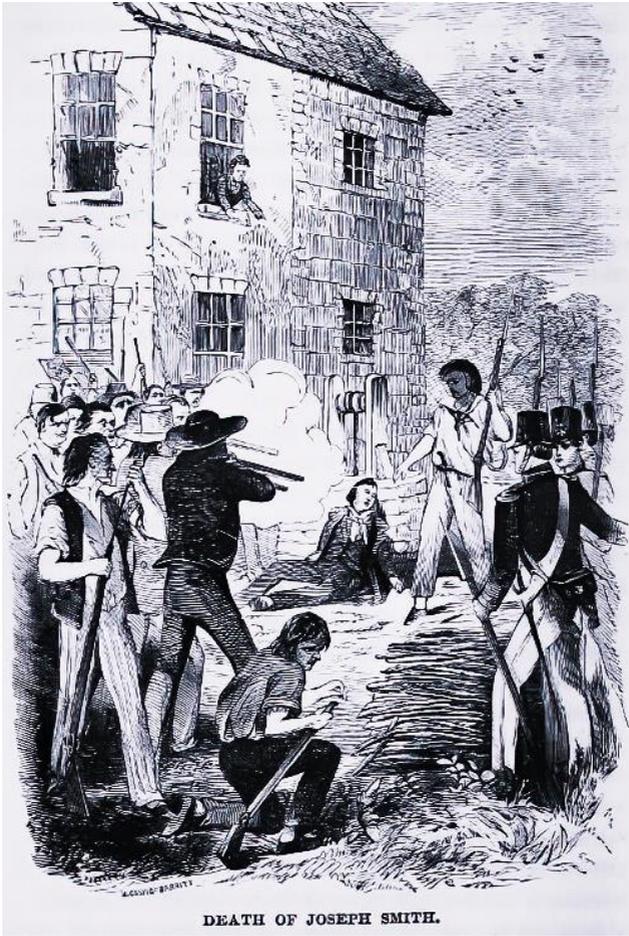
mittee stated to the meeting, that a party of Mormons had attempted to rescue the Smiths out of jail; that a party of Missourians and others had killed the prisoners to prevent their escape; that the Governor and his party were at Nauvoo, at the time when intelligence of the fact was brought there; that they had been attacked by the Nauvoo Legion, and had retreated to a house where they were then closely besieged. That the Governor had sent out word that he could maintain his position for two days, and would be certain to be massacred if assistance did not arrive by the end of that time. It is unnecessary to say that this entire story was a fabrication. [It was of a piece with the other reports put into circulation by the anti-Mormon party, to influence the public mind and call the people to their assistance.] The effect of it, however, was that by ten o'clock on the 28th of June, between two and three hundred men from Quincy, under [the] command of Major Flood, embarked on board a steamboat for Nauvoo, to assist in raising the siege, as they honestly believed. [...]

“Upon hearing of the assassination of the Smiths, I was sensible that my command was at an end; that my destruction was meditated, as well as that of the Mormons; and that I could not reasonably confide longer in one party or the other. [...] [¶] I am convinced that it was the expectation that the Mormons would assassinate me, on the supposition that I had planned the murder of the Smiths. Hence the conspirators committed their act while I was at Nauvoo. [...]”³

“It was many days after the assassination of the Smiths before the circumstances of the murder became fully known. It then appeared that, agreeably to previous orders, the posse at Warsaw had marched on the morning of the 27th of June in the direction of Golden’s Point, with a view to join the force from Carthage, the whole body then to be marched into Nauvoo. When [But by

³ The final sentence of the paragraph is written differently in Ford’s book: “As for myself, I was well convinced that those, whoever they were, who assassinated the Smiths, meditated in turn my assassination by the Mormons. The very circumstances of the case fully corroborated the information which I afterwards received, that upon consultation of the assassins it was agreed amongst them that the murder must be committed whilst the governor was at Nauvoo.” See Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois* (Chicago, IL: S.C. Griggs & Co., 1854), 349.

the time] they had gone eight miles, they were met by the order to disband; and learning, at the same time, that the Governor was absent at Nauvoo, about two hundred of these men, many of them disguised by blacking their faces with powder and mud, hastened immediately to Carthage. There they encamped at some distance from the village, and soon learned that one of the companies left as a guard had disbanded and returned to their homes; the other company, the Carthage Grays, was stationed by the Captain in the public square, a hundred and fifty yards from the jail, whilst eight men were detailed by him, under the command of Sergeant Franklin A. Worrell, to guard the prisoners. A communication was soon established between the conspirators and the company; and it was arranged that the guard should have their guns charged with blank cartridges, and fire at the assailants when they attempted to enter the jail. General Deming, who was left in command, being deserted by some of his troops, and perceiving the arrangement with the others, and having no force upon which he could rely, for fear of his life, retired from the village. The conspirators came up, jumped the slight fence around the jail, were fired upon by the guard, which, according to arrangement, was overpowered immediately, and the assailants entered the prison, to the door of the room, where the two prisoners were confined, with two of their friends, who voluntarily bore them company. An attempt was made to break open the door; but Joe Smith being armed with a six barrelled [*sic*] pistol, furnished by his friends, fired several times as the door was bursted open, and wounded three of the assailants. At the same time several shots were fired into the room, by some of which John Taylor received four wounds and Hiram [*sic*] Smith was instantly killed. Joe Smith now attempted to escape by jumping out of the second-story window; but the fall so stunned him that he was unable to arise, and, being placed in a sitting posture by the conspirators below, they despatched him with four balls shot through his body.



DEATH OF JOSEPH SMITH.

“Thus fell Joe Smith, the most successful impostor in modern times; a man who, though ignorant and coarse, had some great natural parts, which fitted him for temporary success, but which were so obscured and counteracted by the inherent corruption and vices of his nature, that he never could succeed in establishing a system of policy which looked to permanent success in the future. His lusts, his love of money and power, always set him to study-

ing present gratification and convenience, rather than the remote consequences of his plans. It seems that no power of intellect can save a corrupt man from this error. The strong cravings of the animal nature will never give fair play to a fine understanding; the judgment is never allowed to choose that good which is far away, in preference to enticing evil near at hand. And this may be considered a wise ordinance of Providence, by which the counsels of talented but corrupt men are defeated in the very act which promised success.

“It must not be supposed that the pretended Prophet practiced the tricks of a common impostor; that he was a dark and gloomy person, with a long beard, a grave, and severe aspect, and a reserved and saintly carriage of his person; on the contrary he was full of levity, even to boyish romping; dressed like a dandy, and at times drank like a sailor and swore like a pirate. He could, as occasion required, be exceedingly meek in his deportment, and then again rough and boisterous as a highway robber; being always able to satisfy his followers of the propriety of his conduct. He always quailed before power, and was arrogant to weakness. At times he could put on the air of a penitent, as if feeling the deepest humiliation for his sins, and suffering unutterable anguish, and indulging in the most gloomy forebodings of eternal woe. At such times, he would call for the prayers of the brethren in his behalf, with a wild and fearful energy and earnestness. He was full six feet high, strongly built, and uncommonly well muscled. No doubt he was as much indebted for his influence over an ignorant people, to the superiority of his physical vigor, as to his greater cunning and intellect.

“His followers were divided into the leaders and the led; the first division embraced a numerous class of broken-down, unprincipled men of talents, to be found in every country, who, bankrupt in character and fortune, had nothing to lose by deserting the known religions, and carving out a new one of their own. They were mostly infidels, who, holding all religions in derision, believed they had as good a right as Christ or Mahomet, or any of the founders of former systems, to create one for themselves; and if they could impose it upon mankind, to live upon the labor of their dupes. Those of the second division were the credulous,

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wondering part of men, whose easy belief and admiring natures are always the victims of novelty in whatever shape it may come; who have a capacity to believe any strange and wonderful matter, if it only be new, whilst the wonders of former ages command neither faith nor reverence; they are men of feeble purposes, readily subjected to the will of the strong, giving themselves up entirely to the direction of their leaders; and this accounts for the very great influence of those leaders in control[ing] them. In other respects some of the Mormons were abandoned rogues, who had taken shelter in Nauvoo, as a convenient place for the headquarters of their villa[n]y; and others were good, honest, industrious people, who were the sincere victims of artful delusion. Such as these were more the proper objects of pity than persecution. With them, their religious belief was a kind of insanity; and certainly no greater calamity can befall a human being than to have a mind so constituted as to be made the sincere dupe of a religious imposture.”⁴

It were vain to attempt to describe the mingled feelings of grief and rage which agitated the people of Nauvoo, when the death of Joe Smith was announced there. All his errors and tyrannies seemed to be obliterated from their minds; he had “sealed the truth with his blood,” and stood henceforth a sainted martyr. The spiritual wives of the dead Prophet filled the city with their cries, but his lawful wife Emma was quiet and resigned. When Joseph and Hyrum retreated across the river to avoid the constable first sent from Carthage, she had joined with the Apostle William Marks in writing them an indignant letter, in which she charged them as “cowardly shepherds, who had left the sheep in danger and fled.” This statement rests upon the testimony of Joseph F. Smith, son of Hyrum, now an Apostle at Salt Lake, who adds: “When Joseph saw that letter his great heart almost bursted, and he said, ‘If that is all my wife and friends care for my life, then I don’t care for it,’ and returned and gave himself up.”

The whole people turned out, in deep mourning, and with every demonstration of grief, and the remains of Joseph and Hyrum were honored with a magnificent funeral. Joseph was thirty-nine,

⁴ Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois* (Chicago, IL: S.C. Griggs & Co., 1854), 319-356.

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and Hyrum forty-four years old. In the short space of fifteen years Joe Smith and his coadjutors had brought forth a new Bible, ordained a new morality, established a new theology, and founded a Church with missions in half the civilized world. Organized in 1830, the Church, at the time of their death, numbered probably two hundred thousand throughout the world. The Mormons themselves claimed half a million. But they have probably never exceeded the former number since that time. Under the lead of Brigham Young they made tolerable progress for a few years, but are certainly losing in numbers at present. In the very germ of the new sect was planted a fatal principle of progress in evil, which, by its appeal to the vagaries and vices of men, gave a predisposition to rapid rise and the assurance of early decay. From a living and erring Prophet of personal prowess and prestige, the progress was regular and natural to intrigue, grossness and materialism; materialism and sanctified lust necessitated polygamy, and polygamy has in the perfect order of nature proved the mother of incest and blood atonement. From the worship of a human demi-god of passion, under a light and false mantle of religion, the descent was easy to the worship of only sensual forms and practices. There is nothing more surprising in it than in the progress from the serpent's egg to the deadly viper. Nor is it strange that the sect increased rapidly; every century, and almost every generation, has witnessed the sudden rise of a corrupt and law-defying sect; and modern society still presents ample materials. As like produces like, and everything its kind in nature, so the evil-hearted and credulous will be led to worse evil by any religion that does not convert and reform. The various sects, too, have lost much of that burning and aggressive vigor which distinguished their rise; and redemptive agencies have not, in all respects, kept pace with sinful allurements, and a fair field has been left for delusion. The minister in many cases still travels on horseback, while the devil goes by rail. With all the power of evangelical organization and gospel at work, Satan too often rides upon the whirlwind of popular passion, and subsidizes by trick and prejudice the very enthusiasm of man's nature.

The Methodists, who formerly prided themselves on a hearty simplicity and earnest work among the masses, have too often

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attained to the elegant conservatism of the Old Mother; they are in some places fixed almost in gilded formalism, and in others reduced to the prejudiced following after traditions of religion, both lacking much the kindling of the "fire from the altar." The Baptists, who were also the hardy pioneers, have so entrenched themselves about as to be separated from other denominations in sympathy, and almost from the world, leaving themselves open, at least, to the charge of following "the water-god of exclusive errorists." The Presbyterians, whose universal suffrage should be peculiarly suited to the genius of our whole people, seem to have struck but a certain class of quietly reserved tastes; and they appear to the world as much interested in preserving the authority of an ancient Confession of Faith as in vitalizing their republicanism for the conversion of the people. The Campbellites have developed a controversial spirit which may well be suspected of having gone beyond a mere zeal for the truth. The Episcopalians, with an organization essentially monarchical in form, looking to its dignitaries for authority and power, divided even here as to the policy of carrying this principle further, cannot yet be said to be fully naturalized as an American church. All have attained to a more formal, or sober and intellectual sort of religion. Nor should we quarrel with this, of itself. Intellectual men must have an intellectual faith; a mere emotional experience is quite impossible to them, nor would it content them. Notwithstanding this, the Unitarians, a sect whose faith is more purely one of philosophy and taste, have shown little vitality in extending their bounds. There is still the great mass of men who will be content with nothing short of a simple religion, warmed with a generous enthusiasm; and this, in the hands or under the direction of corrupt or crazy men, becomes a wild, fierce fanaticism. Not that religion should accommodate the vices of human nature; but while it reforms them it should give virtuous direction to that enthusiasm which will otherwise rend and tear them. It is not at all too late for another successful [*sic*] delusion. Millions pant for novelty, for a personal *god*, for present light and prophecy, for something harmonious entirely with our own day and nation, more real, more tangible, not a mere matter of two thousand years of church eru-

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dition and history, grand as they are in the triumphs of an improving civilization.

In the midst of such excitement in the West came the impostor, and to the lowest manifestation of this want Mormonism was addressed. But Mormonism could never be a success in America, because it controverted the inherent American idea; it turned back to sensualism for its inspiration, and to despotism for its model.⁵ Had it been founded on progressive instead of retrograde ideas, had it developed individuality and personal freedom, had it claimed a higher consideration for the feminine in creation and a more perfect independence for woman, had it stepped forward and not back, then it might have helped reform all America, and founded a permanent, new order.

The religious public may then be re-assured; Mormonism is not *the* religion or sect which is to play havoc among existing systems. But the signs of the times indicate a *new* or modified *phase of religion*. We will have a distinctly American Church. The Roman Empire Christianized made Roman Catholicism, which has been reformed as its people have in the governments; Russia made the finished Greek system; Italy is Ultramontane Catholic; England has the Establishment; Scandinavia has the Lutheran Church; each nation has developed one central, theologic and ecclesiastical idea, and we are not yet so fully completed and individualized, as to be without the same want and yearning. Perhaps one of the present sects will modify and *advance* to the needed place; or from the spirit of union in *many*, may come the ascendant and satisfying *one*. The Church of the future must be both intellectual and emotional; it must look to the future for its hope, and to our own land for its governing polity, and not to worn out systems which have proved too weak for earthly means; as truth is immortal it must look only for new developments of truth; it must *purify the marriage* relation, and recognize the political and social independence of woman; it must *believe* in sanctification, if

⁵ The advancement of the church was significantly hindered in the late 1800s, largely because members migrated to Utah and became deeply involved in polygamy. The author's confidence in America appears outdated. It is evident that in the 21st century, there is a preference for sensualism and despotism over more traditional values.

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even it does not claim to have obtained it, and it must make unceasing war upon every species of oppression, and every form of intemperance. Such a Church must have more truth than error both in method and creed, and for it, a broad field is open.

But Mormonism was a mushroom growth upon a rich bed of decay, which sprang up merely because *something better was not planted*, but had no enduring root. It might flourish for half a century or more, upon the scum of vice in America and the ignorance of Europe, but could enjoy at best but a sort of living death, and must soon wither and decay.⁶

⁶ In the 21st century, there is ample evidence to indicate a widespread lack of enthusiasm toward organized religion, and Mormons are not exempt from this trend. Nevertheless, the church is financially robust, boasting hundreds of billions of dollars in surplus, allowing it to endure for decades without having to rely on additional donations.