

SECTION II June 2,1844 - June 30,1844
Gilbert and the Prophet

June the second, 1844, early in the morning, I found myself in the streets of Nauvoo. The evening before, Pettingill had agreed to meet me at the residence of Prophet Joseph at nine a.m.

Observing and reflecting upon almost everything I saw and heard, I slowly sauntered to the mansion of the Prophet. There was no sign of Pettingill. Morning came and went and not one face I had ever seen before could I recognize as I walked the streets.

I viewed the foundation of a mighty temple. I saw the tomb and sepulcher for the dead, and the baptismal font resting on the backs of twelve oxen. Probably the first one built since the days of Solomon.

(Gilbert, only four days after his arrival in Nauvoo was able to perform vicarious baptisms for his parents and sister on 6 June 1844.)

I then repaired to the Stonecutter's Shop where the monotonous sound of many a workman's mallet and the sharp ring of the smithy's anvil were heard. All bore unmistakable evidence of determined purpose to complete that mighty structure.

I then returned to the mansion, and after a short conversation with the bar Ruper whom I learned later was Orrin Porter Rockwell, I saw Pettingill and five others ready to enter the house.

After a hearty shake of my old friend's hand I was introduced to the Prophet, whose mild and penetrating glance denoted great depth of penetration and extensive forethought.

While standing there before him, his penetrating gaze seemed to read the very inmost recess of my heart. A thousand thoughts passed through my mind. "Had I been permitted by the great Author of my being to behold with my natural eyes a Prophet of the living God, when millions had died without the sight?"

To grasp his hand in mine was a blessing that in early days I did not expect to enjoy. I seemed to be transfixed before him. I gazed with wonder at his person. I listened with delight to the sound of his voice. Afterwards in public and in private I listened raptly.

The impressions made on my mind at this introduction can never be erased. They are indelible, as if written with an iron pen on the tablet of my heart.

My very destiny seemed to be interwoven with his. I loved his company. The sound of his voice was music to my ear. His counsels were good. His theological reasoning was of God. His acts were exemplary and worthy of imitation and his domestic circle he was mild and forbearing.

Joseph was resolute and determined in the accomplishments of a great work, although opposed by the combined powers of earth and hell. He, by the inspiration of God, restored the Gospel to the earth, organized the Holy Priesthood, and consecrated the land of Zion. He gathered his thousands around him and laid the foundation of a mighty empire.

At the same time, he endured the most unparalleled persecution of any man in the history of our country. Like one of old, the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

With a mind that disdained to confine itself to the old beaten track of religious rites, and ceremonies, he burst asunder the chains which in ages past had held in bondage the nations of the earth. He soared aloft and brought to light the hidden treasures of the almighty. He bade defiance to the superstitious dogmas and combined wisdom of the world. He laid the foundation for man's eternal happiness and revived the tree of liberty.