

Many unwise members blamed the authorities of the Church for this trouble and apostatized. As a result thereof, the Prophet deemed it wise to leave the Church in charge of Brigham Young for a short period. Then he journeyed to Far West, Ill.

Later, Gilbert, true to the faith, journeyed southward also, arriving in Nauvoo, Ill., June 1, 1844, Nauvoo was the second city of the Saints that had been built after much persecution.

Gilbert Belnap's first ambition was to shake the hand of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Therefore he persuaded a Mr. Pettingill, to introduce him to the Prophet the following morning at 9:00 o'clock. Something hindered Mr. Pettingill from fulfilling his appointment, so Gilbert spent the day viewing the foundation of the Nauvoo Temple, with the baptismal font already erected upon the backs of twelve oxen, similar to Solomon's Temple. While lingering around the mansion of the Prophet, he met Mr. Pettingill just entering therein. Mr. Pettingill introduced him to the Prophet Joseph Smith. In Gilbert Belnap's autobiography he writes:

"I was introduced to the Prophet, whose mild and penetrating glance denoted great depth of thought and extensive forethought. While standing before his penetrating gaze he seemed to read the very recesses of my heart. A thousand thoughts passed thru my mind. I had 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 that privilege, and to grasp his hand in mine was a privilege, that in early days I did not expect to enjoy. I seemed to be transfigured before him. I gazed with wonder at his person and listened with delight to the sound of his voice. I had this privilege both in public and private at that time and afterwards. Though in after years I may become a cast-away, the impression made upon my mind at this introduction can never be erased. The feeling which passed over me at this time is impressed upon me as indelibly and lasting as tho it were written with an iron pen upon the tablets 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 ears. His counsels were good, and his acts were exemplary and worthy of imitation. His theological reasoning was of God. In his domestic circle he was mild and forbearing, but resolute and determined in the accomplishment of God's work. Altho opposed by the combined powers of earth and hell, he, by the inspiration of God restored the gospel to the earth and organized the holy priesthood. He gathered his thousands around him and planted a great city, which was to be the foundation of a mighty empire, and consecrated it to God as the Land of Zion. 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 for 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 bid defiance to the superstitious dogmas and the combined wisdom of the world, and laid the foundation for man's eternal happiness and revived the tree of liberty palsied by the withering touch of Martin Van Buren."

The Prophet must have been impressed with the fearlessness and integrity of Gilbert, for he called upon him to attend, in disguise, a secret meeting of anti-Mormons, who were plotting to take the life of Joseph Smith.