

# An Interview with William Law by William Wyl of the Salt Lake Tribune.

**THE DAILY TRIBUNE: SALT LAKE CITY, SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 31, 1887**

Elsewhere in this impression will be seen an interview between Wm. Law and Dr. Wyl. Of course The Tribune cannot vouch for the truth of the statements of Mr. Law; but he was for a long time First Counselor to Joseph Smith; he was better loved than almost any other man by the Mormons; it seems he is now revered by his neighbors as one of the most loveable of men.

He broke with the Smiths when he found what a measureless and wicked fraud he had become involved in; he started a newspaper in Nauvoo to expose that fraud, but it, with the office, was destroyed by a mob shortly after the first edition was printed. Men here whose honesty no one doubts, vouch for the perfect truthfulness and superior abilities of the man.

The career of Joseph Smith, as portrayed in this interview, is something fearful when we consider that he pretended to be an oracle of God; but it was practically repeated in this valley. How a delusion so awful can continue to hold in thralldom the minds of men in other ways sensible, is one of the marvels of the age. A creed founded on fraud and enforced by assassination, here in this free country is most strange. That any pure woman was ever persuaded to accept its cruelties is only accountable on the theory that some women delight in sacrifice, if thereby they imagine that they are serving God.

How any Government with all the accumulating proof can still regard this as a religion and entrust with political power the men who entertained it, is beyond all comprehension. To Gentiles of Utah this story of Joseph Smith's life and ways in Nauvoo; the patching of one revelation to make it in accord with another; the preying upon women; the financial dishonor; the treachery in politics; the means resorted to silence enemies; they have seen all this paralleled right here, and yet have seen the chief instrument in all the filth and wickedness worshipped [sic] as a god. If it was possible here why was it not in Nauvoo? It seems to us there is no remedy for the

hallucination except to strike all power from this creed, and all men who believe in it, and then compel the children to attend school and to study mathematics and the other exact sciences, until their eyes shall be opened.

The reference to the wife of Joseph Smith clears up much which has always been obscure. Had she been all that the Saints here pictured her to be, her course could only be explained on the theory of woman's devotion. If she and her husband were working in accord to delude the rabble, then the whole thing is plain, because a vicious woman is more vicious than a vicious man. If she knew that another man had to make good the sums belonging to others that her husband had spent, and felt neither sorrow nor remorse, then she was bad clear through. If all Smith's property was in her name, then she was bad clear through. A man may secure his wife a homestead; if, when rich, he puts all his property in her name, it means he has acquired his means dishonestly, or is meditating a steal.

**DR. WYL AND WM. LAW.**

**A Deeply Interesting Talk on Old Nauvoo Days.**

**ASTOUNDING REVELATIONS OF DARKNESS**

**Political Chicanery, Trickery, Deceit and Murder—Licentiousness and Fraud—Drunkenness and Avariciousness—Robbing Men of Their Money to Make Them Submissive—An Unprecedented Interview.**

EDITOR TRIBUNE:—In your issue of July 3rd, by your courtesy, we gave a copy each of three letters from William Law, once one of the “heads” of the Mormon “Church,” to Dr. W. Wyl. Those letters spoke for themselves as from a truthful, conscientious and intelligent man, still suffering in his feelings from his former connection with the religious and political fraud, Mormonism. In the remarks accompanying the letters, in your paper, we stated that Dr. Wyl had succeeded in obtaining an interview with the venerable Dr. Law—a privilege never accorded to any interviewer before, and we said that it would be furnished ere long for the information and study of your many readers.

In perusing this interview we are impressed with the goodness of heart, the honesty of purpose, the hatred of imposition under guise of religion and politics, and the remorse of soul in being caught in the meshes of such a corrupt and deceitful class of religious adventurers and speculators, displayed by the good old man; and we see, as well, the innocent, unsuspecting and confiding gentleman and Christian becoming a dupe in the system by the pretension and sophistical arguments of the delusion.

Many fearful deeds and horrible acts were perpetrated in Nauvoo, of which he knew nothing, and only whisperings and innuendoes caught his ear of many of the dark plots and secrets. But when their trickery and treason became so bold and daring his eyes with those of many other good men and women, were opened and they saw more and more that shocked their sensibilities and they exposed the hypocrisy and schemes of the unholy priesthood.

Like an honest man, that had the courage of his convictions, he dared to beard the lions in their dens, dared to speak out, and try to counteract the designs of the leaders. His statement of the false revelation on polygamy is interesting as showing how it was tinkered up afterwards to make it more plausible, and, also, that as in many of the so-called revelations of that church many alterations were effected to deceive the credulous and uncritical. Poor innocent Mr. Law thought that Joe Smith would repudiate the document and pronounce it false, but the dear Mrs. Law knew more of Joe's falsity, impure teachings and practices than did the man, and she said at once that the false prophet would declare it was from God.

The low cunning and deceit of Joe and Hyrum Smith—*par nobile fratrum*!!—on the political question is well exposed by their dragging in their God to father their little schemes. Let the reader notice well how the brothers worked and deceived both political parties to their selfish end. Joe's nefarious ending of the presumption and double dealing is a study of itself that all those who sympathize with Mormon politics under the mask of "rights" would do well to consider. It is no better now, and would be no better hereafter—Mormonism never learns or improves. It is well-known that the heads and feet of the Mormon Church pose and pretend that they are Democrats, but if both houses of Congress were largely Republican the Mormons would be Republican too, to gain an end, especially Statehood.

This is proved beyond contradiction to be true by the fact that both "apostle" Geo. A. Smith and "apostle" Geo. Q. Cannon, representing the "church" by Brigham's revelation were sent to and presented themselves as Republicans delegates at the great Republican convention held a few years ago in Philadelphia—they were rejected, however, and the American gentleman and patriot, Judge McKean with another were accepted; and from the other fact that Geo. Q. Cannon, as Delegate from Utah appeared upon the Records of Congress as Democrat and as Republican in two different terms. Legislators, Americans, be not deceived by the apostles or prophets of Mormonism either in politics or religion.

The testimony of Dr. Law is a fearful arraignment of Emma, Joe's wife, but it is in accordance with other facts well known to many here, and it ought to be a matter for the better class of

Mormons, the Josephites, to reflect upon—false, false, all false, the words and testimony she gave.

The ostracism that characterizes Mormonism here existed in Nauvoo, and ever will with its leaders—like Ishmael, “their hand is against every man, and every man’s hand is against them.” ” [sic] But we hope that this expose of the whole treasonable and deceitful theocratico-politico government which not only threatens our liberties here but would sap the foundation of all just democratic government, will enable some of our Mormon neighbors and Gentile sympathizers to diagnosis the disease that affects the body politic.

But I give at once the interview obtained by the intelligent, careful and persistent Dr. Wyl with the honest, truthful and good-hearted Dr. Law. Let our readers ponder it carefully—it is worth more than gold:

### **Interview with Wm. Law. March. 30, 1887**

Dr. William Law lives with his son, Judge “Tommy” Law. The house is a fine cottage, large, well-kept grounds surround it. We entered a cheerful looking room and there sat William Law, dressed in black, a most venerable looking figure. The head has a striking expression of intelligence, the large clear eyes are of a remarkably deep steel blue; the general impression is that of a thinker, of a benevolent and just man. He greeted me in a fatherly way. I expressed my joy at seeing at last so important a witness of a history, to whose study I had devoted two years.

I sat down near the venerable figure. I hesitated to put any question to him, but he made my task easy by saying: “You speak, in your book, of Joseph Smith having sent Rockwell to kill Governor Boggs. Let me tell you, that Joe Smith, told me the fact himself. The words were substantially like this, “I sent Rockwell to kill Boggs, but he missed him, it was a failure; he wounded him instead of sending him to Hell.”

This beginning gave me some courage and I began the pumping business, in a cautious way, though, that I might not frighten my subject. I had put down in my notebook a score of questions or so. So I glanced over them now and then, stealthily, and ventured this or that question, waiting till the good doctor would get warm in the recollections of the past. This happened soon and then I could ask with more liberty.

### **“What position had Rockwell in Joseph’s house?”**

“Rockwell was the lackey of the house. He used to comb and shave Joseph, blackened his boots and drove his carriage. He would have done anything Joe wanted him to do. I never saw a horse

or carriage belonging to Rockwell which you say he got from Joseph for the attempt to kill Boggs.”

The reader will easily understand that I had particular reasons to ask about the Expositor, Wm. Law being the only surviving publisher and editor of that celebrated sheet, born and killed June 7th, 1844. So I began:

**“I suppose that you originated the Expositor, Doctor Law?”**

“Yes, I originated the idea to publish that paper. I had friends in many parts of the country. They knew that I had become a member of the Mormon religion. I wanted to show them, by publishing the paper, that I had not been in a fraud willingly (here the old man’s eyes filled with tears and his voice trembled). I started the idea, and my brother, Wilson, stood to me like a brother should. I don’t remember whether it was I, or not, who gave the name “Expositor.” But I and my brother, we gave the money, about \$2000. I gave the biggest part. The Higbees etc., had scarcely a dollar in it.”

**“You were well off at that time. Dr. Law?”**

“We had property to the amount of about \$30,000, which was a good deal in those days. We had farms in Nauvoo, city lots and our residences. My brother had a fine brick two story building. By starting the Expositor we lost nearly everything.”

**“Didn’t you have a store and a mill?”**

“Yes, we had a large steam flour and saw mill and a store. It would have been the smart thing to do, to remain quiet, sell our property without noise for what we could get and move away. That would have been smart, but I wasn’t cool and smart then. I wanted to do my duty and nothing else, and didn’t care for the consequences, not a bit. Many friends advised me to be smart and remain quiet, but I would not hear of it and spoke my mind whenever an opportunity offered. When the Smiths saw that we were against them, then they applied to us their usual system, that is, to freeze us out. Secret orders went out that nobody could buy property without the permission of Joseph Smith, Hyrum or the authorities, as they called them, so our property was practically worthless. Yes, my brother Wilson stood to me like a man, fully, fearlessly. He died, here in Shullsburgh, of a stroke of apoplexy, after an illness of three days, ten years ago. He was a very fine and tremendously strong man. He wrestled with Joe in Nauvoo and threw him on his back.”

**“How did you become a Mormon, Doctor?”**

“John Taylor and Almon W. Babbitt came as missionaries to Canada and preached where I lived, twenty-five miles south of Toronto. I believe that Taylor was sincere then and I believe he was to a late day. Finally the greed of power and money killed his conscience. There was, now and then,

a good man in Mormondom, for instance Wm. Marks. He was a very good man and knew as little of the secret crimes of the leaders as I knew myself.”

**“The letters you wrote me, made me suppose that the Smiths tried to kill you when they saw an enemy in you?”**

“They tried to get rid of me in different ways. One was by poisoning. I was already out of the church when Hyrum called one day and invited me for the next day to a reconciliation dinner as he called it, to his house. He said Joseph would come, too. He invited me and my wife. He was very urgent about the matter, but I declined the invitation. Now I must tell you that I, in those dangerous days, did not neglect to look out somewhat for the safety of my person and that I kept a detective or two among those who were in the confidence of the Smiths. That very same evening of the day on which Hyrum had been to my house inviting me, my detective told me that they had conceived the plan to poison me at the reconciliation dinner. Their object was a double one. My going to the dinner would have shown to the people that I was reconciled and my death would have freed them of an enemy. You may imagine that I didn’t regret having declined that amiable invitation.”

**“Have you had any knowledge of cases of poisoning in Nauvoo, ordered by the authorities?”**

“I know that several men, six or seven, died under very suspicious circumstances. Among them were two secretaries of the prophet, Mulholland and Blaskel Thompson. I saw Mulholland die and the symptoms looked very suspicious to me. Dr. Foster, who was a very good physician, believed firmly that those six or seven men had been poisoned, and told me so repeatedly.”

**“What may have been the reason for poisoning the secretaries?”**

(With a smile) “They knew too much, probably.”

**“What do you know about the Danites?”**

“Nothing of my personal knowledge. They existed, but their workings were kept very secret. I never belonged to the initiated. Smith tried very hard to get them to kill me. One day my detective told me, that two Danites had gone to Joseph and told him that they wanted to put me out of the way. Joseph said: “Don’t—he (Law) is too influential; his death would bring the country down upon us; wait.” Later when I was thoroughly aware of my danger, they tried in all manners to use me up and had Danites all day and night after me, but I looked out and kept myself safe. Whatever there was of crime in Nauvoo, was kept secret. On the outside everything looked nice and smooth. There were lots of strangers every Sunday as visitors and then the best speakers were put on the stand as samples of the fruits of this fine religion.”

**“Did Emma, the elect lady, come to your house and complain about Joseph?”**

“No. She never came to my house for that purpose. But I met her sometimes on the street and then she used to complain, especially because of the girls whom Joseph kept in the house, devoting his attention to them. You have overrated her, she was dishonest.”

**“Do you mean to say that she was so outside of the influence Joseph had over her?”**

“Yes, that is exactly what I mean. Let me tell you a case that will be full proof to you. Soon after my arrive in Nauvoo the two L[awrence] girls came to the holy city, two very young girls, 15 to 17 years of age. They had been converted in Canada, were orphans and worth about \$8000 in English gold. Joseph got to be appointed their Guardian, probably with the help of Dr. Bennett. He naturally put the gold in his pocket and had the Girls sealed to him. He asked me to go on his bond as a guardian, as Sidney Rigdon had done. “It is only a formality,” he said. Foolishly enough, and not yet suspecting anything, I put my name on the paper. Emma complained about Joseph’s living with the L[awrence] girls, but not very violently. It is my conviction that she was his full accomplice, that she was not a bit better than he. When I saw how things went I should have taken steps to be released of that bond, but I never thought of it. After Joseph’s death, A. W. Babbitt became guardian of the two girls. He asked Emma for a settlement about the \$8000. Emma said she had nothing to do with her husband’s debts. Now Babbitt asked for the books and she gave them to him. Babbitt found that Joseph had counted an expense of about \$3000 for board and clothing of the girls. Now Babbitt wanted the \$5000 that was to be paid Babbitt, who was a straight, good, honest, sincere man, set about to find out property to pay the \$5000 with. He could find none. Two splendid farms near Nauvoo, a big brick house, worth from \$3000 to \$4000, the hotel kept by Joe, a mass of vacant town lots, all were in Emma’s name, not transferred later, but transferred from the beginning. She always looked out for her part. When I saw how things stood I wrote to Babbitt to take hold of all the property left by me in Nauvoo and of all claims held by me again in people in Nauvoo. And so the debt was paid by me—Emma didn’t pay a cent.”

We had chatted about an hour when Dr. Law said that he felt a little tired. I kept silent for a few minutes. The old gentleman rallied very soon, and began to speak without being questioned.

“I told you that the Smiths tried to poison me. When Joseph saw that I had no great appetite for reconciliation dinners, he tried with the Indians. The plan was, that somebody should use me up who was not openly connected with the church, he was yet afraid of the people because of my influence. Later he would have killed me without any regard. One day about one hundred redskins came to town and twenty or thirty were sent to my house. We tried to get rid of them, but could not and we saw clearly that they had a dark plan for the night. But we had to keep them, gave them blankets and they were all night in our hall. Wilson Law, I and some friends, though, kept good watch all night, with barricaded windows and doors and guns and pistols ready.”

**“You have known the parents of the prophet, old Lucy and old Joe, the Abraham of this new dispensation?”**

“Oh, yes, I knew them. Old Lucy was in her dotage at that time; she seemed a harmless old woman. Old Joe sold blessings, so much a head, always in the same style—that my sons should be emperors and my daughters mothers of queens, and that everybody should have as many children as there was sands on the shore. Old Joe was an old tramp.”

**“How about Dr. Bennett?”**

“Bennett was very smart and clever, but a thorough scoundrel. Never could find out the reason of his downfall. Mrs. Pratt was a most excellent, pure woman, but the fact that Bennett visited her sometimes, was used by Joseph to ruin her character. He had his spies everywhere, and if a woman refused him, he sent his fellows out to whisper stories around about her.”

**“What do you remember about Emma’s relations to the revelation on celestial marriage?”**

“Well, I told you that she used to complain to me about Joseph’s escapades whenever she met me on the street. She spoke repeatedly about that pretended revelation. She said once: “The revelation says I must submit or be destroyed. Well, I guess I have to submit.” On another day she said: “Joe and I have settled our troubles on the basis of equal rights.” \* \* \* Emma was a full accomplice of Joseph’s crimes. She was a large, coarse woman, as deep a woman as there was, always full of schemes and smooth as oil. They were worthy of each other, she was not a particle better than he.”

**“You think that Joseph was an infidel?”**

“Yes, that he was I have not the slightest doubt. What proofs have I? Well, my general and intimate knowledge of his character. And is it possible that a man who ascribes all kinds of impudent lies to the Lord, could have been anything else but an infidel?”

**“Did you ever see the celebrated peepstone?”**

“No. I never saw it and I never saw Joseph giving a revelation. But Hyrum told me once that Joseph, in his younger years, used to hunt for hidden treasures with a peepstone.”

**“Was Joseph a habitual drunkard?”**

“I don’t believe he was. I only saw him drunk once. I found Joseph and Hyrum at a place where they kept quantities of wine. I remember that Joseph drank heavily, and that I talked to Hyrum begging him to take his brother away, but that was the only time I saw the prophet drunk.”

**“Have you ever heard of the old woman that was drowned in the interest of the church?”**

“I have heard of a woman being put aside. They said she had been brought over the river and buried on an island near the shore or on the other shore, near the water. But at that time I did not believe a word of rumors of this kind, and did not investigate them.”

**“Did you ever hear of abortion being practiced in Nauvoo?”**

“Yes. There was some talk about Joseph getting no issue from all the women he had intercourse with. Dr. Foster spoke to me about the fact. But I don’t remember what was told about abortion. If I heard things of the kind, I didn’t believe in them at that time. Joseph was very free in his talk about his women. He told me one day of a certain girl and remarked, that she had given him more pleasure than any girl he had ever enjoyed. I told him it was horrible to talk like this.”

**“What do you know about robbery being practiced for the benefit of the church?”**

“That sort of business was kept very secret. Hyrum had once a very fine, brand new blue suit, and people told me the suit was the produce of the spoils of the Gentiles. I have no doubt, that Hyrum played an important role in this department of church affairs. I think I can prove it. There was one day a “little council” called in Hyrum’s office, and I was invited to come. Joseph called at my house and took me to the little council. Eight or ten were present, all leaders in the church. Hyrum made a long argument—said he: “The Missourians have robbed, plundered and murdered our people. We should take our revenge on them as thoroughly as possible, and regain what we have lost in Missouri. The simplest way would be if our people would go to Missouri and buy their horses and cattle on credit and then not pay for them; and our merchants would go to St Louis and take their large quantities of goods on credit and then, when the notes became due, simply not pay them; our people always go there and pay for everything. That’s foolish, very foolish, but it is just the thing that, for instance, Brother Law is doing. He has paid thousands of dollars there; but get all these things from them for nothing, horses, cattle and goods, that would help the people wonderfully. Our merchants should transfer all they have—not only their stock in trade, but their lots, houses and farms, too; to their wives and friends in general, so that the creditors could not get a cent out of them.” Some of those present applauded the proposition, and said that would be only fair. I said nothing. Then somebody said: Brother Law has said nothing. I said: This seems to me not only wrong and unjust, but at the same time very ridiculous, because it is not practicable. You cannot buy horses and cattle on credit without having established a credit by long trading; and as to St. Louis, I was always of the opinion that the people there had been very good to the Mormons. So you would ruin your friends to injure your enemies, punish the innocent to hurt the guilty. The St. Louis merchants were surely not the men that persecuted you in Missouri. Hyrum got up, furious. ready to attack me. But Joseph rose and said: “I move that we adjourn this meeting. Brother Law has said his opinion, and that is all you wanted from him. Joseph went home with me and on the way he told me that he shared my views fully, and that I had exactly spoken his mind. He praised me very much for the justice and honesty of my views. ‘I did not talk,’ said he, ‘since you took the very words from my lips.’ I

need not tell you, that this was diplomacy on Joseph's part, but Hyrum hated me from that moment, and never forgave me for what I had said at that little council. But Hyrum hated me for another reason."

**"Was that in the robbery line, too?"**

"No. That was from a political reason. It was because I opposed him in the dirty political trade he made with Hoge against Walker. Walker had bought Joseph's influence by declaring that the city charter of Nauvoo secured the habeas corpus. I stood by them when Joseph promised that he should have nine out of every ten Mormon votes. But Hyrum went to Galena to meet the Democratic convention there, and promised the support of the church to Mr. Hoge for a seat in Congress. Yes, General Hyrum Smith was to sit in Congress next year. Saturday came and I went to Hyrum and had a talk with him. He said he would tell the people to vote for Hoge, and I said I would oppose him on the stand. He made objections but finally had to consent to my speaking on the stand in this matter. When it came to the speaking in public Hyrum did all he could to obstruct me by putting longwinded speakers on the stand, one after the other, so that it was nearly dark when I got on the stand. Now, I showed the people how shamefully they had treated Mr. Walker, and I made such an impression that they began to shout for Mr. Walker. Then, Hyrum jumped on the stand and declared that he had a revelation from the Lord, that the people should vote for Mr. Hoge. This was Saturday. Sunday morning I went to Joseph and told him what Hyrum had done. We went over to the meeting and Joseph told Hyrum what I had said. Hyrum insisted that he had had a revelation. Oh, said Joseph, if this is a revelation, then it is all right, and he went on the stand and said to the people: 'My office is so high, that I could not think of bothering the Lord with political affairs. But brother Hyrum has had a revelation—when the Lord speaks let the people obey.'"

**"Had you ever some dramatic scene with Joseph about the difficulties between you and him?"**

"He avoided me. But once I got hold of him in the street and told him in very plain terms what I thought of him. I said: 'You are a hypocrite and a vulgar scoundrel, you want to destroy me.' Instead of knocking me down, which he could have done very easily, being so much bigger and stronger than I, he went away hurriedly without uttering a single word."

**"Were you in Nauvoo when the Expositor was destroyed?"**

"No. I was in Carthage. There was a meeting at the court house, many people were present and it was considered what should be done regarding the Mormons. I think Stephen A. Douglas was present at the meeting. My friends urged me to come to Carthage with the press immediately. No conclusion was arrived at, however. The same evening we went home and when we came to Nauvoo we rode over our type, that was scattered in the street, and over our broken office furniture. The work of Joseph's agents had been very complete; it had been done by a mob of

about 200. The building, a new, pretty brick structure, had been perfectly gutted, not a bit had been left of anything.”

**“Had anything been prepared for a second number?”**

“Yes, the inside of number two had been set up. Seeing what had been done, I my abode, for safety’s sake, at my brother’s. I left Nauvoo on a large new steam ferry-boat, which transported me, my family and my brother to Burlington, Iowa. While we had people packing our things in my house, we rode, my brother and I, through the city in an open carriage, to show that we were not afraid.”

**“Did you ever see Joseph again after you left Nauvoo?”**

“Only once. I saw him in Carthage at the trial. We spoke not to each other and he seemed greatly preoccupied. We left Nauvoo on the second day after the passing of the ordinance which put the press under the absolute will of Joseph and his creatures. This ordinance gave them power to imprison and fine us at liberty.”

**“What opinion have you of Governor Ford?”**

“Ford made a good impression upon me; he was surely a good, straight man.”

**“What kind of a life did the prophet lead in Nauvoo?”**

“Joseph lived in great plenty. He entertained his friends and had a right good time. He was a jolly fellow. I don t think that in his family tea and coffee were used, but they were served to the strangers when he entertained as tavern-keeper. At least, I suppose so. The Smiths had plenty of money. Why, when I came to Nauvoo I paid Hyrum \$700 in gold for a barren lot and at that rate they sold any amount of lots after having got the land very cheap, to be sure Their principle was to weaken a man in his purse, and in this way take power and influence from him. Weaken everybody, that was their motto. Joseph’s maxim was, when you have taken all the money a fellow has got, you can do with him whatever you please.”

**“What became of Dr. Bennett?”**

“The last thing I heard of him was that he went up the river with a large lot of fancy fowls, a speculation of his.”

**“What do you know about the revelation on polygamy?”**

“The way I heard of it was that Hyrum gave it to me to read. I was never in a High Council where it was read, all stories to the contrary notwithstanding. Hyrum gave it to me in his office, told me to take it home and read it and then be careful with it and bring it back again. I took it home, and read it and showed it to my wife. She and I were just turned upside down by it; we did not know

what to do. I said to my wife, that I would take it over to Joseph and ask him about it. I did not believe that he would acknowledge it, and I said so to my wife. But she was not of my opinion. She felt perfectly sure that he would father it. When I came to Joseph and showed him the paper, he said: 'Yes, that is a genuine revelation.' I said to the prophet: 'But in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants there is a revelation just the contrary of this.' 'Oh,' said Joseph, 'that was given when the church was in its infancy, then it was all right to feed the people on milk, but now it is necessary to give them strong meat' We talked a long time about it, finally our discussion became very hot and we gave it up. From that time on the breach between us became more open and more decided every day, after having been prepared for a long time. But the revelation gave the finishing touch to my doubts and showed me clearly that he was a rascal. I took the revelation back to my wife and told her that Joseph had acknowledged it. 'That is what I fully expected,' said she. 'What shall we do?' said I. She advised me to keep still try to sell my property quietly for what I could get. But I did not follow her advice. My heart was burning. I wanted to tread upon the viper."

**"You returned the revelation to Hyrum?"**

"Yes, I did. I was astonished to see in your book that the revelation was such a long document. I remember DISTINCTLY that the original given me by Hyrum was MUCH SHORTER. It covered not more than two or three pages of foolscap. The contents are substantially the same, but there was not that theological introduction. The thing consisted simply in the command of doing it, and that command was restricted to the High Priesthood and to virgins and widows. But as to Joseph, himself, the Lord's chosen servant, it was restricted to virgins only, to clean vessels, from which to procure a pure seed to the Lord."

**"In what manner would Joseph succeed to keep you and others from knowing what was going on behind the curtain?"**

"Marks, Yves, I and some others had, for a long time, no idea of the depravity that was going on. This was simply the result of a very smart system adopted by the prophet and his intimate friends like Brigham Young, Kimball and others. They first tried a man to see whether they could make a criminal tool out of him. When they felt that he would not be the stuff to make a criminal of, they kept him outside the inner circle and used him to show him up as an example of their religion, as a good, virtuous, universally respected brother."

**"Was Joseph a coward?"**

"Yes, he was a coward and so was Hyrum. You see it already in the fact that when I attacked him on the street with most violent words, he did not dare to answer a word."

**"How did the prophets dress?"**

“Joe and Hyrum were always dressed well, generally in blue, sometimes in black. Joseph was a fine man, no doubt of it.”

**“How was it with Joseph’s wrestling?”**

“The forces of the prophet in this line have been exaggerated. My brother Wilson wrestled once with him and he laid him down on the floor like a baby. Wilson could throw a lead bar much farther than Joe could. But Wilson was an uncommonly fine and strong man, over 6 feet. He could hold a weight of 56 pounds on his little finger and write his name on the wall in big letters. Joseph was flabby; he never worked at anything and that probably made him so. Rockwell did everything about the house.”

**“Had you any idea that there was a sort of conspiracy to kill Joseph in jail?”**

“No. I had no idea, no idea. I had been ruined by that man; all my property was gone; all my dearest illusions destroyed, and through my connection with him I got a black spot on my life, which will pain me to the very last minute of my existence. But I tell you [The old gentlemen buried his head in his hands and when he removed them, his eyes were wet.] I tell you, no, if I had had any idea of any such scheme, I would have taken steps to stop it. I have always considered the killing of Joseph Smith a wrong action. It is my opinion that he deserved his fate fully, much more than thousands of men who paid the penalty of their crime to Judge Lynch—but I would have preferred that he should have been tried by court and sent to the Penitentiary.”

**“Did you practice medicine in Nauvoo, Doctor?”**

“Only occasionally. I came to Nauvoo with money. I had had a mill in Canada, already. Joseph said to me: ‘You must not be a doctor here. Buy lands, build mills and keep a store to keep you running. As to practicing and not making anything, let some Gentiles come and do that. You look out for business and profit. I practiced, however, occasionally. Once John Taylor was taken with a very malignant fever. He was treated by his regular physician. I think Dr. Wells was his name. He grew worse and worse. At last I was called in, saw him and prescribed for him. They followed my prescriptions and he got better. This is, I believe, the worst thing I did in Nauvoo or anywhere else!’ –[Dr. Law followed this joke with a chuckle, so as to give me to understand that it was a sin to cure so great a rascal]

**“What kind of men were the other editors of the Expositor?”**

“Dr. Foster was a fine physician and surgeon and a very agreeable, lively, interesting man. The Higbees had been very good friends of Joseph in Missouri and had served his cause there with a kind of boyish enthusiasm. Frank died long ago and Chauncey only lately. He had studied law, was an attorney and sat on the bench for a while. He was quite intelligent. The father of the

Higbees had been an excellent man. He died rather suddenly, and from that time there was something between his boys and Joseph.”

“What kind of a physician was Dr. Bennett?”

“He was a physician of the old school. I could not say whether he was very successful as a doctor or not. He was so much occupied for Joseph, that he had no time to attend the sick.”

**“Did Joseph pay any salary to this Bismarck of his?”**

“I don’t know, but in that honeymoon of favor, which he enjoyed in his first Nauvoo time, Joseph gave him surely all he wanted.”

**“Did you ever hear Joseph speak of his money?”**

“Oh yes, he used to boast of his riches. He expressed the opinion, that it was all-important that he should be rich. I heard him say myself, ‘it would be better that every man in the church should lose his last cent, than that I should fall and go down.’”

After pumping the dear, good old Doctor for two hours. I relaxed my hold on him and our conversation began to run on in an easier style. He made some interesting remarks, still, indeed he didn’t say anything that wasn’t interesting, every instance bearing the strong impress of his keen intelligence and interesting strong, manly character. Let me quote one more detail. Said Wm. Law: “What saved me from death in 1844 was, 1, my caution; 2, the devotion of my detectives and 3, Joseph himself. He had inculcated into the minds of his followers the rule, that the “heads” of the church must be safe before all. This became a strong superstition in the minds of his people, so strong that they did not dare to touch me. And he himself feared me so much because of my popularity and good standing, that he tried for a long time to put me out of the way in a manner that the church could not be charged with it. At last, however, he became desperate and would have killed me in any manner—but then it was too late in the day.”

What I got out of the venerable Patriarch, William Law, the friends of the study of Mormon History owe entirely to the masterly tact and diplomacy of Judge Law, the son of the good Doctor. Judge Tommy J. Law is an attorney and the publisher of a very successful weekly paper. He is a splendid figure of a man, with a flowing beard, every inch a whole hearted, frank gentleman. He venerates his father and the memory of his mother. “My father,” he says proudly, “was considered the best speaker in the Mississippi valley; many men said he would have beaten Beecher had he followed that career. I heard him myself some thirty years ago, deliver a Fourth of July speech. He kept his audience spellbound, his influence was truly magnetic. Wilson Law was one of the finest and strongest of men, but intellectually he was below my father. He was a few years older and died 70 years old. He had been a farmer for many years. We are five boys, two are lawyers, two doctors, and one is a merchant. John is a leading physician in Leadville,

Colorado. He is 45 years. The merchant, now a man of about 54, R. S. Law, lives in California. William Law junior lives in Chicago and is a very successful law practitioner. W. R. Law, a physician, about 40 years old (the youngest) lives in Darlington, Wisconsin. Our only sister, Mrs. Douglas, is the wife of the president of the Shullsburgh Bank. My mother was a most excellent woman, good to the people in the highest degree, charitable, visiting the sick. Everybody loved her and the whole country turned out when she was buried. My father received a terrible shock through her death. I don't believe there was ever a happier couple. For many months after her death he used to break down whenever he saw anybody who had known her. We all thought he would follow her soon. But he rallied, though he is yet unable to speak of her without tears. What has been said about Joseph having made an attempt on her is not true. In such a case my father would not have started a paper against him—he would have shot his head off. No man can be more delicate and conscientious about the relations of husband and wife and more apt to be terrible in such a case, than my father. Two years ago he had an attack of pneumonia. My brother came from Leadville and nursed father for two weeks. His life was despaired of but he rallied once more. He said at that time: "Well, my life has anyhow been a failure." Nobody can cure him of this idea, that Mormonism has ruined his career. A man less sensitive, less retiring would have made capital out of what he knew, lectured all over the country, etc. After leaving Burlington, Iowa, my father came to Wisconsin and lived for many years on a farm. He was the confidential physician of all his neighbors for ten miles around, the most popular physician there ever was. We always want him to give up practicing, but there are so many people who absolutely must have Dr. Law when they are sick.

"Yes, I was once in Utah, I saw Brigham Young but had no talk with him. One of his brothers, a very stout man, who kept a store, told me not to be on the street after dark. 'There are always some hotheaded young fellows,' said he, 'who would think of gaining great merit and reputation if they would injure a man of your kind. It is so very difficult to control them—so you had better keep at home after dark.'"

This is what Judge Law told me about the history of the Law family: "My father was born in Ireland, Tyrone County, his parents were of Scottish descent. They emigrated to America, when William Law was nine years old. He lived with his parents for years in Pennsylvania; he studied in Philadelphia and Pittsburg [sic]. His father was a wealthy farmer. Wm. Law later emigrated to Canada and married there a lady of the Silverthorn family and lived there till he went to Nauvoo. Wilson Law never lived in Canada. William Law was the youngest of five brothers, and he is the only surviving one."

I have tried hard to verify Judge Law's opinion about his father by asking lots of people in Shullsburgh and on the train. I heard nothing but "Oh, Dr. Law is a fine old gentleman; the most popular man we have round here." Mr. Sheaby, who keeps the hotel, in which I spent two days, said: "Dr. Law is a good, fine old man, honest and very kind to the people. I don't think that this

old man has a single enemy, and his wife was loved by everybody, too, she was the soul of kindness.”

The good Doctor had been quite sick for a good many weeks and it was very doubtful, whether he would receive me or not. Judge Law convinced him, that I was a pretty decent fellow and succeeded in getting admission for me, though the Doctor had said, pretty energetically, when he heard of my arrival: “I don’t want to be interviewed.” When I had finished my operations, the Dr. said: “I hope you will do the Laws more justice now”—and he said it with a good, dear look in those wonderfully eloquent, steel-blue eyes.

There is nothing in the aspect of the old gentleman that indicates 78 summers, except the white hands, that tremble a little. I said: “God bless you, Dr. Law,” when I went to the door. I looked round and I couldn’t help it—went back to shake his hand once more. I held out both hands; he put aside his black staff and grasped both my hands, and gave me such a hearty, warm, good shake. I said: “Doctor, be cheerful. You will live twenty years yet like William of Prussia. The Williams are a good race, I belong to it myself.”

There is a strong resemblance between the Law and the Godbe movement and still a stronger one between the great heart of Wm. Law and the deep, unselfish, noble soul of Wm. S. Godbe. The rebellions of 1844 and 1870, both came from great hearts, that had been destroyed by the lies and driven to despair by the cruel egotism of the Mormon leaders. And while speaking of hearts crushed by Mormonism, was there ever a kinder, a purer, a braver one than that beating in the bosom of Mrs. Sarah Pratt? And was this grand woman’s heart not martyred a thousand times worse, than those of our justly celebrated friends Law and Godbe? Men can resist, oppose, fight and wound and finally win and overthrow—but the wife and mother, what is her prize? The tears of her children on her grave—that is all. Well, may the Lord—not Joe’s Lord—bless those three Great souls and all those excellent friends that helped me to study and understand Mormon History; and may they all see the downfall of one of the greatest infamies in human history. God bless them all and may He bless the great, good, patriotic paper, the joy of the student, the consolation of the philosopher, the hope of the Gentile and Mormon sufferer.

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

W.WYL.