Junius And Joseph

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Chapter Nine

Two Conventions

For President, Senator Henry Clay. For Vice-President, Theodore Frelinghuysen.

*Clay Tribune*, New York City, May 4, 1844

For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, of Nauvoo, Illinois. “A Western man, with American principles.”

*The Prophet*, New York City, May 25, 1844

The Whig National Convention convened in Baltimore at the Universalist Church on May 1, 1844. A roll call just before noon confirmed that all twenty-five states in the Union were represented. Ambrose Spencer, of New York, was selected as president of the convention. Vice presidents represented each state. Jacob Burnet led the Ohio delegation. The Illinois representation included George T. M. Davis. John J. Hardin was also present, although not as an official delegate. Horace Greeley conferred with his fellow Whigs and reported on the convention proceedings.

A representative from Virginia addressed the convention. In his view, “The voice of the whig party of the country was so decidedly in favor of a certain individual for the presidency that it would be unnecessary to go through the usual form of a nomination.” He proposed a resolution declaring “HENRY CLAY, of KENTUCKY to be unanimously chosen as the whig candidate for the presidency of the United States, and that he be recommended to the people as such.” The resolution passed by acclamation, “the cheering and bravos . . . continued for a great length of time.” A committee, composed of five men, including longtime Clay supporter John McPherson Berrien of Georgia, and Clay’s sometime adversary Jacob Burnet, was formed to inform Henry Clay of his nomination.

The challenge of selecting a vice presidential running mate lay ahead. The Honorable George Evans of Maine and John M. Clayton of Delaware withdrew their names from consideration. Many expected Judge John McLean of Ohio to run.

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2. *The Prophet*, 25 May 1844
McLean’s letter declining the vice presidential nomination was read before the convention and greeted with acclaim from the floor.

With McLean no longer in the running, a New York representative suggested that each state delegation “appoint one of their number to form a Committee” which would “collect the votes of the several delegates” to determine who would run in the vice presidency slot. Jacob Burnet asked if that would mean the nomination would go “to the gentleman receiving the highest number of votes.” The New York representative answered in the affirmative. The candidate “reported by the Committee” would then be accepted or rejected by the convention as a whole. Burnet objected. If a state was not fully represented at the convention, its vote would be effectively discounted. Burnet proposed that “the Delegation from each State should cast the full Electoral Vote for that State.” Each delegation would choose its own candidate, he argued, thereby avoiding the potential of a split vote within a state. Burnet’s block voting strategy was unsuccessful.

With two hundred and seventy-five delegates present, a simple majority of 138 votes would be required for a nomination to succeed. Four men were nominated for the vice presidency: Millard Filmore of New York, John Davis of Massachusetts, Theodore Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, and John Sergeant of Pennsylvania.

The first vote resulted in: John Sergeant, 38; Millard Fillmore, 53; John Davis, 83; Theodore Frelinghuysen, 101. The two largest delegations, Ohio and New York, prevented the choice from settling on Frelinghuysen the first round—20 of Ohio’s 23 votes went for Davis; 35 of New York’s 36 votes went for Fillmore.

The second vote: John Sergeant, 32; Millard Fillmore, 57; John Davis, 74; Theodore Frelinghuysen, 118. Ohio’s delegates remained with Davis (19), with 4 going to Fillmore. New York stayed behind Fillmore (35); only one voted for Frelinghuysen. Sergeant’s candidacy, as the lowest vote getter, was withdrawn.

The third vote: John Davis, 76; Millard Fillmore, 40; Theodore Frelinghuysen, 155. As expected, Massachusetts voted with Davis (12), Ohio stayed with Davis (19), while New York supported Fillmore (29). Theodore Frelinghuysen was announced as “the candidate of the convention for the office of vice president of the United States.”

Burnet offered a resolution that the nomination be made unanimous. Representatives from Massachusetts and New York concurred in their support. Alfred Kelley, of Ohio, noted that because the state had brought Davis into the field, they “could not honorably desert so honorable a man.” Since the convention had fairly chosen Frelinghuysen, however, “no state would support [him] with more unanimity than the state of Ohio.”

The question was taken. “The resolution was unanimously adopted amidst loud and repeated cheers.” Whig principles espoused by Clay and Frelinghuysen were summed up for the assembly:

A well regulated national currency; a tariff or revenue to defray the necessary expenses of the government, and discriminating with special reference to the protection of the domestic labor of the country; the distribution of the proceeds of the sales of public lands; a single term for the presidency; a reform of executive usurpations:—and, generally—such an administration of the affairs of the country as
shall impart to every branch of the public service the greatest practicable efficiency, controlled by a well regulated and wise economy.  

Someone in the crowd “called out for a rhyme.” Illinois State Representative in Congress, John J. Hardin, penned some lines and sent them down to the convention floor.

Our Country’s flag aloft we raise—
Our hopes now high, and upward rising;
In burning words it there displays
The names of Clay and Frelinghuysen!

On the second of May, a Young Men’s National Ratification Convention met in the same hall. The assembly was even grander than the day before. Thought to be “the largest and most imposing political assemblage ever assembled,” numbering in the tens of thousands, every state in the Union was represented, “several of them by thousands of delegates.”

Representatives crowded into the streets and took their assigned places in formation, to be part of a parade later in the day. Countless floats and displays struggled to outdo each other. A triumphal arch, forty-five feet high, spanned Baltimore Street at the intersection of Calvert. The base of each capital was inscribed with Whig Principles, columns were inscribed with the words: Union, Peace, Encouragement to Industry, Sound Currency, Honest Administration, Uphold the Constitution, Distribution of the Public lands, No Spoils Principles, Executive restraint—One Term.

Another arch, thirty-seven feet in height, spanning Baltimore at Hanover Street, contained likenesses of William Henry Harrison and Henry Clay. A prominent inscription read, “UNION, PEACE, AND PATIENCE,” a phrase taken from Clay’s Raleigh letter (published three days before the opening of the nominating convention) declaring his opposition to the annexation of Texas. A series of blocks inscribed with Whig principles added “States Rights” to the earlier list.

The Young Men’s Convention ratified the choices of Clay and Frelinghuysen as the Whig presidential and vice presidential candidates in 1844. “The response [was] loud as tens of thousands of voices could make it.”

Judge John McPherson Berrien read the correspondence from the nominating committee to Henry Clay. Clay’s letter of acceptance, dated May 2, was likewise read before the assembly.

3. The convention is reported in *Niles’ National Register* for 4 May 1844. The listing of delegates can be found on 147, where Cyrus Edwards of Illinois is mistakenly listed as “Silas.” The *Clay Tribune* of May 4 is correct.

4. Thomas Gregg reported, “The four lines of verse in our Editorial head, are ascribed to Gen. Hardin, member of congress from this State. On the nomination of Frelinghuysen, some one in the crowd called out for a rhyme, in connection with the [names]. Mr. Hardin immediately wrote and sent up those line[s], which were received with great applause. We adopt them as our motto.” *Upper Mississippian*, 18 May 1844.

In Nauvoo, *Times and Seasons* had just published the general conference minutes (including Sidney Rigdon’s remarks on the Kingdom of God) and promised, “owing to the extensive call” for the document, to include “Gen. Smith’s Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States” in the next issue. Lucien Woodworth, secret ambassador from Nauvoo to the Republic of Texas, reported on his mission before the Council of Fifty on May 3. “The prospect of our obtaining room to form a colony there [in Texas] is fair,” Woodworth assured them. Joseph Smith addressed the council. “Let George Miller and Lyman Wight take the Black River company and their friends, and go to Texas,” he said, “to the confines [border] of Mexico in the Cordilleras mountains; and at the same time let brother Woodworth, who has just returned from Texas, go back to the seat of government in Texas, to intercede for a tract of country which we, the Church, might have control over, that we might find a resting place for a little season.” Support from the Council of Fifty was unanimous.6

“I have petitioned the president and Congress assembled,” Joseph reminded them, “to give me the command of [one hundred thousand] men, in some part or portion of the confines [border] of Mexico, for our safety, and for the protection of the government of the United States.” Not having yet received an answer from the capital, Joseph assigned George Miller to his home state of Kentucky, to “visit Henry Clay, and others of high standing in the United States government.”7

Lyman Wight was to “go to the City of Washington, and to all the Eastern Cities of note, and hold [Joseph] up as a candidate for President of the United States at the ensuing election.” At the conclusion of their political missions, Miller and Wight were to “go forth with the Black river company to perform the Mission which has been voted this day.” Lucien Woodworth, George Miller, and Uriah Brown, “the oldest and most prominent non-Mormon in the Council of Fifty” were assigned as “commissioners appointed to meet the Texan Congress” in the fall of 1844, “to sanction or ratify the said treaty, partly entered into by our minister [Woodworth] and the Texan cabinet.” Council support was again unanimous.8

“All things are going on gloriously at Nauvoo,” Brigham Young and Willard Richards wrote to the head of the church’s mission in England later that day. “We shall make a great wake in the nation. Joseph for President . . . We have already received several hundred volunteers to go out electioneering and preaching and more offering. We go for storming the nation . . . We shall have a State Convention at Nauvoo on the 17th inst.,—an election. A great many are believing the doctrine. If any of the brethren wish to go to Texas, we have no particular objection,” Young and Richards assured the mission president. “You may send a hundred thousand there if you can.” “The kingdom is organized,” they went on, alluding to the recent decisions by the Council of Fifty, “and, although as yet no bigger than a grain of mustard seed,

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the little plant is in a flourishing condition, and our prospects brighter than ever. Cousin Lemuel,” referring to the American Indian, “is very friendly, and cultivating the spirit of peace and union in his family very extensively.”

On May 6, Sidney Rigdon was selected by the Council of Fifty to serve as Joseph’s vice presidential running mate. Not having forgotten their differences, Joseph gave Sidney a blessing. “Let him be a candidate for Vice President, and place upon him every mark of honour and respect, that he may have every possible inducement to abide in the truth, being borne up by the good feelings of his brethren.” Rigdon prepared to leave Nauvoo and take up residence in Pittsburgh.

Steamboat elections, “the common mode of testing the success of candidates for the Presidency,” were held for the amusement of passengers journeying the Mississippi River to gauge the strength of the various contenders. One tally was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes for Gentleman</th>
<th>Votes for Lady</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Joseph Smith</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Clay</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Van Buren</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On another occasion, it was “nip and tuck” between Van Buren and Joseph Smith. Each candidate received two votes.

Up on the Nauvoo hill, recently excommunicated William Law (Joseph’s former counselor) met with a number of his followers. In late March Joseph Smith had been informed that Law and Foster, together with Chauncey L. Higbee and non-Mormon Joseph H. Jackson, were engaged in a conspiracy to “destroy all the Smith family in a few weeks.” On April 18, a meeting of the Nauvoo High Council and the Quorum of the Twelve was held to consider the matter. William Law, his wife Jane Law, Wilson Law, and Robert D. Foster “were cut off from the church by unanimous vote.” The charge was “unchristianlike conduct.” Law held the first conference of the Reformed Mormon Church on Sunday April 21. Membership in the fledgling organization soon numbered in the hundreds.

Francis M. Higbee, one of the leaders of the reform movement, addressed a letter to Thomas Gregg, former editor of the Warsaw Message, presently working in Rock Island as assistant editor of the pro-Henry Clay Upper Mississippian. Higbee told Gregg that he had “purchased a 5 d press” with a 25” x 38” platen, “& fixtures,” scheduled to arrive in a day or two on a riverboat from Quincy. The printing

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10. Smith, American Prophet’s Record, 477 [6 May 1844]. Hyde, Speech, 1845, 10 (candidate quote). This is not the best source, but is apparently the only published reference (Cook, Revelations, 364). The authors prefer to refer to the pronouncement as a blessing regarding Rigdon’s vice presidency rather than a revelation. On Rigdon’s departure from Nauvoo, see Nauvoo Neighbor, 8 May 1844. A short notice following Joseph Smith’s Views notes, “President S. Rigdon is about to remove to Pittsburgh, the place of his former residence.”
12. Times and Seasons, 5.8:511. See the response in the Preamble of the Nauvoo Expositor, 7 June 1844, beginning, “On Thursday evening, the 18th of April, there was a council called, unknown to the Church, which tried, condemned, and cut off brothers Wm. Law . . . which we contend is contrary to the book of Doctrine and Covenants.”
supplies, purchased in St. Louis, would reach Nauvoo towards the middle of the month aboard the Die Vernon. Higbee exercised appropriate caution in not informing Gregg that the press had been purchased from fellow Whig Abraham Jonas. If the transaction became public knowledge, attention would be drawn immediately to the fact that the Illinois Whigs were behind the Mormon prophet’s impending downfall.13

Despite a warning by Joseph Smith that a dissident press “shall not be set up in Nauvoo,” Higbee assured Gregg that they would have the first issue off the press by the last week in May. “The paper I think we will call the Nauvoo Expositor,” Higbee said.14

The Reformers, as they were known, continued to believe in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants (containing the earlier revelations of Joseph Smith). Joseph Smith was a prophet, they believed, but he had fallen from grace. The Reformers aimed to reveal Joseph Smith’s “peculiar and particular mode of Legislation” (especially what they saw as his abuse of the right of habeas corpus) and supply a “dissertation upon his delectable plan of Government.”

Informing the world about the secretive Council of Fifty and its political activities was not the only objective of the Expositor. Mormon polygamy was a more immediate target. “Above all,” Higbee promised, “it shall be the organ through which we will herald his mormon ribaldry. It shall also contain a full and complete expose of his mormon seraglio, or Nauvoo Harem—; and his unparalleled and unheard of attempts at seduction.” In a postscript Higbee suggested that Gregg “publish that portion of this [letter] you please or all if you see fit,” and concluded with the words, “Yours in great haste.”15

The “Prospectus of the Nauvoo Expositor” was published on May 10. It stressed that the oversize Imperial sheet would remain politically neutral (“without taking a decided stand in favor of either of the great Political Parties of the country”) while advocating, in part, “the Unconditional Repeal of the Nauvoo City Charter . . . to restrain and correct the abuses of the UNIT POWER—to ward off the Iron Rod which is held over the devoted heads of the citizens of Nauvoo and the surrounding country—to advocate unmitigated DISOBEDIENCE to POLITICAL REVELATIONS . . . [by a] . . . SELF-CONSTITUTED MONARCH . . . to oppose, with uncompromising hostility any UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE or any preliminary step tending to the same.”

The first issue was scheduled to appear on Friday, June 7, 1844. Sylvester Emmons, a non-Mormon member of the Nauvoo City Council, would serve as editor. “From an acquaintance with the dignity of character, and literary qualifications of

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15. Francis M. Higbee to Thomas Gregg [May 1844], Mormon Collection, Chicago Historical Society.
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this gentleman,” the Reformers believed, “assured that the ‘Nauvoo Expositor,’ must and will sustain a high and honorable reputation.” The prospectus was signed by William Law, Wilson Law, Charles Ivins, Francis M. Higbee, Robert D. Foster, and Charles A. Foster.16

The Nauvoo home of William Law became the gathering place for disaffected Mormons and others sympathetic to the cause of the Reformers. “The new church appears to be going ahead,” the Warsaw Signal reported. “On last Sunday,” May 12, “there were about three hundred assembled at Mr. Law’s house in Nauvoo, and listened with much seeming pleasure to a sermon from Elder Blakely, who denounced Smith as a fallen prophet. He treated the Spiritual wife doctrine without gloves, and repudiated Smith’s plan on uniting Church and State.” William Law, “in strong language,” gave his reasons for withdrawing from the “false prophet.” Francis M. Higbee read a series of resolutions which clarified the areas of disagreement and why they found it necessary to separate themselves from the main Mormon church, calling for “the repeal of the Nauvoo City Charter,” the discontinuance of all “political revelations, and unconstitutional ordinances.”17

Robert D. Foster, a justice of the peace recently cut off from the church, began collecting affidavits documenting polygamy at Nauvoo. William Law testified before Foster that Hyrum Smith showed him a “revelation from God . . . [which] authorized certain men to have more wives than one at a time, in this world and in the world to come. It said this was the law, and commanded Joseph to enter into the law . . . and also that he should administer [it] to others.” Jane Law, William’s wife, affirmed that she had also read the revelation, which “set forth that those women who would not allow their husbands to have more wives than one should be under condemnation before God.”18

The initial Mormon response to the “Prospectus” was a letter dated May 12: published in the Nauvoo Neighbor. Written from the Nauvoo Mansion and signed “An American,” the author asserted that the Mormons “have been most woefully misrepresented and abused . . . by persons who know nothing of their principles and doctrines . . . There is not a city within my knowledge that can boast of a more enterprising and industrious people than Nauvoo,” the writer proclaimed. And, “General Smith is a man who understands the political history of his country as well as the religious history of the world, as perfectly as any politician or religionist I have ever met with. He advances ideas which if carried into effect would greatly benefit the nation in point of commerce and finance . . . Mr. Smith’s ‘Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government’ manifest a Republican spirit, and if carried out, would soon place the nation in a prosperous condition.” Claiming to be a non-Mormon, the writer had “heretofore been a warm advocate of the measures of the Whig party but, considering General Smith’s views and sentiments to be worthy the applause of every citizen of the United States, and especially the yeomanry of the country, I

16. Prospectus of the Nauvoo Expositor, 10 May 1844, photostatic copy, Martin Collection, Regional Archives, Western Illinois University.


18. William Law affidavit, 4 May 1844, Jane Law affidavit, 4 May 1844, in Nauvoo Expositor, 7 June 1844.
shall in every instance advocate his principles and use my utmost influence in his favor.”19

What “An American” failed to note was that on the day he wrote his supportive letter, Joseph Smith made an even stronger declaration of his views and destiny during the Sunday meetings. “God will always protect me until my mission is fulfilled,” the prophet informed the Saints there assembled. “I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the Kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord,” he said, “and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world.” He clarified his position. “It will not be by sword or gun that his kingdom will roll on: the power of truth is such that all nations will be under the necessity of obeying the Gospel.” And yet personal sacrifice would also be required. “It may be that the Saints will have to beat their plows into swords, for it will not do for men to sit down patiently and see their children destroyed.” That moment was rapidly approaching.20

Word soon reached Nauvoo that Henry Clay had been nominated by the Whig national meetings in Baltimore. “I arrived in the city two days after the great Whig convention,” Council of Fifty member David S. Hollister wrote to the prophet. “All is joy and enthusiasm among the Whigs, while doubt and consternation are manifested among the Democrats. The convention has been got up at immense expense; hundreds of thousands of dollars have been expended.” The Democratic national convention was scheduled for Baltimore on May 27, Hollister noted. “In the meantime,” he would “do what [was] in [his] power for the promotion of the good cause.”21

Dr. Goforth returned to Nauvoo in anticipation of the Mormon political convention to be held there on May 17. He had been invited by the “Friends of General Joseph Smith” to serve as a representative to the Illinois State Convention at Nauvoo and advance the interests of the Saints at an independent national convention (hosted by the Mormons) to be held in Baltimore in July.

The invitation was not by chance. Dr. Goforth was the only non-Mormon to make an address at the dedication of the Masonic hall earlier in the spring. His political reputation was considerable. Dr. Goforth had been a leading force behind the 1823 Illinois convention that nominated General Andrew Jackson for president. At that time Goforth was appointed chairman of the Committee of Resolutions. “The resolutions, then drafted were stigmatized by the whigs as the ‘Goforth Resolutions,—they went forth and general Jackson was elected.” The Mormons were hopeful that Goforth might be equally successful in promoting Joseph Smith in 1844. “All the difference we look for now,” one observer commented, “is that they will go forth a little quicker, and that Gen. Smith, will be elected the first trial.”22

Goforth was accompanied by two gentlemen from the East, Josiah Quincy Jr. and Charles Francis Adams, a son of John Quincy Adams, whom he met on the steamship *Amaranth* following its departure from Quincy. Previous to their arrival in the Holy City, Goforth confided to the two men that he was “going to Nauvoo, to promote the election of the just nominated Henry Clay.” Shortly after his arrival,

22. Editorial, Nauvoo Neighbor, 22 May 1844.
Goforth met with members of William Law’s Reform movement. They encouraged Goforth to support them by publicly opposing Joseph Smith. Knowing that supporting the Reformers would undermine his own mission, Goforth was not yet prepared to join them.23

Adams and Quincy visited with the prophet, who expounded on his political views. Joseph Smith “denounced the Missouri Compromise as an unjustifiable concession for the benefit of slavery,” Quincy recorded. The chief topic of conversation was “Henry Clay’s bid for the presidency.” The Boston visitor felt that “Dr. Goforth might have spared himself the trouble of coming to Nauvoo to electioneer for a duelist who would fire at John Randolph,” in a contest arising out of charges that Clay had engaged in bribery and forgery, “but was not brave enough to protect the Saints in their rights as American citizens.”

Joseph Smith concluded his political discourse by informing his distinguished visitors “what he would do, were he President of the United States,” and expressed the hope that “he might one day so hold the balance between parties as to render his election to that office by no means unlikely.” Adams and Quincy would depart Nauvoo on May 16.24

The time had now come for Joseph to reply to Henry Clay’s letter of November 15, 1843. On the evening of May 15 Joseph had William W. Phelps “read [his] rejoinder to Clay’s letter for the first time.” It was a scathing retort, running to several closely spaced sheets. On the issues highlighted in General Smith’s Views, Joseph was especially strident. “Your shrinkage is truly wonderful!” the prophet admonished the Kentucky senator.

Not only your banking system, and high tariff project, have vanished from your mind ‘like the baseless fabric of a vision,’ but the ‘annexation of Texas’ has touched your pathetic sensibilities of national pride so acutely, that the poor Texians, your own brethren, may fall back into the ferocity of Mexico, or be sold at auction to British stock jobbers, and all is well, for ‘I,’ the old senator from Kentucky, am fearful it would militate against my interest in the north, to enlarge the borders of the union in the south—Truly ‘a poor wise child is better than an old foolish king, who will be no longer admonished.’ Who ever heard of a nation that had too much territory? Was it ever bad policy to make friends? Has any people ever become too good to do good? No, never; but the ambition and vanity of some men have flown away with their wisdom and judgment, and left a creaking skeleton to occupy the place of a noble soul.25


The State Convention at Nauvoo convened “according to appointment” on May 17, 1844, in the assembly room above Joseph Smith’s store. General Uriah Brown, a non-Mormon businessman, inventor and member of the Council of Fifty, was appointed chairman. Dr. Goforth and other delegates presented their letters of introduction, which were read to the gathering:

Joseph Smith of Nauvoo is recognized respectfully as a candidate, declarative in the principles of Jeffersonianism, or Jefferson democracy, free trade, and sailor’s rights, and the protection of person and property.

A convention being about to be held in the City of Nauvoo on the 17th of this month (May), your name has been on every occasion given as a delegate to said convention, and through me the message to be imparted you, asking you to represent our expressions in the case.

Please say for us, as Americans, that we will support General Joseph Smith in preference to any other man that has given, or suffered his name to come before us as a candidate. And at the great Baltimore Convention, to be held on the 13th of July, our delegation to said convention be authorized to proclaim for us submission to the nominee as may be by them brought before the people, in case of a failure to nominate Joseph Smith (our choice), and unite approbatively for his support.26

Scribe William W. Phelps read Henry Clay’s letter to Joseph Smith (dated November 15, 1843) and “General Joseph Smith’s rejoinder,“ of May 13, “which was applauded by three cheers.” Dr. Goforth reprised his 1823 role as head of the Committee for Resolutions, working together with Elder John Taylor, scribe William W. Phelps, Joseph’s brother William Smith, and Elder Lucian R. Foster.27

Correspondence from New York’s Central Committee of the National Reform Association, which had requested a statement on government policy from Joseph Smith, “as a candidate for public office,” was also read. Joseph’s response was confident.28

Following a recess, the convention appointed a “committee to appoint electors” for the state of Illinois (again headed by Dr. Goforth) and a “central committee of correspondence” (headed by Dr. Willard Richards). Delegates from the “different states of the Union were then received by vote.” Attendance was somewhat low on account of “very heavy rains the preceding five days.” Illinois, with 15 delegates, including gunsmith John Browning, had the largest contingent; New York had 10 delegates; Pennsylvania (4); Ohio (7); Virginia (1); Massachusetts (2); New Jersey (4); Louisiana (2); Mississippi (3); Delaware (2); Vermont (2); Missouri (1); Maine (1); Tennessee (1); Kentucky (2, including General George Miller, who, although a resident of Nauvoo, represented Madison County); Indiana (1); Connecticut (1);

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Maryland (1); Rhode Island (2); New Hampshire (1); Michigan (1); Georgia (1); Alabama (1); South Carolina (1); North Carolina (1); Iowa (1); Arkansas (1).29

“It was moved, seconded, and carried by acclamation, that General Joseph Smith, of Illinois, be the choice of this convention for President of the United States.”

“It was moved, seconded, and carried by acclamation, that Sidney Rigdon, Esq., of Pennsylvania, be the choice of the Convention for Vice-President of the United States.”

More than a dozen resolutions were adopted by the convention:

1. Resolved, that from all the facts and appearances that are now visible in the United States, we believe that much imbecility and fraud is practiced by the officers of Government; and that to remedy these evils it is highly necessary that a virtuous people should arise in the panoply of their might, and with one heart and one mind correct these abuses by electing wise and honorable men to fill the various offices of Government.

2. Resolved, that as union is power, the permanency and continuance of our political institutions depend upon the correction of the abuses.

3. Resolved, that as all political parties of the present day have degraded themselves by adhering more or less to corrupt principles and practices, by fomenting discord and division among the people, being swallowed in the vortex of party spirit and sectional prejudices, until they have become insensible to the welfare of the people and the general good of the country; and knowing that there are good men among all parties in whose bosoms burn the fire of pure patriotism, we invite them, by the love of liberty, by the sacred honor of freemen, by the patriotism of the illustrious fathers of our freedom, by the glorious love of country, and by the holy principles of ’76, to come over and help us to reform the Government.

4. Resolved, that to redress all wrongs, the government of the United States, with the President at its head, is as powerful in its sphere as Jehovah is in His.

(This reflected a major shift in the interpretation of the role of the president of the United States. The resolution argued that the president should become a protector of the oppressed, to “redress all wrongs,” referring, of course, in part to the injuries suffered by the Saints during their tribulations in Ohio and Missouri.)

5. Resolved, that the better to carry out the principles of liberty and equal rights, Jeffersonian democracy, free trade, and sailor’s rights, and the protection of person and property, we will support General Joseph Smith, of Illinois, for the President of the United States at the ensuing election.

6. Resolved, that we will support Sidney Rigdon, Esq., of Pennsylvania, for the Vice-Presidency.

7. Resolved, that we will hold a National Convention at Baltimore on Saturday, the 13th day of July.30

Orson Hyde, Heber C. Kimball, David S. Hollister, Orson Pratt, and Lyman Wight, all members of the Council of Fifty, were elected to serve as Baltimore convention representatives. Sidney Rigdon addressed the meeting. He exposed “the

political dishonesty of both Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren . . . and the present [degraded] condition of the country.” Rigdon was followed by General Joseph Smith and Dr. William Gano Goforth, Lyman Wight, William W. Phelps, John Taylor, Hyrum Smith, and John S. Reid, Esquire.31

Dr. Goforth expounded upon “the past glories of the republic, and the wrongs suffered by the Latter-day Saints in Missouri.” Doubtless unnoticed by most, Dr. Goforth also maintained his commitment to the Whig cause. At the conclusion of his political speech the esteemed doctor promised to support “JOSEPH SMITH the proclaimer of Jefferson Democracy, of Free trade and Sailors rights and protection of Person and Property” at the July Baltimore convention. Unless, of course, there was a demonstrated “want of success in the nomination.” In such a case (not forgetting his commission in the letter of invitation), Goforth would “instruct our delegates to say Henry Clay.”32

A caucus was held that evening. Unable to attend due to the illness of his wife, Emma, Joseph later joined a spontaneous street meeting. The mood was exultant. A barrel of tar burned brightly. Toasts were made. The prophet’s supporters raised him up on their shoulders, carried him “twice around the fire” and escorted him to the Nauvoo Mansion by a marching band. Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign was officially under way.33

31. Ibid., 6:392.
32. Ibid. Nauvoo Neighbor, 22 May 1844.
33. Smith, History of the Church 6:397.