

Tragedy: Death of a Prophet

As the church's prophet and leader, Joseph Smith gave instructions in other ways beside written revelations. A few of his remarks and predictions are given below to show some of the topics of the times. Building the Nauvoo House and the Nauvoo Temple was indicated in a revelation received in January 1841. Three years later, Joseph Smith still spoke "on the importance of building the Nauvoo House stressing that the time had come to build it. and the church must either do it or suffer the condemnation of not fulfilling the commandments of God."¹

Joseph Smith would at times prophesy about political opponents and the nation as a whole. On June 30, 1843, Smith made comments about Illinois state governor Thomas Ford; and in December Joseph believed that, if a petition to Congress was not successful, the government would be broken up. Willard Richards, the prophet's secretary and church historian, recorded the following in the journal he kept for Joseph Smith:

I prophecy in the name of the Lord God that Governor Ford by granting the write [writ] against me has damned himself politically and his carcass [carcass] will stink on the face of the earth food for the cairion [carrion] crow & Turkey buzzard.²

I prophecy by virtue of the holy Priesthood, vested in me, in the name of Jesus Christ that if congress will not hear our petition, and grant us protection, they shall be broken up as a government and God shall damn them, and there shall nothing be left of them, not even a grease spot.³

The year 1844 saw significant developments as Joseph Smith's name was put forth at the lower end of the political process as a candidate for the office of president of the United States. Smith, as Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion military force, was known throughout Illinois and was a widely publicized individual.

Since the middle of 1842, William W. Phelps, a former confidant, came to Nauvoo from Ohio, and became the political advisor to Joseph Smith. As a close friend of the prophet, Phelps

¹ William Clayton, Journal, April 6, 1843. On the Nauvoo House see *Times and Seasons* 4 (November 15, 1842):11. Later in March 1844 Joseph Smith said, "he did not know but it was best to let the Nauvoo house be till the temple is completed. – we need the temple more than any thing else. . . . we will let the Nauvoo house stand till the temple is done and we will put all our forces on the temple." Joseph Smith, Journal, March 4, 1844.

² Joseph Smith, Journal, June 30, 1843.

³ *Ibid.*, December 16, 1843. In April 1844 Joseph prophesied "the entire overthrow of this nation in a few years." William Clayton, Journal, April 13, 1844.

composed letters for President Smith. Phelps was the main person behind the writing of the political views to which Smith attached his name.⁴

On January 29, 1844, it was "moved by Willard Richards and voted unanimously that we have independent electors and that Joseph Smith be a candidate for the next presidency [of the United States] and that we use all honorable means to secure his election."⁵ Smith's journal shows the involvement of William Phelps in writing *General Smith's Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States*.⁶ In the latter part of February 1,500 copies of the *General Smith's Views* were published. Missionaries were sent to preach the gospel and also support Joseph Smith's candidacy for the United States presidency. This was known as electioneering.

The publication gave positions on domestic issues such as abolishing slavery, with Congress paying for freed slaves by revenue from the sale of public lands, and the deduction of pay from members of Congress. Other ideas included having a national bank, setting prisoners free, and confinement or death for murders. On foreign issues was the idea of taking into the United States the territory of Oregon and accepting Texas as a state if it requested admission. Included was an interesting religious comment:

Like the good Samaritan, send every lawyer as soon as he repents and obeys the ordinances of heaven, to preach the gospel to the destitute, without purse or scrip, pouring in the oil and the wine: a learned priesthood is certainly more honorable than a "hireling clergy".

In March Willard Richards learned that the chosen vice presidential candidate, fifty-five year old James Arlington Bennet, baptized by Brigham Young in August 1843, reported that he was born in Ireland. But this was not the case since he was actually born in New York. James Bennet wrote to Richards in April:

If you can by any supernatural means elect Brother Joseph [Smith] President of the U. States, I have not a doubt but that he would govern the people and administer the laws in good faith, and with righteous intentions, but I can see no natural means by what he has the slightest chance of receiving the votes even of one state. If the object of his friends be to aid the cause of Mormonism in foreign lands, or in this country among a certain class of persons, by holding its chief up for the highest office in the gift of the people, then I think they are somewhat in the right track, but if they are aiming in reality at that high office then I must say that at present they, in my opinion, are on a wild goose chase.⁷

⁴ Bruce A. Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Service in Nauvoo as Joseph Smith's Political Clerk," *Brigham Young University Studies* 32 (Winter/Spring 1992):81-94. W.W. Phelps assisted Willard Richards in continuing the compilation of the "History of Joseph Smith," which was being published in the *Times and Seasons*. By March 1844 the history was written to the middle of 1838 and printed to August 1831.

⁵ Joseph Smith, Journal, January 29, 1844.

⁶ John Taylor, Printer: Nauvoo, Illinois, 1844. This was a twelve-page printed work.

⁷ James Arlington Bennet to "Dear Doctor" [Willard Richards], April 14, 1844, typed copy, emphasis omitted, CHL. Bennet wrote in the letter, "I wish for no nomination for Vice President

Another secret organization had been organized March 10-11, it was the Council or Quorum of Fifty, or Kingdom of God of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This council consisted of about fifty men who were bound by secrecy and sworn in allegiance to chairman Joseph Smith. Members of the Kingdom of God were forming a theocracy wherein the voice of God was to become the voice of the council. They envisioned their group as the kingdom that Daniel of the Old Testament saw coming out of a mountain and filling the earth. On the thirteenth Brigham Young recorded in his journal that a number of persons organized themselves "into a compacted [compacted] Boddy [Body] for the further advenment [advancement] of the gospel of Christ."⁸ As recorded in the minutes, the name of the select organization was the result of a revelation pronounced by church president Joseph Smith on March 14.

The name of the council was discussed and the Lord was pleased to give the following Revelation; Verily thus saith the Lord, this is the name by which you shall be called, The Kingdom of God and his Laws, with the keys and power thereof, and judgment in the hands of his servants. Ahman Christ.⁹

At a church conference on April 5, Sidney Rigdon of the First Presidency mentioned in his discourse: "When God sets up a system of salvation, he sets up a system of government; when I speak of a government I mean what I say; I mean government that shall rule over temporal and spiritual affairs."¹⁰ Joseph Smith preached a funeral discourse for King Follett who died before conference was held. A report from the clerks of the conference, Thomas Bullock and William Clayton, was published in *Times and Seasons*. Smith remarks included his teachings of a plurality of Gods.¹¹

Six days later, at a meeting of the Council of Fifty, Rigdon presented a history of the council and said, "The design was to form a Theocracy according to the will of Heaven, planted without any intention to interfere with any government of the world. We wish to have nothing to do with them. . . . It is nevertheless necessary to be careful and prudent inasmuch as there is so much disposition in the minds of men to cry treason at every thing we do." Rigdon "said further that we had chosen our beloved Prest. Joseph Smith as our standing chairman, and our mouth between us and our God."¹²

It was also in this secret group of men where they received "from this time henceforth and forever, Joseph Smith, as our Prophet, Priest & King, and uphold him in that capacity in which God has anointed him." The council adjourned the morning meeting "with shouts of

of the U. States, or other civil station, yet the *idea* of my not being a naive born citizen would not exclude me from the office."

⁸ Brigham Young, Journal, March 13, 1844, holograph, CHL.

⁹ Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 14, 1844, in Matthew J. Grow, Ronald K. Esplin, Mark Ashurst-McGee, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, and Jeffrey D. Mahas, eds., *Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*, vol. 1 of the Administrative Records series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016), 48-49 (hereafter as *Council of Fifty, Minutes*). The minutes are located in MS 30055, Council of Fifty record books, 1844-1846, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

¹⁰ "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 9 (May 1, 1844): 524.

¹¹ "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 5 (August 15, 1844):612-17.

¹² *Council of Fifty, Minutes*, April 11, 1844, 88-89.

Hossanna [*sic*] to God and the Lamb Amen and Amen.”¹³ This occurred on April 11, 1844, at a meeting in the Nauvoo Masonic Hall, but the action did not remain a secret for long. A report published in New York from an individual who visited Nauvoo said:

In many respects, Joe [Smith] has the advantage over his illustrious predecessor [Mahomet]: he, Joe, is not only Prophet, but is also Mormon King, and in his triune function of Prophet, Priest and King, he lords it over God's heritage with such a strict eye to the Lord's treasury, that he will by and by be enabled to present the world with a faint imitation of the outward glories of Solomon's temple.¹⁴

At the April 18 council meeting Elder David Yearsley (1808-49), a merchant and council member, commented on the setting up the kingdom:

We can try to elect our president for a scare crow, but how can a man be elected president when he is already proclaimed king. Can he give up his office for a smaller one.[?] He is perfectly willing to go and electioneer, to blind the eyes of the people, but he wants to see our king upheld in his office here.¹⁵

Joseph Smith was careful in cautioning council members, “It is not wisdom to use the term ‘king’ all the while. Let us use the term ‘proper source’ instead of ‘king’ and it will be all understood and no person can take advantage.”¹⁶

There was pressure from within the church by stalwart William Law. There were some advance teachings of the Joseph Smith that William Law could not accept. Law had been appointed to the First Presidency in January 1841 and initiated into the Masonic Lodge in April 1842. He received his endowment in the Holy Order in May, and again a year later, but now rejected Smith's teaching regarding the practice of plural marriage and secret practices that he regarded as not included in the teachings found in the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants.

The April 18 Council of Fifty meeting ended about 5:30 p.m., followed by a special “council of the authorities”¹⁷ at 6:00 pm. While six members of the Quorum of the Twelve and seven of the Nauvoo High Council were present, this was neither a High Council meeting nor a council under Bishop Newel K. Whitney, who was also in attendance. Of the thirty-two men present at the meeting twenty-three were members of the Council of Fifty.¹⁸ William Clayton wrote in his journal: “I also attended in council with the Twelve & High Council on the case of the Laws & R[obert]. D. Foster – when Wm Law & his wife Jane Law – Wilson Law and R. D.

¹³ *Council of Fifty, Minutes*, April 11, 1844, 95-96.

¹⁴ “Life in Nauvoo,” April 25th, 1844, in *New-York Daily Tribune* vol. 4, no. 41, whole no. 975, May 28, 1844, p. 4, column 1.

¹⁵ *Council of Fifty, Minutes*, April 18, 1844, 125.

¹⁶ *Council of Fifty, Minutes*, April 18, 1844, 128.

¹⁷ Willard Richards Journal, April 18, 1844, MS 1490, Church History Library.

¹⁸ See Joseph Smith Journal, kept by Willard Richards, April 18, 1844, Church History Library; also in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, eds., *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843-June 1844* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015), 231-32.

Foster were cut off from the church by unanimous vote."¹⁹ Notably, neither Joseph Smith nor Sidney Rigdon attended. William and Jane Law and three other church members were excommunicated, and a notice to that effect was printed in the *Times and Seasons*:

Nauvoo, April, 18, 1844.

Robert D. Foster, Wilson Law, William Law, and Jane Law of Nauvoo; and Howard Smith, of Scott county, Illinois, for unchristian like conduct, were cut off from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, by the authorities of said church, and ordered to be published in the Times and Seasons.

W. RICHARDS,
Church Recorder.²⁰

Even after this event there was still time for negotiation and reconciliation between the church and the Law family. At the May 6, 1844 Council of Fifty meeting Sidney Rigdon “reported that he had had a labored with the Laws without accomplishing any thing, but judged that they had taken a course which they never would become reconciled.” The Council of Fifty turned the offenders over “to the buffetings of Satan.”²¹ William Law afterwards helped establish the *Nauvoo Expositor*, a newspaper that would soon publish negative articles against both the church and the Nauvoo city charter.²²

This led to the accusation by William Law that the proceedings held were illegal and they were not notified of any charges. Shortly afterwards Law started a new reformed church with himself as president. The complaint relating to their excommunication appeared in the *Nauvoo Expositor*:

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, Wilson Law, and sister Law, (Wm's. wife,) brother R. D. Foster, and one brother Smith, with whom we are unacquainted; which we contend is contrary to the book of Doctrine and Covenants, for our law condemnest no man untill he is heard.²³

A committee had been appointed to write a constitution and bylaws of the Council of Fifty but had been unable to complete the assignment. Accordingly, Joseph Smith proclaimed a revelation on April 25 as follows:

Verily thus saith the Lord, ye are my constitution, and I am your God, and ye are my spokesmen. From henceforth do as I shall command you. Saith the Lord.²⁴

At the May 6 council meeting Sidney Rigdon was chosen to be the candidate for the vice presidency as the running mate with Smith. The minutes recorded that Lyman Wight “reminded

¹⁹ William Clayton, Journal, April 18, 1844. Howard Smith was also excommunicated at the same time. The minutes of this meeting were not recorded in the high council minutes.

²⁰ *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 8 (April 15, 1844): 511, printed circa April 20, 1844.

²¹ *Council of Fifty, Minutes*, May 6, 1844, 152, 154.

²² [No title], *Nauvoo Expositor* 1 (June 7, 1844): 2, column 3.

²³ *Nauvoo Expositor* 1 (June 7, 1844):2, Nauvoo, Illinois.

²⁴ *Council of Fifty, Minutes*, April 25, 1844, 136-37.

Er [Elder] Rigdon of a certain prophecy, and that the Lord promised to vex the nations and the nation could not be vexed worse than for Joseph to be president and brother Rigdon vice President." Rigdon stated "as the Lord God lives Joseph shall be President next term and I will follow him."²⁵ Six days later Joseph Smith proclaimed in a speech near the Nauvoo temple, "I calculate to be one of the Instruments of setting up the Kingdom of Daniel, by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world."²⁶

On May 17 the Illinois state convention was held in the assembly room of Joseph's store. This convention then made General Joseph Smith its choice for president of the United States with Sidney Rigdon as vice president. A convention was planned for Baltimore in July. John S. Reed gave a speech supporting Smith. He was Joseph's lawyer in the summer of 1830. Reed recalled, "I early discovered that his mind was constantly in search of truth, expressing an anxious desire to know the will of God concerning his children here below, often speaking of those things which professed christians believe in."²⁷ The *Times and Seasons* announced in the June 1 issue:

FOR PRESIDENT,
 GEN. JOSEPH SMITH,
 NAUVOO, ILLINOIS.



FOR VICE PRESIDENT,
 Sidney Rigdon, Esq:
 OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Curtis Edwin Bolton, who saw Joseph Smith for the last time in May, wrote concerning Joseph, "He was Standing with his youngest boy in his arms, at the brow of the hill on the west side of the Nauvoo House in the middle of the Street. No one was near him. He was a most beautiful formed man. And was laughing pleasantly to the brethren on board the Steamboat who were leaving to go a preaching."²⁸

That same month Willard Richards recorded that "a son of John Quincy Adams [Charles Francis Adams], Mr [Josiah] Quincy, & Dr Goforth visited at the Mansion."²⁹ Charles Adams wrote of his visit to Nauvoo. He said that Smith took them into his mother's chamber where Joseph Smith:

showed us four Egyptian mummies stripped and then undertook to explain the contents of a chart or manuscript which he said had been taken from the bosom of one of them. The cool

²⁵ *Council of Fifty, Minutes*, May 6, 1844, 158.

²⁶ Discourse reported by Thomas Bullock, May 12, 1844, Joseph Smith Collection, MS 155, Box 4, Folder 6, Church History Library.

²⁷ "Some of the remarks of John S. Reed, Esq., as delivered before the State Convention," *Times and Seasons* 5 (June 1, 1844):549.

²⁸ Curtis Edwin Bolton, *Journal*, CHL.

²⁹ Joseph Smith, *Journal*, May 15, 1844.

impudence of this imposture amused me very much. 'This,[] said he, []was written by the hand of Abraham and means so and so. If any one denies it, let him prove the contrary. *I say it.*' Of course, we were too polite to prove the negative, against a man fortified by revelation. His mother looked on with attention and aided in the explanation whenever the prophet hesitated, from which I inferred that she was usually made the exponent of the writing to strangers. At the close, he notified us that for this instruction, his mother was in the habit of receiving a quarter of a dollar a piece from them, which sum we paid forthwith.³⁰

The *Nauvoo Expositor*, a four-page local newspaper, was issued on June 7. It contained criticism of local events that related to church president Joseph Smith and political issues that he was mostly involved in. The paper called for the unconditional repeal of the Nauvoo Charter, an important topic that was receiving serious attention in Illinois. The editor Sylvester Emmons stated on page one:

We give place this week to the following Preamble, Resolutions and Affidavits, of the Seceders from the Church at Nauvoo.—The request is compiled with on account of their deeming it very important that the public should know the true cause of their dissenting, as all manner of falsehood is spread abroad in relation to the schism in the Church. In our subsequent numbers several affidavits will be published, to substantiate the facts alleged. Hereafter, no further Church proceedings will appear in our columns, except in the form of brief communications.³¹

The Preamble contained the conviction that they knew the "religion of the Latter Day Saints, as originally taught by Joseph Smith, which is contained in the Old and New Testaments, Book of Covenants, and Book of Mormon, is verily true." But they condemned "Joseph Smith's pretensions to righteousness." Complaints included, among other things, the doctrines of a woman becoming a spiritual wife and the belief in many Gods. The paper reported on two meetings of church leaders relating to the fellowship of certain dissenters.

Included in the publication was a list of fifteen strongly worded resolutions relating to the church and the abuses that were considered objectionable. Most importantly were three affidavits giving a brief summary of the July 12, 1843, revelation. One of the affidavits was by William Law, one by Jane Law, and another by Austin Cowles, a member of the Nauvoo High Council until he withdrew from that calling.

I hereby certify that Hyrum Smith did, (in his office,) read to me a certain written document, which he said was a revelation from God, he said that he was with Joseph when it was received. He afterwards gave me the document to read, and I took it to my house, and read it, and showed it to my wife, and returned it next day. The revelation (so called) 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

³⁰ Diary of Charles Francis Adams, May 15, 1844, emphasis retained, Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

³¹ *Nauvoo Expositor* 1 (June 7, 1844):1.

commanded Joseph to enter into the law.—And also that he should administer to others. Several other items were in the revelation, supporting the above doctrines.

WM. LAW.

Austin Cowles, who on September 23, 1843, resigned his seat on the Nauvoo High Council as a councilor to Stake President William Marks, made an affidavit that included:

In the latter part of the summer, 1843, the Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, did in the High Council, of which I was a member, introduce what he said was a revelation given through the Prophet; that the said Hyrum Smith did essay to read the said revelation in the said Council, that according to his reading here was contained the following doctrines; 1st, the sealing up of persons to eternal life, against all sins, save that of shed[d]ing innocent blood or of consenting thereto; 2nd, the doctrine of a plurality of wives, or marrying virgins; that "David and Solomon had many wives, yet in this they sinned not save in the matter of Uriah.["]³²

The fourth page contained an article from the *Quincy Whig* which told about two representatives of the dissenters who mentioned the spiritual wife doctrine. The paper reported that Elder John P. Greene, the city marshal of Nauvoo, responded in defense of Joseph Smith. Greene was reported to have said that "he had been a Mormon for the last twelve years—and had always been intimate with Smith, and that such doctrines as were ascribed to Smith by his enemies, had never been taught to him. He further said that Smith was like a diamond, the more he was rubbed, the brighter he appeared." The *Quincy Whig* explained the position of most of the non-members in the area:

It is not so much the particular doctrines, which Smith upholds and practices, however abominable they may be in themselves, that our citizens care about—as it is the anti-republican nature of the organization, over which he has almost supreme control—and which is trained and disciplined to act in accordance with his selfish will. The spectacle presented in Smith's case of a civil, ecclesiastical and military leader, united in one and the same person, with power over life and liberty, can never find favor in the minds of sound and thinking Republicans.³³

On Saturday, June 8, the Nauvoo City Council met to discuss the situation regarding the *Expositor* newspaper. One of the charges printed in the *Expositor* was concerning the doctrine of plural wives. Both Hyrum and Joseph Smith discussed this at the council meeting. The published minutes state that Hyrum "referred to the revelation, read to the High Council of the Church, which has caused so much talk about a multiplicity of wives; that said Revelation was in answer to a question concerning things which transpired in former days, and had no reference to the present time." Hyrum Smith replied to Austin Cowles's affidavit saying "it was in reference to former days, and not the present time as related by Cowles."

³² Ibid. 1 (June 7, 1844):2. The affidavits of Law and Cowles were sworn to on May 4, 1844. On Uriah see LDS D&C 132:39.

³³ The *Expositor* took the article from "The Mormons," *Quincy Whig* 7 (May 22, 1844).

Mayor Joseph Smith said the revelation was given in view of eternity and "he received for answer, men in this life must marry in view of eternity, otherwise they must remain as angels, or be single in heaven, which was the amount of the revelation referred to, and the Mayor spoke in considerable length in explanation of this principle."³⁴ This was an attempt by the Smith brothers to obscure the real intent of the revelatory message. It was trying to undercut the statements printed in the *Expositor*.

Joseph Smith on Monday, June 10, commanded the city marshal to destroy the printing press, throw the type in the street, and burn all the *Expositor* papers. William Clayton reported: "The City council passed a resolution declaring the Printing press on the hill a 'nuisance' and ordered it destroyed if not moved in 3 hours notice. About sun down The police gathered at the Temple about sundown and after organizing proceeded to the office and demolished the press & scattered the Type."³⁵ Vilate Kimball wrote to her husband Heber about the activities of that day:

Nauvoo was a scene of confusion last night, some hundred of the Brethren turned out and burned the printing press, and all the apparatus pertaining to the office of the opposite party; this was done by order of the City Council. They had only published one Paper, which is considered a public nuisance. But I do not know whether it will be considered so in the eyes of the Law or not. They have sworn revenge, and no doubt they will have it.³⁶

On June 18 about two o'clock Joseph Smith declared Nauvoo under martial law. John and Patrick Calhoun, sons of John C. Calhoun, a well-known politician of South Carolina, visited Nauvoo on June 22 and conversed with President Smith. John wrote almost a month later that Smith "invited us to the drawing room, where he soon joined us, he gave us a full description of his difficulties, and also an exposition of his faith, frequently calling himself the Prophet, in the course of conversation."³⁷ The same day William Clayton wrote that "Joseph whispered and told me either to put the r[ecord]. of K[ingdom]. into the hands of some faithful man and send them away, or burn them, or bury them. I concluded to bury them, which I did immediately on my return home."³⁸ Vilate Kimball continued her letter to Heber:

Joseph went over the river out of the united states, and there stop[p]ed and composed his mind, and got the will of the Lord concerning him, and that was, that he should return and give himself up for trial; he sent a messenger immediately

³⁴ *Nauvoo Neighbor* 2 (June 19, 1844):2-3, emphasis retained.

³⁵ William Clayton, Journal, June 10, 1844.

³⁶ Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, June 9-24, 1844, CHL. This part of the letter was written on June 11. Joseph Smith's journal records, "About 8 o'clock the Marshall reported that he had removed the press, type, and printed papers and fixtures into the street and fired them." Joseph Smith, Journal, June 10, 1844.

³⁷ John C. Calhoun Jr. to "My dear brother" [James Edward Calhoun], July 19, 1844, as cited in Brian Q. Cannon, "John C. Calhoun, Jr., Meets the Prophet Joseph Smith Shortly before the Departure for Carthage," *Brigham Young University Studies* 33, no. 4 (1993):777. See also *History of the Church* 6:540, 545, footnote; 7:78.

³⁸ William Clayton, Journal, June 22, 1844. Clayton retrieved the records on July 3, but they were water damaged. He then recopied the record.

to Carthage to tell the Governor he would meet his staff at the big mound at eight o'clock this morning in company with all that the ritt [writ] demanded. They have just passed by here, on their way thare. My heart said Lord bless those dear men, and presurve them from those that thirst for their blood. their giveing themselves up, is all that will save our city from destruction.³⁹

Visiting Carthage Jail, Cyrus H. Wheelock gave Joseph Smith a multi-shot pistol (a "pepper-box"). Smith put it in his pocket. Shortly after five o'clock in the afternoon on June 27, many armed men stormed the jail and started going up the stairs to the second floor where the prisoners were located. In the jailor's room at the time were Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, and two apostles, Willard Richards and John Taylor. The assaulting party members were shouting and firing at the four men who had a wooden door without a lock as protection. Willard Richards, who was in the jail with Joseph, wrote the following soon after:

Dr [Willard] glanced an eye by the curtain—saw a 100 armed men around the door.—Joseph, Hyrum & Taylor coat[s] were of off—Josep[h] sprang to his coat for his 6. shooter, Hyrum for his single barrel—Taylor for Markhams cane—& Dr for Taylors cane—all sprung against the door—the balls whistled up the stair way—& in an instant. one came through the door—Joseph, Taylor & Richards—sprang to the left. Hyrum back in front of the door—& snapped his pistol.—when a ball struck him in the left side of his nose. fell back on floor saying—*I am a dead man* Joseph discharged his 6 shooter—in the entry reaching round—the door casing continual discharges came in the room.—6 shooter missed fire 2 or 3 times.—Taylor sprang to leap from the east window—was shot in the window.⁴⁰

Jennetta Richards, wife of Willard, wrote concerning her husband, "Mr Richards was not wounded <only> a ball Passed under his left ear scared <his necke [neck]> and took a little of the tip of his ear."⁴¹ The mob killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Prophet and Patriarch, and sent shock waves to the residents of Carthage, Nauvoo, and surrounding towns. Their bodies were transported to Nauvoo. Wooden canes were made from the rough coffin in which the prophet's body was brought to Nauvoo.⁴² The actual bodies of Hyrum and Joseph were then secretly buried.⁴³ [footnote 43 is on page 437]

³⁹ Kimball to Kimball, June 9-24, 1844. Vilate wrote this under the June 24 portion of the letter. The next day Joseph and Hyrum Smith were charged with treason.

⁴⁰ Willard Richards, Journal, June 27, 1844, CHL, emphasis retained. Some words completed from not so clear handwriting. See Richards, "Two Minutes in Jail," *Times and Seasons* 5 (August 1, 1844):598-99. See also "The Murder," *Ibid.* 5 (July 15, 1844):584-86, and "Martyrdom of Joseph Smith and his Brother Hyrum," in 1844 D&C, 444-45; LDS D&C 135.

⁴¹ Jennetta Richards to "My dearly beloved Parents, Sister and Brother," July 8, 1844, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

⁴² Steven G. Barnett, "The Canes of the Martyrdom," *Brigham Young University Studies* 21 (Spring 1981):205-211. A newspaper in Ohio reprinted an article from the *Cleveland Herald* that reported the "box in which the body of the Prophet Joseph was conveyed from Carthage to Nauvoo has been manufactured into walking sticks for the faithful." *Telegraph* 10 (August 28, 1844):2, Painesville, Ohio.

As to who would be Joseph Smith's successor, there were various rumors on that topic. One was that Joseph Smith blessed his son Joseph Smith III, who was eleven years old at the time of the death of his father. Emma Smith was expecting a child at the time. William Clayton reported a talk wherein Joseph Smith "said that if he and Hyrum were taken away Samuel H. Smith would be his successor."⁴⁴ But Samuel died two weeks later on July 30.

At Joseph Smith's death, the 1844 edition (second edition) of the Doctrine and Covenants was not published.⁴⁵ Neither was Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible. Smith's work on the Book of Abraham was not completed, nor was his forthcoming text of the Kinderhook Plates. While he gave priesthood endowments, they were not generally known to the church at large.

The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, with Brigham Young as president of that quorum, was among those who held priesthood keys. They were involved with the Quorum of the Anointed (Holy Order), the second anointing, eternal, and plural marriage. Given their known rank in the church, the Quorum of the Twelve was chosen on August 8, 1844, to lead the church. William Clayton wrote in his journal:

P.M. attended conference. The Church universally voted to sustain the Twelve in their calling as next in presidency and to sustain Er [Elder] Rigdon and A[masa] Lyman as councillors to the Twelve as they had been to the First Presidency. The church also voted to leave the regulation of all the church matters in the hands of the Twelve.⁴⁶

As has been mentioned, some of the apostles were practicing polygamists. It is only natural that the principles espoused by Joseph Smith would continue to be followed by those committed to his teachings, whether known by the church at large, or practiced in secret in selected homes in Nauvoo.

The majority of Joseph Smith's personal correspondence and journals remained with the church under the direction and leadership of the Council of the Twelve. Some writings remained with the Smith family. The prophet's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, retained in her possession the Egyptian papyri, the four mummies, and the longest Translation Manuscript of the Book of Abraham written years earlier in Kirtland. Emma Smith kept in her possession the manuscripts of Joseph's Bible revision together with the marked King James Bible.

⁴³ See Shannon M. Tracy, *In Search of Joseph* (Orem, Utah: KenningHouse, 1995) and Lachlan Mackay, "A Brief History of the Smith Family Nauvoo Cemetery," *Mormon Historical Studies* 3 (Fall 2002):241-52.

⁴⁴ William Clayton, Journal, July 12, 1844.

⁴⁵ "The Book of *Doctrine and Covenants* will be published in about one month from this time." "Notice," *Nauvoo Neighbor* 2 (June 12, 1844):3, emphasis retained. By September the new edition was being used. See *Times and Seasons* 5 (September 2, 1844):636.

⁴⁶ William Clayton, Journal, August 8, 1844. See *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* 2:440. See also "Special Meeting," *Times and Seasons* 5 (September 2, 1844):637-38.