

**“THERE’S THE BOY I CAN TRUST”:
DENNISON LOTT HARRIS’ FIRST-PERSON
ACCOUNT OF THE CONSPIRACY OF NAUVOO
AND EVENTS SURROUNDING JOSEPH SMITH’S
“LAST CHARGE” TO THE TWELVE APOSTLES**

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Abstract: A well-known account from early Church history describes how, in the spring of 1844, two young men, Dennison Lott Harris and Robert Scott, helped protect Joseph Smith from dissidents plotting against his life. Almost completely unknown, however, is Dennison’s account of his subsequent role as a firsthand witness to events that appear to have taken place on the morning of 26 March 1844, just prior to the meeting in which Joseph Smith gave his “Last Charge” to the Quorum of the Twelve and “roll[ed] the kingdom off [his] shoulders” onto theirs in the presence of the Council of Fifty. This article provides the background necessary to understand all these events and publishes for the first time a complete, annotated transcript of Dennison’s 1881 verbal statement to First Presidency counselor Joseph F. Smith. In addition, the article includes a discussion of the significance of apostolic succession then and now, drawing in part on the encounters of Catholic scholars John M. Reiner and Stephen H. Webb with Mormonism. In the Appendix, I reproduce an 1884 article from The Contributor that gives a secondhand version of Dennison’s account of the conspiracy of Nauvoo.

For those who embrace the claims of the Restoration, there is no more significant event in the months immediately preceding the martyrdom of Joseph Smith than what occurred on 26 March 1844, when the Prophet announced to a gathering of trusted brethren that he had conferred all the keys and powers that he held on selected members of the Twelve, assuring continuity in the leadership of the Church after his impending death. We possess several firsthand accounts of the meeting where this took place.¹ However, because none of them were written until several months afterward,² and since all of them were recorded by

parties with potential self-interest due to their roles as participants, some have expressed frustration and doubt as to whether or not the incidents really happened as they have been reported. For example, a member of an online discussion group wrote the following:³

I hope I don't come across as argumentative, but I am hoping we have something other than the later recollections of those who had an incentive to remember a secret meeting where Joseph gave them, rather than their competitors to church leadership, special authority. It seems rather convenient to me that these recollections occur as their authority to lead the church is challenged. Nobody can remember a date? Nobody can provide meeting minutes, despite the fact that meetings minutes were religiously kept in other circumstances? I mean, we have loads of minutes from the Nauvoo High Council, the Council of Fifty, Relief Society, sealings, second anointings, endowments, etc., but nothing at all from the time when Joseph provided the element necessary for the work to continue after he died? If there is nothing we know of, then I suppose I have to live with that fact. I wanted to see if anyone else knew of something I had missed. Apparently not.

Actually, there is an account of these events that addresses some of these concerns. A young man named Dennison Lott Harris appears to have been a firsthand witness of the preliminaries to the Council of Fifty meeting where Joseph Smith gave his “Last Charge” to the Quorum of the Twelve, stating that he had “roll[ed] the kingdom off [his] shoulders”⁴ onto theirs. Although other contemporaries testified of having heard the Prophet repeat similar words on other occasions,⁵ Dennison Lott Harris is currently the only outside observer who claims to have heard Joseph Smith speak of the event on the very morning it occurred, seemingly just prior to the “Last Charge” meeting itself. Although Dennison’s account was not recorded until decades after the events he reports took place, I find his description both a good fit to known circumstances and not implausible with respect to aspects of the situation for which we have no other informants. Speaking of the portion of Dennison’s account that tells of the conspiracy of Nauvoo, Brian C. Hales concludes:⁶

As a historical document, it has been largely dismissed because it came late . . . and because it contained information that was not verified by corroborative sources. Notwithstanding this general reaction, my research indicates that its reliability may be greater than previously assumed.

Following a brief overview of the statement and its significance, I will discuss its historical background and provenance. I will describe some of the difficulties with the statement. Then I will provide a conjectural timeline of events, followed by an annotated transcript of the original 1881 statement. The article continues with reflections on the significance of apostolic succession in the restored Church, with a focus on the encounters of Catholic scholars John M. Reiner and Stephen H. Webb with Mormonism. In Appendices 1 and 2, I reproduce an 1884 article that gives a secondhand account of Dennison's story about the conspiracy of Nauvoo and a statement by its author.⁷ Appendix 3 provides a perspective on the 1884 apostasy of William Law.

Overview and Significance of the Statement

Dennison Lott Harris, 1825–1885, son of Emer and Deborah (Lott) Harris and nephew of Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris, gathered with his parents to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. He was nineteen years old in March 1844, when the events in Nauvoo recounted in his statement seem to have taken place. Harris came west with the Saints to Utah in 1852, served a mission to the Navajo in 1854, participated in the Echo Canyon campaign of the 1857-58 Utah War, and brought provisions to the handcart companies on three different occasions. After a time living in Virgin City and Paragonah, he moved to Monroe. At the age of fifty-two, he was set apart as the bishop in Monroe and served until his death in 1885.⁸

Dennison's statement begins by telling of how he, along with his friend Robert Scott, was asked by the Prophet to attend and report the proceedings of a series of meetings in which disaffected members of the Church proclaimed Joseph Smith as a fallen prophet and were plotting to take his life. Afterward, the Prophet made them promise to say nothing about their role in these events for many years, knowing that any disclosure might endanger their lives. However, in 1881, Dennison arranged for President Joseph F. Smith to hear his story as secretary to the First Presidency George F. Gibbs took it down in shorthand. Although the original statement he made about the "conspiracy of Nauvoo" has never before been published in its entirety, various versions of the story of his heroic role in defending the life of Joseph Smith have circulated publicly since 1884.⁹

What seems to have been forgotten, so far as I have been able to determine, is Dennison's account of a second incident that appears to have taken place later in the same month.¹⁰ Dennison tells of how one morning, as he passed Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store in a wagon, he was asked by

Elder Willard Richards to assist him in filling “barrels and buckets” of water and hauling them to the second floor of the store for use in giving the apostles “their endowments.”¹¹ After they had finished, Dennison remembered the Prophet declaring, in words reminiscent of later written testimonies of some of the Twelve: “This day I am going to roll this kingdom off my shoulders on to the shoulders of these my brethren [i.e., selected members of the Quorum of the Twelve who were present at the time], for them to preach the Gospel and gather Israel and build up the Kingdom upon the foundation which I have laid.”¹²

If taken at face value, the incidents that Dennison describes seem to have occurred as part of a prologue to the meeting where Joseph Smith delivered his “Last Charge”¹³ to nine members of the Twelve in the presence of other brethren who had gathered at his invitation. More specifically, most scholars now accept that the “Last Charge” was given on 26 March 1844 at the morning session¹⁴ of a meeting of the Council of Fifty, an organization that Joseph Smith had recently formed by divine commandment “to establish the political kingdom of God on the earth.”¹⁵ Leonard Arrington summarizes the key moments of the “Last Charge” as follows:¹⁶

As if he had a foreboding of his impending death, Smith ... gave them a dramatic charge to “bear off the Kingdom.” As they later recounted the moving experience, the Prophet seemed depressed and opened his heart about his “presentiments of the future.” He explained that “some important scene is near to take place,” that perhaps he would be killed, and that as a precaution ... the Twelve [had received]¹⁷ all other keys and powers that he held. Then, if God wills, “I can go with all pleasure and satisfaction, knowing that my work is done, and the foundation laid on which the kingdom of God is to be reared. ...” He counseled them about what lay ahead, then continued,¹⁸

saying, while he walked the floor and threw back the collar of his coat upon his shoulders, “I roll the burthen and responsibility of leading this Church off from my shoulders on to yours. Now, round up your shoulders and stand under it like men; for the Lord is going to let me rest a while.”... After he had thus spoken, he continued to walk the floor, saying: “Since I have rolled the burthen off from my shoulders I feel as light as a cork. I feel that I am free. I thank my God for this deliverance.

Historical Background and Provenance of the Statement



Figure 1. Those known to have been present at the recording of Harris' verbal statement: Dennison Lott Harris (1825–1885)¹⁹; Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918)²⁰; Carl Christian Nikolai Dorius (1830–1894)²¹; Franklin Spencer (1836–1915)²²; George F. Gibbs (1846–1924)²³

Circumstances in which the statement was made. Immediately prior to the morning session of the Ephraim Utah Stake Conference on Sunday, 15 May 1881, Dennison Lott Harris, Bishop of the Monroe, Utah Ward, approached First Presidency counselor Joseph F. Smith with a request. For nearly four decades Bishop Harris had held in confidence information about his role as a nineteen-year-old boy in two important incidents that had taken place in the spring of 1844 in Nauvoo. At last, he felt it was time to relate these stories to President Smith so they could be preserved permanently as part of the history of the Church.

Accordingly, after the morning meeting, Bishop Harris accompanied President Smith, Elder Franklin Spencer, and secretary to the First Presidency George F. Gibbs to the home of Ephraim South Ward Bishop Carl C. N. Dorius. Over a meal between conference sessions, Bishop Harris related his stories while Brother Gibbs took notes in Pittman shorthand. Expressing subdued frustration at the constrained circumstances under which he was obliged to do his work, Gibbs commented: "As the afternoon meeting had been announced to commence half an hour earlier than usual (so as to give Prest. Taylor and party an opportunity to make Moroni and Fountain Green that evening on their [way] home) the time at our disposal to hear Bro. H. also to eat dinner was not sufficient to enable him to do justice to it. He told it in his own way and had to hurry at that."²⁴ No doubt the typescript was made after Gibbs returned to his office in Salt Lake City.

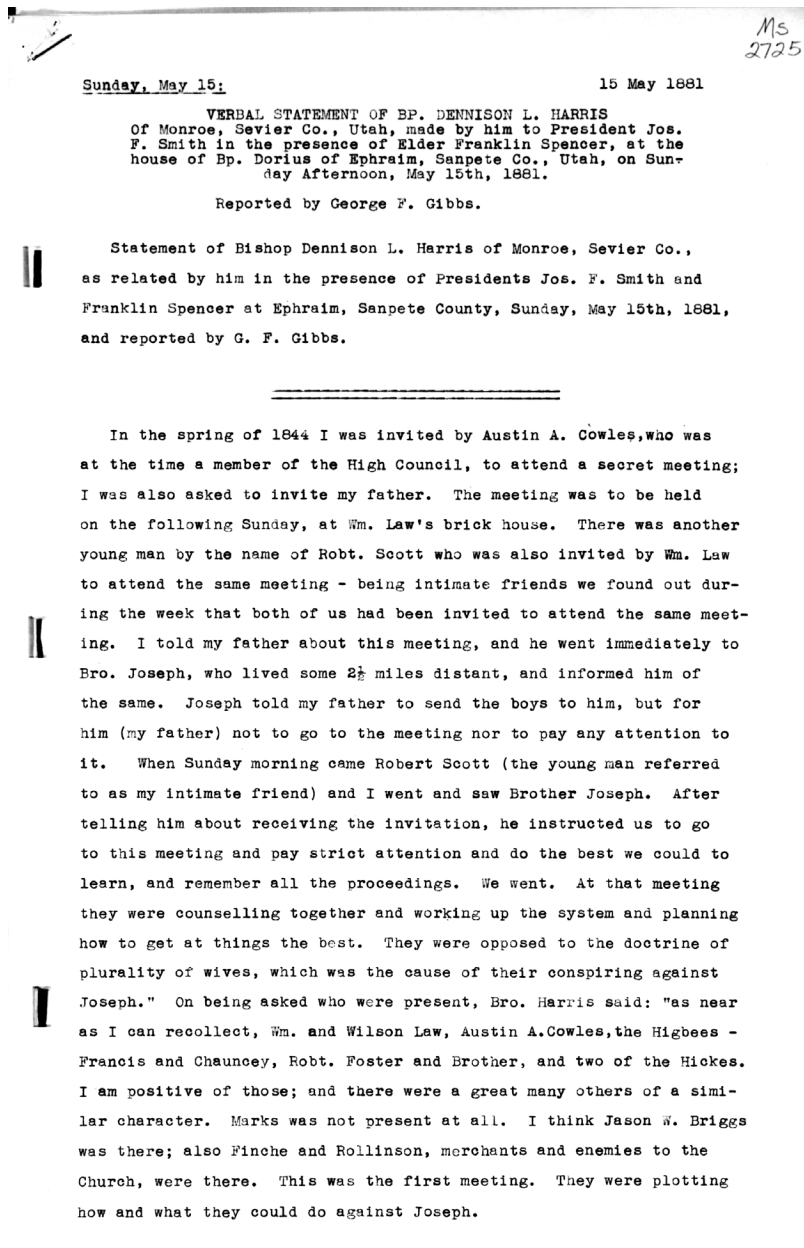


Figure 2. First Page of the Harris Verbal Statement

Description of the document. The only extant version of the verbal statement exists as an eight-page typescript original preserved at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.²⁵ The document was

formally reviewed and cleared for release in January 2015, and on 29 March 2016, I received written confirmation that the document was out of copyright and could be used without restriction.²⁶

On 23 March 2010, I was kindly assisted by Jay Burrup of the Church History Library, who had previously catalogued the Joseph F. Smith papers, in an effort to locate a manuscript behind the typescript.²⁷ After a preliminary search, I found an affidavit from a church member regarding early incidents in church history that, like the Dennison Harris statement, had been recorded by George F. Gibbs in 1881.²⁸ The affidavit was in the form of a longhand manuscript in the handwriting of Gibbs, giving us hope that a similar manuscript might exist for the Harris statement. However, after completing a more complete search for an original manuscript, Burrup wrote me to say that he "had no luck in finding the document in the Joseph F. Smith papers."²⁹ In light of our lack of success, Burrup mentioned the likelihood that Gibbs typed the Harris statement directly from his shorthand notes and then disposed of them immediately afterward.

Related accounts. In a statement made on 8 August 1932, Horace Cummings, the author of the better-known 1884 *Contributor* version of Harris' story, said that the genesis of his article was when he personally heard Dennison Lott Harris relate the story of the conspiracy of Nauvoo to his parents "during the spring conference of 1883." He also stated:³⁰

Before submitting the article to the press, ... at the request of President John Taylor, I read it to him line by line as he was in Nauvoo at the time the narration deals with and the incident happened and of course was with the Prophet at the time he was killed. He was familiar with many of the things to which the article refers and added certain elements to the story. When completed, President Taylor gave it his hearty approval for publication as a valuable document concerning Church history which had never been previously published.

Within the annotations for the transcript of the Harris statement given later in the present article, I include a few minor details that appear in the *Contributor* article that are not part of the 1881 narration.³¹ Significantly, however, although the 1884 article by Cummings was said to have been derived from an independent telling of the story, it matches the 1881 account closely in structure, and in some places the wording is nearly identical. Tellingly, the misspellings of two of the names of the conspirators given in the 1884 article match the 1881 account precisely.

If Horace Cummings had no access to the 1881 account when he wrote his 1884 article, we must suppose that Harris remembered and repeated significant portions of the account nearly verbatim in each instance, and that the substance was captured exactly in the separate notes of Gibbs and Cummings. However, it seems unlikely that Cummings would have been able to capture Harris' words in longhand with the same precision and detail that Gibbs captured them in shorthand. In addition, while I see no reason to question Cummings' statement that he read the article to President John Taylor, I am doubtful about his claim that "certain elements" were added to the account as a result. In comparing the 1881 and 1884 accounts, I saw no instance where details about the events not mentioned in the 1881 statement might have been known independently by President Taylor and contributed to the 1884 article.

Cummings asserts that sometime prior to 1877 another version of Dennison's account was told to Brigham Young and recorded by George F. Gibbs, at that time acting secretary to the First Presidency:³²

The first time that it [i.e., Harris' story of the conspiracy] was revealed was at the dedication of the St. George Temple, when Brother Harris revealed it to President Brigham Young, whereupon President Young called in Brother Gibbs who took the narration in shorthand for church record purposes.

Cummings' assertion that Dennison related the story to Brigham Young "at the dedication of the St. George Temple" resembles an undocumented Harris tradition that was published in 1983 by a family biographer:³³

The year before Brigham Young died, Den invited him to stay at the Harris family home in Monroe while enroute to St. George. Den then related the foregoing story. President Young said it cleared up many otherwise unanswered questions concerning the plots against the Prophet.

The fact that no other record made by George F. Gibbs of Dennison's account has been found other than the one recorded in Ephraim in 1881 raises a question as to whether or not Cummings may have conflated two different events or perhaps was mistaken altogether about a meeting having taken place between Harris and Brigham Young. In the records relating to the 1881 and 1884 accounts, there is no evidence to suggest that either President John Taylor, President Joseph F. Smith, or George F. Gibbs were aware of an earlier version of the story when they heard it in 1881 or 1883.

Difficulties with the Statement

Dating of the events described by Harris. Harris states that the events relating to the conspiracy meetings occurred "in the spring of 1844."³⁴ If we accept his recollection that the meetings of the conspirators took place on three successive Sundays at face value, and if we assume that the last of the three meetings took place one week prior to Joseph Smith's public disclosure of the conspiracy on the temple stand on 24 March, we arrive at the conjectural timeline that follows in the next section. This timeline also accords with Harris' remembrance of an encounter with Joseph Smith and the Twelve at the Red Brick Store happened "two or three weeks" or "a few months" after the conspiracy meetings.

Unfortunately, William Law, who seems to be the only diarist among the conspirators, has a gap in his 1844 journal for the presumed dates of the conspiracy meetings. The last entry prior to the lacuna is 13 January, five days after Law heard from Joseph Smith that he had been released as counselor in the First Presidency. Entries in the journal resume on 29 March, five days after Law had been publicly named by Joseph Smith as one of the group who had conspired against his life.³⁵

Another possibility for dating the meeting assumes that Dennison was mistaken about the order of events, and that the first conspiracy meeting he attended took place in April, following his encounter with Joseph Smith and the Twelve at the Red Brick Store on 26 March. William Law was excommunicated on 18 April and records in his 21 June 1844 diary entry that: "Since our Conference April 21st we have held public meetings every sabbath day."³⁶ The *Warsaw Signal* reported that on 12 May 1844 "there were about three hundred assembled at Mr. Law's house in Nauvoo,"³⁷ roughly matching Dennison's statement that for the third meeting they attended in the home of William Law, the crowd numbered "in the neighborhood of 200 persons."³⁸

Mitigating against the likelihood that the meetings Harris described occurred in April, however, is not only that such a timeline contradicts the sequence of events in the Harris statement, but also that the meetings from 21 April onward were described as being "public" (per William Law). This stands in contrast both to Harris' descriptions of the closely guarded meetings he attended, and also to a separate description of a "secret" meeting to be held in March (per Joseph Jackson).³⁹ Moreover, the primary concerns of the April meetings seem to have been plans for the publication of the *Nauvoo Expositor* and reform — the organization of a new church, with William Law at its head.⁴⁰ In his report, Harris describes no such agenda. Instead, his statement focuses on efforts to stir up additional support to help

carry out with immediacy the murderous intentions that were fomented by individuals enraged at Joseph Smith and his teachings. A conspiracy of this sort, forged in secret meetings, is not only reported by Harris, but also in two separate affidavits, made in late March by men loyal to the Prophet and exposed to the public by Joseph Smith on the 24th of the same month. That the series of sabbath meetings at the Law home that began on 21 April paralleled those described by Harris with regard to timing, location, and estimated number of attendees might simply imply that the *public* meetings that began on 21 April resumed the same pattern that had been established previously for a series of *secret* meetings held in March.

With respect to the timing of the events reported as having taken place at the Red Brick Store, Dennison seems confident that they occurred *after* the conspiracy meetings. The imprecision in his description (“a few months after the thing I have related – perhaps it was two or three weeks, I do not now remember, I did not rivet dates on my mind”⁴¹) is not surprising, given the passage of time and the fact that exact dates are more easily forgotten than other, more salient details of personal events. If we can trust Dennison’s recollection of the Prophet’s words (“*This day* I am going to roll this kingdom off my shoulders...”⁴²), he would seem to have been speaking on 26 March 1844, consistent with scholarly consensus on the dating of the “Last Charge” meeting.⁴³ Based on that assumption — and because it is known that the meeting started at 9:00 AM that morning⁴⁴ — the encounter with Dennison would have had to have taken place prior to that time. The need for some specific instruction to the Twelve prior to the morning session with the entire Council does not seem implausible. Moreover, it would have been prudent for the attendees of such a confidential meeting to stagger their arrivals so as not to attract undue attention.

Although the possibility that Joseph Smith’s statement to Harris about his delegation of responsibility to the Twelve occurred sometime after 26 March 1844 cannot be ruled out, it seems unlikely to me that Dennison would have misremembered the gist of the Prophet’s implication that his charge to the Twelve was imminent, rather than retrospective.

Performing an endowment on the same day as the “Last Charge” meeting. Dennison Harris understood that the barrels of water he helped gather and raise to the upper story of the Red Brick Store were needed because “Brother Joseph wanted to give them (the Twelve) their endowments.”⁴⁵ That the Prophet had requested James H. Rollins to help bring water to the upper floor of the Red Brick Store for endowments on at least one other occasion lends credence to the kind of situation described in the Harris account.⁴⁶ However, Dennison’s understanding that the endowments were to be given to the Twelve is a puzzle because

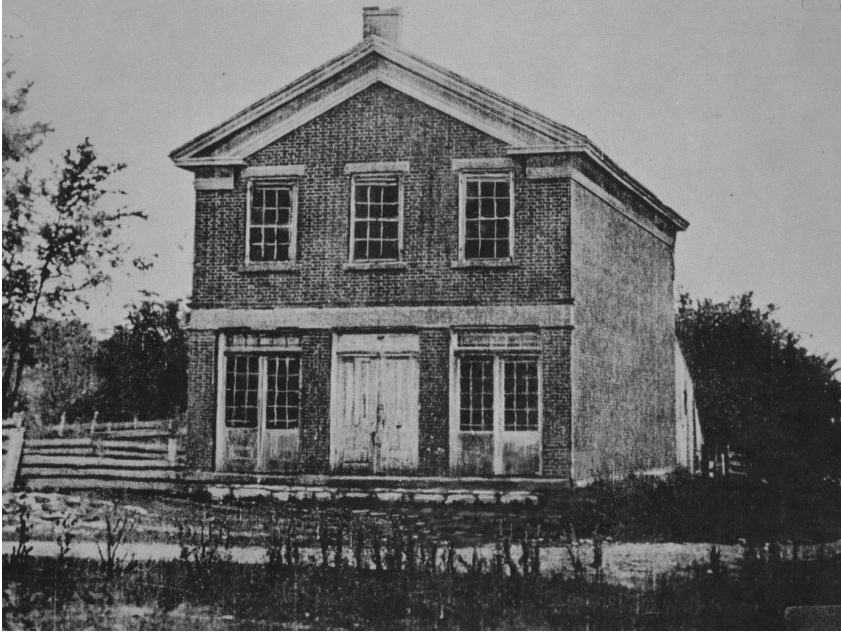


Figure 3. *Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store*, photograph attributed to Elder Brigham H. Roberts, ca. 1886⁴⁷

all the apostles who were or could have been present for the “Last Charge” meeting had already been endowed, and all except Amasa Lyman also had been sealed to their wives and had received the fulness of the priesthood.⁴⁸ Although one might argue that the endowment might have been (re)done for the sake of the Twelve at an additional time for symbolic or instructional purposes, on this occasion it would seem not only “uncalled for” and “unnecessary,” but also “inappropriate.”⁴⁹ Moreover, since it is known that during the morning session of the Council of Fifty meeting on 26 March there was “no discussion of or exercise of priesthood keys, no ordinations, no ordinances, no discussion of temple teachings or other church doctrine,”⁵⁰ any such ordinances would have had to have been performed at an unseasonably early hour (inconsistent with other endowment sessions, which were performed in the afternoon) so they could be completed and the upper floor could be set up for the 9:00 AM Council meeting.

In light of these considerations, it seems possible that in his account, Harris inadvertently conflated two events — his encounter with Joseph and the Twelve at the Red Brick store on 26 March “two or three weeks”⁵¹ after the conspiracy meetings and another occasion when some of the Twelve were called upon to assist in giving the endowments to other brethren later that spring (“a few months after”⁵²). Confirming the plausibility of a

timeframe in the later spring for such an event, James H. Rollins related an experience where he was asked to bring water to the upper story of the Red Brick Store for use in giving endowments to “some of the brethren.”⁵³ He said that this took place “a few days” before another event that occurred “about the first of May” 1844.⁵⁴ Moreover, it is known that John P. Greene and Sidney Rigdon received their endowments on 11 May 1844⁵⁵; that Almon W. Babbitt and William B. Smith received theirs on 12 May 1844⁵⁶; and that Lyman Wight received his on 14 May 1844.⁵⁷ These endowments, all given prior to Brigham Young’s departure from Nauvoo on 21 May 1844,⁵⁸ would fit Harris’ recollection of an event that would have taken place “a few months after”⁵⁹ the meetings of the conspiracy in March. And a date of either the 12 or 14 May would be consistent with his remembrance that the Prophet was intending to give endowments to “the Twelve” (i.e., either to William B. Smith or Lyman Wight).

Conjectural Timeline of Events

Sometime Before 3 March⁶⁰

Sometime before 3 March 1844, Austin A. Cowles, a neighbor,⁶¹ may have invited Dennison Lott Harris and his father, Emer, to a meeting of conspirators that was to be held on the following Sunday at William Law’s brick house. Dennison learned that Robert Scott, who had been reared by William Law,⁶² had also been invited to the meeting. Emer went to the Prophet and was told that he should not attend the meeting himself but that he should send the boys to him to receive instructions.

Sunday, 3 March⁶³

In harmony with the guidance received in the morning from Joseph Smith, Robert Scott and Dennison Harris may have attended a meeting of the conspirators on this date and learned of their murderous intentions against the Prophet.

Sunday, 10 March⁶⁴

On this date, Harris and Scott may have attended their second meeting and then reported to Joseph Smith. The Prophet told them that they should attend a third time.

Monday, 11 March⁶⁵

Joseph Smith presided at the first organizational meeting for the Council of Fifty. The members were strictly enjoined to keep the existence and proceedings of the meetings of the Council confidential.

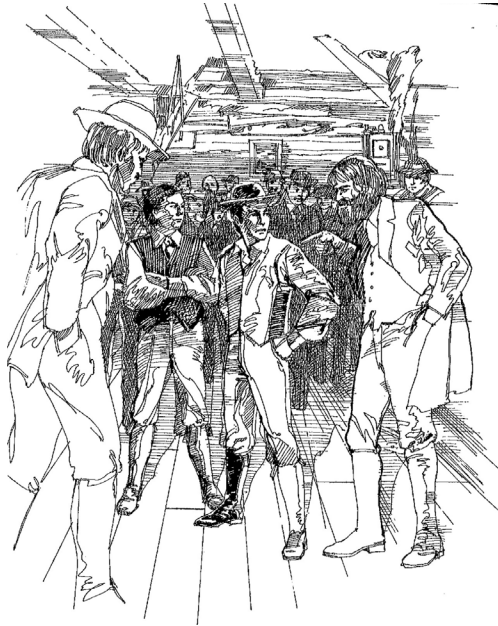


Figure 4. *Harris and Scott Are Confronted by the Conspirators*⁶⁶

Wednesday, 13 March⁶⁷

Joseph Smith met with the Council of Fifty.

Thursday, 14 March⁶⁸

Joseph Smith met with the Council of Fifty.

Friday or Saturday, 15 or 16 March⁶⁹

Abiathar B. Williams (1806–1875)⁷⁰ and Merinus G. Eaton (1812–??)⁷¹ were approached by Joseph H. Jackson, Robert D. Foster, and Chauncey L. Higbee with accusations against Joseph Smith. These included the insinuation that the Prophet had tried to seduce Foster's wife.⁷² Williams and Eaton were strongly urged to join a "secret meeting, ... probably tomorrow evening; but, as it was not decided, he could not say positively as to the time."⁷³

Sunday, 17 March⁷⁴

In the morning of 17 March, Harris and Scott may have gone to see Joseph Smith as they had been instructed. The Prophet told them this, their third meeting, would be their last and that the conspirators would "come to some determination," but that they should not join or speak in

support of the conspiracy. After a dangerous escape from the meeting, Harris and Scott met with Joseph Smith and John Scott, Robert's brother and a bodyguard to the Prophet. Harris said that after "considerable conversation," "Joseph put a seal upon our mouths, and told us to tell nobody not even our fathers for 20 years."

Tuesday, 19 March⁷⁵

Joseph Smith met with the Council of Fifty.

Saturday, 23 March⁷⁶

In order to counter the accusations against the Prophet that Robert D. Foster had made in the presence of Williams and Eaton on 15 or 16 March,⁷⁷ Joseph Smith rode with William Clayton and Alexander Neibaur to secure a statement from Foster's wife.⁷⁸ Joseph Smith's journal mentions that he "spent the day in counselling,"⁷⁹ i.e., in a meeting with Foster's wife. Though some have proposed that the "Last Charge" occurred on this day, there could have been no meeting held that involved Willard Richards or Wilford Woodruff, who spent their day otherwise engaged, apart from the Prophet.⁸⁰

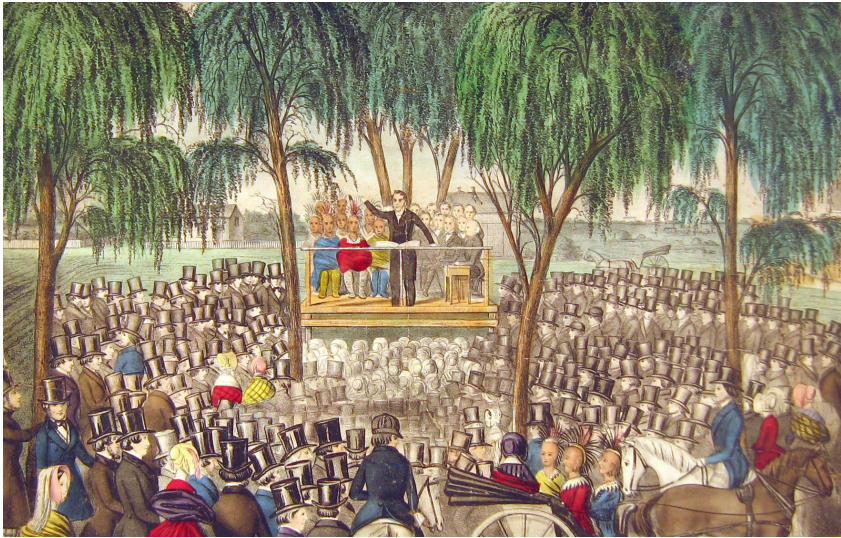


Figure 5. George Lloyd, 1817-??: *Joseph Smith Preaches from the Stand at General Conference, April 6, 1844*⁸¹

Sunday, 24 March⁸²

Joseph Smith preached at 10 AM. His journal records: "on the stand I related what was told me yesterday by Mr [Merinus G.] Eaton. That Wm.

Law. Wilson Law. R[obert] D. Foster. Chaunc[e]y L. Higbee. & Joseph [H.] Jackson had held a caucus, design[ing] to destroy all the Smith family in a few weeks.”⁸³ No doubt out of concern for the safety of Harris and Scott, Joseph Smith did not mention them as additional informants.



Figure 6. Roland L. Lee, 1949-: *Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store*, 2008⁸⁴

Tuesday, 26 March⁸⁵

If the Harris statement can be trusted in this regard, Joseph Smith stood on the porch with the Twelve gathered around him sometime before 9:00 AM on this date⁸⁶ and declared to Dennison: “This day I am going to roll this kingdom off my shoulders on to the shoulders of these my brethren [i.e., selected members of the Quorum of the Twelve who were present at the time].”⁸⁷

Dennison’s remembrance seems to anticipate events that took place sometime between 9:00 AM and 12:00 PM on the morning of 26 March when the Prophet gave the “Last Charge” to nine members of the Quorum of the Twelve in the presence of members of the Council of Fifty.⁸⁹ On 19 March 1897, President Wilford Woodruff summarized his recollection of this event as follows:⁹⁰

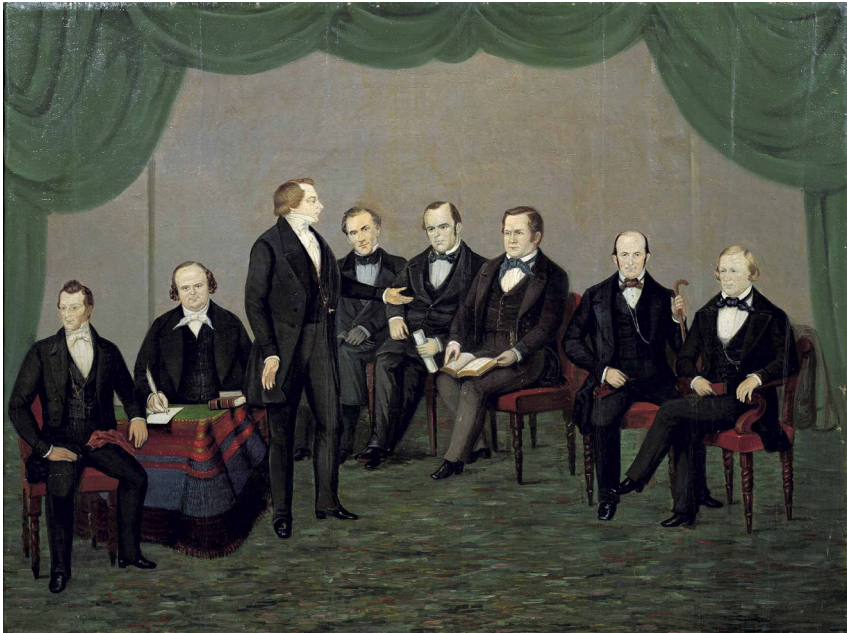


Figure 7. William Warner Major, 1804-1854: *Joseph Smith and His Friends*, 1843-1844. Left to right: Hyrum Smith, Willard Richards, Joseph Smith, Orson Pratt, Parley Parker Pratt, Orson Hyde, Heber Chase Kimball, and Brigham Young⁸⁷

I bear my testimony that in the early spring of 1844 in Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith called the Twelve Apostles together and he delivered unto them the ordinances of the Church and the Kingdom of God; and all the keys and powers that God had bestowed upon him he sealed upon our heads. He told us that we must round up our shoulders and bear off this kingdom or we would be damned. . . . At that meeting, he began a speech of about three hours upon the subject of the Kingdom. His face was as clear as amber, and he was covered with a power that I have never seen in an instant in the flesh before.

It should be noted that Wilford Woodruff's statement telescopes events that occurred over an extended period of time as if they all happened on 26 March 1844. All the ordinances, keys, and powers mentioned had already been given to the apostles prior to that date.

Wednesday, 27 March⁹¹

Merinus G. Eaton and Abiathar B. Williams made affidavits before Daniel H. Wells about the statements Joseph H. Jackson, Robert D. Foster, and Chauncey L. Higbee made to them on 15 or 16 March.

Thursday, 18 April⁹²

On the evening of this day, a council was held where Robert D. Foster, Wilson Law, William Law, Jane Law, and Howard Smith were excommunicated from the Church. Suspecting their own lives were threatened, Foster and Higbee swore they would "shoot the Mayor" (Joseph Smith).⁹³

Sundays, 21, 28 April; 5 May⁹⁴

In a renewed effort to oppose the Prophet, William Law began holding public meetings in his home each Sunday, beginning 21 April. On 28 April he became president of a new, short-lived church. If the conspiracy meetings attended by Harris did not occur in March, the three successive Sunday of 21 and 28 April and 5 May might provide a second option for dating. From his careful study of the matter, Andrew Ehat concludes William Law's antagonism to the Prophet would have reached its zenith about this time.



Figure 8. David Hyrum Smith, 1844-1904: *Bend in the River*, 1868 (detail). The back of the Red Brick Store can be seen slightly to the left of center, above the unfinished foundation of the Nauvoo House⁹⁵

Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday, 11, 12, and 14 May⁹⁶

Dennison described how, subsequent to the conspiracy meetings, he drove his wagon, at the request of Elder Willard Richards, down to the river to fill barrels and buckets of water and haul them to the upper story of the Red Brick Store for use in giving endowments. Joseph Smith's journal records that endowments were given to five of the brethren on these dates, including two apostles.

Verbal Statement of Dennison Lott Harris with Annotations

Sunday, May 15:

15 May 1881

VERBAL STATEMENT⁹⁷ OF BP. DENNISON L. HARRIS

Of Monroe, Sevier Co., Utah, made by him to President Jos.

F. Smith⁹⁸ in the presence of Elder Franklin Spencer,⁹⁹ at the house of

Bp. Dorius¹⁰⁰ of Ephraim, Sanpete Co., Utah, on Sunday Afternoon, May 15th, 1881.

Reported by George F. Gibbs.¹⁰¹

Statement of Bishop Dennison L. Harris of Monroe, Sevier Co., as related by him in the presence of Presidents Jos. F. Smith and Franklin Spencer at Ephraim, Sanpete County, Sunday, May 15th, 1881, and reported by G. F. Gibbs.

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In the spring of 1844 I was invited by Austin A. Cowles,¹⁰² who was at the time a member of the High Council, to attend a secret meeting; I was also asked to invite my father.¹⁰³ The meeting was to be held on the following Sunday, at Wm. Law's¹⁰⁴ brick house. There was another young man by the name of Robt. Scott¹⁰⁵ who was also invited by Wm. Law to attend the same meeting — being intimate friends we found out during the week that both of us had been invited to attend the same meeting.¹⁰⁶ I told my father about this meeting, and he went immediately to Bro. Joseph, who lived some 2½ miles distant, and informed him of the same. Joseph told my father to send the boys to him, but for him (my father) not to go to the meeting nor to pay any attention to it. When Sunday morning came Robert Scott (the young man referred to as my intimate friend) and I went and saw Brother Joseph. After telling him about receiving the invitation, he instructed us to go to this meeting and pay strict attention and do the best we could to learn, and remember all the proceedings. We went. At that meeting they were counselling together and working up the system and planning how to get at things the best. They were opposed to the doctrine of plurality of wives,¹⁰⁷ which was the cause of their conspiring against Joseph.” On being asked who were present, Bro. Harris said:¹⁰⁸ “as near as I can recollect, Wm. and Wilson Law, Austin A. Cowles, the Higbees — Francis and Chauncey,¹⁰⁹ Robt. Foster¹¹⁰ and Brother,¹¹¹ and two of the Hickes [Hicks].¹¹² I am positive of those; and there were a great many others of a similar character. Marks¹¹³ was not present at all. I think Jason W. Briggs¹¹⁴ was there; also Finche [Finch]¹¹⁵ and Rollinson [Rollosson],¹¹⁶ merchants and enemies to the Church, were there. This was the first meeting. They were plotting how and what they could do against Joseph.

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The next Sunday, we attended again, having received an invitation to come back. And when they told us to come again on the next Sabbath they told us to keep quiet what had passed at the meeting, and to say nothing to our fathers, or anybody else. We reported to Joseph the proceedings as far as they went. Joseph said: 'Boys, come and see me next Sunday morning, and go on to the meeting. We did so. They went on with their arrangements, and agreed to make further arrangements during the week. They worked this up considerably that Sunday, and still gave us an invitation to attend the following week. Joseph told us to go again, this being the third Sunday, and was desirous that we should see and learn all that took place this day, for, said he, 'this will be your last meeting, this will be the last time they will admit you into their council, and they will come to some determination; but be sure, he continued, that you make no covenants nor enter into any obligation whatever with that party: be strictly reserve [strictly reserved], and make no promise either to conspire against me or any portion of the community: be silent and do not take any part in their deliberations. That day we were received and welcomed by Wm. Law and Austin Cowles. We passed up the alley; on each side there were men with guns and bayonets on them; and when we got to the door there were men on guard armed in the same way. Before we went to this meeting Brother Joseph said to us: Boys, this day will be their last meeting, and they may shed your blood, but I hardly think they will as you are so young, but they may. If they do I will be a lion in their path. Don't flinch, if you have to die, die like men, you will be martyrs to the cause, and your crown can be no greater. But, said he, again, I hardly think they will shed your blood.

We went, as I have said, to the house of meeting and passed the guards. There was a great deal of counselling going on with each other. And every little while Austin Cowles would come and sit by my side and put his arm around my neck to ascertain how I felt with regard to their proceedings; and at the same time Wm. Law would do the same thing with Robert Scott. They talked about Joseph denouncing him and accusing him. We told them that we did not know anything against Joseph or about the things they were charging him with, that we were only young men, and therefore had nothing to say. They would then try to convince us by relating things to us against him; but we told them that we knew nothing about them, and did not understand them; that

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we had been reared in the Church and had always esteemed Bro. Joseph highly. Robert had been reared by Wm. Law, and I had been a neighbor of Austin Cowles and consequently they esteemed us as friends, and we did them. They continued to persuade us, we being the only ones who did not sympathize with their proceedings; but they failed to convert us.

Finally they went on to administer the oath to those present. Each man was required to come to the table and hold up the Bible in his right hand, when Bro. Higbee¹¹⁷ would say: Are you ready? When the man being sworn answered yes, he would say: You solemnly swear before God and all holy angels and these your brethren, by whom you are surrounded, that you will give your life, your liberty, your influence, your all for the destruction of Joseph Smith and his party, so help you God'. Each one was sworn in that way, numbering in the neighborhood of 200 persons;¹¹⁸ and they were all sworn before we were called upon. There were also three women brought in¹¹⁹ who testified that Joseph Smith and others – Hyrum among them, had tried to seduce them into this spiritual marriage and wanted them for their wives and also wanted to lie with them. They also made oath before this justice; after which they were escorted out of the room, by way of the back door. After all in the room had taken the oath but Robert and me, we were labored with by those two brethren William Law, and Austin Cowles. They sat us together side by side, with Bro. Cowles on one side and Bro. Law on the other. Their arguments were to try to convince us that Joseph was wrong; that he was in transgression, that he was a fallen prophet, and that the Church would be destroyed except action be taken at once against him — a strong one, one that would tell, ect.¹²⁰ We told them that we were young, that we were not members of the High Council, and that we knew nothing at all about their charges. They then told us that Joseph had read the revelation on celestial marriage to the High Council and that Joseph had instructed them in this revelation, and that he had tried to make them believe it.¹²¹ After laboring with us in this way with a view of trying to get us to take the oath, we told them we could not do it. They then told us that they were combining and entering into a conspiracy for the protection and salvation of the Church, and that if we refused to take the oath they would have to kill us; they could not they said, let us go out with the information that we had gained, because it would not be safe to do so. And some one spoke up and said, 'Dead men tell no tales.' They gathered around us and after threatening they perceived that we could not be¹²²

-4-Verbal statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

that we could not be frightened into it, they again commenced to persuade and advise us in this way: Boys, do as we have done; you are young, you will not have anything to do in this affair, but we want that you should keep it a secret and act with us. We then told them that we positively could not. They then said that if we did not yield to their requirement that they would have to shed our blood; and they went so far as to start us down stairs in charge of two men armed with guns with bayonets, and Wm. and Wilson Law, Austin Cowles and one of the Fosters started down stairs into the cellar, and there they said they would cut our throats if we refused to take the oath. We told them positively that we would have to die then because we could not receive the oath, but that we desired to be turned loose. They said they could not turn us loose with the information that we had received, because it would not be safe to do it. They then walked us off with one man on each side of us armed with sword and bowie knife and two men behind us with loaded guns, cocked, with bayonets on them; we were started to the cellar, but we had not gone more than about 15 feet when some one cried out, 'hold on', let us talk this matter over. We were stopped, when they commenced to counsel among themselves; and I distinctly remember one of them saying, that our fathers knew where we were, and that if we never returned it would at once cause suspicion and lead to trouble. They became very uneasy about it, for if they shed our blood it would be dangerous for them, as it was known where we were. Finally they concluded to let us go if we would keep our mouths shut. We were escorted out and then they hated to let us go; they took us toward the river, and still cautioned us about being silent and keeping secret everything we had seen and heard, for, said they, if we opened our mouths about it, they would kill us anywhere, that they would consider it their duty to kill us when ever or wherever the opportunity afforded either by night or by day. I told them it would be to our interest and to our peace and safety never to mention it to anybody. They said they were glad we could see that, and after warning us in strong terms, and before the guard left us, I saw Brother Joseph's hand from under the bank of the river, he was beckoning us to him.¹²³ They turned back but were yet watching us and listening to us, and one of us said, Let us go toward the river. The guard made answer and said, Yes, you better go to the river.¹²⁴ With this we started [started] off on the run, and we ran past where Bro. Joseph was, and Bro. John Scott¹²⁵ was with him; he was one of his body guard. They slipped

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around the bank and came down to the same point where we were; and these men, the guard went back. We all walked down the river quite a piece, nearly a quarter [of a mile¹²⁶], nearly opposite Joseph's store under the bank near Joseph's residence (it was in the afternoon); We got in a little kind of wash, and were inside Joseph's inclosure where the board fence came into the river.¹²⁷ Joseph said, Let us sit down here. We sat down. Joseph said, Boys, we saw the danger you were in; we were afraid you would not get out alive, but we are thankful that you got off. He then asked us to relate the results of the meeting. We told him all that had happened. We also told him the names of those who were there. After Joseph heard us he looked very solemn indeed, and he said, O Brethren, you do not know what this will terminate in. He looked very solemn, and not being able to control himself he broke right out. Bro. Scott rose and putting his arms around Bro. Joseph's neck, said, O Brother Joseph, Brother Joseph, do you think they are going to kill you; and they fell on each others neck and wept bitterly for sometime; and we all wept. After Joseph recovered himself, Brother John repeated the same question; Bro. Joseph lifted Bro. John's arms from off his neck and said, I fully comprehend it. But he would not say that he was going to be killed. But he said in the conversation, Brethren, I am going to leave you, I shall not be with you long; it will not be many months until I shall have to go. Bro. John said, Brother Joseph, are you going to be slain. He never answered; but he still felt very sorrowful. After considerable conversation Joseph said that he would go away and would not be known among the people for 20 years or upwards. Finally he said, I shall go to rest; but he did not say a word about dying.

You know Brother Joseph, (here the speaker addressed himself to Bro. Jos. F. Smith) that the Prophet started over the river, just before he gave himself up, to go away;¹²⁸ it might be that he intended or meant that he would leave the place, and it might be that he knew that his life would be taken. I could not say as to that.

Before leaving Joseph put a seal upon our mouths, and told us to tell nobody not even our fathers for 20 years. He cautioned us very seriously, and I did as he told me.

There was one thing that Joseph said which I have not related. He said: they accuse me of polygamy, and of being a false prophet and many other things which I do not now remember; but, said he, I am

-6-Verbal statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

no false prophet, I am no impostor; I have had no dark revelations, I have had no revelations from the devil. I have made no revelations; I have not got anything up myself. The same God that has thus far dictated and directed me, and inspired me and strengthened me in this work, gave me this revelation and Commandment on Celestial and Plural marriage; and the same God Commanded me to obey it. He said to me that unless I accept it and introduce it and practise it, I together with my people should be damned and cut off from this time henceforth. And they say if I do so and so they will kill me. What shall I do! What shall I do! If I do not practise it I shall be damned with all my people; if I do teach it and practise it and urge it, they say they will kill me, and I know they will. But said he, we have got to observe it, that it was an eternal principle, and that it was given to him by way of Commandment and not by way of instruction."¹²⁹ That is about all.

Bro. Harris then related the following circumstance in connection with Joseph's giving the Twelve their endowments:

"This little circumstance took place a few months after the thing I have related – perhaps it was two or three weeks, I do not now remember, I did not rivet dates on my mind. I was passing Joseph's brick building which was used for a store,¹³⁰ when Bro. Willard Richards came out and beckoned me. As we approached each other he said, Good morning Brother Harris! And shook hands with me. I was on my wagon, and I thought as though he wanted to chat. He walked along, and I drove on, he walking alongside of my wagon. It was an ox team I had but I asked him if he was going my way, and if he would ride. He said, Yes, if you please. He got up and rode. As soon as he was seated in the wagon he said, I have a message for you: Bro. Joseph wanted me to come and see you. As soon as he saw you coming he remarked – There, brethren, we are alright now; the time has come; —

— there is the man I want;¹³¹

/there's the boy I can depend upon and trust. Brother Richards, will you go and see him and tell him what I want." Then Bro. Richards told me that Brother Joseph had met in that building with most of the Twelve,¹³² and they had been waiting for some one that Joseph could depend upon to assist them. He then told me that Joseph desired me to drive around to the river where he (Bro. Richards) would meet me with barrels and buckets¹³³ to assist him to get some water up to the

-7-Verbal statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

house in which the brethren had gathered,¹³⁴ that Brother Joseph wanted to give them (the Twelve) their endowments.¹³⁵ I went to the river according to request, and found Bro. Richards there with barrels and buckets. We loaded up the wagon, and drove up to the house the back way. The Twelve were on the poarch¹³⁶ above with block and tackle with which they drew the barrels of water up. Bro. Joseph was with them and assisted. Bro. Joseph said to me: – This day I am going to roll this kingdom off my shoulders on to the shoulders of these my brethren, for them to preach the Gospel and gather Israel and build up the Kingdom upon the foundation which I have laid; for I shall not be known among the people for many years, or for 20 years; I am going to rest, and these, my Brethren the Twelve have got to preach the Gospel and gather Israel, etc.¹³⁷ In answer to a question, Bro. Harris, said “Joseph was then addressing himself to me, while the Twelve stood around him, on the poarch. “He then said to me, You are the only witness on the earth¹³⁸ to what I am about to do; I wanted you as a witness, and I have been waiting for you. Then turning to Bro. Brigham, he said, Brother Brigham when this Temple (the Nauvoo Temple) is finished will you see to the giving of this young man his endowments as I will give them to you today? Bro. Brigham answered: I will, Brother Joseph. Bro. Joseph remarked again I request you to do it. Bro. Brigham promised in his firm way that he would do it. Brother Joseph then told me that was all I could do for him, and I drove off. Bro. Young fulfilled his promise. When he was ready for me he sent Bro. Milo Andrus¹³⁹ to inform me that Bro. Brigham would give me my endowments if I would go to the Temple.¹⁴⁰ I went and received them.

N.B.

This statement was made under the following circumstances: Bro. Harris spoke to Bro. Jos. F. immediately before the forenoon meeting of Sunday saying that he would like to relate the foregoing to him; consequently an appointment was made, and Bro. Jos. F. asked me to be present to take what Bro. Harris might say in short hand. The time appointed was after the morning meeting. As the afternoon meeting had been announced to commence half an hour earlier than usual (so as to give Prest. Taylor and party an opportunity to make Moroni and Fountain Green that evening on their [way] home) the time at our disposal to hear Bro. H. also to eat dinner was not sufficient to enable

-8-Verbal statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

him to do justice to it. He told it in his own way and had to hurry at that.
G. F. Gibbs, Reporter.

Reflections on the Significance of Apostolic Succession in the Restored Church

The question of authority was central to the acceptance of many early converts that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth."¹⁴¹ Often, a satisfying answer to this question was found in claims of apostolic succession.¹⁴² Matthew J. Grow provides the following example:¹⁴³

In 1846, Oran Brownson, the older brother of the famed Catholic convert Orestes A. Brownson, penned a letter to his brother recounting a dream Orestes had shared with him much earlier. In the dream, Orestes, Oran, and a third brother, Daniel, were "traveling a road together." "You first left the road then myself and it remains to be seen whether Daniel will turn out of the road (change his opinion)," Oran wrote. At approximately the same period in which Orestes converted to Catholicism "because no other church possessed proper authority," Oran joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because he believed that "proper authority rests among the Mormons."

Despite Joseph Smith's early affection for Methodism,¹⁴⁴ one of his final sermons contended that the arguments of Catholics and Mormons for apostolic succession made their claims superior to those of any other church:¹⁴⁵

[the] old Catholic Church is worth more than all [the other churches] — here is a princ[iple]. of logic — that men have no more sense — I will illustrate [with] an old apple tree — here jumps off a branch & says I am the true tree. & you are corrupt — if the whole tree is corrupt how can any true thing come out of it — the char[acte]r of the old ones have always been sland[ere]d. by all apos[tates] since the world began

In our time, unlike the early days of the Church, both the assertion of Mormonism's unique authority and the very idea there is only one "true and living church upon the face of the whole earth"¹⁴⁶ are seen as repugnant or simply irrelevant to many religious seekers. Indeed, one is

often led to wonder whether even the Latter-day Saints themselves fully appreciate the importance of the restoration of all priesthood keys to Joseph Smith by heavenly messengers and the continuity of apostolic succession that has prevailed in the Church since that time.

The significance of Mormonism's claims to unique authority has not been lost on some thoughtful observers from outside the Church. Perhaps the best-known example of this comes from Dr. John M. Reiner, a Catholic scholar¹⁴⁷ who spoke with Elder Orson F. Whitney during a visit to Salt Lake City in 1898. His words echo the sentiment of Joseph Smith quoted above:¹⁴⁸ "If we [i.e., the Catholic Church] have the apostolic succession from St. Peter, as we claim, there is no need of Joseph Smith and Mormonism; but if we have not that succession, then such a man as Joseph Smith was necessary, and Mormonism's attitude is the only consistent one. It is either the perpetuation of the gospel from ancient times, or the restoration of the gospel in latter days."

In a discourse given in the Salt Lake Tabernacle during his visit, Dr. Reiner elaborated more fully on his views:¹⁴⁹

[T]o my mind, your Church and the Roman church are the only two churches in the world today that make any real claim to Christianity. ...

"Have you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" There is absolute silence, unless a voice comes from one corner of the Alps, from Rome, and says, "I have the truth," and then it comes again from another corner of the world, in this new hemisphere — from Salt Lake City — where the head of your Church says, "We have the truth." Or, as the venerable head of the Church said to me, "If you have any truth that I have not got, let me see it, and I will take it." These are the two churches. ...

I do trust and hope that if — IF! — you are really the true Church, then your light may shine before men, so that none of them shall be deprived of it. However, I am glad to say this: Whether you are or not, I must confess that I have traveled pretty nearly all over the world, but as a rule I never pay much attention whether a man says he is Presbyterian, or a Primitive Methodist, or a Wesleyan Methodist. It has no charm for me. But your humble missionaries buttonhole me everywhere, telling me they are the only true Church, ... and I stand aghast and look. Therefore my attention is arrested, and therefore I examine. What the result will be, God only knows.

Admittedly, Dr. Reiner's views on the exclusive claims of Mormonism and Catholicism to legitimate authority would be even more unusual today than they were in 1898. However, that the claim for apostolic authority in Catholicism and Mormonism retains its appeal for at least some scholars today is evidenced in the broadminded generosity of spirit and the erudite elegance of prose of the late Dr. Stephen H. Webb, a convert to Catholicism who became a serious student of Mormonism.

After receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, Stephen taught religion and philosophy for twenty-five years at Wabash College. Later, he devoted himself more fully to writing, while also teaching at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis and serving in several prison ministries.¹⁵⁰ The extent of his "deeply felt mission to 'teach the beautiful truths of Mormonism' to the wider world"¹⁵¹ in his later life was summarized in capsule form by an academic who was also a long-time family friend. Following Stephen's funeral services in Indianapolis, he told me that it was striking to him that after a remarkable academic career in which Stephen wrote numerous articles and more than a dozen major volumes, each one taking up a topic that was very different from the one before (writing not only about theology but also about animals, vegetarianism, diet, politics, popular culture [including a book on the musical career of Bob Dylan], literature, and liberal advocacy¹⁵²) he dedicated his last three books, published with Oxford University Press, to the subject of Mormonism.¹⁵³

After the funeral, I also met Ruth Ellen Homer, LDS Indiana Area Interfaith Specialist, who related an experience she had with Stephen a few weeks prior to his passing. At my request she wrote the following summary, which I include with the permission of both Ruth Ellen and of Stephen's wife Diane Timmerman:¹⁵⁴

On February 18, 2016, Steve came to my home for the Living Room Dialogue [of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation in Indianapolis].¹⁵⁵ He fit right in with the other guests, including university professors who were CIC members. In preparing for the event, I had felt prompted by the Holy Ghost to teach the need for the Restoration in a specific way. I worked on my outline and slides for days until the feeling came that everything was as the Lord wanted.

Steve listened intently as I explained why Mormons believe the Restoration was necessary: the apostles and apostolic keys had been lost in antiquity and were needed in the latter-day church. Ecumenical councils had assembled to



Figures 9 a and b. *a.* Stephen H. Webb, 1961–2016. *b.* Ruth Ellen Homer discusses the restoration of priesthood keys by Peter, James, and John at a meeting on 18 February 2016, with Stephen Webb seated at far left.

consider weighty theological questions, but apostles were not present to declare doctrine. There were no apostles at Nicaea.

Having built the foundation, I next showed a painting of Peter, James, and John ordaining Joseph Smith as the first apostle in modern times and conferring the apostolic keys upon him. Oliver Cowdery would be ordained next as the second modern apostle.

Then I summarized in the words given to me by the Spirit the week before: “This remarkable occasion is sacred to the Latter-day Saints. We believe the keys of the kingdom given to Peter were literally restored *by Peter*.”

During this discussion Steve had grown increasingly animated. Now, in a climactic moment, he declared firmly, “*Peter held the keys of the kingdom.*”

My friend Steve had once again voiced a beautiful truth of the gospel. As he left that evening, he turned to me and said, “That was a *good* presentation.”¹⁵⁶

Earlier Stephen had written:¹⁵⁷

What set [Joseph Smith] apart ... from the many mystics and prophets throughout history who have recorded their auditory and visual experiences of God was his sensitivity to the fragility of religious authority and his recognition that

the traditions of the Church needed to be re-established on the grounds of a renewal of the prophetic tradition. In other words, he instinctively understood that religion without authority is merely passing fad or speculative fantasy. ...

Joseph reinvented the theological wheel of apostolic succession (the idea that the leadership of the church should be in the hands of men who are spiritual heirs of the original ministry of the twelve apostles) and the Petrine Primacy (the idea that Jesus singled out Simon Peter to hold the first place of honor and authority among the apostles). That should not cast him in a negative light to Roman Catholics. Indeed, it should affirm Catholics in their understanding of religious authority.

The testimony of Dennison Lott Harris not only underscores the importance of the circumstances that brought the keys held by Peter back to the earth again, but also the events of 26 March 1844 that assured that the authority and power of those same keys would continue in the leading quorums of the Church after the death of Joseph Smith.

Though at first, after the martyrdom, Brigham Young had sorrowfully wondered whether Joseph Smith had taken the keys of the kingdom with him at his death, he was soon fired through with a burst of inspiration that told him all was well: "Bringing my hand down on my knee, I said the keys of the kingdom are right here with the Church."¹⁵⁸ All those keys of the priesthood,¹⁵⁹ including the "last" and "most sacred" key of the sealing power that was specifically conferred on Brigham Young,¹⁶⁰ have continued with the First Presidency and the Twelve to the present day. Andrew Ehat summarizes the enduring legacy of 26 March 1844:¹⁶¹

John Taylor[, the successor to Brigham Young as President of the Church,] received an admonition from the Lord for the Church to "Fear me and observe my laws and I will reveal unto you, from time to time, through the channels that I have appointed, everything that shall be necessary for the future development and perfection of my Church, for the adjustment and rolling forth of my kingdom, and for the building up and the establishment of my Zion."¹⁶² ... The channels had been appointed. The process of succession was set. The flow of revelation has continued. ... This is the continuing influence of Joseph Smith's "Last Charge."

"Never, ever again," Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Twelve has declared, "do we have to question, 'Where are the keys?'"¹⁶³

Epilogue

Dennison Lott Harris received his temple blessings in early February 1846. Brigham Young had closed the temple two days earlier, fearing that any further delay in leaving Nauvoo would increase the risk of violence from the enemies of the Church. However, after seeing a crowd of Saints that had gathered anxiously at the entrance to the temple, President Young relented and a huge swell of ordinances were performed over the next two days.¹⁶⁴ Five hundred twelve people were given their endowments on February 6¹⁶⁵ and, on the next and last day in which temple ordinances were administered in Nauvoo, over six hundred received them.¹⁶⁶ Poignantly, Dennison was endowed not only on that final day, but also as part of the ninth and last company that completed the ordinance, sometime after midnight, in the wee hours of 8 February.¹⁶⁷ Although we will never know the full story of what happened, it is not inconceivable that a day or two prior to the exodus from Nauvoo, Brigham remembered his promise to the Prophet to make sure that Dennison received his endowment in the Nauvoo Temple — as administered under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve, Joseph Smith’s authorized successors.

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Appendix 1 – Conspiracy of Nauvoo by Horace Commings¹⁶⁸

CONSPIRACY OF NAUVOO

THOSE who have read the life of Joseph Smith the Prophet, must be familiar with the fact that from his earliest boyhood he was ever the object of bitter persecution. Notwithstanding the numerous published accounts of mobbing, drivings, bodily injuries, aggravating accusations, mock trials, and murderous attempts upon his life which he endured, and with which the people are familiar, there are, no doubt, many events and trials yet hidden from the world in the bosoms of his most familiar friends, which may have caused him far greater agony than many of those with which the public are acquainted. Among these the following narrative may be classed, as it has never before been published, and the facts it contains may have had an important influence in hastening, if not really accomplishing, the death of the Prophet.

Early in the spring of 1844 a very strong and bitter feeling was aroused against Joseph, among many of his brethren in and around Nauvoo; and some who held high positions in the Church and were supposed to be his best friends, turned against him and sought by various means in their power to do him injury. Many murmured and complained, and some of the more wicked, even watched their opportunity to take his life, and were continually plotting to accomplish that end. At length this wicked feeling became so strong and general, among a certain class, that it was resolved to form an organization, or secret combination that would better enable them to accomplish their wicked purposes.

Accordingly a secret meeting was appointed to take place in the new brick house of William Law, Joseph's first counselor, on a certain Sabbath, and invitations to attend it were carefully extended to members of the Church whom it was thought were disaffected, or in sympathy with these wicked views and desires. Among those who received invitations to attend this meeting was

Brother Denison L. Harris, now the Bishop of Monroe, Sevier County, Utah, then but a young man of seventeen years of age. Austin A. Cowles, at that time a member of the High Council, was one of the leaders in this wicked movement, and being a near neighbor and on intimate terms with Brother Harris, he had given young Denison an invitation to the secret meeting, and told him also to invite his father, but to be sure and not breathe a word about it to anyone else, as it was to be kept a profound secret. Denison was much perplexed over the invitation he had received, and certain things that Brother Cowles had told him; and while sitting on his father's woodpile, thinking them over and wondering what he had better do, another young man, named Robert Scott, who lived but a short distance away, came over, sat down on the log, and the two began to converse upon various subjects, such as generally engage the conversation of young men of their age. It seems they had been intimate companions for several years; and they had not conversed long before each discovered that the other had something on his mind which troubled him, but which he did not like to reveal. Finally, one proposed that, as they had always been confidants, they now exchange secrets, on condition that neither should reveal what the other told him.

Both readily agreed to this, and when each had told the cause of his anxiety, it proved to be the same—both had received an invitation to the same secret meeting. Robert Scott, having been reared by William Law, seemed to be almost a member of his family, and on this account had been invited by him to attend the meeting.

"Well, Den," said Robert, after a short pause, are you going to attend the meeting?"

"I don't know," replied Denison, "are you?"

"I don't know whether to go or not," said Robert, "suppose we go in the

house and tell your father of his invitation, and see what he says about it."

They entered the house and consulted for some time with Denison's father, Emir Harris, who was a brother of Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. They informed him of his invitation to the same meeting, and told him many other things that Brother Cowles had told Denison. He decided to go at once and lay the whole matter before the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was then in Nauvoo, and ask his advice. He immediately went to Joseph's house, a distance of about two and a half miles, and informed him of the whole affair. Joseph listened with interest until he had finished, when he said: "Brother Harris, I would advise you not to attend those meetings, nor pay any attention to them. You may tell the boys, however, that I would like to have them go, but I want them to be sure to come and see me before the meeting takes place. I wish to give them some counsel."

Subsequent events showed the wisdom of Joseph in advising Brother Emir Harris not to attend the meeting and selecting young men to do the work he wished to have accomplished. Brother Harris returned and told the boys what Joseph desired them to do, and they readily agreed to comply with his request. Accordingly, on the next Sunday before the secret meeting took place, Robert and Denison called at the house of Joseph to learn what he wished them to do. He told them he desired that they should attend the meeting, pay strict attention, and report to him all their proceedings, at the first favorable opportunity. He moreover cautioned them to have as little to say as possible, and to avoid giving any offence.

They attended the meeting as desired. There were quite a number present, and the time was mostly occupied in planning how to get at things the best, and effect an organization. Strong speeches were also made against the Prophet, and many lies were told to prejudice the minds of those present against him.

This portion of the proceedings was not a difficult task, for the element of which the audience was composed was only too susceptible to such evil impressions, and those who spoke were eminently successful in producing the desired impressions, and arousing the feelings of enmity toward the Prophet, that they might wish to use in accomplishing his overthrow. It seems that the immediate cause of these wicked proceedings was the fact that Joseph had recently presented the revelation on Celestial Marriage to the High Council for their approval, and certain members were most bitterly opposed to it, and denounced Joseph as a fallen Prophet, and were determined to destroy him.

The meeting adjourned to convene again on the following Sabbath, and the two young men were invited to attend the next one also, but were cautioned not to tell a soul of what had transpired at the first one. At the first suitable opportunity they called upon Joseph, related to him what had taken place, and gave him the names of those who had taken part in the proceedings. The leading members among the conspirators, for such they really were, were William and Wilson Law, Austin A. Cowles, Francis and Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster and his brother, two Hicks brothers, and two merchants, Finche and Rollinson, who were enemies to the Church. After hearing their report and asking several questions, which they answered to the best of their knowledge, Joseph said: "Boys, I would like you to accept their invitation and attend the second meeting. But come to me again next Sunday, before their meeting convenes, as I may have something more to say to you before you go."

At the expiration of a week they again went to see Joseph, who gave them the necessary advice, after which they went to the meeting. This time the conspirators were still more vehement in their abusive remarks about Joseph. New crimes that he had committed had been discovered, and the old ones were much magnified. Their accu-

sations were not only against him, but against his brother Hyrum and other prominent men in Nauvoo. There seemed to be no end to the wickedness of which these good men were accused, as most of the time until a late hour was occupied by different ones in denouncing and accusing Joseph and his friends of the most heinous crimes. Before the meeting adjourned, however, it was agreed that they should all endeavor to work the matter up as much as possible during the week, that something definite might be accomplished towards effecting a more complete organization without further delay. The meeting was to convene again on the following Sunday. As the boys had kept quiet and said nothing against any of their proceedings, it was supposed, of course, that they were in sympathy with the movement, and an invitation was accordingly extended for them to attend the next meeting.

As on the previous occasion, the young men watched a fitting opportunity of reporting to Joseph without arousing the suspicions of any that attended the meeting. He listened attentively to the recital of all that had taken place at the second meeting, after which he said: "Boys, come to me again next Sunday. I wish you to attend the next meeting also." The boys promised to do so, and left the room. They kept the meetings and their connection with them, however, a profound secret from the rest of their friends, and at the appointed time again went to the house of Joseph to receive their usual instructions. This time he said to them, with a very serious countenance: "This will be your last meeting; this will be the last time that they will admit you into their councils. They will come to some determination. But be sure," he continued, "that you make no covenants, nor enter into any obligations whatever with them. Be strictly reserved, and make no promise either to conspire against me or any portion of the community. Be silent, and do not take any part in their deliberations." After a pause of some moments, he added: "Boys, this will be

their last meeting, and they may shed your blood, but I hardly think they will, as you are so young. If they do, *I will be a lion in their path!* Don't flinch. If you have to die; die like men; you will be martyrs to the cause, and your crowns can be no greater. But," said he, again, "I hardly think they will shed your blood."

This interview was a long one. Joseph's sensitive feelings were touched by the faith, generosity and love manifested by these young men in their willingness to undertake such a hazardous enterprise at his bidding. He blessed them and made them precious promises for their sacrifice, and told them if their lives were taken their reward would be all the greater. After leaving Joseph's house with his sincere wishes for their safety, the boys waited anxiously for the time of meeting to arrive. They fully realized the dangers into which they were about to plunge themselves, yet they did not shrink. They knew it was their duty, and they determined to attempt it at all hazards. They were now familiar with the names of the persons conspiring against Joseph, the object they had in view, and many of their plans for accomplishing that object. Moreover, they were supposed by the would-be-murderers to be in perfect sympathy with all their hellish designs; and if, by any circumstance, they should arouse the suspicion that they were present at Joseph's request, or even with his knowledge, their lives in such a crowd would, indeed, be of little value. They determined to trust in the Lord and die rather than betray the Priesthood. Their feelings may perhaps be imagined as the time of meeting drew near, and they started off in the direction of William Law's house, where it was to be held. They certainly displayed faith that every young man in Israel should cultivate.

On arriving at the rendezvous they found to their surprise and discomfiture, that the entrance to the house was guarded by men armed with muskets and bayonets. After being scrutinized from head to foot, and carefully cross-questioned, they succeeded in passing

the guards and gaining admittance. From this it will be seen that great care was taken to prevent any person from entering, except those whom they knew to be of their party, and ready to adopt any measures that might be suggested against the Prophet Joseph. On entering they found considerable confusion and much counseling among the members of the conspiracy. All seemed determined that Joseph should die, yet objections were raised by some to each of the plans proposed.

The Prophet was accused of the most wicked acts, and all manner of evil was spoken of him. Some declared that he had sought to get their wives away from them, and had many times committed adultery. They said he was a fallen Prophet, and was leading the people to destruction. Joseph was not the only one against whom they lied. His brother Hyrum and many of the leading men in Nauvoo were accused of being in league with him and sharing his crimes. In these councilings and plannings, considerable time was spent before the meeting was called to order, and anything definite commenced. The boys, however, followed Joseph's instructions, and remained quiet and reserved. This seemed to arouse the suspicions of some that they were not earnestly in favor of their wicked purposes, and some of the conspirators began to take especial pains to explain to the young men the great crimes that Joseph had committed, and the results that would follow if his wicked career were not checked, with a view to convincing them that their severe measures against Joseph were for the best good of the Church, and persuading them to take an active part with them in accomplishing this great good. The two boys, however, sat together quietly, and would simply answer their arguments by saying that they were only young boys, and did not understand such things, and would rather not take part in their proceedings.

As before stated, Brother Scott had been reared in the family of William Law, and the latter pretended great

friendship for him on that account, and was very anxious to explain to him the object of the proposed organization, and induce him to join. He would come around and sit beside Robert, put his arm around his neck, and persuade, argue, and implore him to join in their effort to rid the Church of such a dangerous impostor. At the same time Brother Cowles would sit beside Brother Harris in the same attitude, and labor with him with equal earnestness. The boys, however, were not easily convinced. Still, in their replies and remarks, they carefully tried to avoid giving the least offence or arousing any suspicions regarding the true cause of their presence. They said they were too young to understand the "spiritual wife doctrine," of which Joseph was accused, and many of the other things that they condemned in the Prophet. Joseph had never done them any harm, and they did not like to join in a conspiracy against his life.

"But," they would urge, "Joseph is a fallen Prophet; he receives revelations from the devil, and is deceiving the people, and if something decisive is not done at once to get rid of him, the whole Church will be led by him to destruction." These and many other arguments were vainly brought forth to induce the boys to join them, but they still pretended not to understand nor take much interest in such things. At length they ceased their persuasions, and, things having developed sufficiently, they concluded to proceed with the intended organization.

An oath had been prepared which each member of the organization was now required to take. Francis Higbee, a justice of the peace, sat at a table in one end of the room and administered the oath to each individual separately, in the following manner: The candidate would step forward to the table, take up a Bible, which had been provided for the purpose, and raise it in his right hand, whereupon the justice would ask him in a solemn tone, "Are you ready?" And, receiving answer in the affirmative would continue in a tone

and manner that struck awe to the minds of the boys as they listened: "*You solemnly swear, before God and all holy angels, and these your brethren by whom you are surrounded, that you will give your life, your liberty, your influence, your all, for the destruction of Joseph Smith and his party, so help you God!*" The person being sworn would then say, "I do," after which he would lay down the Bible and sign his name to a written copy of the oath in a book that was lying on the table, and it would be legally acknowledged by the justice of the peace.

The boys sat gazing upon this scene, wondering how intelligent beings who had once enjoyed the light of truth could have fallen into such depths of wickedness as to be anxious to take such an oath against the Prophet of God and his faithful followers. They also felt no little uneasiness concerning their own fate, and almost dreaded the moment when the last one should have taken the oath. At length that portion of the business was accomplished, and about two hundred persons had taken the oath. Among that number were three women, who were ushered in, closely veiled to prevent being recognized, and required to take the same oath. Besides doing this, they also testified that Joseph and Hyrum Smith had endeavored to seduce them; had made the most indecent and wicked proposals to them, and wished them to become their wives. After making affidavit to a series of lies of this kind, they made their exit through a back door. One of the women, whom the boys suspected as being William Law's wife, was crying, and seemed to dislike taking the oath, but did so as one who feared that the greatest bodily injury would surely follow a refusal.

After the oath had been administered to all but the two boys, Law, Cowles and others again commenced their labors to get them to take it, but met the same success as before. Arguments, persuasions, and threats were in turn used to accomplish their desire, but in vain. They exhausted their ingenuity

in inventing arguments, lies, and inducements to get the boys to unite with their band. "Have you not heard," said they, the strong testimony of all present against Joseph Smith? Can a man be a true Prophet who would commit adultery? He is a fallen Prophet, and is teaching the people doctrines that his own imagination or lustful desires have invented, or else he received that revelation from the devil. He will surely lead the whole Church to destruction if his career is not stopped. We can do nothing with him by the law, and for the sake of the Church we deem it our solemn duty to accomplish his destruction and rescue the people from this peril. We are simply combining and conspiring to save the Church, and we wish you to join us in our efforts, and share the honors that will be ours. Come, take the oath and all will be well."

"Oh, we are too young," they replied, "to understand or meddle with such things, and would rather let others who are older and know more do such work. We came to your meetings because we thought you were our friends and gave us a kind invitation. We did not think there was any harm in it, but if you will allow us to go now we will not trouble any more of your meetings. Joseph Smith has never done us any harm, and we do not feel like injuring him."

"Come, boys," said another of the crowd, "do as we have done. You are young, and will not have anything to do in the affair, but we want you should keep it a secret, and act with us; that's all."

"No," replied the boys in a firm but cool tone, as they rose to leave, "we cannot take an oath like that against any man who has never done us the least injury." They would gladly have passed out and escaped the trouble they saw brewing for them; but, as they feared, they were not allowed to depart so easily. One of the band exclaimed in a very determined voice: "No, not by a d—d sight! You know all our plans and arrangements, and we don't propose that you should leave in that style. You've got to take that oath, or you'll never leave here alive."

The attention of all was now directed to the two boys, and considerable confusion prevailed. A voice in the crowd shouted, "Dead men tell no tales!" whereupon a general clamor arose for the boys to take the oath or be killed. Even their pretended friends, Cowles and Law, turned against them. "If you do not take that oath," said one of the leading members, in a blood curdling tone, "we will cut your throats." The looks and conduct of the rest showed plainly that he had spoken only what they were ready to execute. It was evident the mob were eager for blood. That moment certainly must have been a trying one, but it seemed that fear had suddenly vanished from the bosoms of the two boys, and they coolly but positively again declared that they would not take that oath nor enter into any other movement against the Prophet Joseph.

The mob was now enraged, as they thought they were betrayed, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the leaders succeeded in keeping them from falling upon the boys and cutting them to pieces. The leaders, however, were no less determined that the boys should die, but as the house in which the meeting was held stood but a short distance back from the street, they thought it better to be more quiet about it, lest some one might be passing and discover what was going on. Order was at last restored, when it was decided to take the boys down into the cellar, where the deed could be more safely accomplished. Accordingly, a guard, with drawn swords and bowie knives, was placed on either side of the boys, while two others, armed with cocked muskets and bayonets, at their backs, brought up the rear as they were marched off in the direction of the cellar. William and Wilson Law, Austin Cowles, and others, accompanied them to the cellar. Before committing the murderous deed, however, they gave the boys one more chance for their lives. One of them said: "Boys, if you will take that oath your lives shall be spared; but you know too much for us to allow you to go

free, and if you are still determined to refuse, we will have to shed your blood." But the boys, with most commendable courage, in the very jaws of death, once more rejected the only means that would save their lives.

At this juncture, when it seemed that each moment would end the earthly existence of these two noble young men, a voice from some one in the crowd, as if by Divine interposition, called out just in time to save their lives: "Hold on! Hold on there! Let's talk this matter over before their blood is shed!" and with great difficulty some of the more cautious ones succeeded in quieting those whose anger and excitement prevented them from weighing well what they were on the verge of committing, and considering the consequences that would inevitably follow. Thus the instantaneous death of the boys was prevented, while the crowd retired to the further end of the room and consulted earnestly together, in so low a tone, however, that the boys could not hear what they said. It was evident, however, that they were nearly equally divided in their views of the feasibility of putting the boys to death. Some appeared to be enraged and fully determined to shed their blood, while others were equally resolved to prevent the cruel deed. During the discussion the boys distinctly heard one of them say: "The boys' parents very likely know where they are, and if they do not return home, strong suspicions will be aroused, and they may institute a search that would be very dangerous to us. It is already late, and time that the boys were home."

This was a very important consideration, as well as a very unexpected circumstance in favor of the boys. Hope rose high in their breasts as the discussion continued, and one by one of the more excited conspirators was silenced, if not convinced, until at length the tide turned in favor of the boys, and it was decided that they should be released. Some openly, and many in their feelings, opposed this resolution, as they considered it as unsafe to liberate the boys to re-

veal all their plans, as to kill them and get them out of the way.

A strong guard was provided to escort them to a proper distance lest some of the gang might kill them before they made their escape. They placed a strict injunction upon the boys not to reveal anything they had seen or heard in these meetings, and declared if they did any member of the conspiracy would kill them at first sight. This caution and threat were repeated several times in a way that gave the boys to understand that they meant all they said, and would just as leave slay them as not if they suspected anything had been revealed by them.

Everything being ready, the boys started off in charge of the guard. Right glad were they to once more gain the open air with so good a prospect for their lives, and they breathed a sigh of relief and satisfaction when they were out of sight of the house in which they had endured such great peril. They took an unfrequented road down toward the Mississippi River which runs around one side of Nauvoo. Some of the guard were very much dissatisfied with the way the tables had turned, and, when they had got a safe distance from the house, they halted to consider if it would not be best to slay the boys on their own responsibility. They would gladly have murdered them if they could have done so with any hopes of having the deed remain undiscovered; but, after some discussion, they contented themselves by reiterating the cautions and threats that had been given to the boys before starting. They continued their march until within a few rods of the river, when they halted, and one of the guards said:

"Well, I guess we have gone about far enough, and had better turn back." Then turning to the boys, he continued, "Boys, if you ever open your mouths concerning anything you have seen or heard in any of our meetings; we will kill you by night or by day wherever we find you, and consider it our duty."

"Oh, don't fear on that account," replied the boys, anxious to allay their uneasiness, lest they still might take a

notion to slay them and cast their bodies into the river, "we can see that it is greatly to our advantage and necessary to our peace and safety to keep silent concerning these things."

"I'm glad you've got sense enough to see it in that light," was the rejoinder in a tone that indicated his mind was somewhat relieved.

During this conversation, one of the boys looking towards the river, to his great surprise, saw a hand rise into view from behind the bank and beckon for them to come that way. The guards, after admonishing them once more to be silent, and telling them their lives depended upon their keeping the secret, turned to retrace their steps just as one of the boys, anxious to put them at ease as much as possible, said to his companion: "Let's go down to the river."

"Yes," returned the guard, evidently pleased with that arrangement; "you had better go down to the river."

The reader will readily understand that the meeting had lasted until a late hour in the afternoon and the conspirators had already detained the boys so long that they were afraid their parents and friends, some of whom perhaps knew where the boys had gone, would become anxious and begin to suspect foul play, and possibly might institute a search which would prove exceedingly disadvantageous to the conspiracy. The boys therefore very adroitly proposed to go to the river, so if they were found there it would be sufficient explanation for their long absence. The guards perceived the idea instantly, and it pleased them, for it indicated to them that the boys wished to keep the secret, and avoid being questioned too closely.

The boys started off on a run toward the river, but, lest the guards should watch them, and discover the presence of Joseph, whose hand it was they had seen above the bank, they directed their course to a point about a quarter of a mile beyond where Joseph was, knowing that he would follow them. On reaching the river, they stepped down the bank and there awaited the arrival of

the Prophet, while the guards returned to the meeting.

It seems that Joseph, knowing the danger into which the boys had gone, had become so uneasy at their long absence that he could no longer remain at home, so he and one of his body guard, John Scott, who was the brother to Robert, started out to see if they could discover what had become of them. Perhaps they suspected the boys had been murdered, and that their bodies would be thrown into the stream, as William Law's house, where the meeting was held, was but a short distance from the river. At all events they were there under the bank when the boys were liberated, and now glided around close to the water's edge to the point where the boys were awaiting them.

It was a joyful meeting; Joseph seemed delighted to see that the boys had escaped with their lives. The party walked on to a point nearly opposite Joseph's store, where a board fence came down to the edge of the river, forming, together with the orchard trees and shrubbery, a suitable retreat where they could converse without any danger of being seen or heard.

"Let us sit down here," said Joseph. All four of them entered the secluded retreat, and when they were seated he continued: "Boys, we saw your danger and were afraid you would not get out alive, but we are thankful that you got off safely. Now relate to me all that you have witnessed."

The boys then gave him a complete account of all they had witnessed, and passed through; repeated to him the oath they had seen and heard administered to some two hundred individuals separately; gave him the names of all they knew that had taken the oath; in short they gave him a most accurate recital of all they had seen and heard.

Joseph and his companion listened very attentively, and, as the boys proceeded, a very grave expression crept over the countenance of the former, showing that a deep anxiety was preying upon his mind. When the recital was finished a pause of some length ensued.

Joseph was very much moved, and at length burst out: "O, brethren, you do not know what this will terminate in!" But proceeded no further, for his feelings were so strong that he burst into tears.

In great agitation, Brother John Scott, who was an intimate and trusted friend of Joseph, sprang forward and throwing his arms around the Prophet's neck, exclaimed: "O, Brother Joseph! do you think they are going to kill you?" and they fell on each other's necks and wept bitterly. The scene is difficult to describe. The thought of losing their friend and Prophet by the hands of such a bloodthirsty mob was sufficient to wring their hearts; and those brave men who but a few moments before had fearlessly faced death, and scorned the proffered conditions on which their lives might be spared, now wept like children and mingled their tears with those of their leader.

Joseph was the first to master his feelings, and, raising Brother Scott's arms from off his neck, he said, in a deep and sorrowful tone: "I fully comprehend it!" He then relaxed into a solemn study, while his brethren anxiously watched the changes of his countenance as if they would read the thoughts and feelings that were preying upon his heart. The scene was painful and impressive. Each moment they expected to hear him say that his work on earth was done and that he would have to be slain to seal his testimony.

After a long silence he finally continued: "Brethren, I am going to leave you. I shall not be with you long; it will not be many months until I shall have to go."

This remark still left them in doubt as to his future fate, but had such significance that Brother Scott again anxiously inquired: "Brother Joseph, are you going to be slain?"

Joseph, for some reason, evaded a direct reply, but continued in a tone that told too plainly of the sorrow he felt: "I am going away and will not be known among this people for twenty years or more. I shall go to rest for a season."

This reply did not clear away their

doubts any more than the former one, but it was evident he intended to leave the people and keep hid more closely than he ever had done, or else, with prophetic vision, he discerned the final outcome of his enemies' efforts, and, through compassion, forebore to crush the spirits of his brethren by telling them plainly the whole truth.

Subsequent events leave us still in doubt as to the real purport of his words. The dark clouds of persecution from enemies without, fearfully augmented by traitors from within, grew so threatening toward the close of the Prophet's life, that he saw something must be done for the safety of himself and the people. He therefore conceived the idea of moving the Saints once more, and this time far beyond the cruel blasts of persecution, and seek shelter behind the barriers of the Rocky Mountains. He called for a company of volunteers to explore the great West and find the most suitable place for the Saints to settle. Quite a number volunteered and began to make preparations for the journey.

It is a well known fact that just previous to surrendering himself to be taken to Carthage, Joseph got into a boat and started across the river, evidently to evade his enemies. He intended to keep out of their hands until this company had procured a suitable outfit for such an undertaking, when he would have accompanied them. Some of his brethren, however, begged him not to desert the people in such a time of trouble and danger, and at their importunity he returned to Nauvoo, and we all know the result. He was induced to surrender himself to the officers of the law, was cast into prison, and there cruelly murdered by a bloodthirsty mob.

Perhaps in reply to Brother Scott's question, Joseph was revolving these plans in his mind and looking forward to the time when he and the Saints would be beyond the reach of persecution; it is now impossible to tell, but the events which followed rather indicate that he foresaw his death. However, he continued in great earnestness:

"They accuse me of polygamy, and of being a false Prophet, and many other things which I do not now remember; but I am no false Prophet; I am no impostor; I have had no dark revelations; I have had no revelations from the devil; I made no revelations; I have got nothing up of myself. The same God that has thus far dictated me and directed me and strengthened me in this work, gave me this revelation and commandment on celestial and plural marriage, and the same God commanded me to obey it. He said to me that unless I accepted it and introduced it, and practiced it, I, together with my people, would be damned and cut off from this time henceforth. And they say if I do so, they will kill me! Oh, what shall I do? If I do not practice it, I shall be damned with my people. If I do teach it, and practice it, and urge it, they say they will kill me, and I know they will. But," said he, "we have got to observe it. It is an eternal principle and was given by way of commandment and not by way of instruction."

It will be seen from these outbursts of his soul what a conflict was going on in his mind, and the agony that he endured can only be imagined by those who knew his sensitive and generous spirit. Persecution and imprisonment from the hand of an enemy would be passed by almost unnoticed when compared with these murderous thrusts from the daggers of alienated friends. Death, to a man who was so familiar with the unseen world and the happiness to be enjoyed there, was stripped of its terrors. His fear of simply losing his life caused him little anxiety. But his whole soul was in the work which the Lord had given him to do, and such bloodthirsty opposition to a commandment of God among his brethren caused the greatest anxiety and grief. His greatest trials are no doubt hid deepest from our view.

The consultation lasted for a long time before they separated to their homes, and impressions were made on the minds of our two young heroes that will last forever. They got an insight into the life of the Prophet and the na-

ture of the work he had to perform, that had never before entered their imaginations. Their love for him and the cause in which he was laboring was increased, and gladly would they have laid down their lives to have saved his.

Before separating, however, Joseph placed a seal upon the boys' lips, and made them promise that they would not reveal what had transpired that day to a living soul—not even to their own fathers, for at least twenty years. The object of placing this injunction upon them no doubt was for their own safety, as their lives would probably have been taken if any of the conspirators should ever find out that any of their proceedings had been revealed. The boys kept their promise, and now, after a lapse of so many years, these important facts, which throw light upon many of the acts and sayings of Joseph Smith, which his brethren could never before fully understand, are revealed and placed with other important records in the archives of the Church.

The muse of history, too often blind to true glory, has handed down to posterity many a warrior, the destroyer of thousands of his fellowmen, and left us ignorant of the valorous deeds of real heroes, whose lot chanced to be more humbly cast; but in that day, when all men's actions will be revealed upon the housetops, we shall no doubt see the names of Denison L. Harris and Robert Scott among the world's heroes as stars of no small magnitude.

"Fact is stranger than fiction," and in value they cannot be compared. I respectfully submit the above narrative, which is a true recital of events that actually transpired. The manuscript has been carefully scrutinized by proper authorities who are satisfied of its authenticity and have approved its publication, as an important and accurate item of history connected with the Church.

Horace Cummings.

(Taken from *The Contributor*, Vol. V, pp. 251-260.)

Appendix 2: Statement by Horace H. Cummings¹⁶⁹

Council of the Seventy

101 N. D. S. Church Offices
Salt Lake City, Utah
Temple Street

Members of First Council
J. Golden Kimball
Kulon S. Wells
Charles H. Hart
Levi Edgar Young
Amasa R. Wins
Samuel C. Benson
John H. Taylor

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August 8, 1932.

The article called THE KAUVOO CONSPIRACY, printed in Volume 5, beginning about page 250, of the CONTRIBUTOR, which was the Y.M.M.I.A. began at that time; the incidents related in that article were related to my parents by Dennison L. Harris, who was Bishop of Monroe, Sevier County, at that time, at our home during the spring conference of 1903, Brother Harris stopping at our home as our guest. The incidents seemed so important and so intensely interesting that I wrote them in my journal in detail. As the CONTRIBUTOR was offering a prize for a Christmas Story, I extended my journal account somewhat and wrote that article in competition for the prize. Before submitting the article to the press, however, at the request of President John Taylor, I read it to him line by line as he was in Kauvoo at the time the narration deals with and the incidents happened and of course was with the Prophet at the time he was killed. He was familiar with many of the things to which the article refers and added certain incidents to the story. When completed, President Taylor gave it his hearty approval for publication as a valuable document concerning Church history which had never been previously published. The secret was held between the Prophet and his body guard, John Scott who was the brother of Robert Scott, the companion of Dennison L. Harris.

Signed: Horace Cummings

The Prophet Joseph placed the two young men above mentioned under covenant that they would not reveal what took place as related in this CONSPIRACY for twenty years. The first time that it was revealed was at the dedication of the St. George Temple, when Brother Joseph revealed it to President Brigham Young, whereupon President Young called in Brother Gibbs who took the narration in shorthand for church record purposes.

HHC

Appendix 3: William Law's 1844 Trajectory of Apostasy

Richard L. Bushman provides the following summary of the life of William Law from 1839 to the spring of 1844:¹⁷⁰

William Law gained Joseph's confidence after he came to Nauvoo in 1839. An immigrant from Northern Ireland who had converted to Mormonism in Canada, Law was one of the few Saints to arrive with capital. ... When Hyrum [moved] into his father's position as patriarch [(see D&C 124:91-92) and was elevated to the position of "associate president" in the First Presidency (see D&C 124:94-95)], Law was made Joseph's counselor. ... Law was one of nine trusted men given the endowment in May 1842, and he and his wife, Jane, were members of the Anointed Quorum that met regularly in prayer meetings in the fall of 1843. Law's disaffection began when Hyrum showed him the plural marriage revelation. Law had disputed John Bennett's charges of Nauvoo polygamy and temporarily allied with Hyrum and William Marks to deny the existence of the practice. After Hyrum accepted the revelation, he tried to persuade Law.

The efforts of Hyrum and Joseph Smith to persuade William must have had some effect. Lyndon W. Cook observes: "Notwithstanding his public statements opposing plural marriage and his shock upon learning that the secret priesthood order was sanctioned by revelation, William Law's own diary for this period indicates that he later seriously entertained thoughts of entering into the practice."¹⁷¹ However, by at least January 1844, the tide had turned and the intensity of Law's opposition to plural marriage and his antagonism to Joseph Smith increased in the next few months until it reached a fever pitch.

Andrew F. Ehat summarizes the sequence of events in the last half of 1843 as follows:¹⁷²

According to two separate sources, the beginning of the significant rupture [between the Prophet and William Law] began when Joseph Smith told William Law that he and Jane could not be sealed.¹⁷³ Joseph apparently told Law this during or shortly after ... 26 May 1843. ... Apparently Joseph never told William (and certainly not Jane) why God "forbid" him to administer these blessings to the couple. Perhaps Joseph originally did not seal the couple because he was testing them on plural marriage — a test Law ultimately failed.

However after Law was excommunicated in April 1844, Joseph explained that he refused to seal the couple because God revealed to him that “Law was adulterous.” Although left without explanation, William ... and Jane (beginning in October 1843) attended all the meetings of the Quorum until William made his final decision on plural marriage.

In Law’s journal entry for 1 January 1844, he acknowledges the “goodness of God,” without which he would have been “lost, overwhelmed, swallowed down in the vortex of iniquity,” through hearkening to the “teachings of man” — “a recollection that paralyzes [sic] the nerves, chills the currents of the heart, and drives the brain almost to madness.” William expresses his gratitude that God’s “spirit prevailed ... before the fearful step was taken”¹⁷⁴ — words that Cook takes as a sure reference “to the fact that William Law seriously considered entering plural marriage at Nauvoo.”¹⁷⁵ The last part of his entry that day provides further evidence that this subject was on his mind: “The evening of this day I have spent at my brother Wilson Law’s, a small party of friends were assembled there, and after partaking of an excellent supper ~~we conversed upon various subjects, amongst the rest the Doctrine (so called) of plurality and Community of wives; they were strongly disapprobated;~~ refreshment we returned home.”¹⁷⁶

Subsequent journal entries for early January document Law’s increasing turmoil in the face of events that brought him into repeated conflict with the Prophet. On 2 January, he said that he had “learned from remarks made by J. Smith before the city council and police” that he was being “narrowly watched” and that “should any misconceive [his] motives [his] life would be jeopardized.”¹⁷⁷ He went with Hyrum Smith to see the Prophet, who called for a Nauvoo City Council meeting to be held the next day to investigate the matter. On 3 January, Law records the supportive words he received from Joseph and Hyrum Smith during the meeting, but his journal entries over the next few days detailing additional investigations evidence a continuing deterioration of his relationship with the Prophet. The effect of all this was to produce “an indignation in his heart, that [he] could not control.”¹⁷⁸ Then, on 8 January, he learned from Joseph Smith that he had been dropped from the First Presidency.¹⁷⁹ Law admits exchanging “unpleasant words” with the Prophet and confided in his journal as follows: “I feel relieved from a most embarrassing situation I cannot fellowship the abominations which I verily know are practiced by this man, consequently I am glad to be free from him, and so vile an association.”¹⁸⁰

On 13 January William recorded his last journal entry for the next two-and-a-half months:¹⁸¹

Several days have elapsed without any important move that I know of; what my feelings have been I cannot relate, various and painful at times almost beyond endurance; a thousand recollections burst upon my burning brain, the past, the present, and the future, disappointed hopes, injured feelings, where they should have been held sacred; the holy religion of Jesus Christ perverted to meet the base designs of corrupt men, these things are as poison'd arrows in my bleeding heart — yet Heaven is my hope, and Christ is my friend —

It was during the interim of silence in Law's journal entries that the secret meetings that Dennison Lott Harris and Robert Scott attended seem most likely to have occurred (although successive Sundays beginning 21 April provide a second possibility). Despite evidence from two affidavits made in late March¹⁸² that Law was involved in a conspiracy that Joseph Jackson claimed was aimed at ridding Nauvoo of every member of the Smith family within "two weeks,"¹⁸³ Law feigned innocence and unjust injury when he resumed his journal writing on 29 March. On that date, he angrily asserted that Joseph Smith "has employed every vile and corrupt man and woman in the city over whom he has any power to circulate evil reports as false as the author of lies, about me and my wife, but he has failed to accomplish his object, for our names yet stand fair and untarnished in the estimation of the virtuous and the good."¹⁸⁴

Law's lack of candor in his 29 March journal regarding his participation in efforts to destroy the Prophet parallels his failure to include in his April and May journal entries anything about his prominent role in his efforts to renew public opposition to Joseph Smith during these months. Although Law organized and led a new church as president in opposition to Joseph Smith, with meetings each Sabbath beginning 21 April, he does not disclose this fact in his journal until 1 June.¹⁸⁵ Rather, his journal entries for this period continued to make himself out as a victim rather than as an active opposer of the Prophet.

Throughout the early spring, Joseph Smith made attempts through intermediaries to reclaim William Law. "William was contacted by Hyrum Smith in March 1844 and by Almon W. Babbitt in April 1844 regarding a reconciliation."¹⁸⁶ Sadly, attempts at reconciliation failed, and William Law was excommunicated on 18 April 1844, along with his brother Wilson.¹⁸⁷

In his careful study of the question of what finally brought Law's rage against Joseph Smith to the boiling point,¹⁸⁸ Andrew Ehat observes that William Law had agonized over issues relating to Joseph Smith and his teachings since at least the summer of 1843, but that it was not until March or April 1844 that the rupture became violent. He concludes that the definitive moment for William was when he became convinced that, in the words of Law himself, Joseph Smith "had lately endeavored to seduce [his] wife, and had found her a virtuous woman."¹⁸⁹ Although this journal entry was made on 13 May — incidentally, the same day he also recorded that Sidney Rigdon visited on behalf of Joseph Smith to make another attempt at reconciliation — the event that formed the basis for Law's story must have occurred prior to 17 April because John Scott testified that Law had told him a similar story on that date.¹⁹⁰ Providing an earlier hint that could be taken as referring to Joseph Smith's attempts to refute the falsehoods in such a story, on 29 March William had referred to the Prophet as having circulated lies "about me *and my wife*."¹⁹¹ Extensive discussions about the accusations and conflicting accounts of what may have transpired between Joseph Smith and William Law have appeared elsewhere.¹⁹²

It seems likely that this same story would have been the basis for an statement that Jane Law was supposed to have made at one of the meetings of the conspirators that Harris attended. The Cummings account of those meetings states that some women were brought in to make statements, "closely veiled to prevent being recognized, and required to take [an] oath. . . . One of the women, whom the boys suspected as being William Law's wife, was crying, and seemed to dislike taking the oath, but did so as one who feared that the greatest bodily injury would surely follow a refusal."¹⁹³ Ehat mentions the possibility that Law's newspaper, the *Nauvoo Expositor*, might have eventually planned to include an affidavit from Jane Law, since the first issue promised additional affidavits in the second issue.

On 1 June, William Law recorded in his journal: "Since our Conference April 21st we have held public meetings every Sabbath day; our enemies rage, and publish slander about us, but we cease not to vindicate the cause of truth, and oppose crime. To this end we have purchased a printing press and intend issuing in a few days a paper to be entitled the *Nauvoo Expositor*."¹⁹⁴ All the events summarized above, including the eventual destruction of the press of the *Nauvoo Expositor* by the city council, culminated in the assassination of Joseph and Hyrum Smith on 27 June 1844. Brian Hales writes: "Few researchers doubt that William

Law bore the greatest responsibility for initiating the events that eventually resulted in the death of Joseph Smith."¹⁹⁵

Regarding William Law's reliability as a reporter of events in Nauvoo, Gordon Madsen has provided an illustrative example. He has demonstrated conclusively that damaging, accusatory statements in one of William Law's retrospective interviews about Joseph Smith regarding the estate of the Lawrence sisters are completely without foundation.¹⁹⁶ Madsen concludes his study with the following assessment: "In comparing the documentary record with the Law interview, made forty-three years after the facts to a writer who was energetically pursuing an anti-Mormon agenda, Mark Twain's statement seems applicable: 'When I was younger I could remember anything, whether it happened or not. But as I grew older, it got so that I only remembered the latter.'"¹⁹⁷

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Endnotes

- 1 Accounts of the “Last Charge” meeting from firsthand witnesses can be found in, e.g., A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” pp. 13-19; O. Hyde, Letter to Ebenezer Robinson (19 September 1844); E. Robinson et al., *Times and Seasons*, Orson Hyde, 8 September 1844, 5:17 (15 September 1844), pp. 650, 651, 6 October 1855, 5:19 (15 October 1844), p. 686, 6 October 1869, p. 180; B. F. Johnson, *My Life’s Review*, pp. 89-90; E. D. LeBaron, *Benjamin F. Johnson*, Benjamin F. Johnson Letter to George F. Gibbs, April-October 1903, pp. 224-225; P. P. Pratt, Proclamation, p. 151; E. Robinson et al., *Times and Seasons*, Heber C. Kimball, 8 September 1844, 5:18 (1 October 1844), p. 664; H. C. Kimball, 8 October 1852, p. 206; W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 25 August 1844, 2:455; W. Woodruff, *Life*, 25 August 1844, pp. 228-229; E. Robinson et al., *Times and Seasons*, Wilford Woodruff, 11 October 1844, 5:20 (2 November 1844), p. 698; W. Woodruff, To the Officers, p. 136; W. Woodruff, Statement (21 September 1883); W. Woodruff, 12 December 1869, p. 164; W. Woodruff, 16 September 1877, p. 226; W. Woodruff, General Conference, p. 722; J. R. Clark, *Messages*, Wilford Woodruff, An Epistle, 10 October 1887, 3:134; W. Woodruff, Keys of the Kingdom, p. 546 W. Woodruff, Priesthood of God, pp. 382-383; W. Woodruff, Priesthood, and the Right of Succession, p. 530; S. Y. Gates, Temple Workers’ Excursion, pp. 511-514; 12 March 1897, 19 March 1897; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, Brigham Young, 7 August 1844, 7:230; B. Young, Letter to Orson Spencer, p. 115.

Andrew F. Ehat has assembled “more than one hundred sources” that provide evidence for the “Last Charge” meeting (A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*, p. 473).

- 2 Lamenting the fact that better records of the momentous events of this day were not kept, Truman G. Madsen wrote (T. G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith*, p. 110):

If all of the Twelve then in Nauvoo had promptly recorded the meeting in which Joseph rolled off the responsibility from his shoulders upon them and charged them, in what he called his last charge, to go forward in building the kingdom, any claim that he intended someone else to succeed to the Presidency of the Church would be completely refuted by contemporary documents. But ... [m]ost of those present didn't say much about it until several years later. Hence, although the charge that this meeting was a convenient afterthought is a false one, as a Church we would have been invulnerable on this point if proper records had been kept. They would have refuted any possible claim that Joseph did not want the President of the Twelve to succeed him.

Though Madsen's regrets are certainly understandable, Richard Holzapfel gives at least one reason why the Twelve may not have recorded these events on the day they happened (R. N. Holzapfel et al., Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony, p. 329):

The "Last Charge" meeting was held on March 26, 1844. Woodruff's brief note in his diary states only, "March 26, 1844. A rainy day. I met in council with the brethren." Naturally, scholars wonder why Woodruff's diary entry was so brief for what he later considered one of the most important days of his life, especially in light of the fact that he was a prodigious diarist. Other participants were just as circumspect. For example, William Clayton noted, "In Council through the day." The Prophet's own diary states, "Tuesday, March 26 1844 From 9 to 12 in council. From 2 to 5 P.M. in council. Warm, some wet."

Because it was considered sacred and confidential, participants chose not reveal or divulge what transpired in the meeting. As with prior meetings in the spring of 1844, those participating knew that details were strictly not to be disclosed. Joseph Smith's diary notes that the participants in these special meetings beginning on March 10, 1844, took an oath of confidentiality regarding these matters: "Joseph required perfect secrecy of them." Later, one participant disclosed to a reporter, "For the

time being, this was to remain a perfect secret until God should reveal to the contrary,” and Joseph Smith “swore them all to present secrecy, under the penalty of death!”

On the issue of confidentiality, see also, e.g., A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” p. 11.

Besides the explicit requirement of confidentiality, Andrew F. Ehat and Ronald K. Esplin (A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*; R. K. Esplin, *Joseph Smith’s Mission*) document several earlier occasions where Joseph Smith indicated his feelings that his work was complete and that his life could be taken at any time. In light of these previous incidents, the witnesses to the events of 26 March 1844 may not have felt the urgency of the Prophet’s forebodings. For example, Elder Wilford Woodruff later said of Joseph Smith’s remarks that day: “The language was plain enough, but we did not understand it any more than the disciples of Jesus when he told them he was going away, and that if he went not the Comforter would note come [John 16:7]” (W. Woodruff, 12 December 1869, p. 164. See also W. Woodruff, 16 September 1877, pp. 226-227).

3 When Did Keys.

4 D. L. Harris, *Verbal Statement*, p. 7.

5 For example, Bathsheba W. Smith was present at a separate occasion when Joseph Smith described his last charge to the Twelve. This probably took place at a prayer circle meeting sometime shortly after 26 March 1844 (J. F. Smith, Jr., *Blood Atonement*, Bathsheba W. Smith, p. 88). Lucian Scovil also heard the Prophet say that “his work was nearly done and he should roll the burden of the kingdom upon the shoulders of the Twelve” (L. N. Scovil, *Higher Ordinances*, p. 71). President Heber C. Kimball bore “testimony of what brother Joseph said on the stand at Nauvoo,” presuming that “hundreds” of others could “bear witness of the same. Said he: ‘These men that are set here behind me on this stand, I have conferred upon them all the power, Priesthood, and authority that God ever conferred upon me.’ There are hundreds present this day who heard him utter words to that effect, more than once” (H. C. Kimball, 8 October 1852, p. 206;). Elder George Q. Cannon testified that Joseph Smith’s “expressions” on the subject were “oft repeated in the congregations of the Saints, telling the brethren and sisters of the Church, and the world that he rolled the Kingdom on to the Twelve, and they would have to round up their shoulders

and bear it off, as he was going to rest for awhile, and many other expressions of a like nature, the full meaning of which the Saints did not realize at the time" (G. Q. Cannon, 5 December 1869, p. 49).

- 6 B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393. Hales gives his assessment of corroborating details about the conspiracy of Nauvoo from other sources, along with a reprint of Horace Cummings' *Contributor* article (H. H. Cummings, Conspiracy) in B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393-408.
- 7 H. H. Cummings, Conspiracy.
- 8 See M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, pp. 142-171; Dennison Lott Harris.
- 9 The source for most of these versions is the 1884 *Contributor* article by Horace Cummings (H. H. Cummings, Conspiracy) rather than Dennison's own statement. Even the author of the most complete biography of Dennison Lott Harris was either not aware of or did not feel at liberty to disclose the contents of the original 1881 statement, since she quotes exclusively from the 1884 *Contributor* article instead (see M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, pp. 142-161).

Other retellings of Dennison's account of the conspiracy of Nauvoo include J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 6:280-281 n; B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 2:223-224; T. G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith*, pp. 115-116; J. F. Smith, Jr., *Essentials in Church History*, pp. 362-364; W. E. Berrett, *Restored*, pp. 169-171; L. L. Baker, *Murder*, pp. 231-236; M. L. McConkie, *Remembering*, pp. 381-386. Elder Dallin H. [Harris] Oaks, a descendant of Dennison Lott Harris, has retold the story twice in General Conference (D. H. Oaks, *Following*, p. 72; D. H. Oaks, *Priesthood Blessings*, pp. 38-39). See also B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393-408.

- 10 Dennison's biographer cites a family source, rather than the original 1881 statement, for the following brief account of Dennison's experience with Joseph Smith and the Twelve, the only published reference to this incident of which I am aware (M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, p. 142):

The Prophet asked Emer if his son Den (as he was called) could haul water in barrels from the Mississippi River so that the apostles and other Saints could receive their washings and anointings "as the enemy wouldn't notice what a young boy was doing." Den willingly performed this service (Lottie

Harris Hayes, private letters and papers in possession of Belle H. Wilson).

- 11 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 7. Note that the apostles who were then present in Nauvoo all had been endowed, sealed to their wives, and had received the fulness of the priesthood previously. See Endnote 48.
- 12 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 7. For general readings on the question of succession after the death of Joseph Smith, see M. V. J. Backman, *Keys Are Right Here*; A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen”; Brewster, Hoyt W., Jr. *Prophets*; R. C. Durham, Jr. et al., *Succession*; A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*; R. K. Esplin, *Succession*; J. F. Smith, Jr., *Origin*; A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*; R. N. Holzapfel et al., *Wilford Woodruff’s 1897 testimony*, pp. 343-348.
- 13 For additional context concerning the “Last Charge” meeting, see R. N. Holzapfel et al., *WW 1897*; R. N. Holzapfel et al., *Wilford Woodruff’s 1897 testimony*; R. N. Holzapfel, *Prophet’s Final Charge*; L. G. Brown, *Holy Order*; R. K. Esplin, *Succession*, pp. 14-15; L. J. Arrington, *Brigham Young*, pp. 109-110; *Our Work*, pp. 771-772; E. Snow, 9 September 1877, pp. 101-102; R. K. Esplin, *Joseph Smith’s Mission*, pp. 308-309.

For more on the date and meaning of the “Last Charge” meeting, see A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*; A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*, pp. 160-166; L. G. Brown, *Holy Order*.

- 14 See Endnote 44. Joseph Smith’s journal also indicates that the Prophet met in council from 2:00 to 5:00 PM that afternoon (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 26 March 1844, p. 209 and n. 912):

In this afternoon meeting, the memorial to Congress was read a second time, discussed, and accepted by the members of the council, who also voted to prepare a similar memorial for United States president John Tyler. Various members of the council spoke on the favorable prospects of spreading the kingdom of God among the nations, after which the council adjourned to 4 April 1844.

The Memorial to the United States Congress that was mentioned “petitioned Congress to pass a bill ... providing ‘for the protection of the Citizens of the United States emigrating to the adjoining territories, and for the extension of the principles of universal

Liberty.' The proposed bill gave [Joseph Smith] the authority 'to raise a company of one hundred thousand armed volunteers in the United States and Territories' to be used to protect American emigrants, settlers, and interests in the Republic of Texas, Oregon Country, and other areas of the West" (ibid., 208 n. 910).

- 15 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, pp. 480-481. For perspectives and history relating to the Council of Fifty, see A. F. Ehat, Ordinances, pp. 162-163; A. F. Ehat, Date and Meaning; A. L. Baugh et al., "I Roll the Burthen," pp. 14-15 n. 23; A. F. Ehat, Seems Like Heaven; R. N. Holzapfel et al., Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony, pp. 343-348; L. G. Brown, Holy Order; D. M. Quinn, Council of Fifty; R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, pp. 517-525. Selected quotations from the Nauvoo minutes of the Council of Fifty have been excerpted in J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, and publication of the entire Council of Fifty "Record" is planned as part of the Joseph Smith Papers series.
- 16 L. J. Arrington, *Brigham Young*, pp. 109-110.
- 17 Sentence altered to more clearly reflect that, within the meetings of the Council of Fifty, "no discussion of or exercise of priesthood keys, no ordinations, no ordinances, no discussion of temple teachings or other church doctrine" (R. K. Esplin, Understanding the Council). Hence, in contrast to earlier views of historians who lacked access to the relevant records, it is now clear that the reported transmission of the needed keys and powers by Joseph Smith to the Quorum of the Twelve occurred outside the Council meetings themselves.
- 18 Draft, *1844/1845 Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Regarding Apostolic Succession*, in A. L. Baugh et al., "I Roll the Burthen," pp. 18-19.
- 19 Family photograph in the possession of the author.
- 20 http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/USHS_Class/id/3246/rec/15 (18 April 2016, Utah State Historical Society Classified Photo Collection, File Name: 39222001361117, Photo Number: 13647; Digital Image (c) 2005 Utah State Historical Society. All Rights Reserved.)
- 21 Carl C. N. Dorius.
- 22 Franklin Spencer.

- 23 George F. Gibbs.
- 24 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, pp. 7-8.
- 25 Ibid. A high-quality digital scan of the document is publicly available at https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE5377450 (accessed May 1, 2016).
- 26 B. C. Nash, 29 March 2016.
- 27 See J. M. Bradshaw, 24 March 2010.
- 28 J. B. Bracken, Statement.
- 29 J. Burrup, 31 March 2010.
- 30 H. H. Cummings, 8 August 1932, as transcribed in B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393. The original of this statement can be found in Appendix 2 of the present article. The entire statement reads as follows:

The article called THE NAUVOO CONSPIRACY, printed in volume 5 beginning about page 250 of the CONTRIBUTOR, which was the Y.M.M.I.A. organ at that time; the incidents related in that article were related to my parents by Dennison L. Harris, who was Bishop of Monroe, Sevier County, at that time, at our home during the spring conference of 1883, Brother Harris stopping at our home as our guest. The incidents [sic] seems so important and so intensely interesting that I wrote them in my journal in detail. As the CONTRIBUTOR was offering a prize for a Christmas Story, I extended my journal account somewhat and wrote that article in competition for the prize. Before submitting the article to the press, however, at the request of President John Taylor, I read it to him line by line as he was in Nauvoo at the time the narration deals with and the incident happened and of course was with the Prophet at the time he was killed. He was familiar with many of the things to which the article refers and added certain elements to the story. When completed, President Taylor gave it his hearty approval for publication as a valuable document concerning Church history which had never been previously published. The secret was held between the Prophet and his body guard, John Scott who was the brother of Robert Scott, the companion of Dennison L. Harris.

Signed: Horace Cummings

Ps: The Prophet Joseph placed the two young men above mentioned under covenant that they would not reveal what took place as related in this CONSPIRACY for twenty years. The first time that it was revealed was at the dedication of the St. George Temple, when Brother Harris revealed it to President Brigham Young, whereupon President Young called in Brother Gibbs who took the narration in shorthand for church record purposes.

HHG

31 In addition, as I compared the accounts, I noticed two minor factual errors in the 1884 article. First, Dennison's age is listed as seventeen rather than nineteen (H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 261). Second, the account records that "Joseph had *recently* presented the revelation on Celestial Marriage to the High Council" (*ibid.*, p 262, emphasis added). In actuality, the reading of the revelation occurred several months earlier (12 August 1843) than the springtime meetings of the conspirators attended by Harris.

Moreover, the Cummings article consistently misspells Dennison's name as "Denison," and his father Emer's name is mistakenly given as "Emir" (see, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 261-262).

32 H. H. Cummings, 8 August 1932, as transcribed in B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393.

33 M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris* p 161.

34 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 1.

35 See L. W. Cook, *Law*, pp. 46-47. See Appendix 3 for more on William Law and his role in the events that led to the death of Joseph Smith.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 54 n. 41.

38 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 3.

39 See affidavit by Abiathar B. Williams, published in J. Smith, Jr. *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278.

40 See, e.g., *ibid.*; R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, pp. 537-538; G. M. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, pp. 359-361.

41 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 6.

- 42 Ibid., p. 7.
- 43 Although a few scholars still debate the date of the “Last Charge” meeting (e.g., Devery S. Anderson accepts the date of 17 March [D. S. Anderson et al., *Joseph Smith’s Quorum*, pp. 71-73] and D. Michael Quinn argues that the meeting was held on 23 March [D. M. Quinn, *Origins*, pp. 193-195]), most now accept the arguments of Andrew F. Ehat in favor of 26 March as conclusive (A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*, pp. 162-163; A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*). Among other considerations, the only entry in Wilford Woodruff’s journal for the second half of March indicating a council meeting is for 26 March (W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 26 March 1844, 2:371. Cf. W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 26 March 1844).
- 44 Joseph Smith’s journal indicates that he met from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM in council (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, pp. 208-209 and n. 911):

Nine men were admitted as members of the Council of Fifty in this meeting. [Joseph Smith] summarized for the new members the business of the council to this date and “gave some instructions pertaining to the kingdom of God.” [The Prophet] then “continued his instructions on heavenly things and many other important subjects,” none of which were reported by scribe William Clayton. The minutes note that the council discussed additional business and that Willard Richards read the memorial to Congress (Council of Fifty, “Record,” 26 March 1844).

In addition to the reference about Joseph Smith giving “instructions pertaining to the kingdom of God” and additional “instructions on heavenly things and many other important subjects,” Ronald K. Esplin notes, on the basis of his access to the full Council of Fifty Record that is scheduled for publication in September 2016, a chain of other evidence for the dating of the Last Charge to the morning of March 26, “not least of which is the apparent absence of Rigdon in the a.m. and his pronounced presence in the p.m. council” (R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016). Prior to the availability of selected notes from the Council of Fifty Record in J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, the prevailing assumption was that the Last Charge had occurred in the afternoon (see, e.g., A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*).

As to the "charge" itself, Andrew F. Ehat writes that (A. F. Ehat, 26 May 2016; 27 May 2016):

when a person was admitted to the Council, they would be given a Charge, that consisted of their receiving the following:

- The Name: The Kingdom of God and His Laws and the Keys and Power Thereof and Judgment in the Hands of His Servants
- The Key Word: Ahman Christ
- The Constitution: Ye are my Constitution, and I am your God; Ye are my spokesmen, therefore, from henceforth keep all my commandments
- The Penalty: Rather than disclosing the proceedings of the Council, you would rather have your life taken.
- Instructions on the background, history, purpose, and objectives of the Kingdom of God administered by the Standing Chairman or one he designates. On 26 March 1844, he administered the Charge.

In light of the fact that Joseph Smith was facing such rumors of his life being taken, he was primed to turn over the reins to others and "rest." ...

During the "Charge" aspect of initiation of a new member, a history of the Council is given. Thus, [it is plausible, though speculative, that] the "Last Charge" was a special case of a charge given to [those] who were admitted on 26 March 1844, and also applied to both the Council of Fifty in general and the members of the Twelve Apostles in particular. Joseph's comment, like what he made to Lucius N. Scovil [see L. N. Scovil, Higher Ordinances] ... that [Joseph Smith] planned to roll the burden on to the shoulders of the Twelve — works just the same for what he said to Dennison before the 26 March 1844 Council of Fifty meeting began.

45 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 7.

46 Rollins, James.

47 Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph_Smith_Red_Brick_Store_in_Nauvoo.jpg, accessed May 18, 2016.

- 48 Apostles who are listed as present at the “Last Charge” meeting on 26 March 1844 were Orson Hyde, Heber C. Kimball, Amasa Lyman, Orson Pratt, Parley P. Pratt, Willard Richards, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Brigham Young (see Endnote 132). All these, except Amasa Lyman, had been sealed to their wives and received the fulness of the priesthood by the end of January 1844. Elder Lyman was sealed on 6 September 1844 and received the fulness of the priesthood on 18 April 1845. George A. Smith is not listed as present at the 26 March 1844 meeting, but since “there is no extant roll so it is not known if he did or not” (R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016). He was sealed on 20 January 1844 and received the fulness of the priesthood on 31 January 1844. For a table with dates of all temple ordinances for members of the Quorum of the Anointed, see D. S. Anderson et al., *Joseph Smith’s Quorum*, pp. xxxix-xliii.
- 49 R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016.
- 50 R. K. Esplin, Understanding the Council.
- 51 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 6.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Rollins, James.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 J. Smith, Jr. et al, *Journals, 1843-1844*, 11 May 1844, p. 248.
- 56 Ibid., 12 May 1844, p. 249.
- 57 Ibid., 14 May 1844, p. 251.
- 58 Ibid., 21 May 1844, pp. 255-256. Heber C. Kimball and Lyman Wight are also mentioned in Joseph Smith’s journal, along with one hundred others, as leaving on the same date for their electioneering missions on behalf of Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign. Orson Hyde was already in Washington, DC on other church business, and others of the Twelve (e.g., Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith [W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 9 May 1844, 2:394]) had already left on their missions prior to 11 May. For perspectives on Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign, see A. K. Garr, *Joseph Smith: Candidate*; M. C. Robertson, *Campaign*.
- 59 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 6.
- 60 Ibid., p. 1.

- 61 Ibid., p. 3.
- 62 Ibid., p. 3.
- 63 Ibid., p. 1. That this was the first meeting attended by the young men does not rule out the possibility that the group of conspirators had met previously.
- 64 Ibid., p. 2.
- 65 A. F. Ehat, *Seems Like Heaven*, p. 256; W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 11 March 1844; J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 11 March 1844, p. 202.
- 66 Reprinted from M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, p. 152.
- 67 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 13 March 1844, pp. 202, 204; W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 13 March 1844.
- 68 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 14 March 1844, p. 204; W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 14 March 1844.
- 69 J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278-280.
- 70 See brief biography in J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, pp. 462-463.
- 71 See brief biography in *ibid.*, p. 403. Eaton was one of three non-Mormons admitted to the Council of Fifty.
- 72 The encounter took place at the Keystone Store, owned by William H. Rollosson, a co-conspirator (J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 30 March 1844, 6:281).
- 73 *Ibid.*, 27 March 1844, 6:278.
- 74 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, pp. 2-6.
- 75 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 19 March 1844, p. 206; W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 19 March 1844.
- 76 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 207 n. 906, citing W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 23 March 1844.
- 77 J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278-280.
- 78 See the report of the interview in *ibid.*, 23 March 1844, 6:271, drawn from Clayton's journal of the same date.
- 79 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 23 March 1844, p. 207.
- 80 A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*.

- 81 Church History Library: An engraving of April 6th, 1844 conference in Nauvoo] /George Lloyd / Lloyd, George, 1817b / M273.2 L793e 1844? / Manuscript /. Image Reference: LDS 2004-51-2.tif. With permission and with thanks to Megan McShane. The original caption to the engraving reads:

This Engraving is respectfully dedicated to the quorum of the Twelve, by GEORGE LLOYD. Commemorating that great and last Conference (previous to Joseph Smith's death) held in the City of Nauvoo, Hancock County Illinois on the 6th day of April A.D. 1844 at which our beloved Prophet Joseph Smith presided and plainly set forth to the Conference the necessity of endowing the Saints and sending Elders forth to preach the GOSPEL of JESUS CHRIST. Feeling the assurance that he obeyed the commandments of God and that he should be called to a more exalted Station: he went through with all the ceremonies of his high office to the twelve he delivered the KEYS of the Kingdom, and as a legacy, bequeathed to them his Blessing.

- 82 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 24 March 1844, p. 207, pp. 207-208 n. 907; W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 24 March 1844, 1:368; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 6:272; J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 24 March 1844, pp. 336-338. R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 538 mistakenly lists the date of this Sunday meeting as 26 March 1844.
- 83 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 24 March 1844, p. 207.
- 84 By permission of Roland L. Lee Gallery, with thanks to Roland L. Lee and Nathan Wotkyns.
- 85 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, pp. 6-7.
- 86 Dennison admitted that his remembrance for the lapse of time between the meetings of the conspirators and the incidents at the Red Brick Store were indefinite. In his statement, he recalls that it was "a few months after, perhaps it was two or three weeks, I do not now remember, I did not rivet dates on my mind" (*ibid.*, p. 6).
- 87 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 87 Church History Library.
- 89 Joseph Smith's journal indicates that he met with the Council of Fifty from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM and from 2:00-5:00 PM that day (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 26 March 1844, pp. 208-209).

- 90 W. Woodruff, 12 March 1897; W. Woodruff, 19 March 1897.
- 91 J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278-280.
- 92 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 18 April 1844, p. 232. For additional details, see p. 232 n. 1037.
- 93 R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 531.
- 94 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 1 June 1844, p. 54; J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 28 April 1844, p. 239.
- 95 By permission of the Community of Christ, with special thanks to Ron E. Romig and Rachel Killebrew.
- 96 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 11, 12, and 14 May 1844, pp. 248, 249, 251; D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 7.
- 97 The verbal rather than written nature of this statement comes across in the conversational style in which it is recorded. Fortunately, the stenographic skill of George F. Gibbs was sufficient to keep up with Dennison's apparently fast-paced telling of the events.
- 98 Joseph F. Smith, 1838-1918, a son of Hyrum Smith and Mary Fielding Smith, was ordained a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1867, and served as a counselor in the First Presidency to John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow. He became president of the Church in 1901. President Smith had a keen interest in Church history, and was employed by the Church Historian's office beginning in January 1865. For many years he actively pursued the collection of statements of members concerning early Church history, especially concerning the origins of plural marriage. See J. F. Smith, Jr., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*; B. M. Yorgason, *From Orphaned Boy*; R. N. Holzapfel et al., *JFS: Portrait*; R. L. Nielson et al., *Excavating*; J. L. Lund, *JFS and the Origins*.
- 99 Franklin Spencer, 1836-1915, reputed to be "one of the best speakers in the Church," had recently returned from serving in the West Tennessee Conference of the Southern States Mission, where he had served as president for the previous sixteen months. He served as the Sevier Utah Stake President from 1877-1887. In about 1864, he changed his name from "Franklin Nicholas Perkins" (or, alternatively, "Nicholas Summers Perkins, Jr.") to escape persecution stemming from his past as a Confederate soldier. For more on the life of Franklin Spencer, see B. Crow, Franklin

Spencer; Franklin Spencer; Family and Early Life of Franklin Spencer.

- 100 Carl Christian Nikolai Dorius, 1830-1894, was born in Denmark and came to Utah in 1857. He was bishop of Ephraim South Ward from 1877 to 1894 and a missionary to Scandinavia from 1862 to 1864. See Carl C. N. Dorius.
- 101 George Francis Gibbs, 1846-1924, joined the Church as a child with his family in Wales and emigrated to the United States in 1868. In 1876, he was called by Brigham Young to serve as a shorthand, reporter for the Church. “Later he was named as secretary and stenographer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles where he served for more than forty-eight years.” See George F. Gibbs.
- 102 Austin Cowles, 1792-1872, a neighbor of Dennison Harris (D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 3), was baptized in New York in 1832 and moved to Kirtland in 1827. He was called to the Nauvoo high council and as a counselor to Nauvoo stake president William Marks in 1841. “Cowles resigned his church position (23 September 1843) over the secret practice of plural marriage and provided William Law an affidavit summarizing the August 1843 High Council meeting where Hyrum Smith instructed relative to having multiple wives. He died in Decatur County, Iowa, 12 December 1872” (L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 57 n. 50). See also J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 400.
- 103 Emer Harris, 1781-1869, father of Dennison Lott Harris and a brother to Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris, was baptized in 1831 and soon moved to Ohio with the Saints. After Simeon Carter decided to join his brother Jared as a missionary companion, Emer served a mission with his brother Martin in 1832-1833 (see D&C 75:30). Later, he moved to Missouri and Illinois, and migrated west to Utah in 1850. In Utah, he served for a time as patriarch in the Provo Stake. See S. E. Black, *Who’s Who*, pp. 119-122; M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, pp. 115-138.
- 104 See Appendix 2 for more on the life of William Law and the unfolding of events in the first half of 1844.
- 105 Robert Scott, 1824-1873, was baptized by William Law in Trafalgar, Canada in 1837 (L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 67). He is described as “a stubborn, rough young man, [who] followed his brother Jacob, Jun. in rebelling against parental control at Nauvoo” (Robert Thomas

Scott). Perhaps it is because he could not be governed by his parents that Law “reared” him instead, as reported by Dennison (D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 3). “Despite this exciting episode in the early life of Robert, the boy did not show any inclination to follow John on his trek to Utah or involve himself in the religious controversies of the day. Sometime in the late 1840s, Robert went to Wisconsin, perhaps in company with his older siblings. By 1850 he had married an Indian woman named Be-Mash-I-Kwe (Kate). ... There is no indication that Robert ever cared to communicate with his siblings to the south; he seems to have been content with his independence, far away from the restrictions of family or religion” (Robert Thomas Scott).

106 According to H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 261:

Denison [Dennison] was much perplexed over the invitation he had received, and certain things that Brother Cowles had told him; and while sitting on his father's woodpile, thinking them over and wondering what he had better do, another young man, named Robert Scott, who lived but a short distance away, came over, sat down on the log, and the two began to converse upon various subjects ... Finally, one proposed that, as they had always been confidants, they now exchange secrets, on condition that neither should reveal what the other told him.

Both readily agreed to this, and when each had told the cause of his anxiety, it proved to be the same — both had received an invitation to the same secret meeting.

107 For brief, accessible overviews of doctrines and historical practices in the Church relating to plural marriage, see these Gospel Topics essays posted on the official Church Web site: *Plural Marriage*; *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo*; *Plural Marriage in Early Utah*; *Manifesto*. For many in our culture, the “emotional and priestly logic” of faithful practitioners of plural marriage is difficult to understand, particularly in light of the “romantic logic” that prevails in modern society. This topic is insightfully addressed in K. Flake, *Emotional and Priestly Logic*.

108 The list of names given in H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 262 is identical in order as that in Harris' verbal statement. The misspelled names (“Finche and Rollinson”) are also misspelled identically.

- 109 Francis Marion Higbee (1820-after 1850) and Chauncey Lawson Higbee (1821-1884) were baptized into the Church in Ohio. Both became ardent enemies of the Prophet. Francis was excommunicated on 18 May 1844 and Chauncey on 24 May 1842. “Opposition to Joseph brought together men of diverse character. Chauncey Higbee, age twenty-three, son of Joseph’s deceased legal adviser Elias Higbee, had been accused of seducing women during the time when John Bennett was operating in Nauvoo. His brother Francis Higbee felt threatened when Joseph proposed to a woman Higbee was courting” (R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 529). See J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 414.
- 110 Robert D. Foster, “a convert from England, had accompanied Joseph to Washington in 1839 as Sidney Rigdon’s physician. In Nauvoo, Foster was appointed surgeon general in the Nauvoo Legion and justice of the peace in the municipal court. Like Law he invested in real estate near the temple, where he built the Mammoth Hotel. An early sign of trouble came when Joseph publicly taunted Foster for resisting Joseph’s efforts to give first priority to land on the flat on Main Street near his house. The Church owned property there and Joseph wanted it developed first. ... Joseph and Foster still remained friendly. More a civic figure than a religious leader, he was elected school commissioner. ... Though Foster was firmly identified with the Mormons, he joined the dissidents in the winter of 1843-44. [He was excommunicated on 18 April 1844.] When a reform church was organized, Foster was selected one of its Twelve Apostles” (R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, pp. 528-529). He was identified as a member of the mob that killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith. See J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, pp. 406-407.
- 111 Charles Ambrose Foster, 1815-1904, was a physician and pharmacist, and a brother of Robert Foster. He was later identified as a member of the mob that killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith. See J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 406.
- 112 This probably refers to brothers Robert Francis Hicks, 1818-after 1880, and John Alexander B. Hicks, 1801-1897 (L. W. Cook, *Law*, 17 January 1839, p. 73 and n. 20). They were sons of Robert Hicks, 1770-1844 (Robert Hicks, Robert Hicks; Robert Hicks, Robert Hicks) who, with his family, was converted in Upper Canada and moved to Nauvoo in 1840. Although John A. Hicks was licensed to preach as an elder (License for John Hicks) and appointed to

preside over the elders quorum in Nauvoo by revelation in 1841 (see D&C 124:137), he was soon "tried by his quorum for stating falsehoods, engaging in schismatical conversation, and breaching Nauvoo city ordinances" (S. E. Black, *Who's Who*, p. 133). He was excommunicated from the Church on 5 October 1841 and thereafter associated with apostates, joined Law's organization, and, while quartered in Carthage in June 1844, was said to have participated in plans to kill Joseph Smith. See L. W. Cook, *Law*, 25 June 1844, p. 59 and p. 59 n. 56; John Alexander Hicks; Robert F. Hicks; Robert Francis Hicks; John Alexander B. Hicks.

- 113 William Marks, 1792-1872, was baptized into the Church in New York by 1835. He soon moved to Kirtland and in 1837 was called to the Kirtland high council and an agent to Bishop Newel K. Whitney. In 1839, he was called as president of the Nauvoo stake. Although William did not come out publicly in opposition to Joseph Smith during the latter's lifetime, he sympathized with some of the apostates, and was eventually rejected as Nauvoo stake president on 7 October 1844 for supporting the claims of Sidney Rigdon to the Presidency. Although he later recanted and stated his support for the Twelve, he soon joined a succession of splinter groups and eventually became a prominent member of the RLDS Church. See S. E. Black, *Who's Who*, pp. 183-186; J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 426.
- 114 "Jason W. Briggs, 1821-1899, was a leader in the early history of the Latter Day Saint movement and was instrumental in bringing about the 1860 'Reorganization' of the church, which resulted in the establishment of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. ... In 1841 at Potosi, Wisconsin he was baptized into the Church. ... Briggs became convinced that [Brigham] Young's organization had fallen into apostasy and by 1846 he and his branches [in Wisconsin] affiliated with James J. Strang who had organized a new church headquarters in nearby Voree, Wisconsin" (Jason W. Briggs).
- 115 No doubt Harris is referring to John M. Finch, 1815-1888. Finch moved to Nauvoo in about 1840 and partnered with William H. Rolloson in the grocery firm of Finch and Rolloson. Later, he participated in mob violence against the Mormons and was identified by Elder Willard Richards as a member of the mob that

- killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith. See (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 405).
- 116 This is surely a reference to William H. Rolloson, 1820-1864, whose Nauvoo career paralleled that of his partner John M. Finch. Though Dennison paints him as sympathetic to the apostates, no evidence exists that he participated in mob actions against the Mormons. See *ibid.*, pp. 443-444.
- 117 According to H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 264, Francis Higbee was a justice of the peace.
- 118 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 268. Providing some additional, rough corroboration to the number of individuals who were attracted to William Law's movement, the *Warsaw Signal* of 15 May 1844 reported that on 12 May 1844, after he had organized his new church and begun regular Sabbath meetings, "there were about three hundred assembled at Mr. Law's house in Nauvoo" (L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 54 n. 41).
- 119 H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 265 adds that the women were "closely veiled to prevent being recognized, and required to take the same oath. ... One of the women, whom the boys suspected as being William Law's wife, was crying, and seemed to dislike taking the oath, but did so as one who feared that the greatest bodily injury would surely follow a refusal."
- 120 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 265:
- "Have you not heard, said they, the strong testimony of all present against Joseph Smith? Can a man be a true Prophet who would commit adultery? He is a fallen Prophet, and is teaching the people doctrines that his own imagination or lustful desires have invented, or else he received that revelation from the devil. He will surely lead the whole Church to destruction if his career is not stopped. We can do nothing with him by the law, and for the sake of the Church we deem it our solemn duty to accomplish his destruction and rescue the people from this peril. We are simply combining and conspiring to save the Church, and we wish you to join us in our efforts, and share the honors that will be ours. Come, take the oath and all will be well."
- 121 Hyrum Smith read a written version of the revelation on celestial and plural marriage to the Nauvoo High Council on 12 August 1843. See B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:139-

144. Separately, Hyrum had read the revelation to William Law and afterward let him take it home to share with his wife (*ibid.*, 2:218-220).
- 122 The final line on page 3 "that we could not be" was partially cut off as the document was being typed. Consequently the phrase was typed again at the top of page 4.
- 123 The compassion and concern Joseph Smith had for the two young men is obvious. While he certainly needed to hear details of the meeting they had attended, it is apparent he was already waiting nearby and watching for them out of concern for their safety despite the personal risks of doing so.
- 124 H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 267 explained:

The reader will readily understand that the meeting had lasted until a late hour in the afternoon and the conspirators had already detained the boys so long that they were afraid their parents and friends some of whom perhaps knew where the boys had gone, would become anxious and begin to suspect foul plan, and possibly might institute a search which would prove exceedingly disadvantageous to the conspiracy. The boys therefore very adroitly proposed to go to the river, so if they were found there it would be sufficient explanation for their long absence. The guards perceived the idea instantly, and it pleased them, for it indicated to them that the boys wished to keep the secret, and avoid being questioned too closely.

- 125 John Scott, 1811-1876, was a brother to Robert Scott. Like his brother Robert:

John was a rough character, prone to violent temper and obstinacy in the face of authority. He was fiercely loyal to his friends but intractable when crossed. Yet at the same time, John was a devoted family man, and his deep religious fervor runs through his journals and the record we have of his acts. His later life is a testament to John's belief in the message and teachings of Joseph Smith, the Mormon founder. ...

Despite the outward growth of the church at Nauvoo, trouble within the Mormon community began to break up the Scott family during the tumultuous year of 1844. Growing militancy on the part of Joseph Smith allowed John Scott to rise in the ranks of the Mormon militia but disappointed his brothers and

sisters, who believed that Smith's political and military defiance would lead to trouble with the government. ... Father Jacob expressed his support for these doctrines, but Ann, Isaac, and Sarah began to question what they saw as Smith's autocratic rule of the church and city. The blow finally fell on April 18, 1844, when John Scott testified at a church council to excommunicate William Law, first counselor to Joseph Smith and a close personal friend to the Scotts [see summary of Scott's testimony in L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 26 n. 84, as drawn from Minutes of meeting, 18 April 1844, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives]. Law had become disaffected with the prophet and his excommunication deeply affected the family. Ann, Isaac, and Sarah rejected the new doctrines, including plural marriage, and became open sympathizers with Law's reform movement. John, however, remained committed to his position in Nauvoo society and to his personal relationship with Joseph Smith (Robert Thomas Scott).

John Scott later went to Utah with wife and children, and served faithfully in church callings and assignments.

126 See H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 267.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 268 wrote:

The party walked on to a point nearly opposite Joseph's store, where a board fence came down to the edge of the river, forming, together with the orchard trees and shrubbery, a suitable retreat where they could converse without any danger of being seen or heard.

128 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 269. After being summoned to Carthage to stand trial for the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* press by Governor Thomas Ford, the Prophet was defiant, telling Ford that "we shall leave the City forthwith — to lay the facts before the General government." Then, as related in R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 546:

Late Saturday night [June 22, 1844], [Joseph Smith] crossed the swollen Mississippi River. He and Hyrum and Willard Richards bailed the leaky boat with their boots while Porter Rockwell rowed. About daybreak Joseph wrote Emma from Montrose that he was on his way to Washington.

Joseph remained on the Iowa side less than twelve hours. When Rockwell returned for horses he found frightened people in Nauvoo. They feared the posse would tear up the city in search of the Prophet. Vilate Kimball wrote Heber that "some were tryed almost to death to think Joseph should leve them in the hour of danger." Three Mormons crossed the river with a message from the governor saying he would hunt Joseph down if he hid, and guaranteeing him a safe trial if he submitted. Hyrum and Emma favored trusting to God and the courts. At 2 p.m. Joseph write Ford from the riverbank that he was coming in — if a protective posse could be provided. All he asked was that all be done "in due form of law." By 5 o'clock on Sunday afternoon, June 23, Joseph was back in Nauvoo. He left for Carthage on Monday morning, June 24.

- 129 According to Richard S. Law, son of William Law who led the effort against the Prophet's life, his father "with his arms around the neck of the Prophet, was pleading with him to withdraw the doctrine, of plural marriage. ... [William] pleaded for this with Joseph with tears streaming from his eyes. The prophet was also in tears, but he informed [William] that he could not withdraw the doctrine, for God had commanded him to teach it, and condemnation would come upon him if he was not obedient to the commandment" (L. W. Cook, *Law*, pp. 27-28 and B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:220, original source in "An Interesting Testimony," *The Improvement Era*, May 1903, pp. 507-510).

Later, Brigham Young declared that Joseph Smith told him and "scores" of others on many occasions that "if ever there was a truth revealed from heaven through him, it was revealed when that revelation [i.e., on celestial and plural marriage] was given, and if I have to die for any revelation God has given through me I would as readily die for this one as any other. And I sometimes think that I shall have to die for it. It may be that I shall have to forfeit my life to it and if this has to be so, Amen" (B. Young, 7 October 1866).

- 130 "Joseph Smith's two-story Red Brick Store, completed in January 1842 and situated on Water Street west of Joseph Smith's home properties (that is, Homestead and Mansion House), was the center of Joseph Smith's church, civic, and business operations and activities in Nauvoo. A small room on the second story served as the Prophet's office. A larger room was used for meetings of

the municipal council, Nauvoo Legion, Relief Society, and the leading councils and quorums of the Church. Joseph Smith also administered the temple ordinances to selected initiates there beginning on May 4, 1842” (A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” p. 13 n. 21).

- 131 This statement was typed between two normally spaced lines.
- 132 The draft *1844/1845 Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Regarding Apostolic Succession* lists nine members of the Twelve as being present (see A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” p. 13): Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, Amasa Lyman, Willard Richards, and Wilford Woodruff. George A. Smith, an additional member of the Quorum, is not listed as attending, but “there is no extant roll so it is not known if he did or not” (R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016). All the brethren listed above (in contrast to those discussed below) were of unquestionable faithfulness. Three others who later became members of the Quorum were absent from Nauvoo at that time: William Smith (in the East), John E. Page (in the East), and Lyman Wight (in Wisconsin). There is no record of Sidney Rigdon and William Law attending the morning session, though we cannot be certain of this because we do not have a roll of attendees. Given Law’s absence from most of these meetings, it seems unlikely that he participated, however we know from the afternoon Council minutes that Rigdon attended that later session (R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016, as a correction and clarification to A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” pp. 13-14 n. 22).
- 133 At that time, the initiatory ordinance of washing was performed in large tubs, hence a relatively large quantity of water was required. The buckets were dipped into the barrels in order to fill the tubs.
- 134 James H. Rollins recalled a similar experience of helping Joseph Smith by bringing water to the upper story to be used for the ordinance of washing: “During the spring and summer of 1844, previous to his death, the Prophet told me to assist in carrying water and other commodities to the room above the store. Afterwards I found out it was to give endowments to some of the brethren” (Rollins, James). He reported this experience as occurring “a few days” before another event that occurred “about the first of May” 1844 (ibid.).

- 135 Note that all of the Twelve who were present in Nauvoo that day had already received their endowments (see Endnote 48).
- 136 The "poarch" mentioned by Harris was a landing to the stairway that led to the upper story of the building. The landing, where the barrels of water were apparently hauled up by block-and-tackle arrangement on the occasion described by Dennison, was "opposite a door which opened into Joseph Smith's private office with its window overlooking the Mississippi River" (L. G. Brown, *Sacred Departments*, p. 263). When the upper story was to be used for the performance of temple ordinances, the Prophet's private office in the back of the building would be fitted up for washings and anointings. The endowment proper would be given in the larger Assembly Room at the front of the building (*ibid.*, p. 364).
- 137 The language of Harris describing the Prophet's remarks echoes phrases found in many of the other accounts of this meeting. As Holzapfel and Smoot observe regarding Wilford Woodruff's report of the meeting, these "accounts repeat similar ideas and in some case certain phrases word for word over a period of five decades ... This combined collection of reminiscences does not reveal layers of tradition build upon earlier tellings of the story that have to be peeled back like an onion to get to the original core; instead, the collection reveals the existence of a consistent and stable story repeated for over fifty years" (R. N. Holzapfel et al., *Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony*, p. 340).
- 138 I.e., apparently meaning the only external witness present on that very day, independent of the participants in the council meetings later that morning, who might have been accused by apostates of colluding to fabricate the account of this incident. This assumes, of course, that the conjectured dating of the event to 26 March 1844 is correct.
- 139 Milo Andrus, 1814-1893, was baptized in Ohio in 1833. He gathered with the Saints to Ohio and Missouri and was a member of Zion's Camp. He was bishop of the Nauvoo Fifth Ward and a Nauvoo temple ordinance worker. In his autobiography, Andrus wrote: "After we had mourned the loss of our prophet and patriarch a few weeks, during which time I was chosen one of the Nauvoo police, I helped to watch the city by night and worked on the [Nauvoo] temple by day--got it so that the work of the endowments commenced in the fall of 1845 and winter of 1846. I spent six weeks

of the time in the temple and was much blessed” (Milo Andrus, Milo Andrus). Milo’s grandson Milo Andrus Hendricks married Dennison’s niece Mary Addrienne Harris (Descendants of Nathan Harris, Descendants of Nathan Harris). After emigrating to Utah, he served faithfully in many assignments and callings, and raised a large and faithful family.

140 According to D. S. Anderson et al., *Endowment*, p. xxii, individuals who were to receive their endowments “were invited to appear at the temple at a specific time by a man appointed as a messenger. This usually occurred the night before.”

141 D&C 1:30.

142 In his well known study of the quest for religious authority as a factor in the rise of Mormonism, M. De Pillis, *Quest*, p. 77 names “apostolic succession, miracles and ‘gifts’ (as signs of divine approbation), and special revelations” as the “three modes of establishing a theological claim to being the one true teaching church.” “For the Roman Catholic Church the ‘marks’ of the one true church are traditionally four: it is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” (*ibid.*, p. 77 n. 15). However, De Pillis downplays the importance of the role of apostolic succession in Mormonism, instead highlighting the significance of the idea of “a *prophetic* succession through a dual priesthood” (*ibid.*, p. 77 n. 16):

Mormon readers will ... be aware that Joseph Smith claimed apostolic succession through Peter or, more accurately, Peter, James, and John. But this is far less important to the definition of Mormonism than the belief that the Apostles were “prophets and revelators” in a prophetic succession from Moses on down through Solomon, John the Baptist, and Christ to Joseph Smith.

To a degree, the emphasis of De Pillis is understandable, given that the complete unfolding of the doctrines of priesthood keys and the preeminence of the Quorum of the Twelve in church administration did not occur until the culminating years of Joseph Smith’s life. For example, in an discussion of the role of authority as a potentially critical element in early Latter-day Saint understanding of the apostasy in 1830-1834, Richard E. Bennett and Amber J. Seidel, after citing Parley P. Pratt’s late recollection of the importance of “the apostleship and authority [to administer ordinances being] restored to the earth” (P. P. Pratt, *Autobiography*

2000, p. 32), conclude (R. E. Bennett et al., *World in Darkness*, p. 95):

Pratt's words are poignant and informative but nevertheless autobiographical and certainly not contemporary to our time [i.e., 1830-1834]. If the very earliest missionaries taught the loss of authority, it seems not to have been an area of particular emphasis or even the distinguishing characteristic. More often they taught the evil effects of the apostasy, the immediate need to come out of the world, and to gather to Zion. Early Mormonism was not presented as merely a denomination per se in contrast with all other churches, but as the restoration of all things, the very dispensation of the fulness of times, modern Israel preparing for the millennial day.

Although the quotation from Bennett might be strictly true, it may mislead unless it is also understood that from the beginning the elders and leaders of the Restoration claimed, spoke of, made a point of restored authority. The familiar language of priesthood restoration did not develop until later in the 1830s, but the claims of restored authority go back to the very beginning of the Church.

For related discussion on the role that questions about authority may have played in the face of religious pluralism in the time of Joseph Smith, see R. L. Bushman et al., *Roundtable*; M. S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge*.

143 M. J. Grow, *Whore of Babylon*, p. 139. For more on the respective conversions of the Brownson brothers to Catholicism and Mormonism, see M. J. Grow, "I Consider the Proper Authority."

144 Joseph Smith — History 1:8.

145 J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Thomas Bullock, Report 16 June 1844, pp. 381-382, with some additional clarifying interpretations for terms added. The argument that any branch broken off of Catholicism has even less claim to authority than the Roman church has been echoed by later LDS writers. For example, Elder James E. Talmage wrote (J. E. Talmage, *Great Apostasy*, p. 160):

The Roman Catholic Church is at least consistent in its claim that a line of succession in the priesthood has been maintained from the apostolic age to the present, though the claim is utterly untenable in the light of a rational interpretation of history. But the fact remains that the Catholic Church is the

only organization venturing to assert the present possession of the holy priesthood by unbroken descent from the apostles of our Lord. The Church of England, chief among the Protestant sections, and all other dissenting churches, are by their own admission and by the circumstances of their origin, man-made institutions, without a semblance of claim to the powers and authority of the holy priesthood.

Concerns about the loss of priesthood authority by religious reformers are also a common theme in LDS writings on the apostasy. For example, Elder Tad R. Callister writes (T. R. Callister, *Inevitable Apostasy*, p. 301; cf. p. 389):

Roger Williams (AD 1603-1683), the founder of Rhode Island and a strong proponent of religious freedom, sensed something was missing in his day and age: “The Apostasy ... hath so far corrupted all [Christian churches], that there can be no recovery out of that apostasy until Christ shall send forth new apostles to plant churches anew” [compare E. B. Bean, *Struggles and Triumphs*, p. 239]. At one point, he declined to continue as pastor of the Baptist Church because there was “no regularly constituted church on earth, *nor any person qualified to administer any church ordinance; nor can there be until new apostles are sent by the Great Head of the Church for whose coming I am seeking*” [W. C. Bryant, *Picturesque America*, p. 502. J. Green, *King Ratbod’s Dilemma*, p. 276 has since clarified that this statement is not an actual quotation from Williams, though it “does accurately represent beliefs that [he] held during his lifetime.” For more on this issue, see also pp. 273-276]. In this priesthood vacuum Charles Wesley, the brother of John Wesley (AD 1703-1791), who founded Methodism, recognized that men were taking divine authority upon themselves. They were in effect nullifying God’s mandate: “Ye have *not* chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you” (John 15:16, emphasis added). After John Wesley ordained Thomas Coke a “superintendent” to administer the sacraments to Methodists, his brother Charles wrote [J. Vickers, *Thomas Coke*, p. 101. For more background on this verse, see pp. 100-102. For current views on the wider context of the controversy between Charles and John Wesley on separation from the Church of England and Methodist ordinations, see H. D. Rack, *Charles Wesley and Early Methodism*, pp. 41, 45, 53; H. D. Rack, *Reasonable*

Enthusiast, pp. 506-526; J. A. Newton, *Brothers in Arms*, pp. 63-65]:

So easily are Bishops made
 By man's or woman's whim?
 W[esley], his hands on C[oke] hath laid,
 But who laid hands on him?

146 D&C 1:30.

147 Elder Whitney's biographer identifies the Catholic scholar as Dr. John M. Reiner (D. B. Horne, *Life of Orson F. Whitney*, p. 181). Reiner was a convert to Catholicism from Judaism (Professors Wrote Letters). He joined the faculty at the Roman Catholic Augustinian College at Villanova, Pennsylvania in 1901, and is listed in 1904-1905 with the following credentials: "Ph.D., LL.D., Professor of Civics. History and History of Philosophy" (E. F. Jenkins, History). He remained on the faculty until his retirement.

In an article in the *New York Times*, Reiner is characterized as a "famed biblical scholar" (Professors Wrote Letters). He was eloquent and vigorous in his defense of his views, and not afraid of confrontation (see, e.g., J. M. Reiner, *Books of the Wars*). A departmental history reported: "He was a very influential man: Father Delurey had a high opinion of him and sought his advice on many things" (E. F. Jenkins, History). By the end of his first year as a faculty member, Reiner was a sufficiently prominent figure, among the "most distinguished figures of the Catholic church, representatives of foreign nations, and of bench and bar" who were present at the university on 18 June 1902, to have been specifically named as the one who accompanied United States President Grover Cleveland when he came to Villanova to receive an honorary doctorate (Catholic College).

In 1898, Reiner visited Salt Lake City and delivered a discourse in the Tabernacle (J. M. Reiner, *How Beautiful*). During his visit, he was hosted by several prominent members and leaders of the Church (D. B. Horne, *Life of Orson F. Whitney*, p. 181, citing a journal entry for 18 January 1898). The subsequent correspondence of Dr. Reiner and Elder B. H. Roberts was published in the *Improvement Era* (B. H. Roberts et al., Dr. John M. Reiner. See also Elder Roberts' reference to Reiner's discourse in B. H. Roberts, *Mormonism and Christianity*, p. 384).

- 148 See, e.g., O. F. Whitney, *Thoughts*, pp. 267-268; O. F. Whitney, *Strength*, p. 6; O. F. Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls*, pp. 222-223 (reprinted in L. Richards, *Marvelous* (1950), p. 3; D. B. Horne, *Life of Orson F. Whitney*, p. 182). The full story reads:

Many years ago a learned man, a member of the Roman Catholic Church, came to Utah and spoke from the stand of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. I became well-acquainted with him, and we conversed freely and frankly. A great scholar, with perhaps a dozen languages at his tongue's end, he seemed to know all about theology, law, literature, science and philosophy. One day he said to me: "You Mormons are all ignoramuses. You don't even know the strength of your own position. It is so strong that there is only one other tenable in the whole Christian world, and that is the position of the Catholic Church. The issue is between Catholicism and Mormonism. If we are right, you are wrong; if you are right, we are wrong; and that's all there is to it. The Protestants haven't a leg to stand on. For, if we are wrong, they are wrong with us, since they were a part of us and went out from us; while if we are right, they are apostates whom we cut off long ago. If we have the apostolic succession from St. Peter, as we claim, there is no need of Joseph Smith and Mormonism; but if we have not that succession, then such a man as Joseph Smith was necessary, and Mormonism's attitude is the only consistent one. It is either the perpetuation of the gospel from ancient times, or the restoration of the gospel in latter days."

Elder Whitney replied: "I agree with you, Doctor, in nearly all that you have said, but don't deceive yourself with the notion that we 'Mormons' are not aware of the strength of our position" (O. F. Whitney, *Thoughts*, p. 268). See also Elder Whitney's report of a similar nature of an encounter with an Episcopal bishop who told him that "the Episcopalians have an unbroken succession of authority all down the centuries, and if Joseph had formed their acquaintance, he never would have gone to the trouble of organizing another church" (*ibid.*, p. 269).

- 149 J. M. Reiner, *How Beautiful*, pp. 359, 360, 362.
- 150 Stephen Howe Webb. See also the moving tribute of Samuel Rocha (S. D. Rocha, *Excess of Stephen Webb*), the loving remembrance of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation (R. E. Homer, *In Memoriam*), and the article that Alonzo Gaskill is preparing for publication

- in the *BYU Religious Education Review* (A. L. Gaskill, Stephen H. Webb).
- 151 R. E. Homer, Memories of Stephen H. Webb (19 April 2016). Unpublished manuscript in the possession of the author. Used with permission of Ruth Ellen Homer and Diane Timmerman, the wife of Stephen H. Webb.
- 152 See Stephen H. Webb. Besides providing a book list, Wikipedia also lists many of Stephen's most popular articles. He also wrote dozens of articles that can be found at <http://www.firstthings.com>.
- 153 S. H. Webb, *Jesus Christ*; S. H. Webb, *Mormon Christianity*; S. H. Webb et al., *Catholic and Mormon*. See also some of his other widely read essays and comments on Mormonism (e.g., S. H. Webb, *Mormonism Obsessed with Christ*; S. Salai, *Catholic and Mormon*; D. L. Paulsen et al., *How Do We Categorize Mormons*; J. Walker, *Mormonism Is Different*; M. De Groote, *Popular Theologian*; *Catholic-Mormon Fireside*) as well as his talks at FairMormon and Interpreter Foundation events (S. H. Webb, *Why Mormon Materialism*; M. Barker et al., *Evening*).
- 154 R. E. Homer, Memories of Stephen H. Webb (19 April 2016); D. Timmerman, April 27, 2016.
- 155 "The Mormon Living Room Dialogue was held at the residence of John L. and Ruth Ellen Homer, Fishers, Indiana on February 18, 2016. This event was organized by the Education Committee of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation, Indianapolis, Indiana. I co-chair the committee. My CIC article reporting the Dialogue is archived at the following link and Steve is shown in the photo. <http://www.centerforinterfaithcooperation.org/archives/8203>" (R. E. Homer, Memories of Stephen H. Webb (19 April 2016)).
- 156 Russ Adamak told me that a short time later he had the chance to tell Stephen about the incident reported by Elder Boyd K. Packer of when he and others of the Twelve and Seventy visited the Vor Frue Church in Copenhagen, Denmark in the company of President Spencer W. Kimball. In sight of Thorvaldsen's statues of the Christus and of the Twelve Apostles of the primitive church, he noted the statue of Peter who held a set of heavy keys and declared: "We hold the real keys and we use them every day" (B. K. Packer, *Holy Temple*, p. 83).
- 157 S. H. Webb et al., *Catholic and Mormon*, pp. 10, 13.

- 158 B. Young, *History 1801-1844*, 16 July 1844, p. 105. See the full recounting of this incident in M. V. J. Backman, *Keys Are Right Here*, p. 107.
- 159 “To us,” wrote Orson Hyde, “were committed the Keys of the Kingdom, and every gift, key and power, that Joseph ever had” (O. Hyde, Letter to Ebenezer Robinson (19 September 1844), in *Items of Personal History of the Editor*, No. 12). It is important to remember, however, that these gifts, keys, and powers were not given to Brigham Young and the apostles in the Council of Fifty meeting on 26 March 1844, but over a period of time in the weeks and months before that Council was organized.

Elder Parley P. Pratt (P. P. Pratt, *Proclamation*, pp. 151-152) also declared that the Twelve “hold the keys of the ministry and ordinances of salvation in this last kingdom,” having had conferred upon them by the Prophet “all the ordinances, keys, covenants, endowments, and sealing ordinances of the priesthood,” who had “set before them a pattern of all things pertaining to the sanctuary [i.e., temple] and the endowment therein,” “according to the heavenly vision.” Elder Pratt continued:

[Joseph Smith] has organized the kingdom of God. — We will extend its dominion.

He has restored the fulness of the Gospel. — We will spread it abroad.

He has laid the foundations of Nauvoo. — We will build it up.

He has laid the foundation of the Temple. — We will bring up the top-stone with shouting.

He has kindled a fire. — We will fan the flame.

He has kindled up the dawn of a day of glory. — We will bring it to its meridian [i.e., noonday] splendor.

He was a “little one,” and became a thousand. We are a small one, and will become a strong nation [see Isaiah 60:22].

In short, he has quarried the stone from the mountain; we will cause it to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth [see Daniel 2:34-35].

While the testator lived, the testament was not of full power [see Hebrews 9:16-17]; all that was done was preparatory. The chaos of materials prepared by him must now be placed in order

in the building [see Ephesians 2:21]. The laws revealed by him must now be administered in all their strictness and beauty. The measures commenced by him must now be carried into successful operation.

- 160 Ibid., p. 151. See D&C 132:7. In the words of Elder Pratt, Joseph Smith:

proceeded to confer upon Elder Young, the President of the Twelve, the keys of the sealing power [see Matthew 16:19, 18:18], as conferred in the last days by the spirit and power of Elijah, in order to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth should be smitten with a curse [see Malachi 4:5-6; 3 Nephi 25:5-6; D&C 2:1-2, 27:9, 110:13-16, 128:17, 138:46-47; Joseph Smith — History 1:38-39].

This last key of the priesthood is the most sacred of all, and pertains exclusively to the First Presidency of the Church, without whose sanction and approval or authority, no sealing blessing shall be administered pertaining to things of the resurrection and the life to come.

- 161 A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*.
- 162 J. R. Clark, *Messages*, Revelation given through President John Taylor, 14 April 1883, 2:354.
- 163 G. E. Stevenson, *Where Are the Keys*.
- 164 The Seventies record book under the date of 6 February 1846 stated (as cited in D. S. Anderson et al., *Endowment*, 1:587):

The [news] having arrived that the Twelve and a large company with them are about starting for the West, such is the hurry and hustle of getting away, that for the last two days no endowments have been done. But this morning the doors are opened again for this purpose and the crowd is greater than ever, such is the anxiety of the people to get their blessings in this house.

- 165 Ibid., 1:603.
- 166 Ibid., 1:609, 614.
- 167 "Members of this company were probably received through the veil early on Feb. 8" (ibid., 1:617).

- 168 H. H. Cummings, Conspiracy. Note that the page numbers in this reprint do not match the page numbers in the original article. Page 1 in this reprint corresponds to page 251 in the *Contributor* publication.
- 169 H. H. Cummings, 8 August 1932.
- 170 R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 528. For a more complete biographical essay on William Law, along with transcriptions of his Nauvoo diary, correspondence, and a late interview, see L. W. Cook, *Law*.
- 171 L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 25. See Diary of William Law, 1 January 1844 in *ibid.*, p. 27.
- 172 A. F. Ehat, Ordinances, p. 74. For the full statements by William Law and his son Richard on events during the latter half of 1843, see B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:218-220.
- 173 See, e.g., W. Clayton, Diaries, 12 June 1844.
- 174 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 8 January 1844, p. 46.
- 175 *Ibid.*
- 176 *Ibid.*, 13 January 1844, p. 47.
- 177 *Ibid.*, 2 January 1844, p. 38.
- 178 *Ibid.*, 4 January 1844, p. 42.
- 179 *Ibid.*, 8 January 1844, p. 46.
- 180 *Ibid.*
- 181 *Ibid.*, 13 January 1844, p. 47.
- 182 J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278-280.
- 183 *Ibid.*, 6:278.
- 184 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 29 March 1844, pp. 47-48.
- 185 *Ibid.*, 1 June 1844, p. 54.
- 186 *Ibid.*, p. 29. See *ibid.*, 29 March 1844, p. 48 and 15 April 1844, p. 50.
- 187 J. Smith, Jr. et al, *Journals, 1843-1844*, 18 April 1844, pp. 231-232.
- 188 Summarized in A. F. Ehat, 26 May 2016; A. F. Ehat, 27 May 2016.
- 189 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 13 May 1844, p. 53. Note that these words have been crossed out in Law's diary.

- 190 See transcript of John Scott's testimony in the minutes of William Law's 18 April 1844 excommunication trial, as published in B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:230.
- 191 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 29 March 1844, p. 47.
- 192 See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 25-27 n. 84; B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:218-246.
- 193 H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 265.
- 194 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 1 June 1844, pp. 54-55.
- 195 B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:398. On the assassination of Joseph Smith and its aftermath, see D. H. Oaks et al., *Carthage Conspiracy*; D. H. Oaks, *Legally Suppressing*; L. L. Baker, *Murder*, R. S. Wicks et al., *Junius and Joseph*; R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, pp. 537-561.
- 196 G. A. Madsen, *Serving as a Guardian*, pp. 353-354.
- 197 *Ibid.*, pp. 354-355.

