

William B. Smith

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In the Shadow of a Prophet

Kyle R. Walker

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To my parents, who have always believed in me—
Dennis Lyle Walker, 1943–1987
Sharon Jensen Walker Haworth

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Preface

As a member of the founding family of Mormonism, William B. Smith has long been a person of interest in Latter-day Saint history. Six years younger than his prominent elder brother Joseph Smith Jr., the founder of the Mormon religion, Smith was present for his brother's earliest recitations of his revelatory experiences, an early witness to the events connected to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and a participant in most of the meetings that laid the groundwork for the establishment for what would eventually become known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Smith held many prominent positions within the movement, as he migrated with the Saints through the states of New York, Ohio, Missouri, and finally to Illinois. He was an active missionary from 1832 through 1845 and had marked success in adding numerous converts to the expanding church.

Smith progressed rapidly through the priesthood hierarchy of the Church, becoming a member of the original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1835. When the Church was headquartered at Nauvoo, Illinois, he was among those trusted by his brother in May 1843 to be initiated into the Quorum of the Anointed (endowed) and be introduced to plural marriage. The following spring he became part of the private Council of Fifty, just prior to the murder of his two older brothers, Joseph and Hyrum. While he resided in Illinois, he was the privilege of representing Hancock County in the state legislature, where he played a key role in defending Nauvoo's controversial charter. Smith successfully published the *Wasp*, a newspaper at Nauvoo, and oversaw the publication of the *Prophet* in New York in 1843-45 during the time he presided over the eastern branches of the Church. These papers were instrumental in defending the Saints' viewpoints at the state and national level. William also succeeded his brother Hyrum as Church patriarch, acting in that calling even before he returned to Nauvoo in May 1845 where the Twelve confirmed this hereditary office. He energetically magnified this calling, bestowing hundreds of blessings of the Saints during the summer of 1845 as patriarch. As the only surviving male member of the Smith family after the summer of 1844, he was looked to by many members of the Church for his views on succession and church policy.

In October 1845, simmering tensions between him and his fellow apostles boiled over, and he was excommunicated in a dramatic break with Brigham Young and the main body of Mormons who eventually settled in Salt Lake City. From that point on, Smith's name all but vanishes from Church history. Saints



William Smith, 1811-1893. Painting by Sutcliffe Maudsley, Nauvoo, Illinois, ca. 1843.
Courtesy of John Hajicek.

in the West branded him an apostate, and any mention of his name in LDS Church history decried his rebelliousness and insubordination. For that reason, most of his contributions to the building up the early Church have been lost to the reader. While there were certainly challenges related to his personality that impacted his leadership and decision making, simply dismissing him from the record fails to account for his vast contributions during the fifteen years between 1830 and 1845.

But William lived an additional forty-eight years, dying at age eighty-two in the obscure town of Osterdock, in northeastern Iowa. The twelve years following his dramatic departure from Nauvoo were equally turbulent as he roared through various factions of the LDS movement. In addition to several unsuccessful attempts at organizing his own church, Smith joined with noted dissidents: James J. Strang, Lyman Wight, Martin Harris, John C. Bennett, George J. Adams, and Isaac Sheen. His interactions with pockets of Saints throughout the Midwest and East are also a valuable resource in understanding the views of those who did not follow Brigham Young's leadership. His voluminous surviving letters not only reveal Smith's attitudes and motives, but also those with whom he interacted.

Finally, in 1878, William linked his experience and aspirations with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ),¹ under the leadership of his nephew Joseph Smith III. Prior to its organization, William had laid out the blueprint for the formation of his nephew's church. Though the tenets he outlined were eventually adopted by his nephew, RLDS leaders viewed William as a liability. While Joseph III accepted William into his Church on the basis of his original baptism in Joseph's Church, he never appointed William to a prominent position within the movement, even as Church patriarch, and discouraged his attempts to infiltrate the Church's hierarchy. As a result, once again, William's contributions to the formation of the RLDS Church, as well as what he brought to that movement for the better part of fifteen years, have been vastly understated in RLDS histories.

1. "Community of Christ" was adopted in 2001, so I reserve it for references to current officers, staff, and departments. During William's lifetime, I refer to the church in which he ended his active ministry and life as the RLDS Church, the Reorganization, or by its full name: The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Joseph's church was initially known as the Church of Christ, then as the Church of Jesus Christ (in Ohio), and simultaneously as the Church of the Latter-day Saints (in Missouri). It was not until 1838 that the name stabilized as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Similarly, it took some time for the nomenclature referring to Joseph Smith III's church to assume its final name. The originally informal clustering of those who believed lineal succession was known during the 1850s as the "New Organization." When Joseph III accepted the leadership of these believers, thirty years to the day after the organization of his father's church, it was called the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." To further differentiate it from the Utah-based church, on February 5, 1873, the name became the "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."

William B. Smith: In the Shadow of a Prophet

With all of William's contributions to Mormonism, it is rather surprising that more has not been written about him. Calvin P. Rudd, a former faculty member from the Salt Lake LDS Institute of Religion, wrote a master's thesis in 1973, but only minimally accessed the vast resources on William owned by the RLDS Church. Nearly everything else written about William is by authors who have focused on his struggle with Church authorities over the scope of his patriarchal authority in 1845. Only one has attempted to highlight his interactions with his nephew Joseph Smith III, and none of the articles have attempted to probe the depths of Smith's complex personality. Consequently, his life has been presented in truncated vignettes. This biography covers his entire life, beginning with William's recollections of and contributions to early Mormon history prior to his 1845 break with Brigham Young and the Twelve and continuing with the events of the final fifty years of his life. From that basis and with due caution about the pitfalls in attempting to "diagnose the dead," in Steven Harper's felicitous phrase, I attempt to sort out the complexities of his enigmatic personality. Despite the abrupt discontinuities, reversals, disappearances, and spectacular public comebacks, this biography bridges those gaps in the life of William B. Smith.

"Why study the process of dissent?" asked Ronald W. Walker in his classic history *Wayward Saints: The Social and Religious Protests of the Godbeites against Brigham Young* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2009). Answering his own question, Walker clarified that studying dissent assists to flesh out clues related to "personality trait[s]" that help us understand the individual. But, he emphasizes, even more importantly, "the process helps to clarify a historical era. By defining the ideas and policies that divided the apostate from the mainline believer, we find what a former age valued—even to the point of defying old allegiances and old associates. In short, by studying dissent we gain the means to view a society as the participants themselves saw it—and not necessarily as we today assume it to have been" (p. 72). In the case of William B. Smith, we gain additional insights into the dynamics of Mormonism's first family.

My personal interest in William dates back many years, when I first began researching on the Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith family. Most of what I had heard and read about William prior to my research was adverse and dismissive. Prior research has referred to him derisively, including articles that included in their titles, "Problematic Patriarch," "A Wart on the Ecclesiastical Tree," and the "Persistent 'Pretender.'" I certainly concur with some of these author's perceptions about the challenging nature of William's leadership. By all accounts, William was a complex person who wrestled with insecurities and fits of passion that sometimes overrode his noble desires and family loyalty. But I also began to discover his vast contributions to the upbuilding of Mormonism, including his missionary success, his persuasiveness as a gifted orator, his propensity to accurately portend the future, and his charismatic leadership. I had a desire to highlight all sides of his personality, which I felt was more complex than can be captured in a single article and best evaluated over the course of his life.

I was also drawn to William because of my training as a marriage and family therapist. I became intrigued by his family dynamics, including his birth-order position, the similarity of his temperament with one of his Smith uncles, and his resentment and insecurities related to his prominent older brother's charisma and station. As I immersed myself in the surviving materials, I became captivated by Smith's psyche. Due to my clinical training, I began to pick up on something that previous historians had missed as they attempted to capture Smith's personality—his emotional instability as a critical factor in understanding his personality and behavior. Such an understanding may also help explain why there are conflicting accounts about how William was perceived by those who were acquainted with him—as both rogue and respected citizen; saint and sinner; apostle or an apostate; profligate brother of the Mormon prophet or revered patriarch. For these reasons, William remains for me one of the most fascinating characters in nineteenth-century Mormon history.

As with any book, many have worked behind the scenes to bring it to fruition, and it is a joy to acknowledge my debts to my co-laborers. The many depositories of Mormon history have been invaluable in producing this volume. Foremost among them is the Community of Christ Archives staff in Independence, Missouri. Lachlan Mackay, Barbara Hands Bernauer, Ronald E. Romig, and Rachel Killebrew as well as other librarians have been very helpful as I have researched their vast holdings related to William B. Smith. I also thank those at the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City, who have been untiringly helpful. Ronald O. Barney, Michael Landon, and William Slaughter have been particularly helpful in locating materials at the library. David J. Whittaker and Russ Taylor also lent their assistance in researching Smith family sources located at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Several private historians have not only done yeoman's labor in strengthening my book but have been unstintingly generous in joining with me to call this portrait of William B. Smith out of the historical shadows. Erin Jennings Metcalfe and William Shepard have been very generous in sharing numerous sources with me as they have gathered material on William B. Smith through the years. Erin reviewed the entire manuscript and offered helpful feedback, as well as locating and sharing numerous sources with me, including William Smith's pension file, which provided critical documentation for several chapters. She also provided extensive information regarding William's wives and children. Lyndon W. Cook expended considerable effort in transcribing most of Smith's letters, an invaluable resource in helping me to locate the large cache of William's letters in multiple repositories. I also have benefitted from the earlier work of Connell O'Donovan, who has researched extensively on William's interactions with early African-American converts, and made an earlier transcription of William's "Elders' Pocket Companion" (see Appendix B). Jeffrey Smith and Brooks Haderlie, librarians at BYU-Idaho, have been most helpful in assisting with the photographs used in this volume. Alexander L. Baugh and Richard N.

Holzapfel, professors at Brigham Young University, also assisted in locating and sharing photographs from their personal collections. Gracia N. Jones, a representative of the Smith family organization, has also been generous in sharing photographs and other historical items with me throughout the writing of this book; as did Mary Dennis and Estel Neff, Smith family descendants through William's sister Katharine. Michael Marquardt was also generous with his time in helping me to locate sources related to Mormonism's earliest history, as were Richard L. Anderson and Larry C. Porter, retired professors from Brigham Young University. Bruce Blanchard, Reed Stoddard, Dale Sturm, Bill Torngren, and Larry Thurgood were helpful in providing funding for scholarly activities related to the publication. The author would especially would like to acknowledge this volume's editor, Lavina Fielding Anderson. This book was markedly improved due to her very capable editorial expertise and vast knowledge of Mormon history. I wish to also thank Greg Kofford and Loyd Ericson at Kofford Books for their support and encouragement of this project. Their professionalism and competence have made the publication process efficient and enjoyable.

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Chapter 9

President of the Eastern Branches, 1843–45

Had it not been for William Smith, [I] should have been in the Church to this day.

— Benjamin Winchester, 1845

In his letter to the *Times and Seasons* in December of 1840, William wrote that he stood ready to “visit the churches in different parts of this State [Illinois], and the eastern states” and was ready to “bid adieu for a time, to the land of my nativity, and lift up my voice on the shores of Europe.” Caroline’s health had improved enough to permit William to travel, and he expressed his desire to “go and assist my brethren [of the Twelve], to prune the vineyard for the last time.”¹ While joining his brethren in the British Isles was no longer an option, he instead decided to go east, both to serve as a missionary and to strengthen the branches throughout the eastern states.²

The decision to serve as a missionary in the East was critical. Between 1841 and 1845, he spent more time among the eastern Saints than he did in Illinois. For a time, it became a second home to him, as he formed many associations, particularly in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and made many decisions that permanently influenced the rest of his life. But it also took him away from the main body of the Saints and the First Presidency in Nauvoo. This fact had its pros and cons. A positive effect was that William had opportunities to preside removed from his brother’s shadow. A negative effect was that William’s leadership experience and ability were limited, and his temperament made it difficult for him to

1. William Smith (Plymouth, Ill.), Letter to D[on] C[arlos] Smith, December 1, 1840, in “Communications,” *Times and Seasons* 2 (December 15, 1840): 252–53. By “last time,” he was paraphrasing a teaching from the Book of Mormon (Jacob 5:62), which communicated the expectation held among early Saints that Christ’s second coming was close at hand.

2. As mentioned in Chapter 8, Joseph Smith had written to the Twelve requesting them to return home just weeks after William’s letter to Don Carlos was printed in the *Times and Seasons*. Joseph Smith to the Twelve, December 15, 1840, *Millennial Star* 1 (March 1841): 266; see also Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 515–22. Most of the Twelve returned to Nauvoo in the summer and fall of 1841. James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 304–8.

succeed in that role. When he encountered opposition among resistant Saints or confusion about doctrine and living gospel principles, he was apt to flare up, insisting on deference to his authority, when patience, careful listening, and more consultation with local leaders would have yielded better results and strengthened the unity of the eastern branches.

In April 1841, soon after moving to Nauvoo, he accepted the calling issued by Joseph Smith to serve a mission which had, among other purposes, gathered funds to build the temple. This six-month mission laid the foundation for further service to the area during 1843–45. William responded to the call immediately, leaving within a week after the conference closed. He traveled by steamboat down the Mississippi River to St. Louis. Although he had balked at the mission to England partly because of poverty, funds were not an impediment for this faith-fueled mission. William put his trust in the Lord by traveling without “purse or scrip,” as the New Testament and earlier Latter-day Saint revelations stipulated (D&C 24:18, 84:86). In so doing, he was following the model set by his fellow apostles a year earlier when they had embarked on their mission to England. He felt that his faith was immediately rewarded. In a letter to Don Carlos in May, apparently the only one that has survived from this mission, he described: “When I left Nauvoo, I had little or no money, and had it not been for the kindness of a gentleman of the name of Silas Haight . . . I do not know how I should have got along. He being on his way to St. Louis on board the same steamer, and seeing me among the deck passengers, took me into the cabin, and paid my fare to St. Louis.” This man was almost certainly Silas Haight, the steamboat’s captain. Other sources describe him as both shrewd and profane, but he apparently responded with admiration and sympathy for William’s missionary endeavor, not only paying his fare but also making an additional contribution so William could continue his journey. William blessed him and hoped the Lord would “reward him for his kindness, even a hundred fold.”³

3. William Smith (Armstrong County, Pa.), Letter to Elder D[on] C[arlos] Smith, May 8, 1841, *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 16 (June 15, 1841): 444–45. Silas Haight was known as a shrewd businessman who traversed the waterways of the upper Mississippi River for more than thirty years. “Captain Haight was all right as long as everything went right,” described one contemporary, “but when things went wrong he would cut loose. He had the steamboat profanity reduced to a science; all of us could swear, but all conceded that Captain Haight was the ranking man on that.” Haight would wait for no one at the riverboat landings. On one occasion when his wife was doing some shopping at Burlington, Iowa, Haight impatiently launched his steamboat just as she arrived. As she stood dismayed at the landing, Haight yelled from the boat to go to a particular house until he returned, for he would not be “laying around with a steamboat waiting for women to stock up with needles and thread.” Captain E. H. Thomas, “Life on the Mississippi,” 1912–13, series of articles published in the *Burlington Saturday Evening Post*, transcription by Georgeann McClure, Iowa History Project, Chapter 37, <http://iagenweb.org/history/rivers/burlingtonpost/contents.htm> (accessed May 9, 2013).

From St. Louis, William took another steamer south and then east up the Ohio River. Full of missionary enthusiasm, he seized the opportunity to explain Mormon principles to James Murdock, a professor of ancient languages, sacred rhetoric, and ecclesiastical history, who had taught at both the University of Vermont and Andover Theological Seminary. Due to his profession, Murdock had a keen interest in the upstart Mormon religion, with its claim of discovering and translating ancient texts, and William was more than eager to recount important events in Mormonism's first decade. "Curiosity led me to make many inquiries," related Murdock, "all of which he [William] promptly answered, and . . . with great ingenuousness [ingeniousness]." Murdock described William as "thirty years old . . . a sincere believer in the book of Mormon, and an honest, upright man, yet deficient in education." Murdock was captivated by William's first-hand account of many of the events that had impacted the Latter-day Saints and found engaging William's home-spun style of communication, complete with anecdotes and down-country metaphors. Murdock wrote up the interview, had William review it for accuracy, and then sent his account to the *Congregational Observer* in Connecticut, where it was published that summer.⁴

William most likely disembarked near Pittsburgh and gradually made his way east across Pennsylvania, visiting Saints and finding small branches organized in Armstrong, Lancaster, and Chester Counties. From Armstrong County, William wrote to Don Carlos, summarizing his activities for May 8–17. "I have held several meetings, and baptized three," related William. "I find plenty to do; there are calls [for] preaching on every hand." Four days later, he addressed a large congregation that included many Methodists and Presbyterians, in addition to a contingent of Latter-day Saints. Using Hebrews 2:1–4 as his text, he emphasized the "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." William explained that "the above passages of scripture offered me an extensive field of argument, upon the subject of the [restored] gospel." He concluded, "I am happy to say, that the religion of Christ is continuing to gain ground in this vicinity; there is a church of about 40 or 50 members in this place, and [they] are some of the most respectable and intelligent part of the community."⁵

William's ultimate destination was central New Jersey where the Church had already seen marked success. He made this area his headquarters and primarily labored within a sixty-mile radius, with Philadelphia on the west end, and Toms River, New Jersey, to the east. He does not inquire about Caroline, suggesting that he wrote separate letters to her, but no correspondence between them from this mission has survived. He must have made significant portions of this journey on foot, for it taxed even his formidable strength to its limits. He was also suf-

4. James Murdock, Letter to *Congregational Observer*, June 19, 1841, in "The Mormons and Their Prophet," *Congregational Observer* 2 (July 3, 1841): 1; see also, Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2003), 1:477–80. See Chapter 3 for more information on the contents of this interview.

5. William Smith, Letter to Don Carlos Smith, May 8, 1841.

fering from what seems to be a chronic lung infection. In his May letter to Don Carlos, he admitted: “In consequence of my incessant labors, I do not feel very well, my lungs are affected through much speaking; [but] I feel as if I could not forbear . . . and have been influenced to labor beyond my strength.”⁶

It was as if William was trying to make up for time lost during the previous two years when he had neglected his apostolic duties. Caring for Caroline had kept him close to home during her bad spells. A contemporary diagnosis of “dropsy” would probably find her suffering either from kidney failure or congestive heart failure, or some other condition that resulted in dangerous retention of water. The home remedies available might have provided short-term relief but not a cure. However, during those brief times when her health improved and spurred on by his newfound commitment, William redoubled his missionary efforts. He seems to have worked continually to the limit of his strength, even though he struggled with respiratory difficulties throughout the summer and early fall.

In Philadelphia William joined fellow apostle John E. Page in late August. Page had been appointed to fulfill a mission to Palestine with Apostle Orson Hyde but remained behind.⁷ In a letter to the First Presidency primarily explaining why he had not accompanied Hyde, Page described William’s dedication, by way of comparing their conditions: “I believe Bro. Smith is a little apt, like myself, to labor too hard for our own personal good health. I think I have reformed a little for my own good and I think if Bro. Smith would try to do so too, it would militate for his good in the better enjoyment of good health, at least his lungs would hold out better.” Page was also pleasantly surprised to observe William’s exemplary commitment, commenting that he was “very much pleased with the spirituality of Bro. Smith, and also his zeal with which he has labored in the vineyard of the Lord since I fell into his society in and about Philadelphia. He has been blessed of the Lord to add many souls to the Kingdom in this region of country. He is truly a destroying storm of sectarianism.”⁸

While William was acknowledging his limitations and, in essence, reproaching himself for his feebleness, the Saints in the East were impressed with William’s effectiveness as a preacher. Although records are not sufficiently complete to provide an analysis of how frequently each apostle spoke, during the

6. Ibid.

7. Like William, Page pled poverty and other difficulties that prevented him from fulfilling his mission with the Twelve. When George A. Smith subsequently encountered William Smith and John E. Page in Philadelphia in June 1841, George encouraged Page to leave immediately and catch up with Hyde who was already in Europe. Page never made the journey, though he had collected sufficient funds to do so. Benjamin Winchester (Philadelphia, Pa.), Letter to Joseph Smith, September 18, 1841, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church History Library; Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*, 3–4, 306–7.

8. John E. Page, Letter to the President and Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints at Nauvoo, September 1, 1841, Philadelphia, in *Journal History*, September 1, 1841, 2–8.

Nauvoo period William increasingly addressed Church gatherings—even more than many of his apostolic colleagues, providing circumstantial evidence of his persuasive speaking ability. In Armstrong County, Pennsylvania, William felt great power in the Spirit as he preached to some fifty Saints and a number of curious onlookers. While “testifying to the truth of gospel and proclaiming the important message of salvation, the power of the Most High rested upon me,” he wrote to Don Carlos in a passage brimming with gratitude. “The spirit of the Lord was manifest, believers rejoiced in the Lord and others who had stood aloof were constrained to acknowledge the truth of the message.” William had already baptized three in the region, and more were scheduled to be baptized two days later. Humbly, William thanked God for communicating the message effectively, reporting that his listeners were reportedly astounded at Smith’s sermon and said they “had never heard it after this sort.”

During the summer, the Twelve began returning from their mission to England. William longed to reconnect with them after the long season of aloofness. He had already joined forces in Philadelphia with John E. Page, the only other apostle who had not gone to the British Isles, and rejoiced when he encountered George A. Smith, William’s first cousin, who had been ordained an apostle in 1839. George A. took a circuitous route home after arriving in New York, traveling to New Egypt, New Jersey, where William was staying. During the first week of June, the two cousins preached in the woods and in a schoolhouse in Cream Ridge, New Jersey, on several successive nights.

In less than a week, seven new converts accepted baptism. In teaming up with George A. Smith and John E. Page, William felt a stronger connection to his quorum than he had had for more than two years. William took George A. to Philadelphia, where they reluctantly parted, with George A. continuing his journey to Nauvoo.¹⁰ Still, William must have felt insecure about his place in the quorum. Both George A. Smith and John E. Page were comparatively unfamiliar with his erratic service as an apostle—specifically, his conflict with Joseph Jr. over the debating school which had become public, the fact that he had actually cursed Joseph in the turmoil of the last Mormon months in Missouri, and his refusal of an important missionary assignment. Men like Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, with their unwavering loyalty and obedience, were probably growing impatient with what they perceived as excuses, even while they appreciated William’s achievements and praised his accomplishments. But George A. also caught a glimpse of some of the challenging aspects of William’s personality during their brief labors together that summer. In a private conversation, George A. later remembered that his cousin expressed frustration over the funds he was

9. William Smith to Don Carlos Smith, May 8, 1841.

10. “History of George A. Smith,” June 4–8, 1841, 39–40, George A. Smith Papers, 1834–75, MS 1322, Box 1, fd. 1, LDS Church History Library. At this point, William had been spectacularly estranged from the Twelve for twenty years, and George A., who was fiercely loyal to Brigham Young, may have had no reason to cast this memory in a more positive light.



The brick schoolhouse in the woods at Cream Ridge, New Jersey, photograph taken in 1905, photographer unknown. Both Joseph Smith and William Smith preached at this location, which was used as an early meeting place for the Saints who resided in Monmouth and Ocean Counties, New Jersey. Courtesy Allentown-Upper Freehold Historic Society.

raising for the temple, recounting that William “considered he was putting means into the hands of Joseph to educate his children, while his [William’s] own children were remaining ignorant.” George A. defended Joseph: “I think that Joseph has done all he could for his relatives, and I wonder that he has done as much as he has considering the circumstances he had been under.”¹¹ If George A. remembered and reported this exchange accurately, it is another early indication that William felt himself entitled to preferential treatment because of his family connections, even while he was shouldering the same burdens as the other apostles.

Don Carlos died on August 7, 1841. No record has survived of William’s feelings, but it must have been a serious blow, especially since Don Carlos was probably the sibling to whom William was closest out of all the family. They had been intimate playmates during childhood and, more recently, had managed their joint business venture with the Mormon Hotel at Plymouth. He had also missed the healing that would have come as tributes poured in from the community and the Saints joined in mourning during the funeral. It seems likely that William appears to have sublimated his sorrow by throwing himself even more fervently into his mission. He returned

11. “History of William Smith,” *Millennial Star* 27, no. 1 (January 7, 1865): 8. This source dates the conversation as occurring in 1843, but the account referred to and George A.’s recollection of attending “a woods meeting” with William in New Jersey better fits the summer of 1841. “History of George A. Smith,” June 5–7, 1841, 39.

to Nauvoo in November 1841, bringing with him the triumph of a very successful mission. First, he had baptized twenty-five converts and witnessed the baptisms of many more performed by Erastus Snow, Benjamin Winchester, and other traveling missionaries with whom he had labored. The eastern branches had been materially strengthened by his efforts. He had set a high standard for himself in terms of strenuous and unremitting work, with the result that he had demonstrated his commitment to the Church and to his apostolic calling.

After his return to Nauvoo, his ardor about the work remained high. He enthusiastically reported on the prosperity of the eastern branches: “Calls for preaching are very numerous and the field for labor is very extensive.” He felt that “twenty five or thirty elders could be busily engaged.”¹² The branches in the East were blossoming by the early 1840s, and William could confidently share his optimism that the success of the Church in the area would continue.

He was eager to return to the East as soon as possible, but events kept him in Nauvoo that winter. Caroline was experiencing another difficult episode in her illness.¹³ In addition to Don Carlos’s death, Father Smith had died less than a year earlier, and Lucy, along with other family members, would have also needed William’s support. Another impediment to returning to the mission field was William’s increasing responsibilities in Nauvoo during the next year and a half. Five months after his return, in April 1842, William launched his weekly newspaper, the *Wasp*, a project that absorbed much of his time. In August, he was elected a Democratic representative from Hancock County to the Illinois House of Representatives, which meant that he was in Springfield full time between December 1842 and March 1843. (See Chapter 8.) By then, the renamed newspaper had been shifted to John Taylor, freeing William to return to the East.

Although William had engaged in land transactions with Joseph and Hyrum during the early part of 1841, his six-month absence had resulted in de facto separation from the business. During the spring of 1842, he still sought to purchase and sell land, only to encounter what seemed like reluctance from Joseph to include him in business affairs, possibly because Joseph found William overly willing to engage in speculative real estate deals. Soon after he had left for his eastern mission, William wrote to Joseph in August 1841 asking his brother to deed him two lots at Nauvoo, including one that was “on the hill near the Temple.” “I want to sell [one],” he confided, “in order to b[u]y me a small farm near Plymouth.”¹⁴ This motive suggests speculation, a difficult business to manage from a distance. Apparently Joseph took no action on this request, but in the spring of 1843, after he had finished his work in the Illinois legislature, William again asked Joseph for the deed to the lot near the temple. According to a later account by Brigham Young, Joseph

12. “Elder William Smith . . .,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 2 (November 15, 1841): 599.

13. *Ibid.*

14. William Smith (Chester County, Pa.), Letter to Joseph Smith, August 5, 1841, LDS Church History Library.

“told him he would do so [transfer the lot] with great pleasure, if he would build a house and live upon it; but he would not give him a lot to sell.” William assured Joseph that he planned to build his home there, so Joseph transferred the property to him. Then, “a few hours afterwards,” William broke his agreement with Joseph and tried to sell the lot for \$500 to James Ivins, a convert and friend from William’s eastern mission. Joseph directed the city clerk to void the transfer to William. Just as William had tried to make the sale without talking over his changed plans with Joseph, so Joseph apparently acted with equal abruptness. Thus, when William learned that Joseph had nullified the transaction, he predictably became “so offended that he threatened Joseph.” Once again, the two brothers demonstrated short-fuse reactions that plunged them into an adversarial confrontation. Although the details of the confrontation are limited, Joseph apparently followed up with a second, more thoughtful approach that avoided an open breach.¹⁵ But the bottom line was that William did not get title to the property.

Instead of the lot near the temple, William said that in May 1843 he purchased a sandy lot near the river for \$300 and contracted with Reuben Hedlock to construct a home for him and his family. To his surprise, however, only weeks later, Hedlock was called as a missionary to England. He was not successful in that assignment. After more than two years in England, the First Presidency sent Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor, and Orson Hyde to England to straighten out the mission’s confused financial and administrative affairs. When they discovered that Hedlock had misappropriated to his own use the funds that the Saints had been saving with great sacrifice so that they could migrate, the apostles excommunicated Hedlock in October 1846. According to William, who wrote this account in third person, “the sequel to the story is, in the fact that Hadlock [sic] never returned from his mission to England, and William Smith found himself minus of money, house and lot.”¹⁶

Brigham Young’s 1865 account incorrectly dated this disagreement over the deed to the lot as occurring in May 1844, an account which was repeated in later LDS publications. Young conjectured that Joseph was getting rid of William

15. Brigham Young published an account of the brothers’ conflict over the lot in 1865 as “History of William Smith,” *Millennial Star* 27, no. 1 (January 7, 1865): 7–8, and Andrew Jenson republished Young’s account in his own “William Smith,” *Historical Record* 3, no. 5 (March 1886): 44–45, and again in *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901–30), 1:86–87.

16. “William B. Smith,” *The Expositor* (Oakland, Calif.) 4, no. 8 (August 1888): 1. When William read Andrew Jenson’s 1886 republication of Young’s account, he felt that Jenson reported the conflict over the lot inaccurately. According to William, Jenson was mistakenly describing the lot near the Mississippi River, where William had contracted with Hedlock to build his house. Andrew Jenson, “William Smith,” *Historical Record* 3, no. 5 (March 1886): 44–45; In his *Expositor* account, William does not mention the deed and its cancellation for the lot near the temple.

when he assigned him to take a second mission to the East, describing it as the last time Joseph and William met before Joseph's death. Young thus implied that the two brothers parted with hostile feelings. However, these events actually occurred in the spring of 1843, not 1844. Young, who was probably assisted by George A. Smith in compiling the account, remembered that William was "accompanied by his family" when he left on this mission, corresponding to the events of 1843. William briefly returned to Nauvoo in the spring of 1844, but Caroline and their daughters remained in the East.¹⁷ Thus, the Young/Smith account, by collapsing the May 1843 disagreement over the deed with William's brief return to Nauvoo in April-May 1844, erases several significant events in William's life during that brief time period: His endowment and induction into the Quorum of the Anointed, his attendance at important meetings with Joseph and other members of the Twelve during those critical months, and his enthusiastic "electioneering" in Joseph's campaign for the U.S. presidency. The skimpy evidence available also suggests that the two brothers successfully worked through their differences over the property in the spring of 1843, not, as Young stated, that the conflict was so volatile that Joseph "deemed it prudent to keep out of the way, until William left on a steamboat for the East."¹⁸ Additional evidence of the harmonious relationship between the two brothers is that, on May 10, 1843, Joseph himself drove William and his family in Joseph's carriage to the upper landing as "they were intending to start on their missions, but no steamboat came." (The only consequence was that William and his family had to wait a day or two, but they definitely departed as soon as possible, since William's name does not appear in the minutes of any meetings in the days following.) William was naturally upset with Young, and Andrew Jenson's later reprint's of Young's versions, that cast him and Joseph as adversaries. Referring to the conflict, William protested in his 1888 *Expositor* correction, "I did not suppose it would become Church history."¹⁹

By at least the spring of 1843, William was introduced to plural marriage, further evidence that he remained in Joseph's trusted inner circle. Although the details of this introduction and his reaction have not survived, both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young likely played a role. Before William left for the East on May 10, 1843, Brigham Young sealed him and Mary Ann Covington Sheffield, a recent convert from England. Covington had been married to James Sheffield in England but had left her alcoholic husband a few months prior to sailing for

17. "History of William Smith," 7–8; Verifying that Caroline and her daughters remained in the East when William traveled to Nauvoo in April-May, 1844, is Caroline's letter to William, written from Philadelphia on May 5, 1844. Caroline Grant Smith (Philadelphia, Pa.), Letter to Jedediah M. Grant, May 5, 1844, LDS Church History Library.

18. "History of William Smith," 7–8; Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:86–87. William was still alive when Jenson wrote his biographical sketch in about 1886, and responded to what he felt were its inaccuracies. "William B. Smith," *The Expositor* (Oakland, Calif.) 4, no. 8 (August 1888): 1.

19. "William B. Smith," *The Expositor* (Oakland, Calif.) 4, no. 8 (August 1888): 1.

America in a company led by Orson Hyde. The company had reached St. Louis so late in the season that they had been forced to winter there for four months until the ice melted.²⁰ They reached Nauvoo in April 1843.

William initially met Mary Ann that month at Montrose, Iowa, at the home of William's uncle Asahel Smith, just after her company completed their journey to Nauvoo. Thus, the two could not have known each other longer than a month when this marriage occurred. Mary temporarily lived in Orson Hyde's home, where Joseph Smith introduced her to the principle of plural marriage. "I went to live at Orson Hyde's and soon after that time Joseph Smith wished to have an interview with me," re-

called Covington decades later in being interviewed for the Temple Lot Case. "He had the interview with me, and then asked me if I had ever heard of a mans having more wives than one, and I said I had not. He then told me that he had received a revelation from God that a man could have more wives than one." A short time afterward, Joseph came to her again, informing her that "his brother William wished to marry me as a wife in plural marriage if I felt willing to consent to it." Within a few weeks of arriving at Nauvoo, Mary Ann moved in with Agnes Coolbrith Smith, the widow of William's brother Don Carlos. Agnes had been sealed as a plural wife of Joseph Smith on January 6, 1842. According to Mary Ann's later recollection, her own sealing occurred at Agnes's home, the two-story printing office on the northeast corner of Water and Bain Streets. She identified Brigham Young as the officiator but did not remember the presence of any witnesses. It is not clear whether Caroline was also instructed in "the principle" and gave her consent to the marriage. In any case, Caroline and William left only few weeks later. Though their time together was brief, Mary Ann reported that William "treated me very well."²¹

It is possible that William had not been instructed as thoroughly as other members of the Twelve by his brother and other leaders prior to his leaving



Mary Ann Covington Sheffield Smith Stratton West, 1815–1908. Courtesy Daughters of Utah Pioneers.

20. Myrtle Stevens Hyde, *Orson Hyde: The Olive Branch of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Agreka Books, 2000), 148–49.

21. Mary Ann [Covington Sheffield] West, Testimony, in United States testimony 1892, Court of Appeals (Eighth Circuit), 495–96, MS 1160, LDS Church History Library. Although for convenience, I usually cite the published version, in this case and a handful of others, the original transcript provides crucial details. For Agnes Coolbrith Smith's sealing to Joseph Smith, see, Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 153–54.

Nauvoo, as he later seemed to believe that he could exercise the sealing power—a right strictly reserved to a small handful of Joseph’s confidants and only in Nauvoo. William’s absence from Nauvoo for the following year also meant that William missed the extensive instruction that the Prophet provided to the Twelve, sometimes on a daily basis in the spring of 1844.²² This situation and William’s enthusiasm for the new doctrine may help explain why he later seemed to feel that he could endow others with sealing power and to instruct them regarding plural marriage. Over the next two years, William introduced plural marriage to key leaders in the East, and word inevitably circulated throughout the eastern branches that William both approved of and was involved in polygamy.

But another reason may have simply been William’s willingness to breach conventional morals, especially given Caroline’s gradually worsening illness. A year earlier in May 1842, two women implicated William as part of the group John C. Bennett and Chauncey L. Higbee had led into adultery and “spiritual wifery.” The first, twenty-seven-year-old Sarah Miller, testified before Nauvoo’s High Council on May 24, 1842, that Higbee had visited her that same month, made “seducing insinuations,” and told her it was not a crime for a single woman to be sexually intimate if they kept the affair secret. When Higbee visited her a second time, “William Smith came with him & told me that the doctrine which Chancy Higby had taught me was true.”²³ Whether William knew all of the details of Higbee’s earlier argument is unclear from the fragmented minutes.

The second woman, also investigated by the high council, was Catherine Fuller Warren. Significantly, the holograph high council minutes show that some sections of Warren’s testimony referring to William were crossed out, perhaps to protect William, or perhaps because this portion of Warren’s testimony was unsubstantiated during the high council’s investigation. A third woman, Melinda Lewis, who must have been a near neighbor to Warren, gave the high council the names of other men who made presumably illicit visits to Warren but specifically testified “[I] have never seen Wm Smith there [at Warren’s home].” A fourth woman, Matilda Nyman, testified that William attempted to seduce her but “I refused because I had come to the determination to break off such conduct.” (Nyman had earlier suc-

22. Ronald K. Esplin, “Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve: A Succession of Continuity,” *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 302–7, 319–20; Alexander L. Baugh and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, “‘I Roll the Burthen and Responsibility of Leading This Church Off from My Shoulders on to Yours’: The 1844/1845 Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Regarding Apostolic Succession,” *BYU Studies* 49, no. 3 (2000): 5–19.

23. John S. Dinger, ed., *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 415–16 note 40. Dinger notes that the words added in italics from the minutes he quotes “come from the original [minutes], a photocopy of which exists in the Valeen Tippets Avery Papers at Utah State University.” Sarah Miller’s quotation about William was in italics and was apparently thus eliminated from some surviving transcriptions.

cumbed to the blandishments of Chauncey Higbee, a lapse she deeply regretted.)²⁴ While William's connection with these women is somewhat unclear and there are conflicting accounts as to William's participation with Bennett and Higbee, he was sufficiently implicated that the high council felt it necessary to convene a court for William, probably during that same summer of 1842.

In a late reminiscence, Lorenzo Snow recounted some details of the circumstances surrounding William's trial in a council meeting of the Twelve in Salt Lake City. According to Apostle Abraham H. Cannon's remarkably detailed diary, Snow said:

William Smith, one of the first quorum of apostles in the age had been guilty of adultery and many other sins. The Prophet Joseph instructed Brigham (then the President of the Twelve) to prefer a charge against the sinner, which was done. Before the time set for the trial, however, Emma Smith talked with Joseph and said the charge preferred against William was done with a view to injuring the Smith family. After the trial had began Joseph entered the room and was given a seat. The testimony of witnesses concerning the culprit's sins was then continued. After a short time Joseph arose filled with wrath and said, "Bro. Brigham, I will not listen to this abuse of my family a minute longer. I will wade in blood up to my knees before I will do it." A rupture between the two greatest men on earth seemed imminent. But Brigham Young was equal to the danger, and he instantly said "Bro. Joseph, I withdraw the charge." Thus the angry passions were instantly stilled.²⁵

I have not been able to find any evidence to corroborate the detail that members of the high council were attempting to "injure" the Smith family. Perhaps due to her influential position as the newly appointed president of the Relief Society, Emma had learned something from sisters in her organization that had led her to make that claim. Either way, her timely intervention may have

24. Testimonies of Sarah Miller, Catherine Fuller (Warren), Matilda Nyman, and Melinda Lewis, Testimonies in Nauvoo High Council cases, 1842 May, MS 24557, LDS Church History Library. Dinger's transcription of the *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, 416–18, which quotes Warren's testimony, contains no reference to William. See *ibid.*, 415–16 note 40 for the portion mentioning William that was deleted from the transcript.

25. Dennis B. Horne, ed., *An Apostle's Record: The Journals of Abraham H. Cannon* (Clearfield, Utah: Gnolaum Books, 2004), April 9, 1890, 144. Horne notes that "the parallels between this story and the following related by former BYU professor Truman G. Madsen are striking: 'This is a story still carried in the family lore of Brigham Young's descendants but, so far as I know, never recorded. It says that in a meeting the Prophet rebuked Brigham Young from his head to his feet for something he had done, or something he was supposed to have done but hadn't—the detail is unclear. And it may well have been that the Prophet was deliberately putting Brigham Young to a test. When he had finished the rebuke, everyone in the room waited for the response. Brigham Young rose to his feet . . . In a voice everyone could tell was sincere, he said simply, 'Joseph, what do you want me to do?' And the story says that the Prophet burst into tears, came down from the stand, threw his arms around Brigham, and said, in effect, 'Brother Brigham, you passed.''" Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith, the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 87–88, quoted in *ibid.*, 144–45 note 13.

helped sway the outcome in William's favor, and although Joseph demonstrated a pattern of defending his brother William throughout his tenure in the Twelve, perhaps both he and Emma were responding to the lack of evidence of actual adultery on William's part. According to Sarah Miller's testimony, William had corroborated Higbee's teaching but had not committed adultery with Miller. While he may have made a direct approach to Nyman, she describes herself as rebuffing his attempt at seduction.²⁶ Whatever the extent of William's connection to Bennett and Higbee that spring, during July and September 1842, he vigorously condemned their actions in *The Wasp*.²⁷ Furthermore, Bennett and Higby were excommunicated, but William was not formally disciplined.

BY APRIL 1843, as part of the seasonal missionary assignments, most of the Twelve went east to preach and collect funds for the temple and Nauvoo House. Joseph assigned William to return to the eastern branches "with his sick wife."²⁸ Caroline's condition had not improved over the winter, and William hoped that a change of scene and access to better medical care would help her. In a pamphlet published in 1844 before returning to Nauvoo, William defended himself against what he considered to be "slanders." In this pamphlet, William justified his travels by recounting his hope of finding "some superior medical skill, that might restore my family to health again, if not to their former youthful bloom."²⁹ Although it was only Caroline who seemed to be "sick and helpless," William did not want to be separated more than necessary from his daughters Mary Jane, who had turned nine in January 1843 and Caroline Louisa who was a few weeks shy of her seventh birthday.

On the same day that blossoms first appeared on apple trees in Nauvoo, a sure indicator of warmer weather for travel, teams of missionaries prepared to head east, including most of the Twelve. As mentioned above, on May 10, William, Caroline, and their two daughters prepared to embark on a Mississippi River steamboat. Accompanying the group was Caroline's brother Jedediah M. Grant, who would help care for his sister and work as William's missionary companion. Joseph recorded in his journal: "Took my brother William, [and] Elders

26. At least two historians, citing Catherine Fuller Warren's May 25 testimony, conclude that William had committed adultery: D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 634; Robert D. Hutchins, "Joseph Smith III: Moderate Mormon" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1977), 33 note 104.

27. "Bennettiana," *The Wasp* 1, no. 15 (July 23, 1842): 2; "Bennett," *The Wasp* 1, no. 16 (July 30, 1842): 2; "Dr. Bennett, the late Mormon general . . ." *The Wasp* 1, no. 21 (September 10, 1842): 2.

28. Joseph Smith, Journal, April 19, 1843, Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals, Volume 2*, 363–69.

29. William B. Smith, *Defence of Elder William Smith, Against the Slanders of Abraham Burtis and Others* (N.p., n.d.), 12. He also pointed out the seriousness with which he took his ecclesiastical responsibilities of preaching, baptizing, and strengthening the young branches of the Church.

J. M. Grant, E[benezer] Robinson and Horace K. Whitney in my carriage to the Upper Steam Boat landing and back. They were intending to start on their mission, but no steamboat came.”³⁰ The group probably departed the next day and was followed by most of the Twelve, who were dispatched in the following two months. The Twelve traveled in small groups, some holding meetings along the way in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and New York.³¹ William missed most of these gatherings due to his pressing need to get Caroline and the children settled in New Jersey. He was the only apostle whose family was traveling with him. Except for the brief return to Nauvoo in April-May 1844 already mentioned, William would remain in the East until April 1845.

By summer William and his family had settled themselves in Hornerstown, New Jersey, a city in the same region where William had lived two years earlier. In September he relocated to Philadelphia, at “No. 418 North Tenth Street . . . above Callo[w]hill Street.”³² Initially, he spent much of his time nursing Caroline and laboring in the branch established at Philadelphia. When eight of the Twelve held a conference in Boston on September 9–11, 1843, William “did not Enjoy the Pleasure of the Company of the twelve while they were . . . hear [sic] as much as I wanted to on account of . . . my wife being Sick,” he explained in an October letter to Joseph, but still felt that their labors had “don[e] a vast deal of good.” William remained optimistic that Caroline would recover. She was under the care of “a doctor in these parts celebrated for the cure of dropsy” who was “working wonders upon her. The prospect of her being released of her Loathsome disease will Keep us till spring before returning to Nauvoo.”³³ At that point, he was envisioning a mission of about a year before returning to Nauvoo. In fact, it would extend more than twice as long.

After William established his family and Caroline’s health was stabilized, his efforts turned to the status of the eastern branches. William’s colleagues of the Twelve left for Nauvoo in October.³⁴ Though William was not specifically assigned to preside over all the eastern branches, he was the highest-ranking Church authority in the area. The Philadelphia members viewed him as “an eyewitness to many of the

30. Journal History, May 10, 1843, 1.

31. Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals, Volume 2*, 369 note 946. Heber C. Kimball left Nauvoo for his eastern mission on June 10. Stanley B. Kimball, ed., *On the Potter’s Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books and Smith Research Associates, 1987), 51. Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, and Brigham Young left Nauvoo on July 7. Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1801–1844* (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968), 134.

32. Walter W. Smith, “History of the Philadelphia Branch,” *Journal of History* (Lamoni, Iowa) 12, no. 1 (January 1919): 117–18.

33. William Smith (Philadelphia, Pa.), Letter to Joseph Smith, October 28, 1843, LDS Church History Library.

34. Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 152; Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898*, typescript, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), 2:318.

stirring scenes incident to the establishment and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ in these last days,” as “an able defender of the truth,” and as a preacher who, during 1843, “added strength to the church in Philadelphia by his testimony.”³⁵ Regrettably, with time, William’s labors among the Saints in the East would be riddled with conflict. While William’s charismatic personality and oratorical gifts initially drew people to him, his leadership ability did not have Joseph’s staying power. Whereas those who knew Joseph best seemed to increase in love for and loyalty to him, William did not share leadership well and lacked Joseph’s gift for intimacy. His personality was frequently prickly, and his officious style of leadership frequently upset both his colleagues and those over whom he presided. Although a dynamic leader, he had no gift for submission as a subordinate, and he stubbornly resisted opposition to his views and policies. He became most rancorous when his decisions were challenged in public by those he supervised.

William must certainly have hoped for a renewal of the warmth and support he had experienced during his 1841 mission, but branch members, who had endured dozens of sermons urging them to support massive and faraway projects like the Nauvoo Temple and Nauvoo House, were more restrained in opening their pocketbooks. Furthermore, John C. Bennett’s disquieting disclosures in his *The History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, published in the fall of 1842,³⁶ had created uneasiness about visitors from Church headquarters. Bennett’s sensational lectures in New York and Massachusetts, even preceding his book, had also alarmed many members.³⁷ Even though they well understood apostasy and the probability of self-justifying accusations, some felt a new defensiveness about being Mormon. Particularly alarming were Bennett’s disclosures about polygamy. Thomas S. Terry, an eighteen-year-old Pennsylvania convert of less than a year, heard a Mormon elder, Joseph H. Newton, preach in favor of plural marriage in Philadelphia even before William’s arrival. Newton had baptized him at Philadelphia on March 12, 1842, with the result that he could not deny the information, even though, when he heard Newton preach “the Doctrine of the Plurality of wives” in the “Spring of 1843,” he recognized Newton’s injudiciousness. Newton had, he wrote, “betrayed the confidence which Elder Brigham Young had place[d] in him, [and] it upset the whole Branch except

35. Walter W. Smith, “History of Philadelphia Branch,” 118.

36. Ibid. Bennett had been excommunicated in May 1842 at Nauvoo and had retaliated by publishing a series of exposé letters in the *Sangamo Journal*, which included at least partially accurate reports that leaders at Nauvoo were practicing polygamy. He compiled his letters into John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842). For more information on Bennett and his activities in Nauvoo and afterward, see Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy, Volume 1: History* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 523–45.

37. Andrew F. Smith, *The Sainly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of John C. Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 114–28.

two.”³⁸ Terry respected Newton, but broke with him when Newton disaffiliated from the Church in 1844 and became a prominent member of Sidney Rigdon’s post-Nauvoo movement in Pittsburgh in late 1844. Newton’s information provided some credibility to Bennett’s accusations and caused great upheaval among the members. William found himself in a quandary, having to defend the Church against accusations of plural marriage, while at the same time accepting and engaging in the practice. Basically, he followed his colleague’s example at Nauvoo of issuing public denials and shifting the accusation from “plural marriage” to “spiritual wifery” which he could, in good conscience, deny.

Many of the eastern branches had been established since the late 1830s and had been functioning fairly autonomously during the last half-decade. William’s arrival and his assumption of authority in gradually overseeing all the eastern branches, combined with his forceful personality and demanding leadership style conflicted with the working relationships established by many of the presiding elders (equivalent of branch presidents) in the region. Joseph Smith had earlier perceived some potential conflict as authorities from Nauvoo traveled among the eastern branches; and, on January 13, 1840, about a month after he had visited with President Martin Van Buren at the nation’s capital, the Prophet instructed the Philadelphia Branch “that traveling elders should be especially cautious of encroaching on the ground of stationed and presiding elders, and rather direct their efforts to breaking up and occupying new ground.”³⁹ Such instructions naturally provided reasons for local leaders to resist measures from visiting authorities that they found troublesome, and William would have done well to adopt this approach during his tenure in the East. Unfortunately, his personality directed him toward a more authoritarian style. Just two years after Joseph’s counsel to the Philadelphia Branch and just months before William settled in the area—and not even accounting for the disruption caused by Newton’s preaching on polygamy—the branch had already experienced “some misunderstanding among the officers about their rights and duties, [and] some conflict between traveling elders and the presiding authorities [which had] engendered strife.”⁴⁰ The current uneasiness of the Saints in the East, combined with

38. Thomas S. Terry, Autobiographical sketch, 1857, 6–7, Val A. Browning Library, Dixie State University, St. George, Utah. Terry’s autobiography is catalogued as a “journal,” but this material was written retrospectively and defends his decision to remain attached to the Twelve. See also Stephen J. Fleming, “Discord in the City of Brotherly Love: The Story of Early Mormonism in Philadelphia,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 15; Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 3:261; Maurine Carr Ward, “Philadelphia Pennsylvania Branch Membership: 1840–1854,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 84; Thomas J. Gregory, “Sidney Rigdon: Post Nauvoo,” *BYU Studies* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 55–56.

39. Walter W. Smith, “The History of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Branch,” *Journal of History* (Lamoni, Iowa) 11, no. 3 (July 1918): 366; also cited in Stephen J. Fleming, “Discord in the City of Brotherly Love: The Story of Early Mormonism in Philadelphia,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 6.

40. Walter Smith, “History of Philadelphia Branch,” (January 1919), 112–13.



George J. Adams, 1811–1880. Photograph taken ca. 1866 by an unknown photographer. Photograph from *New England Magazine* 36, no. 2 (April 1907).

William's abrasive personal style, meant that a clash was inevitable. Rather surprisingly, however, once established in the East, the thirty-two-year-old William formed an alliance with two other powerful personalities who were influential in the Church—George J. Adams, who was William's age, and twenty-four-year-old Samuel Brannan. Adams had a bombastic personality, enjoyed preaching, and thrived on public conflict. His effectiveness as a missionary and familiarity with the Bible were equal to those of any preacher in the country. He had been baptized in Philadelphia in 1841 and, since that time, had resided primarily in the eastern branches. According to Clarence Day, who documented Adams's 1866 ill-advised colonization venture to the Holy Land, Adams, was "of medium size, black curly hair, sharp dark eyes, intelligent forehead, Roman nose, lips that shut up like a clamshell." His personality was characterized by "great firmness if not absolute obstinacy."⁴¹

Not the least of Adams's qualities was his background as an actor, and he recited Shakespeare with much the same relish that he quoted scripture. He had earlier been instrumental in bringing the theater to Nauvoo, as he and his brother-in-law, Thomas Lyne, performed a series of plays in the Masonic Hall to the delight of the Saints. A good part of his success as a debater, in which he nearly always emerged victorious, was due to his skill as an actor. One editorial described Adams as "proverbial for his burning eloquence and withering sarcasm" and characterized his oratorical skill as "like the mountain torrent quenching the flames of iniquity."⁴² Adams had an

41. Clarence Day, *The Journey to Jaffa* (n.d., n.p.) 30, quoted in Vickie Cleverley Speek, *God Has Made Us a Kingdom: James Strang and the Midwest Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006), 38.

42. Peter Amann, "Prophet in Zion: The Saga of George J. Adams," *New England Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (December 1964): 477–500; "The Star in the East," *Zion's Reveille* (Voree, Wisc.) 1, no. 12 (December 1846): 1; John S. Lindsay, *The Mormons and the Theater; or, The History of Theatricals in Utah; with Reminiscences and Comments, Humorous and Critical* (Salt Lake City: Century Printing, 1905), 3–7. In time he would prove to be a rogue and an alcoholic, who exploited many of his followers through his religious pretenses. Adams later used his acting skills in creating a coronation ceremony that literally crowned James Strang as king of Beaver Island. Speek, *God Has Made Us a Kingdom*, 119–22. By the late 1850s, Adams established himself as a prophet of his Church of the Messiah; in 1866, he led members of

uncanny ability to win over an audience, honed during his many exploits as an actor. Edmund C. Briggs, who later served as an apostle in the RLDS Church, described Adams as “the eloquent elder,” who “was one of the most intellectual and fascinating ministers of the gospel I ever heard. It was a grand feast to the soul to hear him preach Christ and repeat the Lord’s prayer. He was an elocutionist of the richest type in word painting I had ever heard in the pulpit.”⁴³ Heber C. Kimball once contrasted his own simple, straightforward style of speaking to Adams’s elaborate but fragile style. Adams was a “polished stone” while Heber and Brigham Young were “rough Stones out of the mountain.”⁴⁴ Kimball’s condemnation likely pointed to an aspect of Adams’s personality that would ultimately lead to difficulty—his egotism and unwillingness to be governed by Church authorities. Adams’s larger-than-life personality was a character trait that he and William held in common. They could easily have turned into competitors; but ironically, they became cooperative partners in spreading Mormonism’s message along the eastern seaboard.

While Samuel Brannan was less eccentric than Adams, history would reveal him to be an aspiring and conflicted character. An energetic and enthusiastic convert, he threw himself into the work. Because he had skills in journalism, he largely oversaw the publication of a Church-sponsored newspaper, the *Prophet*, which issued its first number on May 18, 1844, and its last on December 15, 1845 (by then

his church across the Atlantic Ocean to Palestine in an attempt to establish Zion. Adams lost control over his Jaffa Colony due to his alcoholism and eventually returned to the United States. A number of his followers also returned to the states, where a good number joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Reed M. Holmes, *Dreamers of Zion: Joseph Smith and George J. Adams, Conviction, Leadership, and Israel’s Renewal* (Portland, Ore.: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), 81, 92–160. When a recommendation was made to receive Adams into the RLDS Church in 1878, Joseph Smith III consulted with counselor in the First Presidency W. W. Blair who answered, “I can only say, I would have nothing to do with G. J. Adams for the present. His accession to the church would be a source of weakness and scandal to the church, and a hindrance to the work generally. His career in respect to the church when connected with J. J. Strang, was and is regarded as very corrupt—wilfully and intentionally corrupt. And his career in respect to the Jaffa Colony was very bad indeed. For us to pick up and place in the ministry such *proven* bad men, is, to my mind, to defile the church. . . . He needs remodeling and reconstructing from foundation to capstone.” W. W. Blair, Letter to Joseph Smith III, December 9, 1878, quoted in Holmes, *Dreamers of Zion*, 156.

43. Edmund C. Briggs, *Early History of the Reorganization: Autobiographical Sketches and Incidents in the Life of the Author* (Independence: Price Publishing Company, 1998), 89.

44. Referring to himself and Brigham Young, Kimball related, “we are not Polished stones like . . . Elder Adams But we are rough Stones out of the mountain, & when we roll through the forest &nock the bark off[f] from the trees it does not hurt us even if we should get a Cornor knocked off[f] occasionally. For the more they roll about & knock the cornors off[f] the better we are. But if we were pollished & smooth when we get the cornors knocked off[f] it would deface us. This is the case with Joseph Smith. He never professed to be a dressed smooth polished stone, but was rough out of the mountain & has been rolling among the rocks & trees & [it] has not hurt him at all.” Heber C. Kimball quoted in Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898*, September 9, 1843, 2:297.



Samuel Brannan, 1819–1889. Engraving from Oscar T. Shuck, ed., *Representative and Leading Men of the Pacific* (San Francisco: Bacon and Company, 1870).

renamed the *New York Messenger*), under his management. In between he filled its columns with news from Nauvoo, a plethora of letters from leaders—especially from William and Adams, and even dabbled in politics during the 1844 national election. After the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, when it became inevitable that the Saints must leave Nauvoo, Brannan organized an epic migration west for 230 convert Saints on the ship *Brooklyn*. At one point, just prior to their departure, he ambitiously petitioned Brigham Young to install him as one of the Twelve, in order to supervise affairs once he arrived in California. The group departed on February 4, 1846, ironically on the same day that Brigham Young sent the first wagons across the Mississippi River from Nauvoo. The *Brooklyn* sailed around Cape Horn, stopping in Honolulu,

before landing at present-day San Francisco just before the California gold rush. Brannan promptly set out toward the East, intercepting Brigham Young at the Green River and encouraging him to continue to the fertile fields of California. Young squelched that proposal in no uncertain terms, having decided instead on the harsher but more isolated Great Basin as the Saints' new Zion.

Brannan periodically waffled in his commitment to the Church and eventually left Mormonism permanently. He made a fortune by supplying miners during the gold rush but squandered it through alcoholism and womanizing. He did not have enough money to pay for his own funeral when he died in 1889. He is remembered as both a hero and a scoundrel.⁴⁵

Again, he and William could have turned into bitter competitors but instead seemed to appreciate and enjoy each other's ambitious personalities and admire their influence. By early fall 1843, the Twelve who were serving missions in the

45. Will Bagley, *Scoundrel's Tale: The Samuel Brannan Papers* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999), 15–17, 118, 131–34, 208–14. Bagley labels Brannan a scoundrel “based on his involvement in the vigilante movement, the dishonesty that surrounded his many filibustering schemes, and the scandalous conduct of his personal life rather than on his actions as a businessman or religious leader.” “It is hard to tell the rags-to-riches-to-rags story of Brannan’s life,” continues Bagley, “with his forays into alcoholism, gambling, political corruption, and adultery—without turning the story into an object lesson, but Brannan himself expressed no remorse for any of his actions.” Other contemporaries of Brannan, described his “energy, abilities, force of character and courage” as “very great,” and that he had “more conspicuously shown [such traits] in the face of those obstacles and dangers that would have hampered and filled with dread less bold and talented men” (15–17).

East returned to Nauvoo, leaving William as the only apostle in the East, and hence its presiding authority. In his association with these two men, William quickly found the recognition and status he craved. Adams and Brannan revered the youthful and charismatic apostle, and Smith reciprocated that support by promoting the two men among the eastern Saints. Within months of Smith's arrival in the east, Smith, Adams, and Brannan were acting as an unofficial presidency over all of the eastern branches of Mormonism, demonstrating unusual unity on all Church matters. Smith admired Adams, whose oratorical gifts were second to none and, in an attempt to increase his standing, deemed him the "thirteenth apostle."⁴⁶ Under Brannan's editorship, the *Prophet* became the outlet for the trio's authoritative voice among the eastern branches.

Smith relished the opportunity to preside. He was most content when he was in charge, and being removed from Church headquarters at Nauvoo meant there would be no one looking over his shoulder on the decisions he made. It seems likely that the autonomy he enjoyed in presiding over the eastern branches was a reason for remaining in the East much longer than he initially anticipated, coupled with the realistic fear that another Illinois mob might rise up to slay the last surviving Smith brother. (Samuel had died of an undiagnosed illness in July 1844.) But part of the motivation may well have been William's personal empire-building, encouraged by Adams and Brannan's similar ambitions.

Between October 1843 and December 1844, William Smith launched an ambitious effort to bring the scattered eastern branches under his leadership and, even more dangerously, began to implement practices of his own volition, independent of authorities at Nauvoo. For example, he taught both Adams and Brannan the concept of plural marriage and bestowed the sealing power on them. William likely knew he was overstepping his bounds by instituting such practices outside Nauvoo, but after the deaths of his brothers Prophet and Patriarch, he perceived that both offices, especially that of patriarch, devolved upon him; as an apostle, he held as much authority as any member of his quorum. In any case, he seemed determined to move ahead with the practice. He kept in his possession detailed scriptural arguments defending the practice, as well as a marriage ceremony apparently based on the one used for his sealing to Mary Ann Covington.⁴⁷

46. According to William, it was his brother Joseph who had designated Adams the "thirteenth apostle." William Smith (Peterborough, N.H.), Letter to Brigham Young, October 16, 1844, Brigham Young Office Files 1832–1878, Letters from Church Leaders and Others, 1840–1877, William Smith, 1844–1857, LDS Church History Library.

47. William had these items written up probably in November 1844, in what he termed "The Elders' Pocket Companion." He likely used the arguments contained therein to introduce George J. Adams, Samuel Brannan, and others to accept the practice of polygamy. His "Pocket Companion" was given to Isaac Sheen, along with other personal items, by William's second wife, Roxey Ann Grant, around 1850. Sheen's son John, reproduced portions of William's "Pocket Companion" in his book, John K. Sheen, *Polygamy, or The Veil Lifted* (York, Neb.: n.p., 1889). See Appendix B.

The Saints in the East, particularly those who served in leadership positions, responded more reluctantly to William's leadership than he liked, especially as they got to know him better and after he intensified his authoritarian demands in an effort to gain their compliance. Fellow apostles would later question how impetuously he would remove from office those who disagreed with him.

For example, within a few months of reaching New Jersey, during the summer and early fall of 1843, William clashed with Abraham Burtis, presiding elder of the New Egypt Branch who had been baptized in 1837 and helped organize the first branches in the state at New Egypt and Toms River. Smith and Burtis had met two years earlier when Smith had preached in the area as a missionary, but their relationship had apparently been cordial at that point. When Smith returned, however, the two men apparently sparred over plural marriage, which Burtis rightly suspected had been embraced by Nauvoo Church leaders and which William denied. Burtis also took exception to Smith's assertion of authority in the area, not an unreasonable position since William did not have specific authorization from the First Presidency to provide leadership in the eastern branches. As Smith became aware that Burtis objected to his leadership, he publicly censured Burtis at a Church meeting held on December 2, 1843, at Cream Ridge, New Jersey, that included members from all branches in the region. William recounted the history of their conflict to those in attendance at the conference, indicating that Burtis, upon learning of the death of young man in the area, said "what a pity it was not Bill Smith" and then asserted that he "would do all he could against me, and then leave the Church." William put his self-defense in a pamphlet in which he labeled Burtis's behavior toward him as "unchristian like" and "slander[ous]." William also complained that Burtis's opposition was "not against me alone, but against all the authorities," perhaps a veiled reference to plural marriage. Smith further took umbrage at Burtis's wife, Sarah, whom William described as "behaving very disorderly" at a Church meeting where William had presided, where she apparently laughed at him, "treating me with mocks and frowns." William felt that even with all that had transpired, he would still "freely forgive them, when they repent, although they have tried to do me a serious injury." He worried that Burtis's disaffection, "if he persisted in it . . . would ruin him [Burtis], break up the Church there [New Egypt] or make a division in it."⁴⁸

In time their clash had become dangerously personal, as Burtis apparently sought to discourage Caroline's attending physician from continuing his care. "I think the labour of Mr. Burtis," William alleged in a letter to Jedediah Grant, "to try to influence him [the doctor] to abandon his effort to cure my wife, has been quite unsuccessful." Caroline was beyond help and would soon die, but both William and Jedediah felt that Burtis was meddling in a private family matter and reacted wrathfully. "Concerning the vain and unholy attempt of Mr. Burtis, to persuade Dr.

48. Wm. Smith, Letter to Mr. [Abraham] Burtis (New Egypt, N.J.), September 16, 1843, as quoted in William Smith, *Defence of Elder William Smith, Against the Slanders of Abraham Burtis and Others*, 11–13.

Newell to give up your wife to the ravages of death,” wrote Jedediah to William in late November, “exhibits the inherent meanness of Mr. B. so conspicuously, that the eyes of the blind will be opened, to see the courrption of a fallen, depraved, unmerciful being . . . entirely desitute of those inherent qualities, which renders a man a blessing to society.”⁴⁹ The conflict spilled over to other members of the New Egypt Branch. While most supported Smith, several sympathized with Burtis. As their differences became increasingly public, Smith wrote Burtis, inviting him to a face-to-face meeting where he hoped they could resolve their differences. According to Smith, “Burtis remained inexorable, savage, and impenitent, threatening me with the law.” When William visited Burtis at his home, he said Burtis “leaned back in his chair, against the wall, his eyes red with anger, and sparkling with rage.” William expressed his fear to Burtis that he would not only lose his Church membership, but would “cross his name out of the Church of Christ. He [Burtis] replied ‘go ahead, go ahead, I defy your authority;’” and according to William, repeatedly said “you are a liar.”⁵⁰

As early as October 1843, William had written to Burtis, “suspending him from acting in the office of an Elder,” and summoned a council of elders from the local New Jersey branches to assist in restoring order. William convened an earlier Church council that met to discuss Burtis’s case on October 18, at New Egypt. Probably because William was the person in conflict with Burtis, he appointed Jedediah M. Grant to preside. Burtis was invited to attend in his defense, but before even responding to the accusations, “became offended and withdrew from the conference, refusing to offer any rebutting testimony.” According to the minutes, Jedediah then “offered a motion that his license be demanded, and he be suspended until he makes satisfaction.” However, William, who obviously felt that Burtis’s actions warranted more severe punishment, “offered an amendment, that he be cut off from the Church, which was carried, [with] only two dissenting [votes].”⁵¹ Sarah Burtis was probably cut off at the same time, but Abraham’s case became more public due to his position as branch president. Smith, who never dealt well with criticism, had obviously prevailed in this contest of competing authority but still did not feel that Burtis had been adequately punished, given the upheaval in the New Egypt Branch. Smith convened a meeting on December 3 for the general Church membership in the entire area to recount what had transpired in the Burtis episode. To ensure that those Saints in the area understood who was at fault, he published his small pamphlet telling his side of the story, which included testimonies from members of the New Egypt Branch

49. William Smith (Hornerstown, N.J.), Letter to Jedediah M. Grant, November 26, 1843, and Jedediah M. Grant (Philadelphia, Pa.), Letter to William Smith, November 28, 1843, both quoted in William Smith, *Defence of Elder William Smith*, 12–16.

50. William Smith, *Defence of Elder William Smith*, 17, 20–21.

51. William Smith, Letter to Jedediah M. Grant, November 26, 1843; and Jedediah M. Grant, Letter to William Smith, November 28, 1843. See also Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church, Volume One, 1830–1847* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1997), 235.

condemning Burtis, and reporting the proceedings of both councils. Naturally, he defended his behavior and the decision of the elders' council to sever Burtis from the Church. From a less emotionally charged perspective, it is clear that William was letting his insecurities speak.

In addition to getting his version on the record, William probably saw the pamphlet as a way of forewarning the Saints in other branches that they could expect a similar fate if they failed to support William's superior authority. After reproving those in the New Egypt Branch, some of whom Smith felt were "putting at defiance the authorities of the Church [and] trampling upon all rule and Church government," he ended on a more conciliatory note. In a rare moment of introspection, Smith wrote, "That I have foibles, (and perhaps many) I shall not attempt to deny. I do not esteem myself above the rest of mankind." At the final (all-member) meeting, he offered to leave the area if the Saints did not want him there and asked those present to stand if they wished him to spend the winter in their midst. Reeling from the loss of their branch president and threatened by the loss of their membership in the Church, all those present stood in support of the intimidating apostle.

William was much gratified by this show of support and hoped the decision of the council, along with the publication and distribution of the proceedings, would "soon pass into oblivion, and there sleep forever," marking an end to resistance to his leadership in the area, but the trouble was just beginning.⁵² The difficulties he experienced at New Egypt had been of such a disruptive magnitude it may have prompted him to relocate his family to Philadelphia in September. But the show of support for William's leadership manifest at the conference, helped William feel comfortable enough that he returned to the area in the fall of 1844, settling at Bordentown, New Jersey, about ten miles west from New Egypt.⁵³ In the meantime, William stayed actively involved in overseeing the New Jersey branches.

Benjamin Winchester was another leader who had been very influential as a missionary in the East and with whom Smith would eventually clash. Winchester had baptized Abraham Burtis in 1837 during an early mission through that part of New Jersey and had done much to build up the branches in the eastern states. Local history records that "in 1837, Elder Benjamin Winchester preached the first Mormon sermon in Ocean County, in a school house in New Egypt. . . . He made some fifty converts, who were baptized; among them was Abraham Burtis, who became a preacher."⁵⁴ Up to this point in their history, Smith and Winchester had enjoyed an amiable relationship. The two had known each other more than ten years. In 1832–33, William had been one of the missionaries working in the Erie, Pennsylvania, area when Winchester joined the Church.⁵⁵ Winchester had

52. William Smith, *Defence of Elder William Smith*, 18–24.

53. Walter Smith, "History of Philadelphia Branch," 117–18.

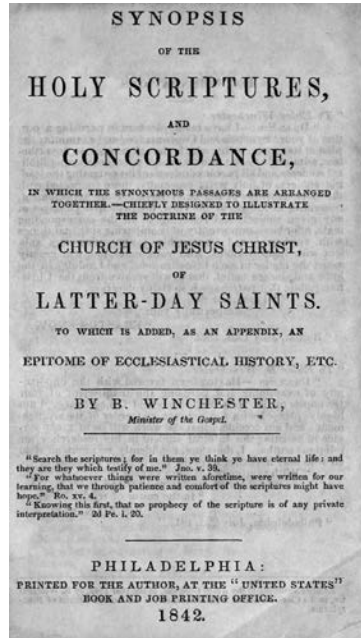
54. Edwin Salter, *History of Monmouth and Ocean Counties* (Bayonne, N.J.: F. Gardner & Son, 1890), 252.

55. Winchester specifically mentions Evan Greene and John Boynton as the elders who converted him in February 1833, but William Smith was actively proselyting with

great success as a missionary in the East, and his education was evident in several publications he wrote in defense of Mormonism. William had sent a note to *The Wasp* in April 1843, complimenting Winchester's recently published *Synopsis of the Holy Scriptures and Concordance*: "I have just perused a book, written by Elder B. Winchester, on the priesthood, and I have no hesitation in saying that it is a good work, and would recommend it to the traveling elders, as a worthy and valuable pocket companion."⁵⁶

That support apparently continued at least until the time of the Smith-Burtis episode. When the two leaders collided in the fall of 1843, Winchester, a friend to both men, was drawn into the conflict and unsuccessfully acted as intermediary in an attempt to help them reconcile their differences. During the first meeting of New Jersey leaders, when Smith called for the vote whether to excommunicate Burtis, Winchester was one of two members who opposed the motion, which naturally angered William.⁵⁷ In a letter to his brother Joseph in October 1843, just two weeks after the meeting, William grumbled that Burtis had become a "particular favorite of Winchester."⁵⁸ Their differences apparently persisted in the months following Burtis's trial, and by the fall of 1844, Smith and Winchester were increasingly at odds.

Winchester's reputation had been deteriorating in the early 1840s, as he disputed with other presiding leaders at Nauvoo. In 1841, Joseph Smith recorded that he had personally given Winchester a "severe reproof" on the occasion for his "folly and vanity," and in 1842 the Quorum of the Twelve had suspended Winchester for "disobedience to the First Presidency." In 1843 Winchester was again reprovved before the leading councils at Nauvoo, who also divested him



Title Page of Benjamin Winchester's *Synopsis of the Holy Scriptures and Concordance* (Philadelphia, 1842).

Greene and Boynton during this same month in this area of Elk Creek, Pennsylvania. Benjamin Winchester, *The Origin of the Spaulding Story, Concerning the Manuscript Found* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking & Guilbert, 1840), 2–5; Evan M. Greene, Journal, 1833 January–1835 April, 7–9, LDS Church History Library.

56. William Smith, Letter to the Editor, *The Wasp*, 1, no. 51 (April 19, 1843): 3. For more information on Winchester's *Synopsis of the Holy Scriptures*, see Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography*, 1:199–201.

57. William Smith, *Defence of Elder William Smith*, 18–21.

58. William Smith, Letter to Joseph Smith, October 28, 1843.

of his preaching license due to his rebelliousness. One witness at the council recorded that “Winchester was entirely used up by Bro. Joseph and Bro. Young before the council of the Twelve and his license [was] taken from him. It was his last kick until he reformed. I never heard a man get such a scoring since the Lord made me as Winchester got at that time.”⁵⁹ He then returned to Philadelphia, obviously disgruntled and upset. Thus, when William Smith called the first meeting over Burtis’s behavior, Winchester may well have felt inclined to withhold support from yet another apostle.

In early September 1844, their differences had advanced to an extent that Smith felt it necessary to rebuke Winchester from the stand during a Church conference in Philadelphia. Winchester, who was present at the meeting, arose following Smith’s comments and stated that “the quorum [of the Twelve] had slandered him, had taken his license [and] that he had spent four hundred dollars in going and returning from Nauvoo and other places, to answer to charges proffered against him, and the Twelve had never explained the reason why he was suspended.” This, he explained, was the primary reason why he no longer sustained the authorities of the Church. Smith described this defense as a “ridiculous” outburst and, in early September 1844, gave public notice that Winchester was excommunicated.⁶⁰ Winchester quickly went on the offensive against Smith and, according to Jedediah Grant, “was traveling from house to house in Philadelphia, stirring up conversations about polygamy, while refusing to preach because he did not want to bring any female to her ruin, as he claimed other missionaries had.”⁶¹ During the winter of 1844–45, Winchester made no effort to conceal his contempt for the apostle. He later declared, “Had it not been for William Smith, [I] should have been in the Church to this day.”⁶²

As he had handled the conflict with Abraham Burtis, William immediately sought to curtail Winchester’s influence among the Saints by publishing several dis-

59. Journal History, October 31, 1841, January 1 and 12, 1842, 1; David J. Whittaker, “East of Nauvoo: Benjamin Winchester and the Early Mormon Church,” *Journal of Mormon History* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 51–52, 59–60; George J. Adams (Springfield, Ill.), Letter to Peter Hess, July 7, 1843, MS 730, LDS Church History Library, also quoted in Whittaker, “East of Nauvoo,” 59.

60. “Minutes of a Conference in Philadelphia,” *Prophet* 1, no. 17 (September 14, 1844): 1; William Smith, “Official Notice,” *Prophet* 1, no. 17 (September 14, 1844): 2. I have found no evidence or date of an actual Church court that ruled on Winchester’s membership.

61. Quoting in Whittaker, “East of Nauvoo,” 67, summarizing the contents of Jedediah M. Grant (Philadelphia, Pa.), Letter to Brigham Young, September 4, 1844, LDS Church History Library, also in Journal History, September 4, 1844, 5–6.

62. Samuel Brannan published an editorial denouncing William after he left the Church in the fall of 1845 in which he includes this quotation. Brannan had probably heard the statement from George B. Wallace, who had reported having a conversation with Benjamin Winchester in Pittsburgh two weeks earlier. Samuel Brannan, “Beware of Strong Delusion, Lest Ye believe a Lie and Be Damned,” *New-York Messenger* 2, no. 20 (November 15, 1845): 157; also reproduced in *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 18 (December 1, 1845): 1045.

paraging editorials in the *Prophet*. At this point, Joseph and Hyrum had been slain three months earlier and the turmoil was still rocking the Church. In one editorial in September, Smith made it clear that Winchester was prohibited from preaching in the name of the Church and referred to his behavior by quoting Revelations 21:8: “All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire.”⁶³ After Winchester aligned himself with Sidney Rigdon’s movement in Pennsylvania that same fall, William felt he needed to undermine Winchester’s standing further, especially among the branches where Winchester was having some success. He published another derogatory letter on November 23, 1845, in the *Prophet*, which implied, among other things, that Winchester was a thief and an accessory to the murder of his brothers, Joseph and Hyrum while at Nauvoo. “We are told that the partaker [of spoils] is as bad as the thief,” wrote William in the conclusion of his published letter, “and that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him [1 John 3:15]. Benny, remember that the blood of the Prophets is still crying for vengeance.” He quoted Shakespeare on the power of guilt: “Suspicion still haunts the guilty mind. The thief doth fear each bush and officer,” He then demanded, “How is it with you Benny? Reflect on thy own black deeds, O thou child of hell! Repent before thou die, and art called to judgment with thy sins upon thy head!”⁶⁴ David Whittaker, in an important article about Winchester’s Mormon career, admitted that William Smith’s letter “must rank as one of the most libelous in the early Church.”⁶⁵ It seems unlikely that William really believed that Winchester was linked to individuals involved in his brothers’ assassination. Rather, in trying to diminish Winchester’s reputation, William linked him with those who harbored the same spirit as those who had murdered his brothers. Either way, in accusing him of breaking the law and being an accessory to his brothers’ murder, William had crossed a legal line, and Winchester immediately filed suit for slander against Smith (the editor), Brannan (the publisher), and Jedediah Grant (the distributor) of the *Prophet*. William’s unfounded accusations entangled him in an expensive and lengthy lawsuit. While Adams and Grant attempted to countersue Winchester for

63. Smith, “Official Notice,” 2; “Meeting of the Mormons Last Evening,” *Prophet* 1, no. 26 (November 16, 1844): 2.

64. In William’s rebuke of Winchester, he quoted Shakespeare’s *King Henry VI*. William Smith (Bordentown, N.J.), Letter to Brother [Samuel] Brannan, November 1, 1844, in *Prophet* 1, no. 27 (November 23, 1844): 2. In a subsequent letter published in the *Prophet*, William wrote, Winchester “is now an excommunicate, and as such published to the world. And I have no hesitation in saying that I believe him to be one of the most consummate falsifiers that ever disgraced humanity; and the public are notified that this imposter and apostate has no authority from the Church of Latter day Saints to preach or to administer any of the ordinances belonging to the Gospel.” William Smith (New York City), Letter to Elder [Samuel] Brannan, *Prophet* 1, no. 30 (December 14, 1844): 3.

65. Whittaker, “East of Nauvoo,” 70.

slander, ultimately it was William who remained mired in the difficult predicament through the winter of 1844–45.⁶⁶

In September Smith wrote to Brigham Young, explaining “that necessity requires the immediate attention of the Quorum in the case of Benj. Winchester,” and, in a follow-up letter written in December, solicited statements from Nauvoo that would verify what he had written about Winchester, and requested they be put “into the form of affidavits.” William avoided dealing with the fact that he had implicated Winchester in the murder of his brothers and instead wanted “to show only that (B. Winchester was more or less engaged in the Law infraction at Nauvoo).”⁶⁷ But no such evidence was forthcoming, and William was forced to retract his earlier accusations. In a letter to Samuel Brannan intended for publication in the *Prophet*, Smith clarified that it was not his intent “to charge B. Winchester with being accessory to the murder of my Brother—but engaged more or less, I believe, in the Law infraction.” It was less than a complete retraction and was definitely not an apology, though he continued: “A small mistake sometimes makes trouble, and it is not my intention to charge any person wrongfully.”⁶⁸

Though William succumbed to the serious pressure to publicly soften his former allegation, privately he held doggedly to his position, lamenting the possibility of going to prison because he was “telling the truth about Winchester.” Smith’s polarized thinking made it difficult for him to engage in introspection or take responsibility for his misconduct in situations where he was in error. Because he perceived Winchester as possessing an “apostate spirit,” he easily disregarded evidence to the contrary, remaining stubbornly hostile to his former colleague. “Where this thing may terminate in I cant Say,” he wrote to Brigham Young or Heber C. Kimball in March 1845, referring to the lawsuit. “The whigs & Rigdenits [Rigdonites] have c[ol]lected together & conspired aghainst me & no doubt will send me to the Ju[d]g[e] or prison.”⁶⁹

66. *Ibid.*, 70–71; William Smith (Bordentown, N.J.), Letter to Elder S[amuel] Brannan, December 17, 1844; “Arrest,” *Prophet* 1, no. 31 (December 21, 1844): 2. Wilford Woodruff, who traveled through the eastern branches in October–December 1844 (see below), was undeniably troubled by William’s behavior and reported to Brigham Young: “Wm [Smith] wrote a piece accusing Winchester of having a hand in murdering his brothers, & he [Winchester] has got out warrants for him, one about to taken [Samuel] Brannan for printing it & have taken Elder Grant for selling the papers.” Wilford Woodruff (Philadelphia, Pa.), Letter to Pres. Brigham Young, December 3, 1844, Brigham Young Office Files 1832–1878, Letters from Church Leaders and Others, 1840–1877, Wilford Woodruff, 1844, LDS Church History Library.

67. William Smith (New York City), Letter to Brigham Young, September 9, 1844; and William Smith (Bordentown, N.J.), Letter to Brigham Young, December 26, 1844, both in Brigham Young Office Files 1832–1878, Letters from Church Leaders and Others, 1840–1877, William Smith, 1844–1857, LDS Church History Library.

68. Smith to Brannan, December 17, 1844.

69. William Smith (Philadelphia, Pa.), Letter to Brigham Young or Heber C. Kimball, March 1845, Brigham Young Office Files 1832–1878, Letters from Church Leaders and

William's continuing apprehension was not completely misplaced. In March 1845, as he passed through Philadelphia, he was arrested and taken before Mayor John Swift, for libel. William recounted being "taken before the mare [Mayor] of the city & put under 3 thousand dollar bond to appear to the may term of co[u]rt[.] I gave bonds to the amount of 2000 the mare [Mayor] reducing the bail 1000." Thanks to the Saints' generosity, they provided security for the \$2,000 bond assuring William's appearance at the May term of court.⁷⁰

By the winter of 1844–45, the eastern branches were deteriorating under the leadership of Smith, Adams, and Brannan. Smith's brash style had upset a number of presiding elders, at least some of whom found his punitive attribute toward Burtis unjustified. The three men, acting together, had replaced many of those who opposed them, leading to further discontent and apprehension. In some branches, members were divided in their support of the authorities from Nauvoo, and some had left the Church altogether. Smith continued to spar with other leaders during his tenure in the East, including George T. Leach, presiding elder at New York City, John Hardy, president of the Boston Branch, the largest in the East, and prominent New Jersey convert John Horner, who had been baptized in 1840 by Erastus Snow.⁷¹

Plural marriage was the tinder that ignited the controversies, and William's leadership in the East came under closer scrutiny in October of 1844, when fellow apostle Wilford Woodruff made a two-month tour of the eastern branches before departing to preside over the Church in England. While visiting the Westfield, New Jersey, branch, Woodruff wrote to Brigham Young in October that he had received a spiritual prompting to ask a Church member what he thought about "marriage for eternity." Woodruff admitted that he found the impulse strange under the circumstances, as it was the furthest thing from his mind, but he obeyed the prompting and posed the question to Elder Quartus S. Sparks, who served as

Others, 1840–1877, William Smith, 1844–1857, LDS Church History Library.

70. Whittaker, "East of Nauvoo," 71–72; "William Smith," *Peoria Democratic Press* 4, no. 11 (April 23, 1845): 2; Samuel Brannan (New York), Letter to Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, July 22, 1845, Brigham Young Office Files 1832–1878, General Letters, 1840–1877, Be-Br, 1845, LDS Church History Library.

71. Wilford Woodruff (Boston, Mass.), Letter to President [Brigham] Young, October 9 and 14, 1844, Brigham Young Office Files 1832–1878, Letters from Church Leaders and Others, 1840–1877, Wilford Woodruff, 1844, LDS Church History Library; John Hardy, *Startling Developments of Crim. Con.! Or Two Mormon Apostles Exposed in Practising the Spiritual Wife System* (Boston: Conway and Company, 1844); John M. Horner, "Adventures of a Pioneer," *Improvement Era* 7, no. 7 (May 1904), 512–13. Horner and Smith's difficulty probably occurred during the winter of 1843–44. On May 10, 1844, the *Times and Seasons* printed a notice: "We are authorized to state that the difficulty heretofore existing between Elder William Smith, one of the 'Twelve,' and Elder John Horner, has been settled. Elder Horner has therefore had his license restored to him again, and is satisfied that opposition to the constituted authorities is bad policy." Both Horner and Smith were in Nauvoo at the time the notice was published. "Notice," *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 10 (May 15, 1844): 535.

branch president at Hartford, Connecticut, and who was serving as a missionary in the area.⁷² Sparks informed Woodruff that a particular sister had been “sealed to her husband” by Samuel Brannan, thus making them spouses for eternity. Curiosity piqued, Woodruff continued his inquiries and eventually determined that leaders were sealing couples in eternal union. He also heard rumors, which he apparently was able to confirm, that plural marriage was also being taught and practiced.⁷³ In the early fall of 1844, either Adams or Brannan had likely sealed William Smith to Sarah Ann Libby and Hannah Maria Libby, biological sisters who had joined the Church at Lowell, Massachusetts, on May 15, 1844, and had been members of the branch since that date. Historian T. Edgar Lyon summarized that Woodruff “reported William B. Smith was in Boston [Lowell?] . . . living with two young female members of the church, blood sisters, whom he claimed were his plural wives properly sealed to him by priesthood authority.” Sarah Ann was twenty-six and Hannah sixteen at the time of their marriages to William, and both worked in the textile mill industry which was such an integral part of Lowell’s economy.⁷⁴ Again, it is not known whether William consulted Caroline about this step, or if he did, what her reaction was. Adams and Brannan also received plural wives with very little oversight, but the details are sketchy and evidence scant. At the very least, as their Church trials would reveal the following spring, they had engaged in both teaching and practicing polygamy in the East in 1844–45, and rumors continued to circulate throughout the eastern branches that Smith and his colleagues secretly supported the practice.⁷⁵

After William had engineered Winchester’s excommunication in September 1844, Winchester immediately affiliated with Sidney Rigdon’s Church of Jesus

72. Quartus Strong Sparks joined the Church in 1838, had been installed as president of the branch at Hartford, Connecticut, on January 4, 1845. “Hartford Conference,” *Prophet* 1, no. 38 (February 8, 1845): 2–3.

73. Woodruff to Young, October 9 and 14, 1844.

74. T. Edgar Lyon, “Nauvoo and the Council of the Twelve,” in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, rev. ed., ed. F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards (Independence, Mo.: Herald House, 1992) 198 note 37; Martha Mayo and Connell O’Donovan, “Members and Missionaries of the Lowell, Mass. Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1835–1860,” unpublished web document, http://people.ucsc.edu/~odonovan/lowell_members.html#hannah_lib, accessed September 12, 2014. I have been unable to locate the reference Lyon cites documenting that William was living at Lowell with these two “blood sisters” whom he identified as his plural wives. However, later references include verification that Sarah Ann and Hannah Libby were sealed to William at some point between June 1844–August 1845. Joseph F. Smith (Salt Lake City), Letter to William Smith, July 12, 1884, MS 1325, Box 31, fd. 3, pp. 58–67, LDS Church History Library; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905), 49.

75. Dinger, *Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, 548–50, 549 note 18; Willard Richards, Diary, May 24, 1845, Willard Richards Papers, 1821–54, Vol. 11, May 4–23, 1845, MS 1490, Box 1, LDS Church History Library.

Christ of Latter Day Saints, headquartered in Pittsburgh. Smith, Adams, and Brannan challenged the Rigdonites both in public and in the press throughout the winter of 1844–45. William Smith felt that these various dissidents were conspiring against him, using plural marriage as their primary weapon of attack. “Benny [Winchester] with all the Rigdonites are desperate aghainst me,” Smith wrote to leaders at Nauvoo, “for I have be[e]n the principle means of saving the Eastern Churches from Rigdonism hence the set determination to ruin me & get me out of the way or into prison.” He further noted: “Bennys hobby in public aghainst the 12” was utilizing the “mutch fuss swirling about [the] spiritual wife practice.” He expected more support from Nauvoo in defending himself against Winchester and the Rigdonites, but the Quorum of Twelve Apostles holding fast at Nauvoo were consumed by their own challenges, including repelling dissident claims to leadership, finishing the temple, and negotiating a reasonable departure date with increasingly hostile neighbors.⁷⁶ With attacks against Smith and his colleagues about plural marriage, combined with Winchester’s slander lawsuit against Smith, many of the branches were on the verge of collapse.

Woodruff, for one, was shocked at what he had discovered, for it was his understanding that such priesthood ceremonies were under strict control of authorities at Nauvoo and that Brannan absolutely was not authorized to perform sealings. He hypothesized that Smith had played a role in sanctioning Brannan’s actions and quickly went on to Boston, where Smith, Adams, and Brannan had scheduled a Church meeting in early October.⁷⁷

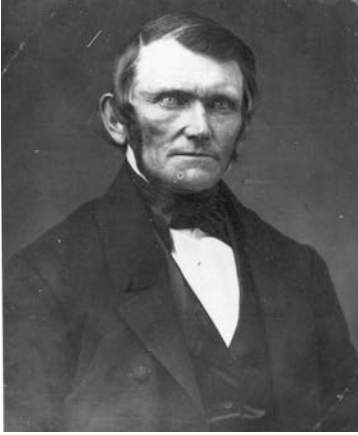
Woodruff’s unannounced arrival during the meeting apparently caught Smith by surprise. While they continued conducting Church business, Woodruff took his seat on the stand next to Smith. Rather than acknowledging and welcoming his fellow apostle, Smith, Adams, and Brannan all seemed “somewhat emberressed [sic] at my presence,” Woodruff reported. He leaned close to Smith and quietly queried: “How [is it that] Br. Brannan came to be marrying people for eternity[?]” Smith admitted that he had “appointed him to do it.” “His Administrations are not legal,” protested Woodruff. Smith contradicted: “Yes they are[.] Any Elder can do it that has power to marry at all.” Woodruff disagreed. The sealing power “is



Hannah Maria Libby (Smith Smith), 1828–1906. Photograph taken ca. 1862–1873, by Edward Martin, George A. Smith photograph collection. Courtesy LDS Church History Library.

76. William Smith to Young or Kimball, March [no day], 1845.

77. Woodruff to Young, October 9 and 14, 1844.



Wilford Woodruff, 1807–1898. Photograph taken ca. 1850, by Marsena Cannon. Courtesy LDS Church History Library.

a right exclusively belonging to the quorum of the Twelve or the president of the quorum.” Woodruff obviously felt that the sealing power was vested only in the president of the Church—even though at this time there technically was no Church president (the First Presidency would not be reorganized until December 1847), but Brigham Young was fulfilling that function as president of the Quorum of the Twelve. Even the Twelve, as Woodruff saw the situation, needed Young’s authorization to seal. Smith countered, “That has reference to exclusive privileges [i.e., plural marriages] and not reference [to] sealing a man to his wife for eternity, for any Elder can do that.” Woodruff was stunned at Smith’s interpretation of the sealing power and his understanding of his rights. Woodruff recorded,

“I will confess some feelings came across me that made me squirm all over.”⁷⁸ By now, the disagreement between the two apostles had certainly disrupted the meeting, and Woodruff dropped the subject, merely passing on a detailed report to Young before leaving the United States in December.

This conversation, however, foreshadowed the objections the Twelve would have with William Smith in succeeding months. While Woodruff’s greatest concern was the unauthorized use of the sealing power, he found other actions unsettling. During the Boston meeting, John Hardy, who had been the Boston Branch’s president since February 1843, resigned from his position and was quickly replaced by Joseph T. Ball, an African American convert specifically selected by Smith, Adams, and Brannan. Woodruff disagreed with this abrupt change as he felt the trio of leaders were “running all over all rights of presiding Elders, on the Claim that Wm Smith was one of the Twelve.” He felt that Hardy was a good man and competent leader but that Smith, Adams, and Brannan were “leagued together in all things” and that anyone who “opposed them in their deeds, they would trample them down until presiding Elders were loosing [sic] their posts and some ready to come out in battle array openly against the Church.”⁷⁹

Woodruff was also concerned about the mission finances. Speaking of Smith and Adams, Woodruff wrote, “I have some reason to believe they have spent hundreds of dollars of Temple money for their own use.”⁸⁰ That suspicion was strengthened when Woodruff attended a meeting with Smith at Peterborough,

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

80. Woodruff to Young, October 9 and 14, 1844.

New Hampshire, when “the Saints brought forward their tithings for the Temple all of which Elder Wm Smith took to the amount of \$150 for the Temple and \$25 or \$30 dollars for his own use.”⁸¹ Woodruff understood that three leaders had collected donations from the Saints saying they were for the Nauvoo Temple but instead were being used to support the *Prophet* and for such personal use as defending Smith in his lawsuit with Winchester. William’s manner of collecting money may have also disturbed Woodruff. Preaching in New Bedford, Massachusetts, during the same season Woodruff was in the area, a reporter from the *New York American* recorded that William concluded his sermon with these emphatic words: “Brethren, I will say here, for the credit of the audience, that at our last meeting I collected some two dollars, while at the same time the expenses of the hall were six dollars. Now, I wish in all soberness to assure, my dear friends, of one solemn truth, and that is, that rather than pay all expenses, preach for nothing, and find myself into the bargain, *I will see the whole generation damned first!*”⁸² After spending October and November among the eastern Saints, Woodruff summarized these concerns in a letter on December 3 to Brigham Young, concluding with a plea that if he wished to “save the eastern churches to delegate some one of the Twelve from Nauvoo that will act [in concert] with you to come and take charge of them for awhile.” Further, he warned Young about the need to “keep an eye upon Bro. William and Adams” by insisting that both men come to Nauvoo.⁸³

William either failed to understand that being introduced to plural marriage did not give him authority to oversee, teach, or perform such unions, or he had simply assumed that prerogative. By late October 1844, Brigham Young received the first of Woodruff’s lengthy communications, “relative to the injudicious course pursued by Elders William Smith, Geo J. Adams and Samuel Brannan.”⁸⁴ When the Twelve realized what William was doing, they were stunned. On December 3, Woodruff had sent another report, which further expressed his concerns: “By careful observation I can see things cropping out that is leading to Apostacy and acting against our interest. God knows I don’t want to injure Bro. Smith, nor Bro. Adams. For the sake of the Smith family, I want William Smith [to stay in the church], if possible, but I know that you ought to be apprised of things as they are.”

He further questioned Smith’s support of the Twelve: “William and Adams at times talk much about sustaining the Twelve, but I Think it is for effect more than any thing else. Wm. Smith told Elder [Jedediah] Grant that the Twelve had not sustained him, nor had he risen through their influence, but on his own. Neither should he feel himself bound hereafter to defend the character of the Twelve, or be accountable to that quorum, but he was led by visions and

81. Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, October 18, 1844, 2:475.

82. “Coming to the Point,” *New York American*, October 10, 1844: 2.

83. Woodruff to Young, December 3, 1844.

84. *Journal History*, October 22, 1844, 1.

revelations for himself.” Grant passed these remarks on to Woodruff, explaining, in mitigation of his brother-in-law’s comments, that William “was somewhat excited when he made these remarks.” Still, it was not an attitude that would have set well with the Twelve at Nauvoo.

Even more unnerving was the fact that Jedediah Grant voluntarily added a postscript to Woodruff’s letter, stating: “The statements of Bro. Woodruff I verily believe are just and true, and some of them I know are true to the letter. My views agree with him in all things.”⁸⁵ Grant had grown increasingly uncomfortable with how the branches were being managed under his brother-in-law’s heavy hand.

Woodruff continued his journey to England where he also found plenty of mismanagement to absorb his energies. When his reports reached Brigham Young and the other members of the Twelve, William Clayton summarized their reaction on December 19, 1844: “Read 2 letters from Elder Woodruff to President Young concerning Wm Smith and G. J. Adams showing that they are in opposition to the Twelve and have collected money in the east for the Temple and have used it. There are warrants out for them in N York and Boston and all seems confusion and sorrow wherever they go.”⁸⁶

Already wary of Smith’s inconstant behavior throughout his tenure as an apostle, Young acted without delay upon receiving Woodruff’s letter. In the December 1, 1844, issue of the *Times and Seasons* (the issue was late enough that Woodruff’s letter, written December 3, reached Nauvoo before it went to press), the Church announced that Parley P. Pratt had “been appointed by the council of the Twelve to go to the city of New York, to take charge of the press in that city . . . and to take the presidency of all the eastern churches.”⁸⁷ Smith was, in essence, being replaced. John Taylor, editor of the newspaper, had attempted to frame Pratt’s appointment as judiciously as possible, by inserting a rather lengthy notice next to the announcement. “We have just received a communication from Elder William Smith,” described Taylor, “[who] would have been here some time ago had it not been for the sickness of his wife; he went to the east for the purpose of recruiting her health, which, we are sorry to be informed, is fast failing. He has been laboring for some time among the eastern churches, and purposes returning here as soon as circumstances will permit.”⁸⁸

Smith had not been consulted about the decision to replace him and was startled when that issue of the *Times and Seasons* reached him, especially as he was not in-

85. Woodruff to Young, December 3, 1844.

86. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, 152. The “warrants” were related to Winchester’s lawsuits against Smith, Adams, and Grant.

87. “Elder Parley P. Pratt . . .,” *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 22 (December 1, 1844): 727.

88. In his notice, Taylor also commended William Smith for his missionary service, offered condolences for the deaths of his three brothers the previous year, expressed sympathy for Caroline’s lingering illness, and assured him that “his old friends the Twelve have not forgotten him.” John Taylor, “We have just received . . .,” *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 22 (December 1, 1844): 727.

tending to return to Nauvoo until spring. He fired off a seething letter to Heber C. Kimball on December 21, 1844. He recounted his labors to establish, support, and distribute the *Prophet* throughout the East, as well as his tireless efforts to combat “Rigdonism,” and had “called on the churches to stand by the 12.” But most upsetting to him was feeling that he had been replaced by Pratt and undermined by Woodruff, who, he correctly surmised, had sent negative reports about him to leaders at Nauvoo. Wrote William, “if PP Pratt [has] come hear [sic] to find fault with me & to usep more power than I have got we shall have a drawn game.” William flared up at the notion that Pratt was also appointed “to take the presidency of all the eastern churches.” The wording ignored his own authority, because “it do[e]s not even honor me in my office as one of the 12[.] I must say this step has surprised me mutch. . . . I acknowledge no man as my superior in the quorum but one [Brigham Young], & him in his place as one of the 12 & prophet,” William continued, “the rest as my equal in power at home abroad in the land & on the sea.” After pointedly referring by name to Woodruff and Pratt, William emphasized, “I want the 12 to understand that I am one of that Number.”⁸⁹ Yet surely William Smith must have known that Pratt could not have replaced him unless Brigham Young had sanctioned the appointment.

The events that transpired during the winter of 1844–45 taxed William’s already limited patience to its fragile limits. With Pratt’s appointment as leader in the East, William began to question whether he held equal status with other members of the Twelve. After all, Woodruff’s assessment of the eastern branches had been accepted unreservedly and without any sort of attempt at consulting with him. And since William was not only an apostle, like Woodruff and Pratt, he was also heir to the Church patriarch’s office. After mentioning the deaths of his brothers Joseph and Hyrum, William underscored, “Remember to[o] that I am one of the Smith family & all are not.” He interpreted his fellow apostles as being equal, or slightly inferior to him in authority, so they were overstepping their ecclesiastical authority.⁹⁰ If Pratt was called to replace him, then was he not viewed as the more capable leader?

Pratt responded promptly to his new assignment, traveling through Bordentown, New Jersey, where William and his family were living, on December 24, 1845, and probably arriving in New York City a day or two afterward.⁹¹ Almost immediately after his arrival, on January 1, 1845, Pratt announced his appointment in the *Prophet*: “I, Parley P. Pratt, being duly appointed by the first presidency of the whole Church to the special presidency of the Church of the Eastern States . . .” In the ensuing weeks he forged ahead in setting the branches in order, which included criticizing the leadership of William Smith and his colleagues. He also published an editorial in the *Prophet* on January 1, which, among other things, cautioned the

89. William Smith to Kimball, December 21, 1844.

90. William Smith (Bordentown, N.J.), Letter to Heber C. Kimball, December 21, 1844, Brigham Young Office Files, 1832–78, Box 42, fd. 13, LDS Church History Library.

91. William Smith (Bordentown, N.J.), Letter to Brigham Young, December 26, 1844, Brigham Young Office Files, 1832–78, Box 42, fd. 13, LDS Church History Library.

Saints against supporting causes that were not sanctioned by the Twelve. “In this way,” Pratt continued, “thousands of dollars are drawn from the saints and from the elders, while the temple cause is neglected.” He pointedly opined that “vast sums” of money had been expended “by men who have but little experience in publishing, and perhaps pay double for the paper and printing.”⁹²

Parley P. Pratt had also heard accounts of Adams claiming he was an “Apostle,” similar to what Woodruff indicated in his letters to Young, and a claim William had personally promoted during his tenure in the East. Pratt immediately published a notice in the *Prophet* countering that sentiment in no uncertain terms.⁹³ William could not have misread these statements as a critique of his own leadership. After reading these, and other similar-themed editorials, which continued into the ensuing months, William wrote in frustration, “I notice . . . [in] the times & seasons [the brethren] has But vary Lidle confidence in my hard Labour to Save the Eastern Churches & keep up the prophet [newspaper].”⁹⁴ William believed his reputation was being damaged. In addition to this injury, he felt undermined and unappreciated for his lengthy service among the eastern Saints.

Writing on behalf of the Twelve on January 9, 1845, Heber C. Kimball carefully replied to Smith’s hasty and imprudent letter written on December 21. After having “read it carefully myself several times,” Kimball wrote, “it has also been repeatedly read to the brethren of the Twelve.” Church leaders perceptibly knew they needed to handle William delicately, especially after receiving his impassioned letter. In defense of Pratt’s appointment, Kimball referred to an earlier letter written by William to Brigham Young, dated October 16, 1844, in which he indicated: “I should have come to Nauvoo this fall But the sickness of my family prevents [it].” Based on that letter and a report they had received from George J. Adams, Kimball wrote, “We expected you to come as quick as possible [to Nauvoo],” and understood “that you had retired from travelling and was with your family in Jersey and there probably would remain untill you returned to Nauvoo.” As to William’s insinuation that Parley might be viewed as holding superior authority over William, Kimball explained, “when you and he are together you are one.” He praised Smith for “standing up against error, and defending the churches against Rigdonism and s[c]hisms”; on that front, Kimball noted, “We have not doubted your integrity.” Then, Kimball moved to the key phrase in the letter by passing on the Twelve’s request: “Now brother William it is my wish, and the wishes of the Twelve that you would come to Nauvoo, as soon as the health of your family will possibly permit.” He reminded him that the patriarchal

92. Parley P. Pratt, “Regulations. For the Publishing Department of the Latter-day Saints in the East,” *Prophet* 1, no. 33 (January 4, 1845): 2; reprinted in the *Times and Seasons* 6 (January 15, 1845): 778.

93. Parley P. Pratt, “Elder G. J. Adams,” *Prophet* 1, no. 33 (January 4, 1845): 2. For the full document, see Chapter 11.

94. William Smith to Young or Kimball, March [no day], 1845.

office awaited him, “which is your legal right,” and that “Nauvoo will necessarily be your home henceforth . . . for your usefulness is needed here.”⁹⁵

Though Kimball’s letter pacified Smith for a time and assured his support of Pratt in his new position, it ignored most of the concerns leaders had about William’s service in the East. Church authorities likely thought it best to deal with Smith in person. After receiving Kimball’s letter, William wrote a letter to the *Prophet* in late January that must have reassured Pratt. William announced that he was “much rejoiced” at Pratt’s arrival and that he would “continue to labor in conjunction with Elder Pratt, in the eastern churches until spring. It is well known however, by the saints that I contemplate leaving for the west soon, and I feel highly pleased to leave the presidency of the eastern churches in such competent hands, and I hope the saints will do all in their power to sustain them.”⁹⁶ Though his feeling of being undermined was calmed for the time, most of the concerns Smith expressed in his December 1844 letter to Kimball would resurface after he returned to Nauvoo.

Winchester’s lawsuit with William had dragged on since November 1844, with his arrest for libel in Philadelphia in March 1845, which placed him under the necessity of arranging for a \$2,000 bond that he would need to settle with his former colleague. The need to leave the East for Nauvoo apparently motivated him to settle the suit, to which Winchester agreed if Smith and Brannan would pay him \$600 in damages—\$300 to pay for books published by Winchester⁹⁷ and the other \$300 for libel. Brannan secured \$300, and another former editor of the *Prophet*, George T. Leach, secured the other \$300, and paid off Winchester in April 1845.⁹⁸ William also undoubtedly agreed to issue a more formal retraction of his

95. Heber C. Kimball (Nauvoo, Ill.), Letter to William Smith, January 9, 1845, LDS Church History Library.

96. William Smith, Letter to Dear Brother [Brannan], ca. January, 1845, *Prophet* 1, no. 36 (January 25, 1845): 3, also reprinted as “Letter from Eld. Wm. Smith,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 15, 1845): 814.

97. When Pratt took over leadership in the East at the beginning of the year, he counseled Saints: “Let the books, tracts, periodicals, pamphlets, &c of Mr. B. Winchester and others no longer be patronized by the Saints.” Pratt, “Regulations,” 2. However, at least for a time, Winchester’s publications were still being sold in England, and he probably demanded his money either for the sale or publication costs associated with printing, or for both. Samuel Brannan (New York City), Letter to Brigham Young and Council, July 22, 1845, Brigham Young Collection, LDS Church History Library.

98. William mentioned the settlement with Winchester at a meeting with the Twelve held on May 5, 1845, the day after he returned to Nauvoo. Willard Richards, Diary, May 5, 1845, Willard Richards Papers, 1821–1854, MS 1490, LDS Church History Library. Brannan wrote in July to Brigham Young that “in order to get Br. Wm Smith exonerated from 2000 dollar bonds when he was arrested in Philadelphia by B. Winchester—that he might go to the west with his family, I gave Winchester my note for three hundred dollars that Brother [Reuben] Hadlock was owing him in England for books, payable in four months from the last of March, which I shall have to pay the last day of this month.” Brannan to Young and Kimball, July 22, 1845; See also Samuel Brannan, Letter

accusations against Winchester in the *Prophet* as part of the suit's resolution. "As much speculation has been had in regard to an article published in the *Prophet*, some time back, in reference to Mr. Benjamin Winchester," wrote William, "I wish to correct the public mind on this subject. . . . As far as the charge of his being accessory to the death of my Brothers is concerned, it was far from my intention of imputing it to him, and that was not the meaning of the 'Law infraction.' The language was harsh, but I trust this article will amply correct it."⁹⁹

Caroline was well enough to travel but still seriously ill when the family departed for Nauvoo on April 19, 1845. Pratt, along with many other leaders and lay members in the East, must have bade him farewell with relief. Although Pratt himself was well known for a pugnacious approach to dissent, he knew that a more conciliatory approach in leadership and especially patience would be necessary to restore order in the troubled branches. "We . . . taught the Church to beware of all impure and wicked doctrines and practices," Pratt summarized in his autobiography, "and not to receive any Elder or minister who sought to seduce them by any false teachings. With these exercises and the continual labors of Elders [Ezra T.] Benson, [Pelatiah] Brown, [Jedediah] Grant and many others, with myself, we succeeded in setting in order the church and reestablishing pure gospel principles."¹⁰⁰ Jedediah Grant, whose personality and actions had drawn Woodruff's approval,¹⁰¹ became a stabilizing influence in the Philadelphia Branch. In June, a month after the Smith family departed for Nauvoo, Samuel Brannan recognized the need for a less combative approach. "There is more flies caught with molasses than vinegar," Brannan wrote placatingly to Brigham Young.¹⁰² William was no longer one of the sources of conflict in the eastern branches, but his stormy leadership left many unanswered questions about his conduct in the East. His relocation in Nauvoo would bring up not only these questions but a prickly series of new issues.

to Brigham Young, August 29, 1845, Brigham Young Office Files 1832–1878, General Letters, 1840–1877, Be-Br, 1845, LDS Church History Library; Whittaker, "East of Nauvoo," 72. Whittaker summarizes the resolution of Winchester's lawsuit against William Smith as follows: "Because the lower courts were nonreporting courts, records are not extant either of the case or verdict. Presumably it was settled by summer 1845, possibly because Smith had backed down publicly from his original stand and possibly [because] Samuel Brannan had settled a \$300 bill he owed Winchester for books sold to Reuben Hedlock in England." Whittaker, "East of Nauvoo," 72 note 125.

99. William Smith, Letter to the Editor of the *Prophet*, *Prophet* 1, no. 46 (April 5, 1845): 3.

100. Parley P. Pratt [Jr.], ed., *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 300.

101. Woodruff to Young, December 3, 1844.

102. Samuel Brannan, Letter to Brigham Young, June 2, 1845, quoted in Bagley, *A Scoundrel's Tale*, 70.

