

# John Willard Young, Brigham Young, and the Development of Presidential Succession in the LDS Church

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ON NOVEMBER 22, 1855, eleven-year-old John Willard Young, son of Brigham Young, received his endowment, undoubtedly accompanied by his father. Brigham Young clearly felt there was something out of the ordinary in John Willard, which is also shown by the event following the endowment—President Young placed his hands on the head of his son and ordained him an apostle. While we know little about this ordination beyond its date and the attendant endowment ordinance, some family members were probably witnesses, including possibly John Willard's older brother, Brigham Young, Jr., who left a record of the ordination some thirty years later. It was a private event, yet this ordination would potentially impact church government, significantly given the importance of apostolic seniority in the LDS church. Brigham Young may have envisioned that at some point John Willard, his favored son, would succeed him.

About eight years later, Brigham Young ordained two more of his sons apostles in a private ceremony. Brigham Young, Jr., who received his apostolic ordination at this time, wrote, or spoke, the following words recording the event:

In President Young's private room in the Lion House, February 4, 1864 he (Brigham Young) ordained Joseph Angell Young and Brigham Young Jr. Apostles and confirmed upon John Willard Young the ordination to the Apostleship which he received when he went through the endowment

house (which was November 22, 1855) and set each of them apart as assistant Counselors to the First Presidency.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, Brigham ordained Joseph and Brigham Jr. apostles, then called his three oldest sons (then aged twenty-nine, twenty-seven, and nineteen years old) to be assistant counselors in the First Presidency.<sup>2</sup> Brigham ordained another son, Brigham Heber, an apostle some time after 1864.<sup>3</sup> Apparently, becoming an apostle was a prerequisite for serving as a counselor in the First Presidency, so this could have been a

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1. Note in the file "Research concerning John W. Young's ordination," John Willard Young papers, MS 3804, LDS Church Archives. See also Charles W. Watson, "John Willard Young and the 1887 Movement for Utah Statehood" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1984), 33. The words "to the Apostleship" are inexplicably left out of Watson's quotation of this statement. The entire contents of this file are quoted in my Appendix A. For contradictory dates given on this little-known ordination, see Watson, "John Willard Young," 32. Mary Young Goulding, a daughter of John Willard, wrote, "My father was made an Apostle at a very early age. . . . Brother Andrew Jenson. . . many years ago said to me that father was nineteen at receiving that great honor; father himself told me it was earlier" (Mary Luella Morgan Young Goulding, "Biographical Sketch of John W. Young by one of his Daughters," letter to Preston Nibley, Aug. 28, 1959, LDS Church Archives). However, Andrew Jenson gave the correct, earlier date in 1890: "John W. Young, a son of Brigham Young was. . . ordained an Apostle Nov. 22, 1855, by his father, set apart as an assistant Counselor to the First Presidency Feb. 4, 1864, and as first Counselor to President Brigham Young Oct. 8, 1876. The latter position he occupied until the death of President Young in 1877" (*The Historical Record* 9 [Salt Lake City: Jenson, 1890], 123). Watson ascribes the later date to a tendency for "orthodox" writers "to gloss over or deliberately confuse the ordination date." See also Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), xxviii (which also gives the correct Nov. 22, 1855 date).

2. For Joseph Angell (1834-1875) and Brigham Jr. (1836-1903), see Dean Jessee, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1974), 3-18; 19-90; Davis Bitton, "The Ordeal of Brigham Young, Jr.," in Bitton, *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 115-49; and the diaries of Brigham Young, Jr., LDS Church Archives. These diaries, like many of the documents written by LDS general authorities cited in this paper, are restricted and not open to researchers, though they have been open in the past. While typescripts of such documents are sometimes available in other libraries or in published works, they cannot replace examining the originals, because I have found that published quotes or transcribed primary documents have often been misquoted or transcribed incorrectly. The unfailingly professional and helpful archivists at the LDS Archives do all they can to allow researchers access to restricted documents, but they cannot go beyond the policy. Excerpts from Brigham Young, Jr.'s journals, 1874-1902, can be found on *New Mormon Studies* CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997).

3. For this ordination of Brigham Heber (1845-1928), the first son born to Brigham's plural wife Lucy Ann Decker in Nauvoo, see D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 720, hereafter cited as Quinn, *Extensions of Power*; James Henry Moyle, *Mormon Democrat: The Religious and Political Memoirs of James Henry Moyle*, ed. Gene A. Sessions (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 295; Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 127.

motivation for the apostolic ordinations. However, John Willard had been ordained an apostle some eight years before, so his 1855 ordination was merely "confirmed" in 1864.<sup>4</sup>

All this was done without the knowledge of the other general authorities. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote of these ordinations, "[T]hese brethren [Joseph A., Brigham Jr., and John W.] were ordained privately by Brigham Young and. . .[t]hese ordinations were never presented to the Church or any body of the Church for a sustaining vote."<sup>5</sup>

Once again, given the importance of apostles in succession, the ordaining of Brigham's four sons as apostles would have been seen as potentially very significant for LDS church history, and provides evidence that Brigham Young hoped to be succeeded by one of his sons.

#### JOHN WILLARD YOUNG

The youngest of these three sons, who had become apostles at such a young age, was John Willard, born October 1, 1844, the sixth child and third son (after Joseph Angell, born in 1834, and Brigham Jr., born in 1836) of Brigham and Mary Ann Angell, Brigham Young's second wife, whom he married after the death of his first wife in 1832. John Willard evidently became his father's favorite, reportedly in part because he was the first son of Brigham born under the covenant, after the endowment had been revealed in Nauvoo. A daughter of John Willard wrote to Levi Young, "The reason for him being made an apostle? [i.e., at such a young age] He, John Willard, was the first son born to his Father, Brigham Young, after the latter received his full temple Endowment (this tallies with Grandpa's data re X in your book)."<sup>6</sup>

Yet John Willard must also have shown early signs of a striking personality, for in later life he was known for his verbal brilliance and personal magnetism. He was acknowledged to be the best speaker of Brigham's sons.<sup>7</sup> While John Willard would live up to much of his young

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4. There is a possibility that Brigham Young, Jr. was also ordained an apostle in 1855. In Jensen, *Church Chronology*, xxviii, we read that Brigham Jr. was "ordained an Apostle Nov. 22, 1855, by Brigham Young, and admitted into the Council of Twelve Apostles Oct. 9, 1868." Quinn accepts Jensen's date, *Extensions of Power*, 719. However, this contradicts Brigham Young Jr.'s explicit statement that he was ordained an apostle in 1864. I think it is likely that Jensen was mistaken.

5. Typed note in "Research concerning John W.'s ordination" file, initialed by Earl E. Olson, cf. Watson, "John Willard Young," 34. See my Appendix A.

6. Goulding, "Biographical Sketch."

7. Watson, "John Willard Young," 8; cf. 3 n. 6; Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 91; Moyle, *Mormon Democrat*, 294-96. Moyle, who served as John Willard's attorney for a time, had a basically positive view of him, portraying John Willard as a failed businessman rather than a swindler. He was "one of the most magnetic men I ever knew. . . His was the most brilliant mind of all the Youngs except for that of his father. I liked and admired him,

promise, becoming extraordinarily charismatic, he also caused controversy when he turned his charisma toward business, especially railroad financing. Many felt that his business dealings were not straightforward and honest.<sup>8</sup> Certainly, many of his projects failed, and he was not able to repay his investors. Nevertheless, he became an important figure in the railroad history of the West,<sup>9</sup> and declared that all he had done had been done to help Zion.

However, this paper is concerned with the ecclesiastical side of John Willard's life. To understand the significance of his 1855 ordination to the apostleship, and Brigham Young's possible motivation for ordaining John Willard, we must examine the issues of succession to the presidency and seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve as they were understood in 1855 and the years following. As it turns out, the little-known ordination of John Willard was possibly a factor in the development of the LDS church's present system of seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve and presidential succession.

#### SUCCESSION AND SENIORITY

Many twentieth-century Mormons accept that the present system of seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve (which allows the senior quorum member, calculated by the date of entrance into the Quorum, to succeed as president of the church) has been in place since the beginning of the church, or at least, since Brigham Young's accession following Joseph Smith, Jr.'s death. Certainly, when Young became president, a pattern was

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though I literally hated some of the important things he did, and things which in business were notoriously objectionable. His marvelous magnetism relieved many of their money, which was never returned. Yet as a rule, and so far as I know, he got the money for what he thought were commendable purposes." Modern historian Guy Bishop defends Young's business acumen, ascribing his failures to financial panics in the east and the difficulty of raising capital in frontier environments (M. Guy Bishop, "Building Railroads for the Kingdom: The Career of John W. Young, 1867-91," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48 [Winter 1980]: 66-80, 78).

8. For a negative view of John Willard, see Heber J. Grant's journal, LDS Church Archives, August 31, 1887 (and many other places in the journal); excerpts of this are also on *New Mormon Studies* CD-ROM. Grant wrote, "A number of letters to and from John W. Young were read. I wish I had confidence in him but I have not and never hear his name mentioned in connection with our efforts for Statehood but what It decreases my faith in the success of our efforts. If the Lord is going to use a man with a dishonest financial record, to give the people liberty, it looks to me as though He was placing a premium on dishonest methods." See also Moyle, *Mormon Democrat*, 296, where Grant speaks of the "crookedness and lying" of John Willard.

9. See Bishop, "Building Railroads for the Kingdom"; Marlow Adkins, "A History of John Willard Young's Utah Railroads 1884-1894" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 1978); Charles L. Keller, "Promoting Railroads and Statehood: John W. Young," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1977): 289-308.

established: The senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve, the senior apostle, would succeed as president and prophet of the church after the former president's death. However, the question of how this seniority was reckoned—a crucial factor—did not reach its present resolution until the twentieth century. John Willard's ordination and subsequent events linked to it were possibly a key element in this development and final resolution.

When the first twelve were named by the Three Witnesses on February 14, 1835, only Lyman Johnson, Brigham Young, and Heber C. Kimball were ordained that day. Six more apostles were ordained the following day (Orson Hyde, David Patten, Luke Johnson, William McLellin, John Boynton, and William Smith), and three apostles were subsequently ordained—Parley P. Pratt on February 21, Thomas Marsh on April 25, and Orson Pratt on April 26.<sup>10</sup> However, on May 2, Joseph Smith instructed them to arrange their seniority according to birthdates, hence the paradoxical system of seniority by seniority.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the original apostles had seniority strictly by age, as follows: Thomas Marsh (born November 1, 1799, 35 years old), David Patten (born November 14, 1799, 35 years old), Brigham Young (born June 1, 1801, 33 years old), Heber C. Kimball (born June 14, 1801, 33 years old), Orson Hyde (born January 8, 1805, 30 years old), William McLellin (born 1806, 29 years old), Parley P. Pratt (born April 12, 1807, 27 years old), Luke Johnson (born November 3, 1807, 27 years old), William Smith (born March 13, 1811, 23 years old), Orson Pratt (born September 19, 1811, 23 years old), John Boynton (born September 20, 1811, 23 years old), Lyman Johnson (born October 24, 1811, 23 years old).

Beginning in 1838, a number of apostles left the quorum. For example, David Patten was killed, and Orson Hyde experienced difficulties with the church, although he eventually worked these out without ex-

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10. Joseph Smith et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Period I: History of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and. . . Period II: From the Manuscript History of Brigham Young and Other Original Documents*, ed. Brigham H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 2:187; Reed Durham and Steven Heath, *Succession in the Church* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), 17. This is a basic book for tracking variation in seniority in listings of the apostles.

11. "It will be the duty of the twelve when in council to take their seats together according to their ages" (Remarks, May 2, 1835, in "A record of the transactions of the Twelve apostles," in "Patriarchal Blessings Book, Vol. 1, February 14 to August 28, 1835," LDS Church Archives, [restricted]; I cite from *New Mormon Studies CD-ROM*). See also Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:219-20; and Gary James Bergera, "Seniority in the Twelve: The 1875 Realignment of Orson Pratt," *Journal of Mormon History* 18 (1992): 19-50, 47. The First Presidency re-emphasized this policy in early 1839: "Appoint the oldest of those of those twelve who were first appointed, to be the President of your Quorum" (Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith to Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young, Jan. 16, 1839, in Joseph Smith collection, MS 155, Box 2, Fd 3, LDS Church Archives).

communication and returned to the church and to his place in the Quorum. Several new apostles were ordained to fill the vacancies. On December 19, John E. Page (born February 25, 1799, age 39) and John Taylor (born November 1, 1808, age 30) were ordained. On April 26, 1839, Wilford Woodruff (born March 1, 1807, age 32) and George Albert Smith (born June 26, 1817, age 21) received their ordinations. Willard Richards was ordained on April 14, 1840 (born June 24, 1804, age 35) and Lyman Wight (born May 9, 1796, age 44) on April 8, 1841.

Using the sole criterion of age, this new group of apostles would have caused a major upheaval in seniority, since Lyman Wight, the last ordained, but the eldest, would become the senior apostle. However, this did not occur. When we look at the early lists showing seniority of the Twelve, we find them in groups. For instance, on April 15, 1841, the twelve, in England, signed an epistle in the following order: Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, George A. Smith.<sup>12</sup>

While not all of the twelve were in England at the time, this document illustrates a new development. The first member of the "new apostles," Willard Richards, signed after Orson Pratt, even though he was seven years older. So while the groups were arranged by date of ordination, within the groups, age seniority was still the criterion.

One oddity in this list will leap out at any Mormon history buff: Woodruff had seniority over John Taylor because he was older, even though Taylor had helped ordain Woodruff to the apostleship. If this system of seniority had continued, Woodruff would have succeeded Brigham Young, and Taylor would never have been president of the church. There were also some minor quirks and oddities in subsequent listings of the Quorum of the Twelve. For instance, Lyman Wight's rank was ambiguous, partially due to his comparatively late ordination, and perhaps also because of his problematic character. Sometimes he was viewed as a "Third Group" because of his late ordination, and was listed at the end of the Twelve, while at other times he was viewed as first of the "Second Group," and at still other times, he was placed after Page but not at the end of the Twelve, an odd compromise!<sup>13</sup> Excluding these few variations, the pattern of seniority within groups explains seniority in the Twelve at this time very well.

In 1842, Orson Pratt had problems with Joseph Smith and was

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12. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:348.

13. Another quirk is that William Smith and Orson Pratt sometimes traded places. Yet another readily explainable quirk is that, in epistles, Willard Richards sometimes appeared at the end of the Twelve, but this was because the clerk always signed his name last.

nearly excommunicated,<sup>14</sup> so Amasa Lyman was ordained to fill his place. However, Pratt did not leave the church, according to Bergera's interpretation, and was eventually returned to his place in the Quorum. Lyman subsequently filled a vacancy in the Quorum, at the end of the list.<sup>15</sup>

In the years that followed, of course, Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith were killed, and the church split, with most Mormons following the Twelve, led by the senior member, Brigham Young, who eventually became church president in a First Presidency that was separate from the Twelve. William Smith and John Page left the church, and Ezra T. Benson (born February 22, 1811, age 35) was ordained an apostle on July 16, 1846.

In October 1848, at General Conference, the general authorities were sustained as follows: in the First Presidency, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards; in the Quorum of the Twelve, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Lyman Wight, [Willard Richards would be here] Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, George A. Smith, Amasa Lyman, and Ezra T. Benson. Thus, the First Presidency was followed by nine apostles. However, it was subsequently decided to fill the Quorum of the Twelve. On February 12, 1849, four new apostles were ordained: Charles C. Rich (born August 21, 1809, age 39), Lorenzo Snow (born April 3, 1814, age 34), Erastus Snow (born November 9, 1818, age 30), and Franklin D. Richards (born April 2, 1821, age 27). They took their places in the Quorum of the Twelve in that order.

After this, apostles were generally called one or two at a time. There was no question of age seniority, except regarding groups of apostles called at about the same time. However, one point of ambiguity remained. In these new, single, callings, an apostle was ordained at about the same time he entered the Quorum. Was seniority reckoned from date of ordination, or from date of entrance into the Quorum?

A related ambiguity arose on April 6, 1854, when Jedediah Grant was ordained an apostle, then took his place as second counselor in First Presidency. He evidently became an apostle in order to serve as a counselor. This created a new question: If Brigham had died when Grant was alive, would Grant have taken a place in the Quorum of the Twelve based on the date of his ordination to the apostleship?

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14. See Gary James Bergera, "The Orson Pratt-Brigham Young Controversies: Conflict Within the Quorums, 1853-1868," *Dialogue* 13 (Summer 1980): 7-58 and *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 7-32.

15. Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Church*, 58. Lyman was supposed to replace Sidney Rigdon in the presidency, as Joseph was upset with Rigdon. Almost comically, though, the saints voted to retain Rigdon, leaving Lyman in another limbo.

This is how matters stood when Brigham Young ordained John Willard an apostle on November 22, 1855. Based on Brigham's interpretation of that ambiguity, he was either giving John Willard a private honor, or he was virtually choosing him to be his successor at some time. If seniority was to be reckoned by ordination to apostleship alone, John Willard would eventually have overwhelming seniority, because he was so young when ordained.

#### SUCCESSION AFTER 1855

On December 1, 1856, Jedediah Grant died, and a month later, on January 4, 1857, Daniel H. Wells was ordained an apostle, then a counselor in the First Presidency.<sup>16</sup> Now there was indeed an apostle not in the Quorum who would outlive Young. When Parley P. Pratt was killed on May 13, 1857, his vacancy in the Twelve was filled on August 26, 1860, by George Q. Cannon (born on January 11, 1827, age 33).

One can only conjecture why Brigham kept the ordination of John Willard secret. Perhaps there was tension between the church president and the Twelve, despite Young's forceful leadership.

However, in October 1861, the ambiguity in apostolic succession was removed, when Brigham Young, at General Conference, stated a policy that brought about an important change in the method for reckoning apostolic seniority. As we have seen, the older Woodruff originally ranked before John Taylor in apostolic seniority, but at this conference, as Taylor called out Woodruff's name before his own, "President Young directed the clerk, J. T. Long, to place Brother Taylor's name above Brother Woodruff's as Elder Taylor was ordained four or five months before Elder Woodruff. . . . President Young said the calling was made in accordance with the date of ordination."<sup>17</sup> Thus, years later John Taylor would become president of the church before Woodruff. Likewise, John Willard, with this new policy, would almost certainly become president of the church at some time, barring unforeseen difficulties, apostasy, or death, provided he entered the Quorum of the Twelve. In 1855, at the time of John Willard's ordination, the next youngest apostle had been Franklin D. Richards, thirty-four years old.

On February 4, 1864, as we have already noted, Brigham ordained his other two oldest sons apostles, and set all three sons apart as assistant

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16. Bryant S. Hinckley, *Daniel Hanmer Wells and Events of His Time* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1942), 233.

17. History of Brigham Young, MSS, October 1861, p. 437, LDS Church Archives, MS CR 100 102, #14; Journal History, LDS Church Archives, Oct. 7, 1861. Cf. John Taylor, *Succession in the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1881), 2, 16-17; Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Church*, 65.



counselors to the president. Brigham subsequently confided this to two apostles, John Taylor and George Smith:

President Young said I am going to tell you something that I have never before mentioned to any other person I have ordained my sons Joseph A. Brigham & John W. Apostles and My Counsellors. Have you any objections? J. Taylor & G.A. Smith said they had not, that it was his own affair & they considered it under his own direction. He further stated In ordaining my sons I have done no more than I am perfectly willing that you should do with yours. And I am now determined to put my sons into active service in the Spiritual Affairs of the Kingdom and keep them there just as long as possible you have the same privilege.<sup>18</sup>

Joseph Angell was twenty-nine at the time of ordination, Brigham Jr. was twenty-seven, and John Willard was nineteen. In the junior part of the Quorum, Lorenzo Snow was forty-nine, Erastus Snow was forty-five, Franklin Richards was forty-three, and George Cannon was thirty-seven. There was a sizable gap between the oldest of Brigham's ordained sons and the youngest member of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Two years later, on July 1, 1866, Brigham performed another private apostolic ordination that paradoxically would have far more practical consequence than the earlier ordinations of his own sons. After a prayer meeting with Joseph F. Smith and four apostles (John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, and George Q. Cannon—a group that did not include the most senior apostles, Hyde and Pratt), Young began to take off his temple clothes, then, as recorded by Wilford Woodruff, "[o]f a sudden he stoped & Exlaimed hold on, 'Shall I do as I feel led? I always fell [feel] well to do as the Spirit Constrains me. It is my mind to Ordain Brother Joseph F. Smith to the Apostleship, and to be one of my Councilors.'" He then asked for the feelings of the apostles present, who gave the idea "Harty approval. . . .After which Brother Joseph F. Smith knelt upon the Altar &. . .we laid our hands upon him, Brother Brigham being mouth." Young then ordained Joseph F. Smith an apostle and a counselor to the First Presidency.<sup>19</sup> The secrecy of this ordination is evidenced by

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18. Wilford Woodruff, "Historian's Private Journal" (1858-78), Apr. 17, 1864, LDS Church Archives, as cited in Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 164, who notes a typescript of this document, "Minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles," in Donald R. Moorman papers, fd 8, box 16, Stewart Library, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah. See also D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Hierarchy, 1832-1932: An American Elite" (Ph.D. diss., Yale, 1976), 36; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1994), 454 n38.

19. Wilford Woodruff journal, LDS Church Archives, July 1, 1866, typescript published in Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833-1898*, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-1985), 6:290; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*

the fact that Young counseled the apostles to make a record of it, but instructed them not to tell anyone not present about the event. Young's first counselor, Heber C. Kimball, was not present. A few days later, Kimball approached Joseph F. and told him that he had received a spiritual impression that Joseph F. would someday become an apostle. Joseph F. felt somewhat embarrassed that he could not tell Kimball he already was an apostle.<sup>20</sup>

As of yet, none of these apostle-counselors<sup>21</sup> had joined the Twelve, as there were no deaths or apostasies of the members of the Twelve for a number of years. But in 1867, Amasa Lyman was excommunicated and expelled from the Quorum of the Twelve for preaching false doctrine and apostasy, leaving a vacancy. Brigham originally desired to put Brigham Young, Jr., into the vacancy, but this did not take place. Brigham Jr., writing in his journal, gave a remarkable behind-the-scenes view of what happened at this point: "Bro. Geo. A. Smith suggested that it might raise a question & comment if B.Y. Jr. was put in, in place of Br A. M. Lyman apostasized; and if Jos. F. S. was now put in to the Quorum it could make no difference as <I> B.Y. Jr. was ordained an apostle and would take <my—crossed out> his place in the Quorum according to that ordination."<sup>22</sup> This statement shows that the policy of seniority reckoned entirely by date of ordination to apostleship was firmly in place at this time. As George A. Smith suggested in this journal entry, Brigham Jr., when he joined the Quorum at a later date, "would take his place [rank] in the Quorum according to that [earlier apostolic] ordination." Interestingly, Brigham Sr. bowed to George Smith's counsel, and as a result, Joseph F. Smith would later become president of the church rather than Brigham Jr. However, because the policy of seniority by date of ordination was then accepted, Brigham had no qualms about putting Joseph F. into the Twelve first, since he expected that his sons would always have seniority over Joseph F.

When another vacancy occurred, Brigham Jr. was brought into the Quorum of the Twelve on October 9, 1868. In the subsequent April conference, Young was sustained behind Smith, but this was quickly recog-

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(Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), 226-27. See also Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Church*, 70-71.

20. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 227; Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 23, 419 n. 13, citing Quorum of the Twelve Apostles minutes, Apr. 5, 1900, 10, LDS Church Archives. Quinn tells this incident in the context of probable tensions between Young and Kimball.

21. Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Church*, 68-69.

22. Diary of Brigham Young, Jr., April 5, 1900, LDS Church Archives as quoted in Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 171-72.

nized as a mistake, for in the following years Brigham Young, Jr., was sustained ahead of Joseph F. Smith at conferences. This is how their relative seniority remained for many years.<sup>23</sup>

#### JOHN WILLARD: RAILROAD ENTREPRENEUR AND FIRST COUNSELOR

From 1863 on, although John Willard was an apostle and assistant counselor in the First Presidency, he spent much of his life in New York, engaged in business ventures. In these he alternated between dazzling success and inability to fulfill his dreams and promises. One day he would be a millionaire (and he liked to live like a millionaire), the next he would be penniless. He quickly became chronically indebted and beset by creditors. He raised money with a golden tongue, but when his projects failed, many contributors felt betrayed.<sup>24</sup>

Brigham Young likely looked on his favorite son with great fondness and continual unease. He knew that John Willard was deeply in debt.<sup>25</sup> Brigham Young, Jr., visiting John Willard at one time, wrote, "I have passed a miserable day seeing John harrassed by duns. . . . Money could not hire me to endure the torture which my poor brother suffers every day. I know it must be terrible on his mind."<sup>26</sup> Brigham Sr. would often plead with John Willard to come back to Utah to take up his responsibilities in church leadership,<sup>27</sup> but John Willard never seemed singlemindedly interested in church affairs.

In April 1873, John Willard, along with four others, was publicly sustained as an assistant counselor to Brigham. Still, John did not seem to fulfill his church obligations in any substantial way.<sup>28</sup> Brigham went to the length of paying many of John Willard's debts to convince him to

23. Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Church*, 72.

24. See Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 92-94; Watson, "John Willard Young"; Bishop, "Building Railroads for the Kingdom"; Adkins, "A History of John Willard Young's Utah Railroads."

25. Brigham Young to Brigham Young, Jr., and John Willard Young, Jan. 11, 1876 (Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 117). See following notes.

26. Brigham Young, Jr., Diary, 29 Dec. 1875, 3 Jan. 1876, LDS Church Archives, as cited in Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 117.

27. Brigham Young to John Willard Young Oct. 26, 1874 (Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 109); Brigham Young to John Willard Young, Dec. 17, 1875 (Jessee, 115-16). This letter has a moving, almost pathetic postscript, written in hand by Brigham himself after the more formal dictated letter: "O Jonna I pr[a]y for you and yours continually. If you nue [knew] how I want to see you, you would come. My dear Jonna, I due hope you will see as we see thing[s]. I send your dear Br Brigham & Br Stanes to prevale on you to come home and stay with us. M[a]y God Bless my d[e]ar Boy. B.Y." See also Jessee, 109-124.

28. Wilford Woodruff journal, Apr. 8, 1873 (Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 7:130); Brigham Young to John Willard Young, 13 Nov. 1873 (Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 109);

come back to Utah,<sup>29</sup> but after a stay in Zion, John Willard once again returned to the east. Toward the end of Brigham's life, he managed to bring John Willard back to church service once again. In February and March 1876, John Willard visited Utah. On the day before his departure, Brigham told his son that he desired to make him "his first counselor in the First Presidency if he would walk up to his duties."<sup>30</sup> Evidently, Brigham Young once again coaxed him back by offering financial assistance.<sup>31</sup> John Willard agreed to accept this high church position. After "arranging his business affairs in the east," John Willard returned to Utah in October 1876, and became First Counselor.<sup>32</sup> This youthful apostle—now only thirty-two years old—had a church position of high visibility. He had avoided church service throughout his life, but now held the second most important position in the church.

Brigham Young effected another important change in apostolic seniority in 1875 when he found himself suffering from serious health complaints. (Thus, this change may have been made with a view toward presidential succession, as he feared that he might die.) Before this time, the Twelve had been sustained as follows: Orson Hyde (President), Orson Pratt, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, [George A. Smith], Ezra T. Benson, Charles C. Rich, Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow, Franklin D. Richards, George Q. Cannon, Brigham Young, Jr., Joseph F. Smith. (George A. Smith and Daniel H. Wells were the First Presidency counselors.) Thus, Orson Hyde was in line to succeed Brigham at his death. However, at a meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve before April conference, Brigham informed Hyde and Pratt that they had lost seniority because of their difficulties with Joseph Smith in Nauvoo which had caused them to leave the Quorum, and instructed them to give up their leading position in the Quorum. Thus, the new criterion became longest *continuous* apostolic status. In the April 1875 conference, the Twelve were sustained as follows: John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff,

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Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Church*, 73. Brigham now had seven counselors. See also Watson, "John Willard Young," 22.

29. Watson, "John Willard Young," 22 n. 55.

30. Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 119, citing Brigham Young, Jr., diaries, LDS Archives, 14-15 March 1876.

31. Watson, "John Willard Young," 23 n. 57, citing John Willard Young to H. B. Wooster, 20 Nov. 1877; Brigham Young, Jr., Diary, LDS Church Archives (restricted), 1 Sept. 1875; 14 Mar. 1876.

32. Wilford Woodruff journal, Oct. 7, 1876 (Kenney, *Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, 7:286); Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 122. Another sign of John Willard's high church status was his receiving his Fullness of Priesthood ordinance on March 28, 1877, see Wilford Woodruff journal (Kenney 7:341); L. John Nuttall diaries, at same date, LDS Church Archives, excerpts available on *New Mormon Studies* CD-ROM.

Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, Charles C. Rich, Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow, Franklin D. Richards, George Q. Cannon, Brigham Young, Jr., Joseph F. Smith, Albert Carrington. (John W. Young and Daniel H. Wells were the First Presidency counselors; they had apostolic seniority just after Franklin D. Richards.)<sup>33</sup>

A behind-the-scenes vignette shows the tension between John Willard and Joseph F. Smith, and the depths of Brigham's love for John Willard. Evidently, after John Willard was chosen as First Counselor, on August 29, 1877, Brigham brought the matter before the Twelve to enlist their support. However, Joseph F. "stated that he thought the people would very much prefer to see Brigham Jr. selected, rather than to take John W. to fill that position. President Young turned to Joseph F. and shaking his finger at him said, 'I have got Brigham [Jr.] and I have got you and I want John W.'"<sup>34</sup> Brigham immediately instructed Joseph F. to prepare to go on a five-year European mission. Joseph F. went to Europe, but was recalled soon after, when Brigham died.

#### AFTER BRIGHAM YOUNG: TENSIONS WITH CHURCH LEADERS

Brigham Young's death, another milestone in Mormon history, did not cause a full-fledged succession crisis, and John Taylor succeeded to church leadership relatively smoothly.<sup>35</sup> There was no debate about the policy of seniority by date of ordination. Wilford Woodruff, in 1879, said, "Elder Taylor is the oldest in *Ordination* and that is why he presides today."<sup>36</sup> However, the general authorities were faced with another problem: what to do with First Presidency Counselors John Willard Young and Daniel Wells. They could have been retained in the First Presidency, as has often happened since. In addition, there would be a vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve, if the First Presidency were reorganized.

However, the First Presidency was not immediately reorganized. Therefore, the Twelve were sustained as follows in October 1877: John

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33. See Wilford Woodruff journal, April 10, 1875 (Kenney 7:224); Taylor, *Succession in the Priesthood*, 2, 16-17 (who misdates the realignment by Brigham Young at June 1875; instead, the Woodruff journal shows it occurred before April 10, 1875); Bergera, "Seniority in the Twelve" and "The Orson Pratt-Brigham Young Controversies"; William G. Hartley, "The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877: Brigham Young's Last Achievement," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 (Fall 1979): 3-36, 5; Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Church*, 73-75; Steven Heath, "Notes on Apostolic Succession," *Dialogue* 2 (Summer 1987): 43-57, 44.

34. Charles W. Nibley, *Reminiscences of Charles W. Nibley, 1849-1931* (Salt Lake City: His Family, 1934), 73-74; Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 38-39.

35. For this succession, see Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Church*, 78-92; Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 40-41.

36. Moses Thatcher journal, Jan. 5, 1879, LDS Church Archives, as cited in Bergera, "Seniority in the Twelve," 51 n. 106.

Taylor (President), Wilford Woodruff, Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, Charles C. Rich, Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow, Franklin D. Richards, George Q. Cannon, Brigham Young, Jr., Joseph F. Smith, Albert Carrington. The problem of two non-Quorum counselors was solved by creating a new office: Daniel H. Wells and John Willard Young were sustained as counselors to the Twelve.<sup>37</sup> Thus John Willard was still a recognized general authority, but had been kept somewhat at arm's length. He returned to the East, to take up his favored business dealings once again. In 1880, when the First Presidency was re-organized with George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith as counselors to Taylor, three new apostles were brought into the Twelve: Moses Thatcher, Francis M. Lyman, and John Henry Smith. Daniel Wells and John Willard Young were not included.

John Willard's relations with the other general authorities quickly deteriorated.<sup>38</sup> On April 6, 1881, John's name was withheld from the list of general authorities. On May 20, he was tried by the Quorum of the Twelve, but a reconciliation followed.<sup>39</sup> He was again tried by the Quorum on April 3, 1883, immediately before General Conference, "for conduct unacceptable to the rest of the Quorum"; again he obtained reconciliation.<sup>40</sup> On April 29, 1884, John Willard was "threatened with church discipline regarding his handling of church finances," and a year later, he was tried by the Quorum of the Twelve once again, on November 7, 1885, when his release from general authority status was discussed. The authorities objected to John Willard's long stay in the East, his disobedience to counsel, and the fact that his business dealings had not been in line with the church leaders' desires. John Willard, however, obtained another reconciliation.<sup>41</sup>

Part of the problem was that, although the authorities disapproved of John Willard's love of the East, he had many political and financial connections there, so they were willing to have him act as their represen-

37. John Willard was made a "Counselor to the Twelve" on September 4, 1877, see Wilford Woodruff journal, at that date (Kenney 7:372). See also Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 40.

38. Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 720-22.

39. John Henry Smith diaries, published in Jean Bickmore White, ed., *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 60-62; Watson, "John Willard Young," 24, 45 n., citing Wilford Woodruff to John Willard Young, 9 April 1881, First Presidency letterpress copy book vol. 6 #19, LDS Church Archives; Wilford Woodruff journal, May 20-25, 1881 (Kenney 8:32).

40. Wilford Woodruff journal, Apr. 3-8, 1883 (Kenney 8:162). See also "Fifty-Third Annual Conference," *Millennial Star* 45 (28 May 1883): 337-38. John Taylor recorded that John Willard had been pursuing secular enterprises and had done little work as a general authority. There were also complaints from church members about his business practices.

41. Brigham Young Jr. Diary, 7 Nov. 1885, LDS Archives (restricted), as cited in Watson, "John Willard Young," 61-63 nn. 26, 27; John Henry Smith journals, Nov. 7, 1885, in White, *Church State and Politics*, 142.

tative in delicate negotiations regarding statehood and lessening the legal blows of anti-polygamy legislation.<sup>42</sup> In this mission, he was entrusted with extensive funds from the church to grease judicial, editorial, or political wheels.<sup>43</sup> However, in 1888 he was accused by Joseph F. Smith of using this money unethically to maintain his wealthy lifestyle.<sup>44</sup> Joseph F. Smith replaced him as head of Utah's statehood efforts at that time, to John Willard's chagrin.

The actions of this charismatic son of Brigham continued to seriously trouble the general authorities. On April 5, 1889, the Quorum of the Twelve again discussed releasing him from his calling, and the Quorum and First Presidency debated the same issue two years later, on October 3, 1891. During the discussion they received a letter of resignation from John Willard. Three days later, he was released from his calling as Counselor to the Twelve.<sup>45</sup> Evidently, he had suffered terrible financial setbacks at the time.

While John Willard was still an apostle, and in line to become president of the church through the policy of apostolic seniority by ordination, he was no longer recognized at conference as a general authority, and relations between him and the church leaders had become extremely cool. His early ordination, which was evidently well known among the First Presidency and Twelve by this time (Brigham Young, Jr., was part of the Quorum), would have been seen as a very dangerous factor for the future of the church, like a time bomb ticking away in the east. He was not a member of the Twelve, but ambiguity in succession still remained; did seniority toward succession come from being the senior apostle (ordination date) or from being the senior member of the Quorum of Twelve?

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42. For this period of John Willard's life, see John Willard Young, Letterbooks, in John W. Young Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.; Keller, "Promoting Railroads and Statehood"; E. Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Watson, "John Willard Young," 73-100.

43. See Watson, "John Willard Young," 77, quoting John Willard: "My conscience is clear in buying men to do right, but not to do wrong" (John Willard Young to George Q. Cannon, 18 Nov. 1886). In Sept. 1886, John Willard wrote to the First Presidency, "I think almost any judge or particularly obnoxious official can be removed if we go about it in the right way." (John Willard Young to John Taylor, 17 Sept. 1886, as cited in Watson 99.) According to Watson, the First Presidency instructed John Willard to move ahead (99-100). See also Watson, 73, 76, 160, 94.

44. Watson, "John Willard Young," 234, 237, 239-41, 236, 254 n.112, citing Jason Mack [Joseph F. Smith] to Wilford Woodruff, 13 March 1888.

45. Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 722 and "Organizational Development and Social Origins of the Mormon Hierarchy 1832-1932: A Prosopographical Study" (M.A. Thesis, University of Utah, 1973), 290. However, this resignation did not affect Young's standing for succession, per George Q. Cannon on Oct. 31, 1893, see Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 722.

The tragedy of John Willard's life continued to spiral downward. Four of his five wives divorced him (two in 1873, two in 1890, and the remaining wife separated from him in 1879). One of his wives wrote, "My children will never know in this life what the word father means."<sup>46</sup> Financial disaster forced him to leave New York for Europe. Further projects failed. One of these left many "Mormon laborers unpaid."<sup>47</sup>

#### APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION: THE FINAL DEVELOPMENT

Wilford Woodruff succeeded John Taylor as acting church president in 1887, and Lorenzo Snow succeeded Woodruff in 1898. In October, Franklin Richards was sustained as president of the Quorum of the Twelve; John Willard was next in seniority; George Q. Cannon, Brigham Young, Jr., and Joseph F. Smith followed John Willard. On December 9, 1899, Franklin D. Richards died. John Willard Young would have been the President of the Quorum of the Twelve, if he had been in the Quorum. Lorenzo Snow was at that time 85 years old, and not in good health. Church leaders clearly saw that a dangerous succession ambiguity was looming. John Willard was roundly disliked by a number of general authorities, and had resigned as counselor to the Quorum of the Twelve; nevertheless he had never resigned his apostleship, and had not been disfellowshipped or excommunicated. By the accepted system, he was the person who *should* succeed Lorenzo Snow. No one wanted him as the next president; in fact, some authorities felt that his succession would be a disaster for the church, but Brigham Young's desire for his favorite son to gain the presidency, sealed by an ordination half a century earlier, was still a shadow falling across the hierarchy. Even if his accession faced practical challenges, his "legal" status still would produce uncertainty and ambiguity.<sup>48</sup>

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46. Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 94 (no bibliographical data given); Watson, "John Willard Young," 256; divorce dates, see John Willard Young Family Group Sheets, Genealogy Library; Adkins, "A History of John Willard Young's Utah Railroads"; Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 720. For further on problems in John Willard's family life (neglect, and accusations of a romance with an actress), see Watson, "John Willard Young," 9, 10, 15, 16; Newell Crookston, "The Wages of Sin," LDS Church Archives, pp. 7-8; John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled; or the Life & Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee* (St. Louis, Mo.: Bryan, Brand & Company, 1878), 161-63.

47. Watson, "John Willard Young," 256.

48. The early ordinations of John Willard and Brigham Jr., and their implications for presidential succession, were so well known that a *Salt Lake Tribune* story mentioned them in 1871, "The Dynasty of the Youngs," Sept. 9, 1871, p. 4: "It is understood that he ordained his sons, Brigham, Joseph and John, to this special Apostleship, outside the legitimate Twelve, under pretence of making them his personal counselors, which in effect was creating them princes of his royal family. Brigham's Apostleship was conferred upon them, and that in his mind, meant the right to out-rank all the Apostles of the church, when the due time of the succession came up." I am indebted to E. Leo Lyman for this reference.



The final chapter in the story of John Willard and the succession now took place. It would also affect his brother, Brigham Jr. After Woodruff's death on September 2, 1898, his counselors, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, briefly returned to their function as members of the Twelve before the next First Presidency was organized, and Smith sat below Brigham Young, Jr., in accordance with the "date of ordination" policy then in place (Cannon was still senior to Brigham Jr.). However, after the meeting, a junior member of the Quorum, Heber J. Grant, somewhat brashly objected to Smith being behind Young. Young replied that he was willing to serve any place in the Quorum, but he nevertheless defended his senior placement. As recorded in his own diary, he stated that he felt he was "fit to be an apostle." In other words, there was no question of unworthiness, as there had been with Hyde and Pratt, and as there might be with John Willard Young. He mentioned that he had "submitted this matter to father one day and he said rather severely 'It is just right the way it is, and you let it alone.'" So Brigham Jr. had the authority of his father for the present placement being correct. He reiterated that after ordination an apostle could not be demoted, if he was worthy: "I am of the opinion that when a man is ordained an apostle and seeks to magnify that office, no new man can rank him in (being) set apart to fill a vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve." Nevertheless, he stated, with true humility, that he would always bow to the decision of the First Presidency and the Twelve on this issue, and "I yield my views to theirs with all my heart."<sup>49</sup>

On March 31, 1900, the aging President Lorenzo Snow and his counselors, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, had a private discussion, in which they agreed that the previous policy of apostolic seniority by date of ordination, which Brigham Young had implemented, was incorrect, and that seniority should be gauged by date of entrance into the Quorum. Although Joseph F. Smith had ranked below Brigham Young, Jr., in Quorum rankings, succession sequence, and solemn public sustainings in conference, Snow told Smith that Brigham Young, Jr., would now rank below him in seniority.<sup>50</sup> There is no escaping the fact that this was a straightforward change in policy; nevertheless, it was also an entirely reasonable and sensible change. However, there remained the difficult problem of informing Brigham Jr. that neither he (nor John Willard) would be the next president of the church.

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49. Brigham Young, Jr., diary, LDS Church Archives, Sept. 9, 1898, as cited in Heath, "Notes on Apostolic Succession," 49.

50. Diary of Joseph F. Smith, LDS Church Archives, as quoted in Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 310. See Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Presidency*, 114.

On Apr. 5, 1900, at a meeting of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve in the Salt Lake Temple, the subject was discussed at length. According to the minutes of the meeting, Apostle John Henry Smith spoke and specifically referred to the problematic nature of the private ordinations of Brigham Young, Jr., and John Willard Young:

Bro. John Henry Smith said that he regarded this as a very important question from the fact that he understood there had been quite a number of men ordained apostles who had never been voted upon as such by the church. . . . Bro. Smith said he recognized the right of the President of the Church to ordain his sons apostles if he chose to exercise that right, and he took it for granted that the late President Young ordained Brigham and others of his brothers apostles, and he supposed history was correct in stating that Brigham and John W. were ordained before Prest. Cannon. . . . On this phase of the proposition, the question of man [at hand?] was simply this: Has a father—himself being an apostle—a right to ordain his son to the apostleship, and that son to preside without the action of the church, his ordination antedating that of the man chosen and acted upon by the church? The speaker said, to his mind there was but one view to be taken to safeguard the church and this council, and to the maintenance of their dignity in the world, such ordinations were dependent upon joint action, first, on the presentation by the First Presidency to the Council of the Apostles for their acceptance, and then to the people for their approval, and then he must be ordained in the proper way; otherwise it would open a door for questions to be sprung entirely unlooked for.<sup>51</sup>

As has been noted previously, Brigham Young, Jr., had stated in 1898 that his position was correct based on accepted church policy and his father's authority. Nevertheless, after George Q. Cannon discussed the cases of Joseph Smith III, Daniel H. Wells, and Hyrum Smith, President Snow "expressed his love and admiration for Brigham Young, Jr., then asked the council to sustain the decision that Smith outranked Elder Young. The vote was unanimous."

Joseph F. Smith wrote: "It was unanimously decided that the acceptance of a member into the council or Quorum of the Twelve fixed his rank or position in the Apostleship. That the Apostles took precedence

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51. Minutes of First Presidency and Twelve Apostles, for 5 April, 1900, LDS Church Archives, also available in John Henry Smith Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Much of this is reproduced in Heath, "Notes on Apostolic Succession." See also Brigham Young, Jr., diary, LDS Church Archives, 9 Sept. 1898, cited in Heath; Diary of Marriner Wood Merrill, Apr. 5, 1900, published in Melvin Clarence Merrill, ed. *Utah Pioneer and Apostle, Marriner Wood Merrill and His Family* (Salt Lake City: 1937), 252 ("One subject decided after full discussion was that Joseph F. Smith stood ahead and outranked Brigham Young in the Quorum of Apostles" [Durham and Heath, *Succession in the Church*, 111-16].)

from the date they entered the quorum . . . [t]hat ordination to the Apostleship under the hands of any Apostle other than to fill a vacancy in the quorum and authorized by the General Authorities of the Church did not count in precedence."<sup>52</sup>

So in this momentous, but little known, change of policy, Joseph F. Smith and Brigham Young, Jr., traded places once again.<sup>53</sup> (George Q. Cannon was still alive, and would have preceded them into the presidency, but he died on April 12, 1901, before Snow). Now John Willard had no apostolic seniority at all, though he perhaps did not know it.

On October 10, 1901, President Lorenzo Snow died. Five days later John Willard was in Utah. "It was entirely possible that it was for succession reasons that John W. arrived in Salt Lake City," writes Watson.<sup>54</sup> If so, he must have been bitterly disappointed when he discovered the policy change. His rival and critic Joseph F. Smith became president of the church on October 17, 1901—nominated by Brigham, Jr., and set apart by Joseph F.'s brother, Patriarch John Smith. Joseph F. called a special conference in November, and explained that Lorenzo Snow had directed him to re-organize the First Presidency immediately after his death, with himself (Joseph F.) as president. Again, this might have been an act to forestall the possibility of John Willard putting forth any claim to the presidency, for John Willard had been ordained an apostle eleven years before Joseph F. Smith had. Furthermore, Lorenzo Snow's change in policy had been very recent, and perhaps was not widely known or understood.

John Willard returned to New York, where he probably felt more at home than in Utah. This little-known and little-understood succession crisis had passed.

#### JOHN WILLARD'S FINAL YEARS: SCANDAL AND OBSCURITY

In John Willard Young's last years, he made his living by serving as an elevator operator in an exclusive New York hotel where he had once been a high-paying resident.<sup>55</sup> This contrast between his early dreams of wealth and power, and the final, prosaic, harsh realities of his daily life in old age, is one of the haunting stories of Mormon history. He would

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52. Diary of Joseph F. Smith, LDS Church Archives, as cited in Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 310-11.

53. See Bitton, "Ordeal of Brigham Young, Jr.," 142. Bitton interprets Young's reaction as mild, but it seems more likely that Young was deeply affected by this abrupt change in policy just as he expected to become president of the church. I agree with Bitton that Brigham Jr. accepted the policy change with humility (Diary of Brigham Young, Jr., as quoted by Bitton). Brigham Jr. would die on April 11, 1903.

54. Watson, "John Willard Young," 258, cf. 267.

55. Watson, "John Willard Young," 267.

attend the LDS branch in New York as a regular member. A pathetic account records that the branch president would have to corner new members and warn them not to lend any money to John Willard when he approached them.<sup>56</sup>

Another shattering blow to Young was a wayward son's involvement in a bizarre, highly publicized murder case in New York. John Willard's son, Hooper, was living in New York and had arranged a tryst in an apartment with a disreputable woman. She took drugs (possibly given to her by him) and died of an overdose. He probably did not kill her intentionally, even if he did give her the drugs. However, after she died, he panicked, and instead of calling the police, tried to dispose of the body himself, throwing it in a river. The river washed it up, detectives traced it back to Hooper, and after a sensational trial, he was sent to Sing Sing for some twenty years. Thus it is possible he did not commit an actual murder, although he was certainly involved with disreputable women, drugs, and trying to cover up the woman's death.<sup>57</sup>

John Willard Young died of cancer on February 24, 1924, in New York. "He died without a friend in the world," wrote the local church authority.<sup>58</sup> So the favorite son of a powerful church president and prophet, a former first counselor in the First Presidency, died alone in New York, an obscure elevator operator.<sup>59</sup> Despite his charisma, his dreams, his desire (perhaps sincere) to benefit his people and church through financial projects, John Willard remains a profoundly tragic figure. The favorite son of the most powerful figure in Utah Mormonism, he was ordained and groomed for the presidency. From 1901, he was the senior apostle in the church, by date of ordination; by another set of circumstances, he might have directed the church for twenty-three years. Yet because of his questionable business practices, his love of the cities of the East, and without his father as advocate, he lost the protection of both church and family, living as an entirely obscure figure for many years before his death.

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56. Harvey Fletcher to John McQuarrie, May 13, 1954, LDS Church Archives.

57. John McQuarrie, "A Tragic Epic in Missionary History," typescript, in LDS Church Archives; Watson, "John Willard Young," 267 n. 20. Hooper denied murdering the woman, or even administering the dose of chloral, although he admits straying from the teachings of the church, and that he panicked after the woman's death. There was a sad reunion of John Willard and Hooper at church, in which the father told his son that he never wanted to see him again (Fletcher to McQuarrie). Oddly, in Crookston, "The Wages of Sin," 15, we have a diametrically opposed story, a sentimental reunion.

58. Fletcher to McQuarrie.

59. See Watson, "John Willard Young," 268; Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 327, n. 26; Adkins, "A History of John Willard Young's Utah Railroads," 3 n.

## SOME CONCLUSIONS

In this complex story, there are a number of themes that may strike the reader. First, and most centrally for this paper, the ecclesiastical history of John Willard Young shows the development of the present method of judging apostolic seniority. It was not delivered to the church in final form, neatly packaged and immediately recognized. It developed through a system that might be called creative trial and error. It moved through four distinct stages, from (1) age within group in the original Twelve, to (2) age combined with group date of ordination/entrance in the Quorum, to (3) date of ordination (the standard throughout most of the nineteenth century), to, finally, at the dawn of the twentieth century, (4) date of entrance into the Quorum and public sustaining. Absolutists, positive or negative, might regard this development as non-inspirational, due to the conflicts between the different policies, and because the policy had to develop through some painful, tense, moments occasioned by the human limitations of church leaders. Nevertheless, non-absolutists might find the story ultimately reassuring because the final synthesis resulted in by far the best policy. It serves to lessen the possibility for confusion and autocracy, and brings the Quorum of the Twelve and membership of the church together as partakers in an important decision-making process. In theory, church members could reject an apostle put forward by the First Presidency. I have heard undocumented stories that the Quorum of the Twelve has demurred on apostolic nominations made by the president on occasion.<sup>60</sup>

Second, the life of John Willard sheds added light on a theme analyzed by Michael Quinn: tensions between the church president, the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and even the membership of the church. Church government is not a simple monolithic structure in which all church leaders and organizations act alike; there is a system of checks and balances. It is clear that Brigham Young minimized the Council of the Twelve at times, and they resented his use of autocratic power.<sup>61</sup> John Henry Smith, in 1900, emphasized that an apostle should be recognized and accepted by the entire church in order to have seniority status. So this development to seniority by entrance into the Quorum is the result of a creative tension between the First Presidency and the Quorum

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60. See also Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 51, 54.

61. Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 38-40. Joseph F. Smith felt that Young had "[ignored] the quorum of Apostles." Joseph F. Smith diary, Oct. 6, 1880, LDS Archives, as cited in Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 41-42. After Young, the Twelve felt the same resentments against Taylor and his first counselor, Cannon. Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 42-47.

of the Twelve, and represents a development from autocracy to a more democratic form of government.

Third, in John Willard's story we have a case history showing how Mormon society had developed a recognizable and full-fledged elite by the Utah period. Mormonism had some egalitarian ideals and attempted to implement radical egalitarian programs, such as the United Order.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, Mormon culture quickly produced an elite in Kirtland, Nauvoo, and Utah, which often inclined some church leaders toward the standard dangers of an elite system: giving important jobs to family members, whose faults a loving relative may overlook (as in the case of John Willard), in preference to more qualified persons, allowing the church leaders/elite with their families to become the wealthy class. Watson writes, of the "missions" Brigham's sons were sent upon, to Europe and elsewhere, that John Willard and other sons were "more like young princes sent to view the world. . . than. . . ordinary bush beaters."<sup>63</sup> Once John Willard wrote to Brigham, excusing his stay in an expensive hotel. "As it was generally known that I was your son, I felt I could do no less than stop at the finest hotel."<sup>64</sup> Sometimes, such elite are excused from accepted standards of conduct. Such double standards would obviously cause the not-so-elite (who were generally expected to adhere to higher standards) to feel injustices were taking place. One thinks of Joseph F. Smith objecting when Brigham Young called John Willard to the second highest church position in 1876. Brigham Young seemingly encompassed stark contradictions and enigmas: On the one hand, he passionately preached and promoted United Orders throughout Utah; on the other hand, there were aspects of elitism in his financial dealings, and in his dealings with his sons, as in the case of John Willard Young.

Finally, this story is a case history of how nineteenth-century church leaders, especially presidents, tended to call their sons into church leadership at a comparatively young age. Clearly, this gave their sons good chances of eventually becoming church president. Examples are: Joseph Smith, Jr., ordained the young Joseph Smith III to succeed him.<sup>65</sup> (This had such a powerful impact on many LDS members that it caused the

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62. See Leonard Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

63. Watson, "John Willard Young," 8.

64. Watson, "John Willard Young," 10. For John Willard's extravagance, see Joseph Fish, *The Life and Times of Joseph Fish*, ed. John H. Krenkel (Danville, Ill.: Interstate Printers & Publishers, 1970), 221.

65. See Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 15-16. George Q. Cannon called this a bad precedent in the 1900 policy-changing session with the Twelve and First Presidency.

church to split, with our Restoration friends from the Midwest following lineal tradition more exactly than we have until recently.) Then Brigham Young ordained four sons to the apostleship. John Taylor called two sons to the hierarchy, including apostle John W. Taylor. Wilford Woodruff called his son Abraham Woodruff to be an apostle. Joseph F. Smith called a son, Hyrum Mack Smith, to be an apostle exactly a week after he became church president. In 1910, Joseph F. also brought a Smith, John Henry Smith, into the First Presidency, and called another son, Joseph Fielding Smith, to the apostleship. As we know, Joseph Fielding became president of the church in 1970.<sup>66</sup>

A major shift occurred in the twentieth century—of recent presidents, McKay, Lee, Hunter, and Hinckley have had no near general authority ancestors. Spencer Kimball was a descendant of Heber C. Kimball, and Ezra Taft Benson was a descendant of an apostle, but neither was the son of a general authority. None of these presidents brought a son into the Quorum of the Twelve. In fact, there appears to be an almost unspoken policy that sons of prominent general authorities are not called into the highest church leadership. Again, I think this is a wise policy, and an example of the church evolving and improving. This story is hopeful in showing that as the church has changed in the past, it can also change in the future.

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66. Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 171-74. See also Quinn, "Organizational Development," 128, 142 n. 9 and n. 10, 143. When G. Q. Cannon tried to have his sons placed in vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve, a son of Wilford Woodruff and a grandnephew of Woodruff were put in instead. "I was much disappointed. . . . I felt almost rebellious for a few minutes. . . ." wrote Brigham Young, Jr. (see his diary, Sept. 28 and 30, Oct. 5, 1897, LDS Archives, as cited in Quinn, *Extensions*, 171).

Appendix A:  
"Research concerning John W.'s ordination"<sup>67</sup>

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1. First item: *[typed]*

Research has been done on the following records in an effort to determine the date of ordination [of John Willard Young] as an Apostle.

1. Journal History
2. Ms. History of Brigham Young
3. Brigham Young's papers
4. Wilford Woodruff's journal
5. S.L. Stake Priesthood Records
6. Juvenile Instructor 39.6a
7. John Willard Young's Journal #558G
8. Essentials in Church History p. 688
9. Church Chronology

10. Endowment date as given on the endowment cards shows 22 Nov. 1855 at the Endowment House. *[This sentence typed by a different typewriter]*

Nothing was found to substantiate the ordination of John Willard Young as an Apostle 22 Nov. 1855.

2. Second item: *[handwritten in a very attractive hand, slanted to the right. This parallels Andrew Jensen's language in the Historical Record, so may be his rough draft.]*

13—John Willard Young was born 1 Oct. 1844 in Nauvoo, Hancock County, Ill.—was baptized by [ ] and confirmed by [ ]—was ordained an Apostle 22nd of Nov. 1855 and on the 4th of Feb. 1864 was set apart as a counselor to the First Presidency by his father, President Brigham Young—also on the 8th of October 1876 was set apart as First Counselor to the First President by President Brigham Young, assisted by D. H. Wells and Brigham Young Jr.—and resides at Salt Lake City.

3. Third item:

The following information was obtained from Apostle Brigham Young, April 10, 1884.

In President Young's private room in the Lion House, February 4, 1864 he ordained Joseph Angell Young and Brigham Young Jr. Apostles and confirmed upon John Willard Young the ordination to the Apostleship which he received when he went through the Endowment House (which was November 22, 1855) and set each of them apart as assistant Counselors to the First Presidency.

4. Fourth item: *[typewritten, but pencilled in at the top is "April 10 8[ ]" — a hole in the paper destroys a number]*

Dec. 2, 1966, President Joseph Fielding Smith states that these brethren were only ordained privately by Brigham Young and that these ordinations were never presented to the Church or any body of the Church for a sustaining vote. These brethren were never recognized officially as Apostles, and never became members of the Quorum of the Twelve. For this reason, the ordination as Apostles is not accepted. *[Signed in pen: "EEO", Earl E. Olson]*

*[This statement by Joseph Fielding is problematic. When the privately ordained apostles joined the Quorum (as in the case of Brigham Young, Jr. and Joseph Fielding's own father), they were not re-ordained, to the best of our knowledge. Thus their ordinations to apostleship, although not performed in the presence of the full Twelve and First Presidency, were recognized as binding by the general authorities as then constituted. In addition, it was apparently necessary for a counselor in the First Presidency to be an apostle. Since John Willard Young was an assistant counselor since 1864, and a publicly accepted first counselor in the First presidency in 1876, it would have been difficult to question the validity of his apostolic ordination, private and early though it was.]*

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67. File at LDS Church Archives. See also Watson, "John Willard Young," 34.