The Eastern States Mission to which William H. Smart reported on April
11, 1898, had a long, although sporadic, history. First opened in 1839, it
was the second organized Mormon mission, two years behind the British
Mission. It was closed in 1850, reopened four years later, but closed again
in 1858, after elders throughout the church were called home because of
the approach of a federal army in what became known as the Utah War. It
remained closed during the Civil War, reopened in 1865, closed four years
later, and finally reopened for good in 1893.

When Smart arrived, it included eight divisions or “conferences”—
Brooklyn, Maryland, New England, New York, eastern Pennsylvania, west-
ern Pennsylvania, northwestern Virginia, and southwestern Virginia.
It also included a vast area not yet organized into conferences—North
Carolina, Delaware, upstate New York, Washington, D.C., and Canada,
from Ontario east to the Atlantic Ocean and, theoretically, north to
Hudson Bay. The entire area counted only 975 members in 1900, but
during the previous half-century, thousands had emigrated from there to
Utah, including the third president of the church, John Taylor, who had
been baptized in Canada.

This, then, was the theater in which, after his earlier years of indecisive,
guilt-ridden, self-doubting failure, Smart in the next two and a half years
would develop, prove himself, and discover himself as a dedicated, ener-
geetic, self-confident, well organized, highly effective servant of his church, a
role he would fill virtually full-time for the next thirty years.

2. Andrew Jenson, Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake
His leadership role began immediately. In their first meeting, mission president A. P. Kesler appointed him president of the newly-reorganized Brooklyn Conference. “There are very few members here,” Smart reported in his journal, “and it seems but little systematic work is done. My responsibility is great and I pray God He will strengthen me for it.” That was on May 5. He lost no time getting “systematic work” under way. On May 7, he met with the missionaries under his direction, instructed them in their duties, and established a bi-weekly meeting in which each elder would give a report of his activities.

On May 9, he began his own tracting (“Distributed 12 tracts and had one gospel conversation. Treated kindly”); on May 16, wrote his own lesson plan (a “diagram of systematic references on the first principles of the gospel as a skeleton for speaking on those principles”); on May 29, held his first street meeting and gave “my first open air speech here and really my first in preaching the gospel to unbelievers. God blessed me with clearness of mind and strength of voice, so that held the audience fairly well. There were about 50 present.” By the time of the first report meeting with the elders, on May 31, he recorded his own activities: “I have visited 5 families, had 24 gospel conversations, distributed 581 tracts, sold 1 Voice Warning loaned 2 V of W, held 9 hall meetings.”

So, throughout that hot New York summer, the work went forward, gathering momentum each month. There are no mentions of conversions, nor baptisms, but despite that, the journals of this period contain not a single discouraging word, not a negative thought except for a couple of brief mentions of physical ailments—a remarkable contrast to the litany of negativism, discouragement, and even sullen rebellion in the journals of Smart’s earlier Turkey-Palestine mission. Conditions in the two missions were, of course, drastically different. But so was the spirit in which he faced his challenges.

Ironically, on the same day the Greenpoint Weekly Star printed an article by Smart on plural marriage, news came that church president Wilford Woodruff had died. Smart’s feelings may well have been mixed. Earlier, while on his mission in Turkey, he had expressed sharp disagreement with Woodruff’s policy of disavowing polygamy; later he would confirm those feelings by taking a second wife. But there was no ambiguity in the feelings expressed in his journal about the president’s death: “I thought of his busy, simple, noble life. I also noted that it is quite peculiar that the Pres[ident], Bismack [sic], & Gladstone all have died so close together. These are great

4. A Voice of Warning, an important early missionary tract, was written in 1838 by Apostle Parley P. Pratt, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, while serving as one of Smart’s predecessors as president of the Eastern States mission. The title is from the Doctrine and Covenants, 4:4: “And the voice of warning shall be unto all peoples, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.”
lights that have gone out and lost to the world, to be lighted again in another sphere.”

America that summer was celebrating the successes of its military forces in the Spanish-American War. Smart’s journal of August 20 noted the triumphant arrival of the ships that had destroyed the Spanish fleet in the harbor of Santiago, Cuba. Characteristically, he saw it as a metaphor for man’s—and perhaps his own—journey through life.

There were six man of war—Texas, New York, Brooklyn, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Oregon. They sailed up the Hudson to Grant’s tomb. The sailors were all dressed in white uniform and presented a very beautiful appearance. . . . All along cannon were booming, factory and boat and ship whistles were screaming and humanity cheering . . . the thought uppermost in my mind was, how glorious is the welcome to the successful, while how ignominious is that of defeat. I drew a parallel between this magnificent welcome home and that of the heroic saint who, after victorious battle with evil here he sails into the haven of heavenly welcome and heres this address of welcome Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over few things, I shall make you ruler over many; enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.

At the end of the day he was still thinking in exalted terms. At Manhattan Beach, he witnessed a reenactment of the fall of Manila. He noted the “beautiful fire works, tumbling, rope walking, diving from a great height into water, blowing up of the Maine etc. It was grand. The firing and exploding of shells etc was realistic, and such beautiful fire works I never saw before. I thought: ‘What hath God wrought!’ What must be the glory and magnificence of celestality when man can achieve so much.” But in all the excitement, he still remembered what he was there for: “Missionary labor is proceeding as usual. Our street meetings are quite well attended and orderly as a rule.”

On September 9, 1898, the twenty-five missionaries laboring in and around New York met in conference. According to Smart, most of their reports were not good. On Long Island the work seemed to be progressing, but in New Jersey—Patterson, Newark, and Jersey City—street meetings were either forbidden or unproductive, and tracting was unsuccessful.

According to his journal, Smart’s report from Brooklyn was “more encouraging having distributed lots of tracts, held quite a number of Street meetings and engaged in a goodly number conversations.” In a pattern of self-congratulation that would run through his journals for the rest of his life, he also confided what others said about him.

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5. Smart, Journals, September 3, 1898. An interesting coincidence is that Wilford Woodruff and William H. Smart were two of the most consistent and voluminous journal-keepers in the church.
Brother H. P. Hansen who has been laboring at office as sec’y, reported and among other remarks said work had been discouraging at times but of late there had been a good Samaratin who had always had a word of encouragement for him and the brethren, and that was Bro. Smart. The brethren, he said, here are blessed in having such a man as he as Pres, and if there is any one can encourage them in their labors he can. Elder L. B. Laker spoke in much the same strain saying Pres. Smart was able, and a friend in time of need.

Though that sounds like flattery, it impressed mission president A. P. Kesler. He combined the Long Island and New Jersey conferences into a single Brooklyn Conference, with Smart as president. Kesler “exorted Elders to do as I told them and they would be successful,” Smart recorded. “Said Elders were not working as hard as should. Said the Brooklyn Elders had distributed three times as many tracts as had been distributed by same number Elders elsewhere, and he was pleased with their labors.”

_Saving a Mormon Bank_

As the work went forward under his expanded leadership, Smart was involved as well in another, quite different, way to serve his church. His journal records the first of many occasions when he placed his funds at the disposal of church leaders, or used them in ways he felt would build or strengthen the church.

Received today letters from Apostles [Heber J.] Grant and [Matthias] Cowley acknowledging a letter I had sent Elder Cowley. These brethren were called upon a mission to raise by donation from the Saints 80 or 90 thousand dollars this fall to save the good name and credit of Zion through the names of leading brethren who are officers in a bank in Ogden which is in financial jeopardy. The money is to go to the depositors and not to the stock holders. I did not know the cause of this donation. Just being informed by my niece Luella Cowley [wife of Apostle Cowley] that these brethren had been called to this mission. Feeling that God had wonderfully blessed us financially I wrote that we would assist them by loaning or donating anywhere from $1,000 to $20,000. . . . Their answer blesses me for my liberality—and says that through it I and posterity will be preserved in the faith forever provided I remain humble. They name no sum as it is a voluntary consecration.

The “bank in Ogden” was the Utah Loan and Trust Company (UL&T), and “financial jeopardy” barely describes its desperate condition. Its liabilities grossly exceeded its assets, and most of the assets were in loans made

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6. Ibid., September 9, 1898.
7. Ibid., September 30, 1898.
uncollectible by hard times. Its failure would mean bankruptcy to many of its shareholders, most if not all of them Mormons. But failure would do more than that. Though not owned by the church, it was regarded as a Mormon institution, with two apostles—Joseph F. Smith, then a counselor in the First Presidency, and Francis M. Lyman—as well as other prominent Mormons serving as directors. The church itself was deeply in debt to eastern bankers; the bank’s collapse could bring demand for payment of those loans, forcing the church into receivership. Criminal prosecution for accepting deposits when the bank’s liabilities exceeded its assets could send Smith, Lyman, and other directors to prison.

It was not the first financial crisis the church had faced. Six years earlier, during the panic of 1893, Apostle Heber J. Grant, then thirty-six years old, had saved the church from bankruptcy by wangling a series of seemingly impossible loans from New York financiers. Now, only months after he had survived two near-death medical crises, the First Presidency called on him for another miracle—to raise $75,000 or more in outright gifts from prosperous Mormons, some of whom had already refused to make loans to save the Ogden bank. Apostle Cowley was assigned to assist. Even though the two were armed with a letter signed by the First Presidency urging church members to donate and promising blessings to those who did, it was a daunting task.

Grant started by calling on two of Mormondom’s wealthiest men. Alfred W. McCune, a successful mining speculator, turned him down flat until Grant shamed him by comparing his own $2,500 contribution when he was $50,000 in debt to McCune’s situation where a $5,000 gift would amount to two days’ income from one of his mines. McCune finally wrote a check for $5,000.

The next target was Jesse Knight, made wealthy by his Humbug Mine, so named by skeptics because he claimed a voice had directed him to stake it out in order to preserve the church’s credit. Knight also declared he wouldn’t give a dollar to save the bank. Grant refused to take no for an answer, and after two more visits begged Knight to pray about making a $5,000 donation.

That night Knight prayed, and the answer came: “Give Heber ten thousand dollars.” “I wasn’t praying about any $10,000,” he complained to the Lord. “Heber didn’t ask me for $10,000.” Again the answer came: “Give Heber ten thousand dollars.” He did, and informed Grant that the next time he came with a letter from the First Presidency asking for a donation, he wasn’t going to pray about it.9

Given that experience, Grant must have been astonished when a letter came, unsolicited, from the far less prosperous William H. Smart, offering

up to $20,000. Apparently Smart learned that $5,000 was the amount of most requests, because within a week, he was on his way to Chicago to arrange financing with his bankers, and on October 10 reported to his journal that

I wrote Apostle Cowley enclosing a draft for $5,000 (five thousand dol’s) as a donation to the Church with a promise to duplicate it provided it was required to maintain the honor and credit of Zion. I also wrote my wife explaining this action and asking her cooperation in it. I also wrote my partner J W Webster and wife advising them of same, exhorting them to unite with me in the consecration that they and posterity may receive the blessings which will attend it, but further told them if they do not desire to do so to inform me so and I shall bear it all. I thank God He has made it possible for us to make this donation, but more especially do I thank Him for the faith he has given to prompt it.”

Webster did agree to bear half the cost of the donation. Shortly thereafter, Smart received Grant’s acknowledgment of and gratitude for the gift, along with a letter from the First Presidency, dated October 25, 1898.

Dear Brother:

We have just seen your letter enclosing donation for $5000 from Smart & Webster, for which we tender you our sincere thanks.

May both of you and your loved ones have a great abundance of peace, prosperity in this life, and may you all enjoy an eternity of bliss in the life to come is the profound and heart-felt prayer of,

Your Brethren in the Gospel,
Lorenzo Snow
Geo Q. Cannon
Jos. F. Smith

The response Smart recorded in his journal speaks eloquently of the attitude of stewardship he would carry the rest of his life, especially during his ministry in the Uinta Basin: “I am very thankful to receive the approval of the Brethren of my action in this matter and my humble prayer is that God will also accept it approvingly, and that Satan may not have power to lift me up in self-righteousness and cause me to take the honor all upon myself. I desire to feel that I am God’s and therefore that which is in my possession is also His, and I pray I may be a wise steward, knowing also when to retain and when to disburse.”

Years later, he ended his Uinta Basin stewardship in poverty, which suggests that his disbursements, while wholehearted and single-minded, were perhaps not always wise.

For months Grant continued his often-disappointing and sometimes humiliating efforts in what he called “one of the most unpleasant tasks of

10. Smart, Journals, October 31, 1898.
my life.” He was mostly successful. Although the LDS Church lost \$50,000 in subsidies and defaulted loans, Grant’s campaign saved the reputations of its leaders and preserved the church’s credit. The shareholders lost their investments when the bank finally closed on August 31, 1900, but the other debts were satisfied and the depositors were made whole.

In Smart’s file of personal correspondence are no fewer than fourteen letters from Grant, spanning more than a quarter century. Included are statements like the following. From Yokohama, Japan, on September 24, 1901: “I shall NEVER forget while I live the grand and glorious aid which you rendered to me and Elder Cowley in that great mission which we were called upon to perform in saving that Ogden bank.” From the office of the First Presidency, November 19, 1921: “I shall never forget while I live your splendid donation of five thousand dollars to save the Utah Loan and Trust Company from failure. This donation of yours and your partner, Bro. Webster, was one of the important factors in helping save that institution, and its failure would have reflected materially upon the good names of Presidents Joseph F. Smith and Francis M. Lyman.” From the same office, August 16, 1929 (seven years after Smart’s last leadership calling in the church and when he was struggling in poverty): “It is a long while since I heard from you. I hope things are prosperous with you. I shall never forget the wonderful help you gave in assisting to save the reputation of our brethren interested in the Ogden bank which was rescued from failure by the generous donations made by yourself and others.”

A Missionary’s Work

During the fall and following winter of 1898–99, Smart carried on the work of a typical missionary: tracting, holding street and cottage meetings, and meeting with and encouraging the church members. The work brought only limited success; he recorded five baptisms on October 9, but no others in the next four months. As district president, he met with newspaper editors and wrote articles for them, mostly defending attacks about polygamy, but managed to get only one published, in the Brooklyn Eagle on October 30. He tackled a couple of cases of disharmony among the missionaries, meeting with them and counseling reconciliation and obedience, and reported good results. He attended the funeral of a lapsed member and mourned that the departed was buried in a dark suit rather than in temple clothing. “Oh Lord, I beseech thee to save me from such a burial!” he pleaded.

During this time he was encouraged by a letter from his partner, James Webster, reporting that the sheep business was going well (“he says he goes

11. Grant to Smart, September 24, 1901, November 19, 1921, and August 16, 1929, Smart Papers.
12. Smart, Journals, November 14 and December 22, 1898.
13. Ibid., December 22, 1898.
into winter with about 26,900 ewes, 7500 lambs and 760 head of bucks”), saddened by news that after a seven-month pregnancy his wife had aborted a baby girl, but strengthened by her declaration that “I was thankful even in the midst of the pain and trouble for the gospel assurance and for the reliance on God that, come life or death, all would be well.”

He attended a meeting at the Plymouth Church to discuss sending a mission to relieve suffering in Cuba after the Spanish-American War. His description of conditions in Cuba as a result of that war of liberation were echoed a century later in Afghanistan and Iraq, following the American wars of liberation there.

Their homes were in ruins, industries stifled, fields devastated and implements of labor scattered and destroyed. The years of misrule and semi-slavery had rendered them incompetent, and they were now even with liberty in their hands helpless—not knowing how to use the blessing now theirs. . . . We have given them freedom but we must not stop—our duty is not ended until Cuba is reconstructed: until She has a stable government and until her people are placed upon a self supporting basis.

The B. H. Roberts Ordeal

Back home in Utah, political events were unfolding that would raise national opposition to Mormonism and polygamy to new heights, as well as intensify challenges to the Eastern States Mission over which Smart would soon preside. In October 1898, Brigham H. Roberts, a Democrat, member of the First Council of the Seventy, and avowed polygamist, was elected to Congress, 35,296 votes to 29,631. His election brought no joy to the church’s leadership. President Lorenzo Snow publicly proclaimed in a letter to the New York World that “non-Mormons” aided in Roberts’s nomination and election, and that “he was not a church candidate in any sense of the word.” George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency had objected to his candidacy in the first place, because he feared that a “whip” would be made of Roberts’s domestic affairs, to the injury of the church. The truth of that prophecy is demonstrated in numerous entries in Smart’s journals.

On November 17, he noted that “he [Roberts] has plural wives and the religious denominations claim they will use their influence to prevent his taking his seat.” On November 20, he reported that “the New York Herald devoted in today’s issue a whole page to an article from the pen of Eugene Young,
disaffected grandson of President Brigham Young. He reviews the history of the Church and attempts to prove that the Church is still controlling politics in Utah and is laying down the gauntlet to the nation in making polygamy an issue by influencing the election of Elder B. H. Roberts to Congress.”

On the same day, speaking at a meeting with his missionaries, Smart saw it differently. His interpretation included what appears to be a faint but recognizable echo of his declaration of conscience while on his Turkish mission, expressing his disagreement with the church’s ambiguous defense of polygamy. “I believe the hand of God is over the nation,” he wrote. “He has permitted the Election of Elder B. H. Roberts to Congress. The Religious Denominations intend to prevent his seating if possible. If they succeed God will permit it because we need correction at home, or for the same reason that He permitted the best blood of the 19th Century [that of Joseph Smith, Jr. and his brother Hyrum] to be spilt in Carthage jail. Nothing will transpire except it be for the final triumph of God and His people.”

In the months between Roberts’s election and the opening of the congress to which he had been elected, the storm gained strength as Brigham Young’s grandson and others continued their attacks. On November 9, 1899, a notice in front of the Tremont Baptist Hall in Boston announced: “Mass Meeting: To enter a public protest against the admission into the 56th Congress of the avowed polygamist Brigham H. Roberts. The speakers will be Mr. Eugene Young—grandson of Brigham Young—and Rev. Josiah Strong.” Smart attended to monitor the proceedings. “Many things were said against us,” he reported. “Polygamy and the power of the priesthood were especially attacked. Resolutions were passed at the close to petition Congress to eject Bro. Roberts from Congress and to make a Constitutional amendment prohibiting any polygamist to hold office.” That meeting, of course, was only one of many as a national campaign filled newspapers, magazines, and lecture halls with charges that the seating of Roberts would represent an attack on the sanctity of marriage.

On November 23, Smart’s journal reports: “Brother Roberts stayed with us last night leaving this morning. He goes to Washington today to prepare to take his seat.” And, on December 4: “Today Congress convenes. The New York Journal boasts that they will have near the speaker’s desk the huge petition of about 7,000,000 names against the seating of Elder B. H. Roberts for him to confront when he goes to be sworn in. The New York Herald and Journal are the worst against him, the Brooklyn Eagle heretofore rather friendly is now somewhat opposing him, while the New York World is favorable.”

The petition as presented to Congress was indeed huge—twenty-eight rolls, each two feet in diameter, and encased in an American flag. No matter that many of the seven million signatures were of children or duplicated; its

19. Smart, Journals, November 20, 1898.
effect was overwhelming. It took the House one day to briefly consider the matter of seating Roberts and, in its usual matter of doing business, refer it to a committee. Smart saw little hope of a favorable outcome from what he considered a stacked committee.

Today Taylor of Ohio argued in the House of Representatives in favor of the resolution he introduced to not allow Bro. B. H. Roberts to take his seat, but to keep him out until a committee appointed by the speaker should try the case. An hour was given him, an hour to Richardson of Tennessee, & half an hour to Bro. Roberts. Richardson gave part of his time to Bro. Roberts. 302 voted for the resolution & 30 against. While the vote was mixed those against were very largely Republicans. The speaker, Speaker Henderson then appointed a Committee of nine. . . . They are mostly Republicans [six Republicans, three Democrats] and all men who voted for Taylor’s resolution, he (Taylor) the house leader against his being seated, the chairman of the Committee. I tremble for the future of this government. He is not even tried or investigated by his peers—almost condemned beforehand it would seem. I wrote Bro. Roberts letter of sympathy proffering any assistance we can render not inconsistent with our calling.

The committee investigation took six weeks. During that time, Roberts received no pay from Congress, no compensation for his travel, no per diem, not even stationary or a postage allowance. His letters to Smart during this time reveal the unhappy state of his finances. On December 13, he wrote that he felt “a little uneasiness [about] the $100 that I borrowed from your office. I had hoped before this that I should have drawn my mileage, which would amount to something over $800. But the House seems a little slow with reference to that matter.” Smart responded immediately: “As Elder B. H. Roberts is evidently short of funds I have offered to loan him any part of or all of $1,000 to assist him in his expenditures at Washington.”

Roberts thanked him in what proved to be an overly optimistic letter dated December 16.

I do not think that there will be any real occasion to draw upon the account, as I am still in hopes, and very stoutly believe, that I shall finally win this fight; but in any event, it is most delightful to receive such expressions of friendship, and meantime, if occasion should arise for drawing in part upon the amount that you have so generously placed at my disposal, I shall avail myself of it in the same generous spirit that it is tendered to me; for to act otherwise would be unworthy of your generous offer.

The occasion soon arose. “These Philistines down here have sure enough held up my mileage, amounting to $1,000 until I am either sworn in, or

21. Smart, Journals, December 5, 1899. Selected parts of the Roberts correspondence are appendix B.
22. Ibid., December 15, 1899.
kicked out,” Roberts wrote on December 22, “and consequently I find myself under the necessity of taking advantage of your very kind offer, or at least part of it, temporarily. Would you therefore kindly forward to me a check for $300.” He added a paragraph that virtually snarls with the frustration and anguish he was feeling during this controversy.

Will I preach while in Brooklyn [responding to an invitation Smart had tendered]? Well, I’ll attend meeting and break bread with you, but under the circumstances I think it would not be prudent for me to speak; and then, moreover, there is no telling just what kind of a discourse I might deliver if I attempted one as there would stand back of it the white-heat of suppressed rage and indignation rolling and tumbling about in the darker recesses of my consciousness. I confess that I have not of late entertained the very kindest and most Christian spirit; the fact is there has been a heap of old Adam bubbling up the surface of my usual secrenity [sic].

In mid-January, the blow fell. The committee’s report was negative, and the full House voted overwhelmingly to deny Roberts his seat. On January 18, exultant headlines in the New York Journal, one of the nation’s largest newspapers and one which had led the anti-Roberts fight, proclaimed: “Bar Roberts is the Verdict” and “The Journal’s Fight for the Purity of the Home and the Honor of American Womanhood is Won.” From Roberts to Smart came an undated letter that described, in the bleakest terms, his financial distress and state of mind.

... Have not been able yet to bring anything to a head relative to my salary and milage, now amounting to some $2,000. I cannot remain in Washington however more than two or three days longer. I lack about $100 to settle my bills here and reach home. And as you have extended a brotherly hand to me before, and as one good turn deserves another, I make myself bold to ask you to loan me that amount until I reach home. This will make $500 all told that you have advanced me. I shall be pleased to give you my note for that amount until either the government pays me or I can make other arrangements to raise it after getting home. . . . Of my defeat, I can say nothing. I had hoped for better results but hoped in vain. I take it, however, that it is nothing to a man’s discredit that he has been overcome by mob law, which is nonetheless real because the mobbing took place in the House of Representatives and under the thin guise of law.

With that acceptance of the outcome, Roberts could return to a quieter life of service in his church calling. But the firestorm raised by his candidacy subsided only briefly. Four years later, Utah elected Reed Smoot, an apostle, to the Senate. The resulting congressional investigation was far more intense, lasting four years, and brought church president Joseph F. Smith himself and other Mormon leaders to the witness table. The

23. Roberts to Smart, December 13, 16, and 22, 1899, Smart Papers.
outcome this time was different; Smoot was finally seated and became one of the most powerful senators of his day. He was not himself a polygamist, and perhaps his victory best reflects the remark attributed to Pennsylvania senator Boise Penrose: “I don’t see why we can’t get along just as well with a polygamist who doesn’t polyg as we do with a lot of monogamists who don’t monog.”24

It took Congress six months to compensate Roberts for his expenses. When it finally did, he sent Smart a letter from Salt Lake City, enclosed a check for $500, and wrote, in part,

I do not add interest on the amount for the reason that when I suggested that you take a note of me for the amount you said that smacked too much of the spirit of the world, and was altogether too cold-blooded, and you did not wish the act of brotherly kindness marred by such an act; and, as likely you still entertain the same view, we will not make this a cold business transaction on the part of either of us. The interest on the amount shall be paid in my appreciation of your brotherly friendship, and in my prayers to Almighty God for you and for your great consideration of me when truly I was in sore distress and great need. I hope you have not been incommmoded by your generosity, and that this shall remain a bond of friendship between us for all time to come.25

A New Mission President

By this time, Smart’s mission responsibilities had magnified greatly. On March 1, 1899, just eleven months after arriving in the mission field, he received a letter from church president Lorenzo Snow calling him to succeed Alonzo P. Kesler as president of the Eastern States Mission. He would be the mission’s fifteenth president. His predecessors included such church notables as Lyman Wight, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Samuel Brannan, Jesse C. Little, Wilford Woodruff, and John Taylor. Perhaps reflecting his recognition of that heritage, his journal entry that day conveys the depth of his humility, the pain still felt from his earlier unworthiness, and the faith he had by now developed in the church’s leaders.

Never have I been so overwhelmed as I am at this news. All my past errors and sins and all my present infirmities—moral, mental and physical—unite in crying out against this responsibility and sacred trust. But to refuse is to deny the inspiration of the Presidency. I answer them so and accept throwing myself entirely upon the mercy of God for success. I cannot do otherwise, for with all my faults I revere the Priesthood and desire to be obedient to it.”26

25. Roberts to Smart, August 31, 1900, Smart Papers.
26. Smart, Journals, March 1, 1899.
After a sleepless night and doubtless much prayer, he found a deeper meaning and reassurance in the call: “I have been praying that my heavenly Father would, in some way, manifest to me that I am accepted by him, and that my repentance for past imperfections is accepted. It comes to my mind (and yet I hardly dare presume so great a blessing) that it may be He has answered me in this way.”

The Eastern States Mission over which Smart now presided included 147 missionaries in thirteen organized conferences in New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and New England. His first act as the new president was a letter to the First Presidency asking how soon he could expect replacements for seven missionaries about to be released, how tithing and sales of books should be handled, and a thinly veiled expression of his own dissatisfaction with the mission quarters. Should mission headquarters be kept in Brooklyn, he asked, and if so should he continue “the very economical policy” regarding the general appearance of the office, or “do you rather wish us to endeavor to maintain more respectable and commodious apartments?”

He reported that he had called Edward H. Snow of St. George and John M. Whittaker of Salt Lake City as counselors and Arthur F. Burton of Afton, Wyoming, as secretary. Painfully aware of his lack of experience, he sent Burton to the Southern States Mission “to obtain all information of value in missionary work” from the veteran president Ben E. Rich. It was probably from that visit that an agreement was reached by the two presidents to transfer six northern Virginia counties from Rich’s mission to Smart’s.

In June, George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency and, later, Apostle Heber J. Grant arrived on business and to meet with the Saints. Having had no encouragement from his letter inquiring about moving from the “very economical” to “more respectable and commodious” quarters, Smart took advantage of the opportunity to press the matter personally. He was not thinking small: “I asked Pres’t Cannon his advice on opening up a missionary family hotel where we could take care of Elders and traveling Saints, and also have respectable office room; also whether he would advise a hall for meetings. He approved of both providing we could maintain them without entailing expense to the church.”

Smart assigned his first counselor, Edward Snow, to find such property. Snow reported that “I spent several days tramping over New York and Brooklyn and finally came to the conclusion that nothing less than $700 a year would suit us. We finally concluded that the finances of the mission

27. Ibid., March 2, 1899.
28. Eastern States Mission Record Book, MS 85, Reel 4, Box 5, LDS Church Archives.
29. Smart, Journals, May 20, 1899.
31. Ibid, June 3, 1899.
were such that we could not afford it.”

When Smart left the mission, the office was still in what he considered disreputable quarters at 50 Concord Street, Brooklyn.

The seventeen months of his labors as mission president were not particularly remarkable, except for the painstaking detail in which he reported them. He did what mission presidents do—touring the mission to reorganize or create new conferences; instructing, counseling, encouraging, and assigning missionaries; and traveling tirelessly to meet with and preach to the Saints on a remarkable range of subjects.

Conditions were often primitive. Near Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, “we met in a grove of timber where they hold their meetings.” At Hurricane, West Virginia, the minister barred them from the Methodist log church where they had arranged to meet, so a local citizen, John Raborn, offered to tear out a partition in his house to make room.

Smart gave special emphasis to selling church-related books and pamphlets. “An elder should not feel it beneath his dignity to be a book pedler for God’s work,” he preached, “when Pres’t Lorenzo Snow as the financial head of the Deseret News Co. was the great, general book publisher and seller of church literature.” Other priorities were placing the Deseret News and Mormon scriptures (the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrine and Covenants) in leading libraries and, most emphatically, encouraging payment of tithing in support of President Snow’s plea for tithing to bring the church out of bondage.

The mission’s annual report reflected the results: $1,685.97 had been paid in tithing, and $600 of that was sent to Salt Lake City, the first since the mission had been reopened in 1893. Seventy libraries had received the Deseret News, Mormonism’s standard works, and the Articles of Faith, and 8,192 books had been sold or given away.

The 165 elders had visited 34,401 families and revisited 12,550, had held 69,500 gospel conversations, written 2,532 gospel letters, distributed 323,976 tracts, and held 656 outdoor meetings, 2,197 hall meetings, and 3,127 cottage meetings. All this activity brought only 139 baptisms, but, the report claimed, “great improvement in the spiritual development of the elders was most marked and its good effects were likewise felt among the saints.”

32. Edward H. Snow, missionary diary, June 11, 1899, Eastern States Mission Record Book, 1899–1901. The original of this diary is found in MSS 2051, box 2, folder 3, Special Collections, Brigham Young University, and a typescript copy is found in BX 8670.1, Sn6121m, Special Collections.
33. Smart, Journals, June 29, 1899.
34. Ibid, October 8, 1899.
35. Ibid, July 22, 1899.
36. Eastern States Mission Record Book, December 31, 1899; Smart, Journals, February 20, 1900.
Good things came to him during his mission. One was news from church headquarters that his wife Anna could and should join him. This word came in a letter from Apostle Matthias Cowley, one that also indicated that Smart had not entirely overcome his earlier emotional problems. “He counseled me,” Smart wrote, “to try to overcome the bad habits of depreciating myself and giving up to despondency. He said he had to guard against them; but said we should remember that we are all God’s children and He can make something out of us as well as others if we will but put our trust in him.”

Anna arrived with their six-year-old son, Thomas Laurence, on December 30. Smart’s journal mentions little about her activities as mission mother, but the mission record reports that “Sister Smart, while in Brooklyn, was actively engaged in missionary labors, assisting the elders in holding meetings, visiting lady friends and investigators, and did considerable good in this line.”

Other good news came in periodic reports that back in Utah and Idaho, the sheep business was doing extremely well. Smart sent instructions to his partner James Webster: “that we pay a full tithing that we comply thereby with the present word of the Lord through Pres’t Lorenzo Snow. Also that we free ourselves from financial bondage entirely by Dec. 31–99, that we commence the morning of the new century entirely free from all debt. Pres’t Snow is advising the Saints to get out of debt.” All of this was done, and on November 11 he recorded: “Received statement today dated Nov. 1 from Greer Mills & Co–Chicago which shows that this fall we have shipped 47 cars of sheep at a net valuation of $35,340.11; and that our [account] with them including all notes is thereby entirely balanced . . . and there was a balance to our credit to the sum of $22,153.82. This makes me rejoice for it marks the time when we have ample cash to pay every bill we owe and have enough left to see us through the winter. I feel to praise the Lord for his great blessings.”

But there were bad times, too. In Everett, Massachusetts, a missionary, Ephraim Jensen, had fallen out of harmony with his companion. His conference president sided with the companion and recommended that Jensen be transferred. Smart concurred, and sent Jensen $10 to pay the cost of his transfer to western New York. In what today seems an incredible act of defiance, Jensen returned the $10, refusing to leave “until the spirit moves him.” Remembering the pain from his own earlier experience, Smart counseled patience rather than the early mission release the controversy seemed to require. After letting time soften the dispute, he went to Massachusetts, meeting individually and then together with the antagonists. “We felt the spirit of the Lord was with us,” he wrote. “Finally all matters were amicably

37. Smart, Journals, December 22, 1899.
39. Smart, Journals, August 4, 1899.
settled and so great was the spirit of penitence, humility and forgiveness present that we were all melted in tears as we extended the hand of fellowship and asked forgiveness of one another. O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou did meet with us and that Thou didst bless Thy servants with this spirit and with the spirit of counsel.”

Another event ended less happily. On June 20, 1899, a missionary, H. R. Hamson, drowned in Lake Keuka, one of the smaller Finger Lakes in upstate New York, despite the efforts of his senior companion, H. Amasa Belnap: first, to dissuade him from swimming in the icy water, and then to save him when he apparently cramped. Smart had the sad task of consoling the grief- and guilt-ridden companion, recovering the body, and arranging to ship it home. He didn’t fail to draw a lesson from the tragedy, recording in his journal that he was a fine looking strong boy and strong will and intellectually. He seemed to have no idea of system in government of priesthood or respect thereto. He would make his plans irrespective of his superiors. He did not seem to do it wilfully, but simply because obedience seemed not to be an element in his nature. . . . This headiness followed him to his death, for instead of listening to the impressions of Elder Belnap, his senior, he carried out his own plan and went to his death. I hope I shall never forget this sadly and dearly bought experience and lesson.41

On March 5, 1900, a letter from the First Presidency invited Smart to attend the annual April conference of the church in Salt Lake City. It implied that he might soon be released, but that “they would not make any change in the presidency of the mission until they talked with me.” His associates in the mission field harbored no doubts that this was a release. Snow recorded that at a farewell gathering of the Brooklyn Conference elders, “all spoke of the love and confidence in Prest Smart. . . . I regretted to part with him for although his health had been poor for a long time and he could not work at routine duties, yet his order, discipline and presence did more than we realized to hold things together and keep union and push together.”42

Smart’s trip home was leisurely. On March 13, he took the train to Washington, D.C., where he spent three days visiting the recently built Library of Congress (“cost over $60,000,000 exclusive of grounds it is said to be the finest building in the world. . . . About 748,000 books and 245,000 pamphlets . . . 3 editions of the Book of Mormon, 1830, 1837, & 1840.”). He found time to visit the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, the White House, the U.S. Treasury, the Capitol, the Navy Yards, and the Washington Monument, where he walked down the steps

40. Ibid, February 14, 1900.
41. Ibid, June 22, 1899.
42. Snow, missionary diary, March 24, 1900, Eastern States Mission Record Book.
inside its 555-foot shaft (“the States have contributed inscribed stones and they are seen at various places as we descend. I was proud to see Utah or ‘Deseret’ represented by a beehive with the inscription ‘Deseret’ and ‘Holiness to the Lord.’”)

In Pittsburgh he visited the Carnegie Steel Works at Bessemer (“some of the important hands get as high as $8 per day while common laborers get from $1.50 to $1.80”). For six days in the vicinity of Zanesville, Ohio, he and his wife Anna visited her relatives and childhood friends, and on April 3 they arrived home “in fair health and spirits finding the children quite well.”

The next day “I went to Salt Lake today to communicate with the presidency as to whether they wish me to return to the Eastern States Mission. I had a conversation first with Pres. Snow. He wanted to know how I felt about going back. He said I was entitled to an honorable release if I so desired, but unless I so wished he would like me to return. After expressing my feelings of unworthiness, he said he had not heard one word against my management but on the contrary good reports.”

He next met with Joseph F. Smith, then a counselor to President Snow and soon to assume the presidency. Apparently a decision that he was to be released had leaked and appeared in the Salt Lake Herald. The presidency felt bad about this and said they had not warranted it. Pres. Smith wished me to return for this as our [one?] reason but not unless I felt like it. He gave me high compliments. Said no one could have done better under the circumstances and that I had the full confidence and fellowship of the presidency. I expressed to him that I had been sinful and wayward in the past and that I had been humiliated in presiding over my more worthy brethren in consequence. While he sat encouraging me I could not refrain from kneeling before him and burying my face in his lap while my being was racked with grief. He said that “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin” if we have not sinned unto death in the shedding of innocent blood or like evil; that by true repentance and obedience God had forgiven my sins of youth, but that it is a trick of the adversary to darken my mind and bring the past up before me. He said to take my burden unto the Lord and pray for absolution and peace and to sin no more, but to live in the future a life of purity and uprightness and I should grow and expand and prosper, and he sealed a blessing to this end upon my head. . . . With a fervent heart I arose and thanked him for all and told him now that they understood my full feelings, and conditions in the East as well I could return with joy if they so desired. He said he felt impressed to say to me to return, make a tour of the mission and in a few months I would receive my release when I could turn everything over to my successor properly.43

43. Smart, Journals, April 14, 1890.
The Family Peacemaker

So it was settled; he would return to the mission. But first there was a matter of family business, the resolution of which would demand his highest talents of persuasion and conciliation. It involved two of the most frequent and contentious sources of dispute: money and family feuding.

The tiny general store established in 1862, the year of Franklin’s settlement, by Samuel R. Parkinson, Smart’s brother-in-law, had evolved into the Franklin Co-operative Mercantile Institution during the ZCMI movement, and then into the Oneida Mercantile Union. By 1899, its operations included not only a retail store but also a furniture store, blacksmith shop, woolen mill, and creamery. Its shares were held primarily by the Parkinson and Smart families and by former apostle Moses Thatcher.

At age sixty-eight, Parkinson decided to sell out. As the major stockholder, Thatcher could dictate the value of the stock he proposed to buy, especially after persuading some members of the Smart family, especially William’s older brother Thomas, to go along. Parkinson felt that the price was unfairly low, and appealed first to Apostle Anthon H. Lund and then to the First Presidency. He was told to take his case to the Cache Stake High Council. But Moses Thatcher had been stripped of his apostleship in 1896 because, among other reasons, he refused to sign the First Presidency’s “political manifesto” that no general authority would run for political office without prior approval of the presiding church authorities. With this cloud on his church standing, Thatcher felt he could not get a fair hearing in a high council court.

William H. Smart also dreaded going that route, for a different reason. His brother Thomas was at that time lukewarm as a Mormon, and William feared an unfavorable decision in such a court might drive him out of the church entirely. Both Thatcher and Thomas Smart had responded to being summoned to a high council trial by denying the right of the church to try what they considered a civil matter. William felt he must step in.

“The feeling came upon me with great force,” he recorded in his journal, “that I must ask these brethren—Bro. Parkinson and his son—to approve of my applying to Apostle [Marriner W.] Merrill—Pres of Cache Stake—to postpone this trial to give me time to try to bring about a peaceable

settlement.” With what must have been a great sigh of relief in hopes of avoiding a messy trial, President Merrill approved the delay.

William faced a sticky situation. Though no longer an apostle, Thatcher was president of the Cache Valley Board of Trade, director of the Utah Northern Railroad, a brilliant businessman with many interests, and perhaps the most powerful man in the area. Moreover, in earlier years he had been the man to whom William, facing important decisions, had frequently gone for what he considered inspired counsel. Thomas Smart, Thatcher’s ally in the dispute, had dug in his heels against any compromise, not only over the money involved but also because of the animosity he and some other family members had developed toward Parkinson, his brother-in-law. William’s task was to convince these two powerful men, his brother and Thatcher, that their course was unjust.

He first met with his aging father, Thomas Sharratt Smart, pleading that “injustice was being done, that we were parties to it and the time had come for him to take a stand for right, to make friends with Bro. Parkinson, bury the hatchet, setting an example to us then use his influence with Thomas to make amends in this matter.” His father agreed and “decided to do all in his power to make peace.”

Thomas was a harder case. In a private meeting with him, William wrote that

I . . . took up the past troubles of the families, endeavored to show him how these things had mitigated against the progression of all concerned . . . spoke of the danger lying in his pathway when taking a stand with Moses Thatcher in the face of moral law. . . . The spirit of opposition was very strong in him and it seemed that he could not be moved. . . . I was overcome with emotion and falling upon his neck I beseeched him by the memory of our beloved mother that he would listen to the voice of reason and take a brave stand for right.

For most of the next two weeks, Smart worked in his role of conciliator, shuttling between Thatcher, Parkinson, his Smart siblings, and others, pleading not only for fairness but also for restoration of harmony between the Parkinson and Smart families. Finally, on May 10, all parties signed an agreement that, like most compromises, satisfied no one completely but laid the matter to rest. Parkinson summed up the settlement this way.

Me and Frank [Franklin C., his son] went to meet Moses Thatcher, J. Mack, T. Smart Jr and W. Smart at Logan to settle up for our stock in the Union and the best we could do was to give all my stock, $5350. The [woolen] factory was put in at $4100 and me take the factory. All other stock was sold

45. Smart, Journals, April 24, 1900.
46. Ibid, April 26, 1900.
47. Ibid, April 25, 1900.
48. Ibid, April 27, 1900.
at sixty cents on the dollar. I let it go this way for peace and stated let God judge between you and me. . . . We came home with W. Smart who brought about this settlement with his continuous explaining of justice to the parties as he got it as near right as it is.49

With that difficult task well done, Smart could return to his mission duties. Before leaving, he met twice more with President Snow. Once was to describe his efforts to settle the Parkinson-Thatcher-Smart controversy. “He very heartily approved of what I had done and commended me warmly for it,” he wrote. “I also saw and talked with Snow’s Counselors—Geo. Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith who also made favorable mention of my labors for peace.”50

The second visit is typical of what became his practice—to consult and take counsel from the First Presidency on important matters, including his personal business and financial decisions. Invited to become a major investor in a proposed bank in Rexburg, he “expressed myself as not feeling satisfied to take hold of it without laying the matter before Pres. Snow.” Meeting with the president, he first asked if it was “lawful” to consume his time on financial matters. “He made me very welcome and said anything is lawful for me to talk to him about.” President Snow generally favored the investment, but urged caution: be sure the men to run the bank were both honest and capable; invest as little as possible until it proved successful; and none at all “if there is likely [likelihood] of losing any money.” Apostle Heber J. Grant, also present, “was rather more discouraging,” and after five days of thought and, doubtless, prayer, Smart decided not to invest.51

Communitarian Dreams

His mind was running to much bigger things. On the third day of his train trip back to the mission field, he outlined a plan for an extended Smart family business/financial organization that was audacious in its scope, closely structured along church lines, and “pointing toward United Order principles.”52 The Smart family had been deeply involved in the Franklin

50. Smart, Journals, May 17, 1900.
51. Ibid, May 21, 22, and 26, 1900.
52. “United Order” is the term describing the Mormon cooperative and, in some cases, communitarian efforts first introduced by Brigham Young in St. George in 1874. In Utah and adjoining states, as well as in Mexico, it took three general forms. The Orderville type was essentially communal: its members contributed all their property to the order, shared equally in the product of their labor, and generally ate together as a large extended family. Several such orders were established in southern Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and Mexico. The last survivor, in Orderville, was disbanded in 1885. In a second system, the St. George type, members contributed their property to the order and received pay and dividends according to their investments and labor. Few United Orders of this type succeeded; within three years, when Brigham died, none were left. The least communitarian, most successful, and longest lasting was the Brigham City model. It involved
Co-operative Mercantile Institution—the “One-eyed Co-op”—established in 1868 and dissolved and merged into the Oneida Mercantile Union in 1889, so he was familiar with the concept. But he envisioned a far more paternalistic organization, patterned closely along church lines. There would be a president and two counselors (or vice presidents) and a board of twelve directors—a council of twelve. Each director would head one of the following departments: agriculture, stock-raising, mining, law, medicine, religion, finance, merchandise, manufacturing, commerce, banking, and education. The way he saw each department operating illustrates his concern for the personal as well as the economic welfare of family members. For example, the dept. of religion would especially look into the rightfulness of all business proceedings and foster religion among members and families and employees. That of law would look into the legal phase of all matters pertaining to the affairs of the firm and the individual interests of all connected. That of medicine would look to the health of all departments, sanitization etc. . . . Education would preserve the proper tone of progress in each department among members’ families and employees, see that school advantages were secured, and suggest at all times scientific improvements in the various departments for development.

Two days later, as the train rattled on, he was still dreaming of what his plan would do for family members and the church: “My mind today again took up a train of financial thoughts especially looking to the betterment of condition of relatives that the forces of their lives may be more economically utilized and thus made to yield more to the church, especially in tithing the present point of interest among the people.” But, characteristically, he insisted that nothing would be done without the “advice and approval of the church presidency.”

Nothing ever came of this ambitious plan, whether because he later realized it was impractical; because, despite his polygamous ambitions, his own family never became large enough (only five of his children reached adulthood); because he would soon become totally absorbed in other matters; or perhaps all of the above.

The Mission’s Final Days

On May 30, 1900, Smart arrived back at Brooklyn, reviewed mission conditions with his counselor, Edward H. Snow, and was gratified that Elder Snow’s spring conferences “succeeded in firing [the missionaries] with  

no consecration of property to the order, but members pooled their capital to establish cooperative enterprises. Some of these continued into the 1890s, and at least one, in the Logan Second and Third wards, lasted until 1909. No doubt William H. Smart was thinking of this model. See L. Dwight Israelsen, “United Order,” in Ludlow, Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 4:1493. For a discussion of the cooperative movement in Cache Valley, see Robert C. Sidford, “To the Devil by Any Road They Please: Cache Valley’s Entrepreneurial Challenge to Cooperation,” Utah Historical Quarterly (Spring 2004): 119.

53. Smart, Journals, May 27 and 29, 1900.
new zeal and determination.” The following Sunday, fast day, he bore testimony that “when we say we know the gospel is true and that God directs us through the priesthood and then fail to keep the commandments we show ourselves to be either hypocrites or else very weak.” The next day, somewhat in contradiction to that testimony, he made his affirmation of polygamy clear, despite the Manifesto a decade earlier supposedly discontinuing it. In counseling with a prospective convert, “I talked to him concerning the law of sacrifice including tithing, plural marriage and other principles.”

Clearly, President Snow’s increasingly emphatic statements disavowing polygamy had not changed Smart’s heart.

On June 7, he assigned himself to tour the mission, reporting on proceedings of the general conference. In conference after conference, eighty-seven meetings in all, he repeated the same message: revere, honor, and obey the priesthood, and respond to President Snow’s urgent appeal to pay an honest tithing to relieve the church’s financial bondage. His message was compelling. For example, he told the Brooklyn Conference that “our names shall not be enrolled among the people of the Lord unless we are tithe payers.” Because he would soon be released, the tour included often teary farewells to the missionaries and church members. Frequently, he recorded expressions of gratitude for and praise of his services, usually adding that he felt unworthy of such expressions.

On August 27, the expected letter from the First Presidency arrived, dated August 22, 1900, releasing him and naming his counselor, Edward H. Snow, to succeed him. His recorded response included the mixture of humility and faith found so frequently in his journals in these years, as well as throughout his life.

Elder Snow was filled with humility and a sense of incapacity and was visibly moved. . . . as for me, my heart was measurably light with the thought that soon the mission would be wholly behind me with its grave responsibilities, and that my brethren, God’s oracles were now commending me for my devotion to my labors, and that while I had made many blunders and exhibited weaknesses, God had kept me from entirely failing.

Snow’s diary confirms Smart’s light-heartedness and gives an unsuspected insight into his personality. “We had a splendid dinner,” he wrote. “All just as funny as Bro. Smart is at times. He was happy about the happiest man I know of or had seen for some time.”

With transfer details completed and final farewells said, Smart left for home on September 1, with the satisfaction that, as the Eastern States Mission Record Book recorded, “the elders . . . are taking hold with greater

54. Ibid., June 2 and 4, 1900.
55. Ibid., August 24, 1900.
56. Ibid., August 20, 1900.
57. Ibid., August 27, 2000.
zeal and energy. From the Presidency down to the latest arrival, we feel there is a spirit of love and union that augers well for the future.”

En route, he stopped overnight in Chicago and heard Labor Day speeches by William J. Byron and Theodore Roosevelt, then campaigning for election, on opposite tickets, as President and Vice President, respectively. “They were able addresses,” he noted, “but Mr. Byron failed to keep within non-partisan lines.” That breach of political etiquette did Byron no good; he lost to the Republican ticket of William McKinley and Roosevelt. William Smart was no help to Byron; he and his wife voted a straight Republican ticket.

Another stop en route was at Independence, Missouri, designated in Mormon scripture as the “center place” of the future City of Zion. He visited the property where a temple was to have been built had the Saints not been driven from Missouri, and met with a member of an offshoot branch from Mormonism called the Hedrickites, who owned the property. “They claim to have had a revelation not long since that the time has come for the building of the temple and that they were to call upon other factions of the church to assist. They sent delegation to our authorities in Utah and to the Josephites [the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] in Lamoni Iowa, but receiving no encouragement nothing has been done.”

But Smart had faith something would be done in the future: “As the shades of night came on more deeply I walked back to the temple block and under a tree kneeled and engaged in secret prayer—praying that I may live that I may be privileged to assist in building up this centre Stake of Zion.” His faith was misplaced, but not for lack of effort on his part. In his private papers are receipts for voluntary donations to a fund “for the purchase of land in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri [specifically the Hedrickite-owned temple site], and the redemption of Zion”: $200 in the form of Salt Lake Knitting Works stock on April 18, 1904; $300 cash, February 13, 1904; and $100 cash, December 30, 1911.

There’s also a sad letter from President Heber J. Grant, dated November 19, 1921, acknowledging receipt of fifty shares of knitting works stock but stating “I certainly hope that your faith in this business may be realized, but am free to confess that I do not believe that stock will ever recover or have any actual value.” If the knitting works was defunct in 1921 (making worthless any stock Smart still owned), so is the “redemption of Zion” fund today.

Arriving home from his mission on September 9, Smart’s only comment

58. Eastern States Mission Record Book, September 1, 1900.
59. Smart, Journals, September 2, 1900.
60. Ibid., November 6, 1900.
62. Smart, Journals, September 6, 1900.
about his children was that “they all said they had kept the word of wisdom since I was here at conference.” In view of his own history of addiction, that must have been gratifying, but hardly a surprise; his oldest child, Elizabeth, was only eleven, William nine, Lawrence seven, Ruth five.

The next day he called on church leaders, and reported that President Snow “gave me a cordial welcome, told me I was free now to spend my time with my family and business, but gave me to understand there would be other missions. . . . Subsequently I met counselors Geo. Q. Cannon and Jos. F. Smith who received me very kindly—especially Bro. Smith.”

Financial Help to “Worthy Brethren”

An interview with Apostle Matthias Cowley followed. Impressed with the prosperity Smart had achieved in the sheep business, Cowley “desired to know if he could not invest some means in business with James Webster, my partner, and I. All of his time being taken up in spiritual matters he has no opportunity in this line and he wishes to progress in this line . . . instead of always drawing for support.” Smart wrote to Webster, proposing that Cowley be admitted as a partner with a dividend of 8 percent a year, but that “we should control the upper limit of his investment.”

It was soon made clear that he saw this not so much a business decision as another way to use his wealth for the good of the church and its leaders. Two days later, he confided in his journal that Apostle Reed Smoot had told him of the financial difficulties of fellow-apostle John W. Taylor, and of how Smoot was trying to straighten out Taylor’s affairs.

There has come to me since a desire to assist in some way worthy brethren that are in such conditions. . . . I have thought of suggesting to James [Webster] the advisability of offering Apostle Taylor the same privilege I have suggested to offer to Apostle Cowley, and upon getting his consent laying both of these matters before the presidency of the Church for their approval or disapproval. I hope these thoughts are inspired of the Lord and not by my own selfishness and hunger of notoriety or rule. If the latter be true then evil will befall me, but if the former be true then will the Lord bless all efforts looking to the benefit of His servants.

The offer that was finalized with Cowley, much better than what Smart first proposed, was one Cowley could hardly refuse. His investment was to be $5,000. Of this, Cowley was able to raise only $2,000, so Smart & Webster loaned him the needed $3,000 at 8 percent annual interest. That rate of interest would seem to be no problem, since Cowley was to be paid interest on his $5,000 investment at “the rate % of our net gain for the year.”

63. Ibid., September 10, 1900.
64. Ibid., October 27, 1900.
65. Ibid., October 29, 1900.
net gain the previous year had been 46.77 percent, and there appeared to be no reason to doubt that such success would continue. Even if it didn’t—if the entire enterprise collapsed—Cowley would be made whole; the agreement specified that “he is not responsible for any losses of business or of his investment further than loss of interest provided our business makes nothing.”

With the deal complete, Smart wrote his partner, “advising him what I had done and impressing him with the responsibility of having an investment of an apostle and encouraging integrity of business principles and an endeavor to so manage that our gain would be praiseworthy.” Ironically, it was these two apostles, Taylor and Cowley, who would be, respectively, excommunicated and disfellowshipped for encouraging and performing post-Manifesto plural marriages, including that of Smart himself.

With the sheep business going so well, Smart proposed to branch out. His first attempt was not a small one: “to try to effect a corporation here [in Rexburg, Idaho] taking in Banking, Mdse, Stock, agriculture etc,” apparently along the lines of the United Order. He outlined his proposal to Thomas E. Ricks, leader of the Mormon colony called to settle the upper Snake River country in 1882, founder of Rexburg and fourteen other communities in the area, and at that point still president of its first stake since it was organized in 1884. Concerned that Rexburg’s only bank was controlled by an outsider, Ricks endorsed the plan with enthusiasm, and entrusted Smart with a letter to church president Lorenzo Snow conveying “our hearty approval.”

The meeting two days later with eighty-six-year-old President Snow, who Smart described as “feeble and troubled with a hacking cough,” produced mixed and puzzling results. “I explained in more detail my plans for corporating with ends of union and redemption to be attained,” Smart wrote. President Snow “then reviewed his experiences in Brigham City along these lines. He said that God had but one perfect plan and he referred to it in some 16 different places in the Doc. and Cov. That is—Consecration or United order.” He emphasized that “we should not allow control to go out of our hands and should so arrange as to not let outsider influence control.” Then, after what seemed to be encouragement, came a different decision: “He said the bank matter as begun should not go on and to tell Pres. Rick & the brethren so.”

That counsel did not satisfy the leaders in Rexburg. Ricks, his counselors, and a few others, including Smart and his partner, Webster, discussed it at length. The prevailing sentiment was that “the matter had gone too far to stop,” and that “the bank [without the other elements of the plan] better go on now as begun.” But Smart wouldn’t have it. With obedience to counsel

66. Ibid., December 16, 1900.
67. Ibid., January 12, 1901.
that would characterize his future ministry, “I stated to the brethren that we had done our duty and the matter would end here.”

These were heady days for thirty-nine-year-old Smart. Impressed by his ready access to church president Lorenzo Snow, his bishop approached him with a scheme to ask President Snow to use $3,000 of Smart’s 1900 tithing to pay off an old debt incurred to build the ward’s amusement hall. The wealthy David Eccles had managed a similar deal for his ward, the bishop told him. Smart demurred, telling the bishop he wanted no part of asking for special treatment because he was a heavy tithe payer, and that he should have no more voice than “the poorest widow who had contributed her mites.” If he accompanied the bishop, it would be only “as a humble representative of the lay members of the ward.” In that spirit they went, and simply asked for a $3,000 appropriation. President Snow gave them no encouragement, explaining the church’s burden of debt, and saying only that their request would be given consideration along with other requests. He then dismissed the bishop and proceeded to give Smart broad hints of what was in store for him.

He confided that the First Presidency had disapproved the request of Angus Cannon, president of the Salt Lake Stake, that Smart be called as bishop of the Third Ward, and “told me not to get myself tied up . . . but to prepare myself and hold myself in readiness so that I could be used by them. He said that I had a great future and that I should be required for greater and more extensive operations. . . . Remembering all my struggles and weaknesses I was almost overcome, and felt to wither under this display of confidence from the representative of the Lord on earth.”

From other general authorities came similar encouragement, and from Apostle Cowley, explicit counsel that the First Presidency was “pleased with my record in the Eastern States Mission,” and urging that he should keep himself “always in readiness.” Clearly, a change was imminent. It seemed, he wrote, that “in spite of all my short comings and weaknesses of body and mind I was fast being hurried along to some unknown responsibility which I feared.” He shared the news with his wife, along with his fears, and got a wifely scolding, urging him to forget his past noncompliance and “resolve to accomplish good in the future let what ever come.”

His confidence was reinforced the next day, when his bishop invited him to join the ward prayer circle, beginning a practice that for years would be a treasured part of his leadership ministry. His journal makes clear the importance he attached to a rite that was practiced throughout the church at this time.

68. Ibid, December 22, 24, and 27, 1900.
69. Ibid, January 8 and 9, 1901.
70. Ibid, January 12, 1901.
"I accompanied the brethren upstairs into the Circle room. We first removed our shoes in an adjoining room. We engaged in prayer in behalf of the sick, and for the general interests of the ward, Stake and Church. I felt the sacredness of the place and my unworthiness to be here, but also a strong desire to be worthy."71

Another Full-time Calling

The “unknown responsibility which I feared” was soon made known. Meeting him on the Logan depot platform on January 25, Apostle Cowley reported the unanimous vote of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve to make Smart president of Wasatch Stake, replacing Abram Hatch. The change was to be made in Heber at the next stake conference, February 9–10. Hatch was the first president when the stake was organized on July 15, 1877, and after twenty-three years it was probably time for a change. According to Smart’s journal, though, Cowley indicated other reasons. At age seventy-one, Hatch, he said, was “becoming infirm,” and besides, “the people in Wasatch Stake are cold and unfaithful and the brethren felt that I could do a good work among them.”72

Unspoken, but perhaps another factor, may have been the stake members’ resentment of Hatch as a businessman who, according to one critic, took “a course to crush every man in the stake that will not comply with his wishes and trade at his store,” and who, though the stake president, did not fully support the church effort to establish cooperative businesses in the valley.73

Whatever the reasons, Smart accepted the news with his usual expressions of humility, unworthiness, and faith.

I was full of joy at this evidence of the confidence of the Lord and my brethren in me, but full of sorrow that I am not more worthy. In spite of my frail body & mind and my many failings I have had a burning desire that the Lord would find me something to do to assist His great work. But to preside over my brethren has seemed beyond my capabilities and what I deserved. But I bow humbly to the will and infinite wisdom of my Heavenly Father and trust Him to make me equal to the grave responsibility.

71. Ibid, January 13, 1901. Today, the Mormon prayer circle is associated mainly with the temple endowment ceremony. It was apparently a part of early Christian worship, and was introduced in modern times on May 26, 1843, when Joseph Smith invited his close associates to join one. From 1851 to 1929, prayer circles were formed for priesthood groups, stake presidencies and high councils, priesthood quorums, and ward bishoprics—usually in response to and under authority of the First Presidency. In 1973, during the presidency of Harold B. Lee, prayer circles outside the temple were discontinued by instruction of the First Presidency, although they are still held during weekly meetings of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. George S. Tate, “Prayer Circle,” in Ludlow, Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 3:1120.

72. Smart, Journals, January 25, 1901.

Assurance soon came. After fasting and pouring out his soul in prayers of thanks, and pleading for aid, and forgiveness of sins, he became "somewhat settled in my feelings . . . and informed my wife who accepted of the call in the same spirit as myself. We both felt that the Lord had been managing all things for our good and that in this choice of Stakes we acknowledged his hand."\(^7^4\)

\(^{74}\) Smart, Journals, January 25, 1901.