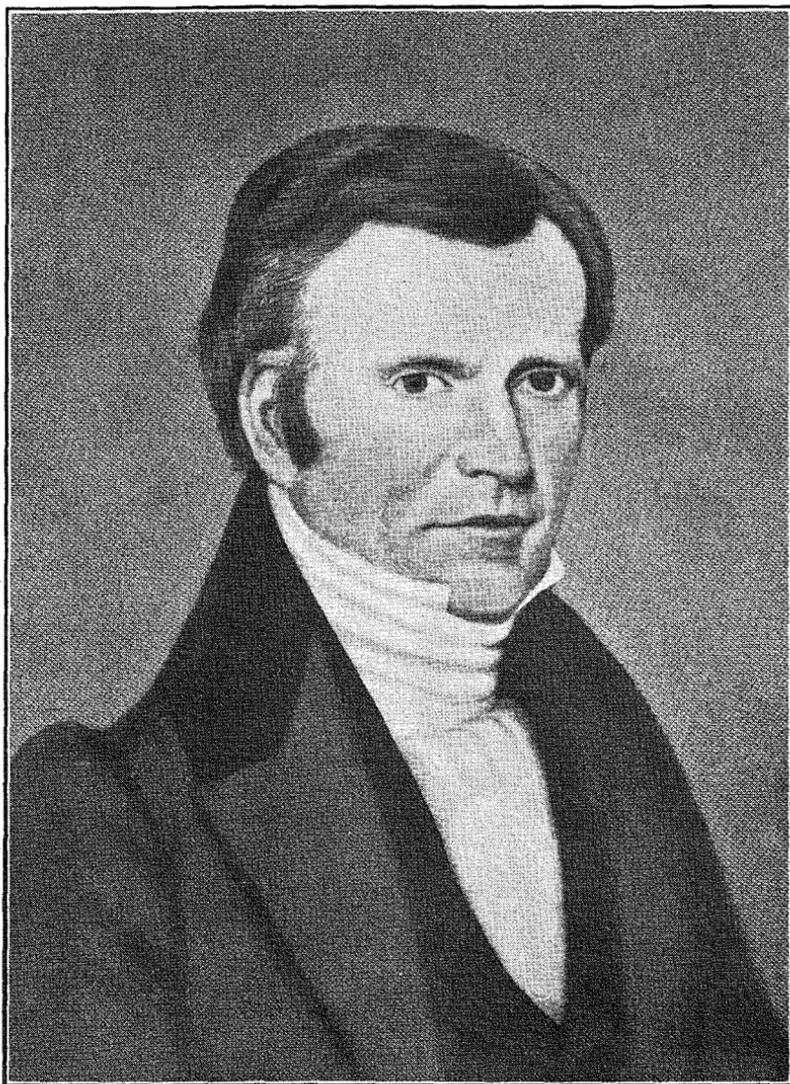


BIOGRAPHY OF FREDERICK GRANGER WILLIAMS.

BY HEMAN C. SMITH.

The study of biography suggests the thought that all men are molded by the great formative hand of the Creator for the positions they are intended to fill, and the work they are called to do, as suggested by the saying of Holy Writ concerning Abraham: "For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him." And the words addressed to Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." This is not to say that man always fulfills his destiny. He may sometimes fail to occupy or use the means within his reach for development, he may be prevented by those to whom he is sent rejecting him. He may aspire to that for which he is not suited, and thus render life and life's efforts a failure. He may be too modest to assert himself, and thus never come into his own place. Happy is the man who finds his proper place and occupies and serves acceptably. It is a serious question whether men are capable of this without divine guidance and support.

The subject of our sketch seems to have been a man possessing the qualities of mind and heart for the responsible duties for which he was designated, but who for some of these reasons did but a limited work. It is not our province to say where the fault lay, but to record so far as our information permits, the record he made. Joseph Smith, to whom Elder Williams was at one time a trusted counselor, wrote of him at the time as follows:



FREDERICK G. WILLIAMS.

Bro. Frederick G. Williams is one of those men in whom I place the greatest confidence and trust, for I have found him ever full of love and brotherly kindness. He is not a man of many words, but is ever winning, because of his constant mind. He shall ever have place in my heart, and is ever entitled to my confidence. He is perfectly honest and upright, and seeks with all his heart to magnify his presidency in the church of Christ, but fails in many instances, in consequence of a want of confidence in himself. God grant that he may overcome all evil.

Joseph Smith also continued to sustain and encourage him, when the church refused to sustain, as will be seen as we proceed. In 1836 Joseph and his wife gave one of their own boys the name Frederick G. W., thus expressing their great regard for Mr. Williams.

Frederick G. Williams was born October 28, 1787, in Suffield, Hartford County, Connecticut. We know but little of his early life, but at the age of forty-three he was residing near Kirtland, Ohio, where he owned a farm and was engaged in the practice of medicine. He was a man of considerable influence in the community and was widely known as Doctor Williams.

Here in 1830 he was found by the first missionaries of the Latter Day Saints, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer, jr., and Ziba Peterson, when they paused in this region on their way to the West. He soon accepted their message, and was so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of it that he left his practice and accompanied the missionaries, and with them walked the most of the way to the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, suffering much hardship occasioned by willing sacrifice. They passed over into what is now the State of Kansas and began preaching to the Indians with such prospects of success that they aroused the jealousy of Indian agents and sectarian ministers, so they were ordered out of the Indian country.

They crossed back over the line and commenced missionary efforts in Jackson County, Missouri. February 14, 1831, they held a council in Independence, Missouri, and resolved to send

Elder Pratt of their number back to the East to report their progress to the church and secure supplies.

Elder Williams, with the other three, remained in the West until Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Martin Harris, William W. Phelps, Edward Partridge, Joseph Coe, and Algernon S. Gilbert and wife arrived about the middle of July, 1831. Of this meeting Joseph Smith wrote as follows:

The meeting of our brethren, who had long waited our arrival, was a glorious one, and moistened with many tears. It seemed good and pleasant for brethren to meet together in unity. But our reflections were great, coming as we had from a highly cultivated state of society in the East, and standing now upon the confines or western limits of the United States, and looking into the vast wilderness of those who sat in darkness. How natural it was to observe the degradation, leanness of intellect, ferocity and jealousy, of a people that were nearly a century behind the time, and to feel for those who roamed about without the benefit of civilization, refinement, or religion! Yea, and exclaim in the language of the prophets, "When will the wilderness blossom as the rose? When will Zion be built up in her glory? and where will Thy temple stand unto which all nations shall come in the last days."

Quite a number of ministers soon followed, and on August 2, 1831, the land of Zion was dedicated. Elder Williams was probably one of the twelve men mentioned in the following statement of Joseph Smith:

On the second day of August I assisted the Colesville Branch of the church to lay the first log, for a house, as the foundation for Zion, in Kaw Township, twelve miles west of Independence. The log was carried and placed by twelve men, in honor of the twelve tribes of Israel. At the same time, through prayer, the land of Zion was consecrated and dedicated for the gathering of the Saints, by Elder Rigdon; and it was a season of joy to those present, and afforded a glimpse of the future, which time will yet unfold to the satisfaction of the faithful.

He may possibly have been the eighth man mentioned in the following:

"On the third day of August the spot for the temple, a little west of Independence, was dedicated in the presence of eight men, among whom were myself, Sidney Rigdon, Edward Partridge, W. W. Phelps, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and Joseph Coe. The eighty-seventh psalm was read and the scene was solemn and impressive."

Probably he was not specifically mentioned by Joseph Smith

for the reason that they were comparative strangers, as Joseph did not reach Kirtland until after Williams' departure; and this meeting in the western wilds was their first meeting.

Just when he returned to the East we are not informed, but he was soon after found again at Kirtland, Ohio, where he soon became prominent as one of the leading men of the church.

About this time he evidently contemplated sacrificing his farm in the interests of the church work, for in a revelation given September, 1831, he is commanded not to do so in the following language: "I will not that my servant Frederick G. Williams should sell his place, for I, the Lord, willeth to retain a stronghold in Kirtland for the space of five years," etc. In March, 1832, he was designated as a counselor to Joseph Smith. The revelation thus pointing him out reads:

Verily, verily I say unto you, my servant Frederick G. Williams. Listen to the voice of him who speaketh, to the word of the Lord your God, and hearken to the calling wherewith you are called, even to be a high priest to my church, and a counselor unto my servant, Joseph Smith, jr., unto whom I have given the keys of the kingdom, which belongeth always unto the presidency of the high priesthood; therefore, verily I acknowledge him and will bless him, and also thee, inasmuch as thou art faithful in council, in the office which I have appointed unto you, in prayer always vocally, and in thy heart, in public and in private; also in the ministry in proclaiming the gospel in the land of the living, and among thy brethren; and in doing these things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow-beings, and will promote the glory of him who is your Lord: Wherefore, be faithful, stand in the office which I have appointed unto you, succor the weak, lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees: and if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father. Behold, and lo, these are the words of Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

One year later this calling and promise was renewed in the following language:

And again, verily I say unto thy brethren Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, their sins are forgiven them also, and they are accounted as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom; as also through your administration the keys of the school of the prophets, which I have commanded to be organized, that thereby they may be perfected

in their ministry for the salvation of Zion, and of the nations of Israel, and of the Gentiles, as many as will believe, and through your administration, they may receive the word, and through their administration the word may go forth unto the ends of the earth, unto the Gentiles first, and then, behold, and lo, they shall turn unto the Jews; and then cometh the day when the arm of the Lord shall be revealed in power in convincing the nations, the heathen nations, the house of Joseph, of the gospel of their salvation.

In harmony with this call he and Sidney Rigdon were ordained at Kirtland, Ohio, March 18, 1833, and thus was the First Presidency of the church established. He was also about this time or before made the scribe of Joseph Smith, and as such penned many of the important documents which make up the sacred records as well as the volume of Church History.

In May, 1833, he, in connection with his colleagues of the Presidency and Bishop Newel K. Whitney, was reproved for neglecting to properly instruct his family. When the standing high council was organized, February 17, 1834, he was chosen to act as one of the presidents. On September 24, 1834, he was appointed with Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery a committee to arrange and compile items of doctrine for the government of the church. On August 17, 1835, this committee presented to a general assembly the Book of Doctrine and Covenants which was indorsed by the several quorums and by the assembly. After the destruction of the press in Independence, Missouri, and the consequent suspension of the church paper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, the church authorities decided to establish a publishing house at Kirtland, Ohio, and to publish a paper to be called the *Messenger and Advocate*, also to issue the suspended paper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, from this press. This business was to be conducted under the firm name of F. G. Williams and Company. This was carried into effect under the general supervision of Elders Williams and Cowdery. The numbers of *The Evening and the Morning Star* published at Independence, Missouri, were also reprinted by this firm. In

1834 Elder Williams went up to Missouri with Zion's Camp in which he faithfully performed his duty as a member and an officer, acting as paymaster. In February, 1835, there was a weekly newspaper started at Kirtland, Ohio, in the interests of Democracy, named the *Northern Times*, which was issued by this firm, and in May, 1835, Frederick G. Williams was appointed its editor.

Elder Williams took an active interest in the building of the Kirtland Temple, and at one time, June 25, 1835, subscribed five hundred dollars to this fund. He was present at the dedication of the temple, and was prominent in the service. He testified that at this time, while Elder Sidney Rigdon was offering prayer an angel entered the room, and seating himself between Elder Williams and Joseph Smith, senior, remained there until the prayer was ended.

During these years, and until 1837, Elder Williams was a zealous participant in all the activities of the church, serving as a member of the First Presidency, presiding in council, traveling as a missionary, acting as a scribe to Joseph Smith, as well as contributing largely of his means.

But in the year 1837 there occurred a difference among the leading men of the church, of the particulars of which we are not fully informed. The usual sad result of loss of confidence ensued, to the injury of the church.

In this controversy such men as Frederick G. Williams, Lyman Johnson, Parley P. Pratt, David Whitmer, Warren Parrish and others were against Joseph Smith and the majority of the officers and members.

This so impaired the confidence of the people in Frederick G. Williams that at the conference of September 3, 1837, held at Kirtland, Ohio, when his name was presented by President Smith, he was not sustained as a member of the Presidency. Joseph Smith, it seems, had not lost confidence in him, as is evident from his presenting him to the body for acceptance.

His confidence is also further expressed by his again presenting Elder Williams as a member of the Presidency at the conference held at Far West, Missouri, November 7, 1837, but he was again rejected, notwithstanding he was nominated by Joseph Smith and sustained by such men as Bishop Partridge, David Whitmer and others.

This ended the active career of Elder Frederick G. Williams, but did not destroy his faith. As one would expect, he was estranged from the men with whom he had associated, and who had opposed and rejected him. Though in 1838 he renewed his covenant, perfect affiliation and concord were never fully reestablished. He died at Quincy, Illinois, October 25, 1842. We are informed that some of the family reside at Ogden, Utah, but they are not prominent in any way.

This is one of the strange examples of human experience where a man of superior ability, and great goodness of heart, finds his power for good suddenly paralyzed for reasons unknown to us. A case that must be referred to divine justice for adjustment. So far as we know, Frederick G. Williams retained his honor and virtue, and maintained his characteristic nobility of mind and heart until the shades of death shut from our view the man and the environment in which he moves.

We can not better close this sketch than to quote the words of Hon. Alex. W. Terrill, in the Memorial Address of Stephen F. Austin:

It is not given us to know what the Great Power behind all visible phenomena did with the soul when it left its final casket: we can only hope that it found a better home. Earth and sky, the voices of Nature, its harmonies and beauties, all proclaim that God is good, and that he did not plant this universal hope for immortality through tantalizing caprice. He who provides food for the hungry body, will somewhere, somehow, at some time satisfy the soul that hungers after immortality. If this hope is a vain dream, and the spirit of man is annihilated by death, like the flame of a candle blown out, then life is a tragedy so full of disappointment that he who dreads to die should fear to live. No! No! If the revolving wheel of time and change destroys no atom in all this world, how can the quick spirit of man, which is king over all, perish? Never. The strong and subtle energies of the soul will find development beyond this transitory existence, and amid the prophetic splendors of an eternal dawn.

(The end.)