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Richard Bushman

Claremont Graduate University

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The Character of Joseph Smith

Richard Lyman Bushman

The title of this essay, “The Character of Joseph Smith,” may promise more than can ever be fulfilled. Joseph warned the Saints of the difficulty in trying to understand him. In the King Follett discourse given two months before his death, he told them, “You dont know me—you never will.” Another version of the same speech says, “You never knew my heart. No man knows my hist[ory].”¹ He seems to say that what we want to know most—his heart and his history—are not to be found out. No matter how much we study him, we must be cautious about believing we have comprehended him. There is too much there, and much of it is far beyond the ordinary. As he continues, “I dont blame you for not believing my history had I not experienced it [I] could not believe it myself.”²

And yet we still want to know what kind of a man he was: How would we experience him if we knew him? What was the feel of his personality? How did the visions and revelations affect his character? Was he lifted above human foibles and idiosyncrasies by his contact with the heavens? Was he a little magical?

In my opinion, Joseph Smith remained planted in the earth despite his visions. He was a sharply etched human individual with a personality of his own and a culture derived from his time and place. He was not molded into a timeless model of perfection. He remained Joseph Smith Jr., a son of Lucy Mack Smith and Joseph Smith Sr., and a son of New England and the nineteenth century. He had flaws and preferences and feelings like the rest of us. We could meet and know him like other personalities.

Were we to know Joseph well, we probably could compile a long list of his qualities: his good cheer, humility, kindness, friendliness, bravery, resolve, faith, and on and on; he was a multifaceted man. But without

claiming to be comprehensive, I would like to discuss four aspects of his personality that have thrust themselves upon me while I have studied his life. They are (1) his transparency, (2) his sharpness in rebuke, (3) his confidence, and (4) what I term his love but could also be called his enthusiasm or piety.

Transparency

The first of these aspects, transparency, became apparent while I was trying to evaluate the historical record left by Joseph Smith. Since we have *The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, seven volumes of documents and diaries covering his life and the years immediately after his death, you would think we have plenty to go on. If a man does not reveal himself in seven volumes, what more can we ask?

The problem was, as I discovered, that this bounteous record can be misleading. The *History of the Church*—sometimes called the Documentary History—appears to be a collection of documents (letters, proclamations, speeches, revelations) tied together with a first-person narrative. Joseph tells the story of his life and then introduces key documents as they come along.

In actual fact, much of the first-person narrative was not written by Joseph at all. A large part was written by his clerks and others.³ The resulting history does not so much contain errors as it misleads us. These writings may have been approved by him, they may express his sentiments and ideas, but they are not his voice. We are not listening to words from his mind and heart when we read. Since we learn as much from how a story is told as by what it contains, this method of compiling the history makes the *History of the Church* less revealing than it seems at first sight.

This complexity, however, was precisely what led to my recognition of Joseph's transparency, as I am calling it. For in addition to this clerk-written material, we have a few letters and a few pages in his journal written in his own hand. In the *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*,⁴ these sections appear in bold type, so we know the words that did proceed from his mind and heart. Other parts were dictated and may have been written down pretty much word for word. These personal writings have been compiled and presented in one volume by Dean Jessee, the general editor of the Joseph Smith papers project⁵ and one of the Church's most useful and productive scholars.

These holograph writings are helpful because their tone differs so markedly from the clerk's writings. When Joseph wrote, the emotional level almost always was higher than in the clerk's writings. He seems always to have been open about his feelings. He had strong feelings about virtually everything, and these flow out onto the page. Sometimes he expressed his

love, but he was equally candid about his anger or disgust. He was a man of feelings, and he let his feelings show. You see this emotion in the little interjections in his diary: “Oh how marvellous are thy works Oh Lord and I thank thee for thy me[r]cy u<n>to me thy servent Oh Lord save me in thy kingdom for Christ sake Amen.” “Oh may God grant that I may be directed in all my thoughts. Oh bless thy Servent Amen.”⁶

After he learned of the ejection of the Saints from Jackson County in 1833, he wrote a letter filled with anguish for the plight of his brothers and sisters. He longed to be with them and to assure them all would be well in the end. “Never at any time,” he wrote, “have I felt as I now feel that pure love and for you my Brotheren the wormth and Zeal for you[r] safty that we can scarcely hold our spirits but wisdom I trust will keep us from madness and desperation and the power of the Go[s]pel will enable us to stand.” He pled with the Lord on their behalf: “O Lord what more dost thou require at their hands.”⁷ When you read page after page in this vein, especially in contrast to the cooler style of the clerks’ writings, you begin to get a feeling for Joseph’s openness. He revealed himself in his writings, and one must assume in his speech, too. He did not conceal his inner self.

His letter from Liberty Jail in March 1839 reveals his habits of mind as well as any single document I know. He had been in jail for four months, part of the time jammed in a room with two small, grated windows and a ceiling so low he could not stand up straight. In early March, he received four letters on one day from his friends in Illinois. The input from outside sparked a desire to reply, and he spent the next day dictating one long rambling letter. Occupying seventeen printed pages, it must have taken at least the entire day to get down. The two-part letter consists of a single, unbroken text, flowing from one topic to another without paragraph breaks. At times Joseph speaks for the Lord in some of the most transcendent language in scripture; three of our revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants are taken from this letter. At other times, the letter gives practical advice or denounces the Saints’ enemies. It is filled with love, wrath, joy, gratitude, enthusiasm, and revulsion.⁸

I think of the Liberty Jail letter as a transcript of his mind. It shows no signs of calculation or political caution. He simply writes from his heart, letting every thought and feeling spill out. That is what I mean by transparency. I do not mean that Joseph did not have compartments where he stored experiences away from the gaze of the world. Some of his most thrilling revelations, such as the appearance of Christ in the Kirtland Temple, were held back from the Saints. He was also reluctant at first to talk about the First Vision. But outside of withheld revelations such as these, he spoke freely, spontaneously, almost impulsively.

We wonder, of course, how much this transparency reflected the necessity of being transparent before God. We can only conjecture if a person who was accustomed to revealing his heart to God, knowing that concealment was impossible, tends toward the confessional among his friends, or if our coming before the Lord consistently with real intent and full purpose of heart necessarily habituates us to transparency, or if the Spirit of the Lord also enlivens our feelings and intensifies our emotions, thus requiring greater expressiveness.

Sharpness in Rebuke

A second quality his friends noted in him emerged from his openness. Joseph himself called it “sharpness.”⁹ He was quick to reprove people he believed were in the wrong. On one occasion, he publicly reprimanded sluggish missionaries in the newspaper, publishing a rebuke of Orson Hyde and John Page in the *Times and Seasons* when they were slow to get on their mission to Palestine. “Elders Orson Hyde and John E. Page are informed that the Lord is not well pleased with them,” the article said, “in consequence of delaying their mission, (John E. Page in particular) and they are requested, by the First Presidency, to hasten their journey towards their destination.”¹⁰

Eliza Snow put it as tactfully as possible: “His lips ever flowed with instruction and kindness; and although very forgiving, indulgent, and affectionate in his temperament, when his God-like intuition suggested that the welfare of his brethren, or the interests of the kingdom of God demanded it, no fear of censure—no love of approbation could prevent his severe rebuke.”¹¹ Benjamin Johnson, likewise a great admirer, said, “Criticisms, even by his associates, were rarely acceptable, and contradictions would rouse in him the lion at once, for by no one of his fellows would he be superseded.”¹² The plain fact is, Joseph did not like to be crossed, and when he saw someone in the wrong, he told them so. This is what he meant by “sharpness.”

We can see in Joseph’s tendency to use strong speech signs of a person weighed down with his responsibilities. Some of the most forceful rebukes were recorded in fall 1835, when Joseph was looking forward to the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. He had been striving for years to prepare his people for the endowment of power, one of the most difficult assignments he had received from the Lord and one he took very seriously. He had been given quite common, ordinary people to work with, and somehow he had to shape them into a godly society able to stand in the presence of the Lord. Moses had failed in this assignment with his people, and Joseph did not want to repeat the mistake. One reason for his frequent rebukes, particularly

on the eve of the temple dedication, may have been his anxiety about the people's worthiness.

But I think this sharpness reflected something in his secular culture as well. Joseph Smith was not purely the product of his revelations; he came out of a particular culture—early-nineteenth-century, backcountry Yankee. Studies have brought to life a particular aspect of that culture that scholars call the culture of honor. This is a culture we glimpse through the legendary tales of duels and in the stories of feuding clans. It was a complex compound made up of equal parts of loyalty and resentment—loyalty to family and resentment of insult. Any personal hurt, any damage to reputation called for an immediate response. Vengeance was to be sought for a hurt, and no insult was to go unchallenged.¹³

Joseph showed that kind of quick response to anything he perceived as an insult. He wrote in fury to Thomas Sharp, the vitriolic editor of the *Warsaw Signal*, after Sharp published his first editorial against the Saints. Sharp had attended a Church meeting in Nauvoo and even dined with Joseph after the conference. But then Sharp returned to Warsaw and began the campaign that was to end in Joseph's murder in Carthage. After reading the critical editorial, Joseph wrote to Sharp:

Mr. Sharp, Editor of the Warsaw Signal:

SIR—You will discontinue my paper—its contents are calculated to pollute me, and to patronize the filthy sheet—that tissue of lies—that sink of iniquity—is disgraceful to any mortal man. Yours, with utter contempt,
Joseph Smith.

P. S. Please publish the above in your contemptible paper.¹⁴

One should not conclude from these instances that Joseph was always stubborn and assertive. There is evidence that Joseph learned to rein in his inclination to dominate. Peter Burnett, one of his non-Mormon attorneys in Missouri and later governor of California, said of him, “He was very courteous in discussion, readily admitting what he did not intend to controvert, and would not oppose you abruptly, but had due deference to your feelings.”¹⁵ Apparently, Joseph taught himself to be moderate. He probably had this softening in mind when he said he was like a great, rough stone bumping down the hill, knocking off the sharp edges, and so gradually being polished.¹⁶

Moreover, if conflict was common in his life, it was not something Joseph enjoyed or sought out. Quite the reverse. He yearned for peace and harmony. It pained him terribly when he fought with people. He wanted peace as quickly as he could get it. If he rebuked people, he also quickly sought for reconciliation. He did not hide from his adversaries and let the

anger fester. His immediate impulse was to get the complaints out in the open and strive for an agreement. He wanted resolution as quickly as it could be had.

After a season of small altercations with the Twelve, he brought them together and pled with them to make peace. He acknowledged that a letter rebuking them “might have been expressed in too harsh language; which was not intentional and I ask your forgiveness in as much as I have hurt your feelings.” He wanted nothing more than to make peace. “Inasmuch as I have wounded your feelings brethren,” he implored, “I ask your forgiveness, for I love you and will hold you up with all my heart in all righteousness before the Lord.”¹⁷

Those words give us Joseph Smith’s style. He described himself perfectly in the letter to the Saints from Liberty Jail where he told them the method of the priesthood. That method entailed “reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou has reprov’d, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy” (D&C 121:43).

Looking back now from the viewpoint of current cultural analysis, we can see that Joseph Smith stood on the boundary between the culture of honor and the culture of gentility.¹⁸ Honor required outspoken rebukes and strong reactions to insult and contradiction. Gentility favored polish and smoothness, what we call “nice.” I don’t think you could call Joseph “nice” in this narrow technical sense of always keeping things smooth and quiet. He spoke his mind and his heart—whether love and gratitude or anger and reproof. His was a much more open style than ours.

I do not say that his was the better way—it got him in trouble on many occasions—but it won him confidence and friendship. People knew exactly where they stood. They felt his wrath from time to time but also were enveloped in his love. They knew they were in the presence of what we would say now was a real *Mensch*. There was no phoniness, no concealment, no pretense, only real feeling, candid expression, and honest reactions.

I would add that we can see something of the personal meaning of Joseph’s doctrine in these qualities. He spent his life building a City of Zion. And what was its outstanding quality? People there would be “of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18). His revelations emphasized the importance of unity in the Lord’s people. Joseph rejoiced in those moments when the Saints were one. Perhaps we can hear in these doctrines echoes of Joseph’s own yearning to escape conflict. He wanted to rise above the evil-spirited, abrasive world of insults coming out of the culture of honor and move instead to a happy realm of gospel love and harmony. He dreamed of a society where contention would end.

Confidence

The third quality I wish to consider is Joseph's confidence and independence. If perfect peace eluded Joseph, he had greater success in overcoming a weakness the Lord saw in him early in his life. Section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the first revelation he wrote down,¹⁹ chastises him for giving way to pressure. You "have gone on in the persuasions of men," he was told, and "feared man more than God" (D&C 3:6, 7). In other words, he showed too much regard for the opinions of others, something that he could not do if he were to speak for God. He had to be independent.

I would have to say that Joseph succeeded admirably in overcoming this problem. One of his strongest characteristics was that he remained autonomous and even dominant no matter with whom he dealt. He was never overwhelmed by more educated men or strong figures of any kind. Much more literate people than he joined the Church, and he frequently put them to work, as he did Sidney Rigdon. But none of them ever gained the upper hand. There was never the slightest question who was in charge.

Howard Coray, who was considered well educated among the early converts because he got so far as to apply to college (though he never attended) was impressed by Joseph's independence. Coray was Joseph's clerk and knew him well:

The Prophet had a great many callers or visitors, and he received them in his office, where I was clerking—persons of almost all professions—Doctors, Lawyers, Priests and people seemed anxious to get a good look at what was then considered something very wonderful: a man who should dare to call himself a prophet, announce himself as a Seer and ambassador [*sic*] of the Lord. Not only were they anxious to see, but also to ask hard questions, in order to ascertain his depth. Well, what did I discover? . . . he was always equal to the occasion, and perfectly master of the situation; and, possessed the power to make everybody realize his superiority, which they evinced in an unmistakable manner. I could clearly see that Joseph was the captain, no matter whose company he was in. Knowing the meagerness of his education, I was truly gratified, at seeing how much at ease he always was, even in the company of the most scientific, and the ready off hand manner in which he would answer their questions.²⁰

I think one of our strongest impressions of Joseph were we to meet him would be his dominance. He filled every room where he was present, no matter who else was there.

Josiah Quincy, the young Harvard graduate and soon-to-be mayor of Boston, noted this quality when he visited Nauvoo in spring 1844 with Charles Francis Adams, son of the former president John Quincy Adams. Quincy went away with a sense of Joseph's "rugged power." Joseph seemed to have a great vital force. Quincy compared Joseph to the Rhode Island

congressman Elisha Potter, whom Quincy met in Washington in 1826. The two of them, Quincy said, emanated “a certain peculiar moral stress and compulsion which I have never felt in the presence of others of their countrymen.” Quincy continued, “Both were of commanding appearance, men whom it seemed natural to obey.”²¹ Quincy thought Joseph was born to lead.

Others came away with the same impression. Sometimes visitors compared him to Sidney Rigdon, who was much better educated and far more polished as an orator. Joseph always deferred to Rigdon in giving sermons on great occasions, but despite Sidney’s accomplishments, visitors recognized Joseph’s superior powers. Peter Burnett said of Joseph, “Among the Mormons he had much greater influence than Sidney Rigdon. The latter was a man of superior education, an eloquent speaker, of fine appearance and dignified manners; but he did not possess the native intellect of Smith, and lacked his determined will.” Burnett was impressed that Joseph was absolutely rock hard in his resolve. “He possessed the most indomitable perseverance,” Burnett said. Joseph “deemed himself born to command, and he did command.”²²

Looking back now, we can see the necessity of having such a forceful and unyielding person at the opening of the last dispensation. Joseph was repeatedly asked to carry out incredibly difficult errands for the Lord. Like Frodo’s in *Lord of the Rings*, Joseph’s assignments were impossibly difficult—like translating the gold plates or building the city of Zion. These tasks would have defeated the most experienced and well-connected men. They were assigned to Joseph when he had nothing. Yet he simply went and did them. He let nothing stand in the way. For years the Church existed almost entirely in his mind. He had to compel it into existence by sheer force of will. That effort required a man of rock-hard determination.

One wonders how someone as ill-prepared as Joseph Smith was for leadership acquired this immense confidence. He was unschooled, was without social standing, and had no institutional backing. As one visitor to Kirtland said of him in 1832, he was “no more than any ignorant plough-boy.”²³ Everything he did, he did with precious little help. The Church was created out of nothing. Most religious reformers began with a church institution; Joseph began with nothing. And yet he forged ahead without hesitation, never wavering in the face of ferocious opposition. He was not cowed by learning or political position or social eminence. He seems to have been perfectly sure of himself.

Surely such confidence can arise only out of inner experiences so powerful they overwhelm everything else. Joseph could have acted so decisively and confidently only with the assurance that God was behind him. In this I think we can see the direct imprint of revelation on his character.

Love and Enthusiasm

Finally, I come to love and enthusiasm. I leave these for last in order to emphasize them. We frequently see Joseph in his leadership position exhibiting the strength that enabled him to prevail. Dazzled by his power, we may overlook his soft qualities: his inner yearnings, his deep affections, his love. Yet nothing comes through more forcefully in his personal letters—especially the ones he wrote home. Invariably the letters expressed his love for his wife and children. From his place of confinement at Richmond in 1838, after being torn from his family at Far West, he wrote of his yearnings: “Oh God grant that I may have the privaliege of seeing once more my lovely Family, in the injoyment, of the sweets of liberty, and sotiaial life, to press them to my bosam and kissingg their lovely cheeks would fill my heart with unspeakable ~~great~~ grattitude.”²⁴ He spoke frequently of his children in his letters. On his visit to New York, impressions of the city so flooded his thoughts he had to return to his room to calm his mind, and then thoughts of home came to him. He wrote his wife, “Thoughts of home of Emma and Julia rushes upon my mind like a flood and I could wish for [a] moment to be with them[.] my breast is filld with all the feelings and tenderness of a parent and a Husband.”²⁵ Virtually every letter to Emma expressed his affection and respect. While in hiding from the Missouri officers, he wrote to Emma after a visit, “Tongue cannot express the gratitude of my heart, for the warm and true-hearted friendship you have manifested.”²⁶ His letter from Carthage on the eve of his death was no different: “May God Almighty bless you & the children & Mother & all my friends.”²⁷

His love went out to all his friends and brethren. Even in prison, he saw himself as bound in the bonds of brotherhood as well as captivity. In November 1838 after the militia occupied Far West, Joseph was imprisoned in Richmond, Missouri, where he and his fellow prisoners were chained to one another to prevent escape. Instead of complaining about their miseries, Joseph wrote to Emma, “Brother Robison is chained next to me he ~~he~~ has a true heart and a firm mind, Brother Whight, is next, Br. Rigdon, next, Hiram, next, Parely, next, Amasa, next, and thus we are bound together in chains as well as the cords of everlasting love.”²⁸

Along with his familial and brotherly feelings, I think Joseph also had more of a personal relationship with the Savior than we ordinarily see. I once had thought of Joseph as an external person. We see him receiving revelations, building the kingdom, and being active and extroverted, not reflective or internal. But his letters reveal his personal feelings for Christ.

In 1832 he was stranded for a month in a small Indiana town tending Newel K. Whitney, who had broken a leg after it was caught in the wheel of

a runaway carriage. During the wait, Joseph was forced into inactivity. Each day, he went into a grove outside town to think and pray. He was restless and eager to be on his way back to Emma. Writing home, he told her of his effort to be patient: “I will try to be contented with my lot knowing that God is my friend in him I shall find comfort I have given my life into his hands I am prepared to go at his Call I desire to be with Christ I Count not my life dear to me only to do his will.”²⁹

I am not sure it is absolutely necessary that Joseph Smith should have been an admirable character. God no doubt can reveal his will to a perfect bear of a man. But I do think Joseph was a happy combination of power and love. He was forceful but openhearted. Under his strength was extraordinary humility and candor.

In December 1835, when he was preparing for the temple dedication, some friends in Kirtland cut wood for his family. He was deeply touched by this kindness and could barely find words enough to express his thanks: “I am sincerely grateful to each and every, one of them, for this expression of their goodness towards me.” Not content with that, he went on to record a long blessing on the friendly woodcutters. As he wrote, he moved from simple gratitude to an exalted view of the woodcutters’ possibilities. Reading the passage, you can follow the theological ascent:

In the name of Jesus Christ I invoke the rich benediction of heav[e]n to rest upon them ~~even all~~ and their families, and I ask my heavenly Father to preserve their health’s and those of their wives and children, that they may have strength of body to perform, their labours, in their several occupations in life, and the use and activity of their limbs, also powers of intellect and understanding hearts, that they may treasure up wisdom, ~~and~~ understanding, ~~until~~ and intelligence, above measure, and be preserved from plagues pestilence, and famine, and from the power of the adversary, and the hands of evil designing, men and have power over all their enemys; and the way be prepared before them, that they may journey to the land of Zion and be established, on their inheritances, to enjoy undisturbe[d] peace and happiness for ever, and ultimately to be crowned with everlasting life in the celestial Kingdom of God, which blessings I ask in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.³⁰

That desire to bless his friends ran strong in Joseph. He wanted them to thrive, but more than that, to be exalted. He began with the woodcutters’ health and ended with “everlasting life in the celestial Kingdom of God.” People loved him because he believed in them. Under the woodcutters’ shabby clothes and rough manners, he saw people on their way to godhood. They were, in his eyes, divine.

That unbounded love for his friends was probably the most compelling of Joseph’s qualities. The combination of personal warmth and elevated

doctrine made him irresistible. Five days after arriving in Nauvoo, English convert William Clayton wrote home about Joseph, “Last night many of us was in company with Brother Joseph, our hearts rejoiced to hear him speak of the things of the Kingdom, he is an affectionate man and as familiar as any of us. We feel to love him much and so will you.”³¹

One hundred and sixty years later, William Clayton’s expectation has been fulfilled in the lives of many Latter-day Saints, who, like the English Saints, love Joseph much.

Richard Lyman Bushman (rlb7@columbia.edu) is Gouverneur Morris Professor of History Emeritus at Columbia University and Chair of the Executive Committee at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, Brigham Young University. This article was originally given as a Brigham Young University forum address on November 19, 2002.

1. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 343, 355.

2. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 343.

3. On the composition of Joseph Smith’s history, see Dean C. Jessee, “The Writing of Joseph Smith’s History,” *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (1971): 439–73; and Dean C. Jessee, “The Reliability of Joseph Smith’s History,” *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 23–46.

4. Dean C. Jessee, ed. and comp., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002).

5. The Joseph Smith Papers project will publish all surviving documents that were part of Joseph Smith’s papers, including diaries, letters, revelations, and financial and legal records. Volumes will begin appearing in 2004.

6. Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 28, 2.

7. Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps and others, Kirtland, Ohio, August 18, 1833, quoted in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 309, 307.

8. Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 430–46. The letter is discussed in Dean C. Jessee and John W. Welch, “Revelations in Context: Joseph Smith’s Letter from Liberty Jail, March 20, 1839,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 125–45.

9. Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 441. See also Doctrine and Covenants 121:43.

10. *Times and Season* 2 (January 15, 1841): 287. Also in Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 4:274.

11. Quoted in Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith: Prophet’s Wife, “Elect Lady,” Polygamy’s Foe, 1804–1879* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 61.

12. Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs, 1903, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 4. Reprinted in E. Dale LeBaron, *Benjamin Franklin Johnson: Friend to the Prophets* (Provo, Utah: Benjamin F. Johnson Family Organization, 1997), 221.

13. The major explication of the culture of honor focused on the South with sidelong glances at New England. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). More recent studies are Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001); Douglas L. Wilson, *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1998); and Frank Henderson Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

14. Joseph Smith to Thomas Sharp, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 26, 1841, *Warsaw* (Illinois) *Signal*, June 2, 1841, 2.

15. Peter H. Burnett (1807–1895), *An Old California Pioneer, by Peter H. Burnett, First Governor of the State* (Oakland, Calif.: Biobooks, 1946), reprinted from *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer* (New York: D. Appleton, 1880), 40.

16. *History of the Church*, 5:401.

17. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 2:146–47.

18. On this transition in another context, see Robert Shoemaker, “Male Honour and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth-Century London,” *Social History* 26 (May 2001): 190–208.

19. Robert J. Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants, Volumes I, II, and III” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 1:116, 128.

20. Dean C. Jessee, “Howard Coray’s Recollections of Joseph Smith,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 3 (1977): 344–45.

21. Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past: From the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1892), 317, 279. See also Jed Woodworth, “Josiah Quincy’s 1844 Visit with Joseph Smith,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000): 71–87.

22. Burnett, *Old California Pioneer*, 40.

23. Nancy Towle, *Vicissitudes Illustrated, in the Experience of Nancy Towle in Europe and America* (Portsmouth: John Caldwell, 1833), 157.

24. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, Richmond [Missouri], November 12, 1838, quoted in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 405.

25. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, New York City, October 13, 1832, quoted in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 278.

26. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, Nauvoo, August 16, 1842, quoted in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 554.

27. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, Safety [Montrose, Iowa], June 23, 1844, quoted in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 616.

28. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, Richmond [Missouri], November 12, 1838, quoted in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 406.

29. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, Greenville, Indiana, June 6, 1832, quoted in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 264–65.

30. Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:99–100.

31. William Clayton to Edward Martin, November 29, 1840, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; quoted in George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 81 n. 82.