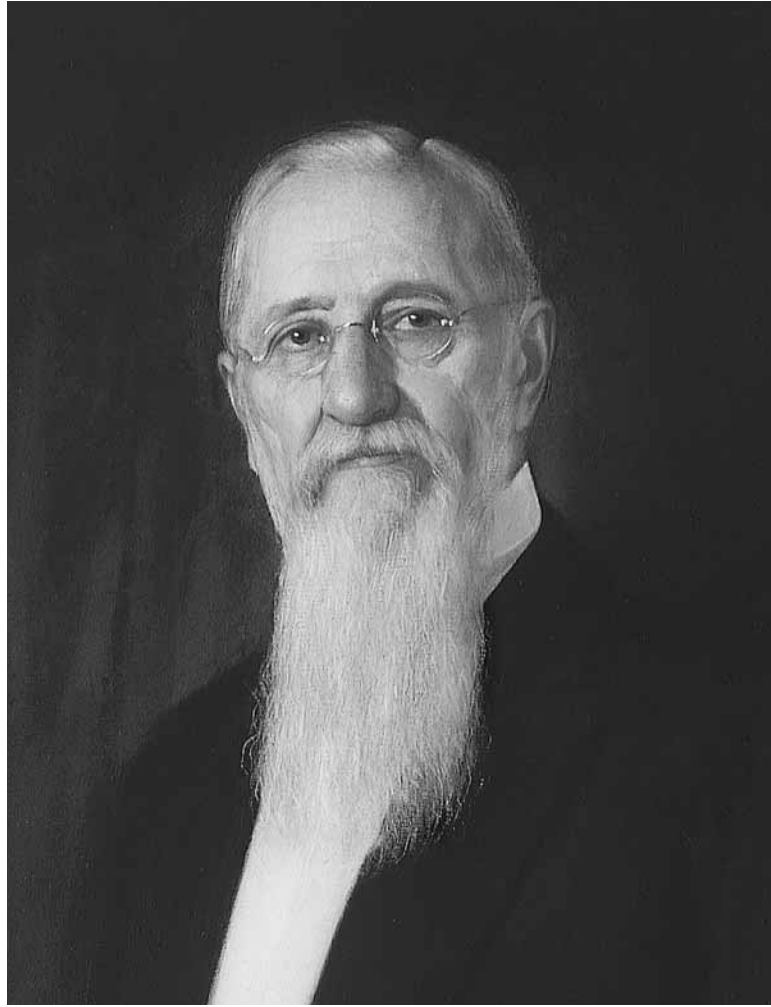


Joseph F. Smith

SIXTH PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH



HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH F. SMITH

Age Events

- He was born 13 November 1838 in Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri, to Hyrum and Mary Fielding Smith.
- 5 His father, Hyrum Smith, was martyred (27 June 1844).
- 9 He drove an ox team across the plains from Winter Quarters to the Salt Lake Valley (1848)
- 13 His mother, Mary Fielding Smith, died (21 Sept. 1852).
- 15–19 He served a mission in Hawaii (1854–57).
- 19 He served in the Echo Canyon campaign of the Utah War (1857).
- 21 He married Levira A. Smith (5 Apr. 1859).
- 21–24 He served a mission to Great Britain (1860–63).
- 25 He served a special mission to Hawaii (1864).
- 27–35 He began serving as a member of the Territorial House of Representatives (1865–74).
- 27 He was ordained an Apostle and set apart as a counselor to President Brigham Young (1 July 1866; he also served as a counselor to Presidents John Taylor, 1880–87; Wilford Woodruff, 1889–98; and Lorenzo Snow, 1898–1901).
- 28 He was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (8 Oct. 1867).
- 35 He served as president of the European Mission (1874–75).
- 39 He served a mission to the eastern United States to obtain information on the history of the Church (1878).
- 46 He went into voluntary exile because of persecution for practicing plural marriage (1884–91).
- 51 The Manifesto ending plural marriage (Official Declaration 1) was issued (1890).
- 54 He served as a member of the Constitutional Convention for the state of Utah (1893).
- 62 He was ordained and set apart as President of the Church (17 Oct. 1901; he was sustained 10 Nov.).
- 65 He testified before Congress (2–9 Mar. 1904); he issued a second manifesto on plural marriage (6 Apr. 1904).
- 67 He was the first Church President to tour Europe during his administration (summer, 1906).
- 70 The First Presidency issued an official statement on the origin of man (Nov. 1909).
- 74 The family home evening program was introduced (1915).
- 75 The First Presidency issued a doctrinal exposition on the Father and the Son (1916).
- 79 He received a vision of the redemption of the dead (D&C 138; 3 Oct. 1918).
- 80 He died in Salt Lake City, Utah (19 Nov. 1918).

Joseph F. Smith was born on 13 November 1838 during a period of severe persecution of the Saints of God. His father, Hyrum Smith, along with his uncle, the Prophet Joseph Smith, were imprisoned in Liberty Jail. His mother, Mary Fielding Smith, ill from physical and emotional strain, needed help taking care of him and Hyrum's five other children.

HE WAS BORN DURING TURBULENT TIMES



Mary Fielding Smith,
mother of Joseph F. Smith

Mary's serious condition had been aggravated emotionally when her husband was yanked away from their home at bayonet point. A fiendish guard told Mary to say her last farewell to Hyrum, for she need not suppose she would see him alive again. She suffered under these circumstances while waiting for the birth of her first child (which occurred two weeks later). She named the new baby after her beloved brother, Joseph Fielding. She had been so taxed that she did not have sufficient strength to nurse her little son. Her sister Mercy (whose husband had been forced to flee to save his life) moved in to care for her and nurse the baby.

Members of the militia had forced their way into many homes on the pretext of searching for arms, but

Members of the militia gathered outside the home of Hyrum Smith in Far West, Missouri. The voice of Samuel Bogart, a fiery preacher who had been a major force in inspiring mob hatred toward the Saints, could be heard inside the house where Mary Fielding Smith lay sick in bed. Her sister, Mercy Thompson, concerned that Mary might not recover from her illness, tried to quiet her own fears and reassure her sister.



Hyrum Smith, father of Joseph F. Smith

in reality had used the opportunity to plunder and abuse the Saints. Up to this hour the two sisters had not been molested, but in a moment the ruffians were within their home. Not caring for anyone's condition, the mobbers forced all but the baby, Joseph F., into one area of the house and then began to loot and pillage. They broke into a trunk and helped themselves to its contents. In another room, some of the mob picked up a bed and threw it on top of another bed during their frantic search for loot. In their disregard for life they had buried the infant Joseph F. beneath the suffocating weight of the bedding.

Having taken what they wanted, the mob departed as swiftly as it had come. It took some moments for the household to recover from this invasion. Suddenly Joseph F. was remembered. With great anxiety the quilts and blankets were pulled from the bed and the small baby recovered. Though buried for some time and blue from lack of oxygen, he had been spared from death. Mary held the tiny infant in her arms, grateful that he had survived.

Elder Samuel O. Bennion, a member of the Seventy, testified: "I believe that the Lord knew him before he ever came here, and I believe that when Joseph F. Smith was born in Missouri that God knew him, and I believe that Lucifer, the 'son of the morning,' knew him, and that he, the adversary of all good, sought to destroy him. . . . I believe that he was recognized by Lucifer, that he was to become a great leader in Israel" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1917, 121).

HE WAS MATURE BEYOND HIS YEARS



Mary Fielding Smith and her son Joseph F. traveling to the Salt Lake Valley

Joseph F. Smith's youth was unusually strenuous and served to mature him beyond his years. When he was five years old, his father and uncle were assassinated at Carthage, Illinois. At seven he drove an ox team from Montrose, Iowa, near Nauvoo, to Winter Quarters, more than two hundred miles.

“Mary Smith with her family remained in Nauvoo until the summer of 1846. It was only a day or two before the battle of Nauvoo, when, under threats, she hastily loaded her children in a flat boat with such household effects as could be carried, and crossed the Mississippi to a point near Montrose. There under the trees on the bank of the river the family pitched camp that night, and there they experienced the horror of listening to the bombardment of Nauvoo. . . . Although Joseph was not yet eight years of age, he was required to drive one of the ox teams most of the way from Montrose to Winter Quarters. At this place the family sojourned until the spring of 1848, endeavoring in the meantime, by help from friends who were not prepared to continue on the journey, and by constant toil, to gather sufficient teams and necessities to make the journey across the plains” (Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith* [1938], 131).

When almost nine years old, Joseph F., along with several other boys, was assigned to watch the cattle as they were sent out to graze about two miles from the town of Winter Quarters. One morning as the cattle grazed, the boys mounted their horses and amused themselves by running short races and jumping ditches. Suddenly, they were attacked by Indians.

Joseph F. recalled: “My first impression, or impulse was to save the cattle from being driven off, for in a most incredible short time, I thought of going to the valley; of our dependence upon our cattle, and the horror of being compelled to remain at Winter Quarters. I suited the action to the thought, and at full speed dashed out to head the cattle and if possible turn them towards home” (quoted in Smith, comp. *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 135).

While the others ran for help, Joseph F. tried to drive the cattle back toward the town as fast as he could, but he was unable to outrun the Indians. They soon overtook him. Even so, the boy continued to dodge and run until his horse became winded. He said: “One Indian rode upon the left side and one on the right side of me, and each took me by an arm and leg and lifted me from my horse; they then slackened their speed until my horse run from under me, then they chucked me down with great violence to the ground. Several horses from behind jumped over me, but did not hurt me. My horse was secured by the Indians and without slackening speed they rode on in the direction from whence they had come” (quoted in Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 136).

The chase, however, had taken enough time that men approaching from the fields prevented the Indians’ return. The cattle were saved, but the horse Joseph F. was riding was never found.

HIS MOTHER’S FAITH WAS DEMONSTRATED

While on a trip to procure provisions for the long journey from Winter Quarters to the Salt Lake Valley, young Joseph F. Smith witnessed his mother’s trust and faith in God in overcoming obstacles. Camping by a creek one night near some men with a herd of cattle, Joseph F. turned his family’s oxen out to graze.

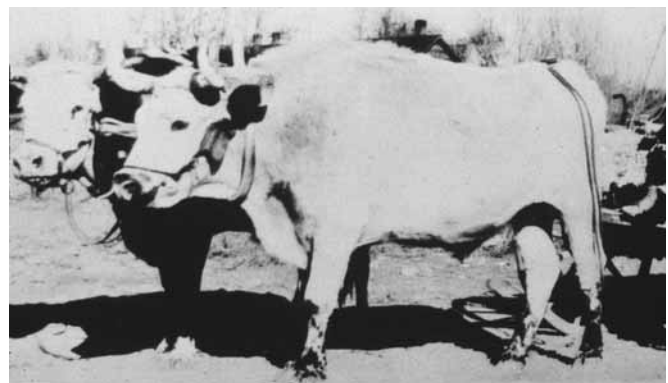
The next morning their best yoke of oxen could not be found.

Joseph F. and his uncle searched all morning until they were both disheartened. He recalled: “I was the first to return to our wagons, and as I approached I saw my mother kneeling down in prayer. I halted for a moment and then drew gently near enough to hear her pleading with the Lord not to suffer us to be left in this helpless condition, but to lead us to recover our lost team, that we might continue our travels in safety. When she arose from her knees I was standing nearby. The first expression I caught upon her precious face was a lovely smile, which discouraged as I was, gave me renewed hope and an assurance I had not felt before” (quoted in Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 132).



Painting by Suscille Maudsley

Mary Fielding Smith



Photograph by Don O. Thorpe

Through prayer, Mary Fielding Smith found her lost oxen.

After Joseph F. and his uncle had returned to camp, Joseph F.’s mother insisted that they eat while she went out to look for the oxen. Her brother tried to dissuade her, insisting that they had looked everywhere. But she was determined to go and walked some distance toward the river. There she was met by one of the men from the cowherd who told her he had seen the oxen headed in the opposite direction from the one in which she was

walking. She ignored him and kept on walking. Upon reaching the river, she turned and beckoned her son and brother. They hurried to her side and, as Joseph F. wrote, “There I saw our oxen fastened to a clump of willows growing in the bottom of a deep gulch which had been washed out of the sandy bank of the river by the little spring creek, perfectly concealed from view. We were not long in releasing them from bondage and getting back to our camp, where the other cattle had been fastened to the wagon wheels all the morning, and we were soon on our way home rejoicing. The worthy herdsmen had suddenly departed when they saw mother would not heed them; I hope they went in search of estray [strayed or lost] honesty, which I trust they found” (quoted in Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 133).

Later, during the journey west, young Joseph F. once again saw the power of his mother’s faith demonstrated. Having traveled a good share of the way to Zion, one of their best oxen fell to the ground. “The ox stiffened out spasmodically evidently in the throes of death. The death of this faithful animal would have been fatal to the progress of Widow Smith on the journey to the valley. . . . Producing a bottle of consecrated oil, Widow Smith asked her brother and James Lawson if they would please administer to the ox just as they would do to a sick person, for it was vital to her interest that the ox be restored that she might pursue her journey. Her earnest plea was complied with. These brethren poured oil on the head of the ox and then laid their hands upon it and rebuked the power of the destroyer just as they would have done if the animal had been a human being. Immediately the ox got up and within a very few moments again pulled in the yoke as if nothing had ever happened. This was a great astonishment to the company. Before the company had proceeded very far another of her oxen fell down as the first, but with the same treatment he also got up, and this was repeated the third time; by administration the oxen were fully healed” (Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 150).



The old adobe home. This home was dismantled and moved to the Pioneer Trails State Park, near the “This Is the Place” monument in Salt Lake City.

Photograph by Don O. Thorpe

AS A BOY, HE WAS DEPENDABLE

Joseph F. Smith recorded: “My principal occupation from 1848 to 1854, was that of herd-boy, although I made a hand always in the harvest field and at threshings, and in the canyons cutting and hauling wood. Though I had the principal care of the family stock, as herd-boy from 1846 to 1854, I cannot recall the loss of a single ‘hoof’ by death, straying away, or otherwise, from neglect or carelessness on my part during that period” (quoted in Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 163).

At one time during the winter of 1848, “he saw a wolf chasing a sheep out in the open field. It was a rainy day and the ground was soft. The wool of the sheep was heavy with moisture which retarded its flight. As the wolf was about to seize the sheep Joseph F. arrived at the rescue and saved the sheep. Although wolves were numerous and bold, Joseph F. was often out on the range after dark, in cold weather, where he would hear the ferocious howls of the marauders. He had a dog to aid him in his work, but at times the dog would become terrified because of the great number of wolves and would crouch at his feet. This was the nature of the amusement accorded to this faithful boy at an age when most boys like to play and engage in athletic sports” (Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 164).



Rescuing a calf from wolves

Painting by Harold I. Hopkinson

HE OVERCAME MANY TRIALS DURING HIS MISSIONS

Soon after his fifteenth birthday, Joseph F. Smith was ordained an elder and called to serve a three-year mission in Hawaii. During his mission he overcame fatigue, severe illness, and material loss by flood and fire. He preached, healed the sick, cast out devils, and presided over numerous branches of the Church.

Elder Charles W. Nibley, then Presiding Bishop of the Church, talked about the challenges overcome by the fifteen-year-old elder: “On this mission to the Sandwich Island [present-day Hawaii], he encountered severe

hardships. I remember on our first trip over to the Islands, and I was over there on four trips with him, that sailing among the different small islands, he would point out to me such and such a place: ‘There is where I lived so long in a little straw hut’—which burned down or which was destroyed by flood. Here was another place where he had lain sick and where the good Hawaiian people had ministered to him. This experience, and the other, he would tell as we journeyed along, all of which, if I had time to relate, are faith-promoting and inspiring, and would point out to you the manliness of the young boy—for he was then, as I told you, fifteen or sixteen years of age” (in Conference Report, June 1919, 62).



Joseph F. Smith, about 1857

of these, and within one hundred days he was speaking the language fluently.

Sometime later he was taken ill again and did not fully recover for three months. Nevertheless, he applied himself to gospel study and to perfecting his language skills. During this second illness he was cared for by a young native brother and his wife. On one occasion the power of the adversary seized the woman of the house, causing her to go through all manner of hideous contortions. Though fearful at first, the boy prayed and found the power by which he successfully rebuked the evil spirit.



Joseph F. Smith’s first mission was to the Hawaiian Islands when he was fifteen years old. This was the type of native Hawaiian grass hut in which he would have frequently stayed.

Shortly after arriving in the islands, Elder Smith became very ill. Kind treatment by friends helped him to recover. Undaunted, he used his convalescent time to study the Hawaiian language.

He had been promised by Elder Parley P. Pratt that he would master the language by faith and study. He applied both

Many years later, Bishop Charles W. Nibley recounted how President Joseph F. Smith was received by the Saints when he returned to Hawaii years after his mission. The members gathered together to greet the prophet as his boat docked at a wharf in Honolulu. He was covered with wreaths of flowers and many tears. During the festivities, Bishop Nibley “noticed a poor, old blind woman tottering under the weight of about ninety years, being led in [to the place where the Saints were gathering]. She had a few choice bananas in her hand. It was her all—her offering. She was calling, ‘Iosepa, Iosepa!’ Instantly, when he saw her, he ran to her and clasped her in his arms, hugged her, and kissed her over and over again, patting her on the head saying, ‘Mama, Mama, my dear old Mama!’

“And with tears streaming down his cheeks he turned to me and said, ‘Charley, she nursed me when I was a boy, sick and without anyone to care for me. She took me in and was a mother to me!’” (quoted in Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 186).

A DREAM ENCOURAGED HIM ON HIS MISSION

As a young missionary—humble, sick, and discouraged—he was strengthened by a dream of his father and mother and of the Prophet Joseph Smith and others. He later wrote:

“I did have a dream one time. To me it was a literal thing; it was a reality.

“I was very much oppressed, once, on a mission. I was almost naked and entirely friendless, except the friendship of a poor, benighted, degraded people. I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look a white man in the face.

“While in that condition I dreamed that I was on a journey, and I was impressed that I ought to hurry—hurry with all my might, for fear I might be too late. . . . Finally I came to a wonderful mansion. . . . I knew that was my destination. As I passed towards it, as fast as I could, I saw a notice, ‘Bath.’ I turned aside quickly and went into the bath and washed myself clean. I opened up this little bundle that I had, and there was a pair of white, clean garments, a thing I had not seen for a long time. . . . I put them on. Then I rushed to what appeared to be a great opening, or door. I knocked and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said: ‘Joseph, you are late.’ Yet I took confidence and said:

“‘Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!’

“He clasped my hand and drew me in, then closed the door. . . . When I entered I saw my father, and

Brigham and Heber, and Willard, and other good men that I had known, standing in a row. . . . My mother was there . . . ; and I could name over as many as I remember of their names who sat there, who seemed to be among the chosen, among the exalted. . . .

“When I awoke that morning I was a man, although only a boy. There was not anything in the world that I feared. . . . That vision, that manifestation and witness that I enjoyed at that time has made me what I am, if I am anything that is good, or clean, or upright before the Lord, if there is anything good in me. That has helped me out in every trial and through every difficulty” (*Gospel Doctrine* [1939], 541–43).

At age twenty-one he married Levira A. Smith; at twenty-two he served his second mission—this time to Great Britain, where he presided over a number of districts. After being home again for only five months, he was called back to the Hawaiian islands on a third mission, where he served as an assistant to two of the Apostles.



Joseph F. Smith

HIS DESIRE WAS TO BEAR A STRONG TESTIMONY

In an 1854 letter from the mission field to his cousin, Elder George A. Smith, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Joseph F. Smith wrote poignantly of his desires:

“I know that the work in which I am engaged is the work of the living and true God, and I am ready to bear my testimony of the same, at any time, or at any place, or in whatsoever circumstances I may be placed; and hope and pray that I ever may prove faithful in serving the Lord, my God. I am happy to say that I am ready to go through thick and thin for this cause in which I am engaged; and truly hope and pray that I may prove faithful to the end. . . .

“Give my love to all the folks; . . . and tell them that I desire an interest in their prayers, that I may hold out faithful, and bear off my calling with honor to myself and the cause in which I am engaged. I had rather die on this mission, than to disgrace myself or my calling. These are the sentiments of my heart. My prayer is that we may hold out faithful to the end, and eventually be

crowned in the kingdom of God, with those that have gone before us” (quoted in Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 176–77).



Book of Mormon in Hawaiian and mission boots

UNDER NO CONDITION WOULD HE DENY HIS TESTIMONY

On his way home from his first mission to Hawaii, Joseph F. Smith and his companions ran into a group of extremists when they camped one evening. The leader of the group swore he would kill anyone who was a Mormon. Pointing his gun at Joseph F. he demanded, “Are you a ‘Mormon?’” Expecting fully for the gun to discharge, nonetheless he answered, “Yes, siree; dyed in the wool; true blue, through and through.” The answer, given boldly and without hesitation, completely disarmed the belligerent man, and in bewilderment all he could do was shake the young man’s hand and praise him for his courage. The men then rode off and did not harm them further (see Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 189).



Joseph F. Smith

Three years later, in 1860, Joseph F. again showed the strength of his conviction. This time he was traveling to serve a mission to England. As he and his companions approached Nauvoo, where they had decided to visit for a while, they found a particularly bitter mob spirit and threats of murder. Although Joseph F. and his companions had been evasive about revealing who they were, so as to avoid trouble, a Catholic priest asked them directly if they were

Mormon elders. At that moment the temptation to deny the truth was very strong; but resisting, Joseph F. said they were. The reply satisfied the priest and did not incur the anger of the other people. When they arrived at Nauvoo, they found themselves in the same quarters as the priest. Joseph F. Smith later stated of this experience, "I had never felt happier . . . than when I saw the minister there, and knew that we had told him the truth about our mission" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 534).

HE WAS CALLED TO BE AN APOSTLE

"July 1, 1866, Joseph F. Smith met with President Brigham Young and a number of the Apostles in the upper room in the Historian's Office, in a council and prayer meeting according to the custom of the presiding brethren; Joseph F. was the secretary of this council. After the close of the prayer circle, President Brigham Young suddenly turned to his brethren and said, 'Hold on, shall I do as I feel [led]? I always feel well to do as the Spirit constrains me. It is my mind to ordain Brother Joseph F. Smith to the Apostleship, and to be one of my counselors.' He then called upon each of the brethren present for an expression of their feelings, and each responded individually stating that such action met with their hearty approval. The brethren then laid their hands upon the head of Joseph F." (Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 226–27).



Joseph F. Smith, about 1874

A little over a year after being ordained an Apostle, Elder Smith was set apart as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. While an Apostle, he served as a counselor in the First Presidency, president of the European Mission, a counselor in the MIA, a councilman on both the Salt Lake City and Provo city councils, and as a

member of the territorial legislature. He also presided over the state constitutional convention of 1882.

THE HOME IS THE MOST SACRED INSTITUTION OF HEAVEN

Called to practice plural marriage, Joseph F. Smith received five wives over the years. Thoughtful and kind, he deeply loved his wives and children. Following are some statements he made about the importance of home and family:

"The richest of all my earthly joys is in my precious children" (quoted in Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 449).

"There is no substitute for the home. Its foundation is as ancient as the world, and its mission has been ordained of God from the earliest times. . . . The home then is more than a habitation, it is an institution which stands for stability and love in individuals as well as in nations" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 300).

"The very foundation of the kingdom of God, of righteousness, of progress, of development, of eternal life and eternal increase in the kingdom of God, is laid in the divinely ordained home; and there should be no difficulty in holding in the highest reverence and exalted thought, the home, if it can be built upon the principles of purity, of true affection, of



Joseph F. Smith in his forties

righteousness and justice. The man and his wife who have perfect confidence in each other, and who determine to follow the laws of God in their lives and fulfil the measure of their mission in the earth, would not be, and could never be, contented without the home. Their hearts, their feelings, their minds, their desires would naturally trend toward the building of a home and family and of a kingdom of their own; to the laying of the foundation of eternal increase and power, glory, exaltation and dominion, worlds without end" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 304).

HE TAUGHT ABOUT THE PATRIARCHAL ORDER

President Joseph F. Smith taught:

"There is no higher authority in matters relating to the family organization, and especially when that organization is presided over by one holding the higher Priesthood, than that of the father. The authority is time honored, and among the people of God in all dispensations it has been highly respected and often emphasized by



Joseph F. Smith

the teachings of the prophets who were inspired of God. The patriarchal order is of divine origin and will continue throughout time and eternity. . . . Wives and children should be taught to feel that the patriarchal order in the kingdom of God has been established for a wise and beneficent purpose, and should sustain the head of the household and encourage him in the discharge of his duties, and do all in their power to aid him in the exercise of the rights and privileges which God has bestowed upon the head of the home. This patriarchal order has its divine spirit and purpose, and those who disregard it under one pretext or another are out of harmony with the spirit of God's laws as they are ordained for recognition in the home. It is not merely a question of who is perhaps the best qualified. Neither is it wholly a question of who is living the most worthy life. It is a question largely of law and order, and its importance is seen often from the fact that the authority remains and is respected long after a man is really unworthy to exercise it.

"This authority carries with it a responsibility and a grave one, as well as its rights and privileges, and men can not be too exemplary in their lives, nor fit themselves too carefully to live in harmony with this important and God-ordained rule of conduct in the family organization. Upon this authority certain promises and blessings are predicated, and those who observe and respect this authority have certain claims on divine favor which they cannot have except they respect and observe the laws that God has established for the regulation and authority of the home. 'Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,' was a fundamental law to ancient Israel, and is binding upon every member of the Church today, for the law is eternal" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 286–88).



The Joseph F. Smith family in 1898

FAMILY HOME EVENING WAS INTRODUCED

With the exception of war, perhaps no other factor characterizes the twentieth century better than the battle against the family. Many forces are at work tearing at the foundations of this God-ordained institution. Loud, strong voices full of seductive appeal cry from opposing sides. Abortion, alternate forms of marriage, homosexuality, the so-called women's liberation movement, and the pressure to have no or few children are all loudly proclaimed with every other kind of selfishness. The proponents of these insidious ideas and movements express loud indignation when any defend the most noble God-given institution of the family.



The Joseph F. Smith home on 200 North, Salt Lake City

Long before any of these were critical issues, the Lord inspired President Joseph F. Smith on the need to strengthen the homes of the Saints so that they might effectively combat those forces that would try to pull the home apart. An official announcement issued by the First Presidency in 1915 urged the Saints to begin a program that would be the basis of a strong and happy home. This announcement read, in part, as follows:

"We advise and urge the inauguration of a 'Home Evening' throughout the Church, at which time fathers and mothers may gather their boys and girls about them in the home and teach them the word of the Lord. They may thus learn more fully the needs and requirements of their families; at the same time familiarizing themselves and their children more thoroughly with the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This 'Home Evening' should be devoted to prayer, singing hymns, songs, instrumental music, scripture-reading, family topics and specific instruction on the principles of the Gospel, and on the ethical problems of life, as well as the duties and obligations of children to parents, the home, the Church, society and the Nation. For the smaller children appropriate recitations, songs, stories and games may be introduced. Light refreshments of such a nature as may be largely prepared in the home might be served.

"Formality and stiffness should be studiously avoided, and all the family should participate in the exercises.

“These gatherings will furnish opportunities for mutual confidence between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, as well as give opportunity for words of warning, counsel and advice by parents to their boys and girls. They will provide opportunity for the boys and girls to honor father and mother, and to show their appreciation of the blessings of home so that the promise of the Lord to them may be literally fulfilled and their lives be prolonged and made happy. . . .



Joseph F. Smith, about the time he was called to the apostleship

“If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them” (“Home Evening,” *Improvement Era*, June 1915, 733–34).

HE TOOK TIME AND PUT EFFORT INTO CARING FOR HIS CHILDREN

Bishop Charles W. Nibley, then Presiding Bishop of the Church, stated: “I have visited at his home when one of his little children was down sick. I have seen him come home from his work at night tired, as he naturally would be, and yet he would walk the floor for hours with that little one in his arms, petting it and loving it, encouraging it in every way with such tenderness and such a soul of pity and love as not one mother in a thousand would show” (“Reminiscences of President Joseph F. Smith,” *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1919, 197).

HE SHARED HIS TESTIMONY WITH HIS CHILDREN AND TAUGHT THEM



Joseph F. Smith and his son Joseph Fielding Smith

One of President Joseph F. Smith’s sons, Joseph Fielding Smith, remembering the power of his father’s teachings, said: “On such occasions [when he was home], frequent family meetings were held and he spent his time instructing his children in the principles of the gospel. They one

and all rejoiced in his presence and were grateful for the wonderful words of counsel and instruction which he imparted on these occasions in the midst of anxiety. They have never forgotten what they were taught, and the impressions have remained with them and will likely to do so forever. . . . My father was the most tenderhearted man I ever knew. . . . Among my fondest memories are the hours I have spent by his side discussing principles of the gospel and receiving instruction as only he could give it. In this way the foundation for my own knowledge was laid in truth” (quoted in Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. and John J. Stewart, *The Life of Joseph Fielding Smith* [1972], 40).

RESPONSIBLE PARENTS TEACH THEIR CHILDREN GOSPEL STANDARDS

President Joseph F. Smith counseled the Saints:

“God forbid that there should be many of us so unwisely indulgent, so thoughtless and so shallow in our affection for our children that we dare not check them in a wayward course, in wrong-doing and in their foolish love for the things of the world more than for the things of



Joseph F. Smith, about 1893

righteousness, for fear of offending them. I want to say this: Some people have grown to possess such unlimited confidence in their children that they do not believe it possible for them to be led astray or to do wrong. . . . The result is, they turn them loose, morning, noon, and night, to attend all kinds of entertainments and amusements, often in company with those whom they know not and do not understand. Some of our children are so innocent that they do not suspect evil, and therefore, they are off their guard and are trapped into evil. . . .

“. . . I want to sound a note of warning to the Latter-day Saints. The time has come for them to look after their children. Every device possible to the understanding and ingenuity of cunning men, is being used for the purpose of diverting our children from the faith of the gospel and from the love of the truth. . . . Our children can be led away from their parents and from the faith of the Gospel, only when they are in a condition that they know not the truth for themselves, not having had a proper example before them to impress it upon their minds. . . .

“I may be pardoned, since it is pretty well known everywhere, I believe, that I speak my mind if I speak at all, if I say to you, . . . I would rather take one of my children to the grave than I would see him turn away from this gospel. I would rather follow their bodies to the cemetery, and see them buried in innocence, than I would see them corrupted by the ways of the world” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1909, 4–5).

HE LOVED HIS FAMILY WITH A PURE AND HOLY LOVE



Joseph F. and Julina Smith on their fiftieth wedding anniversary, about 1916

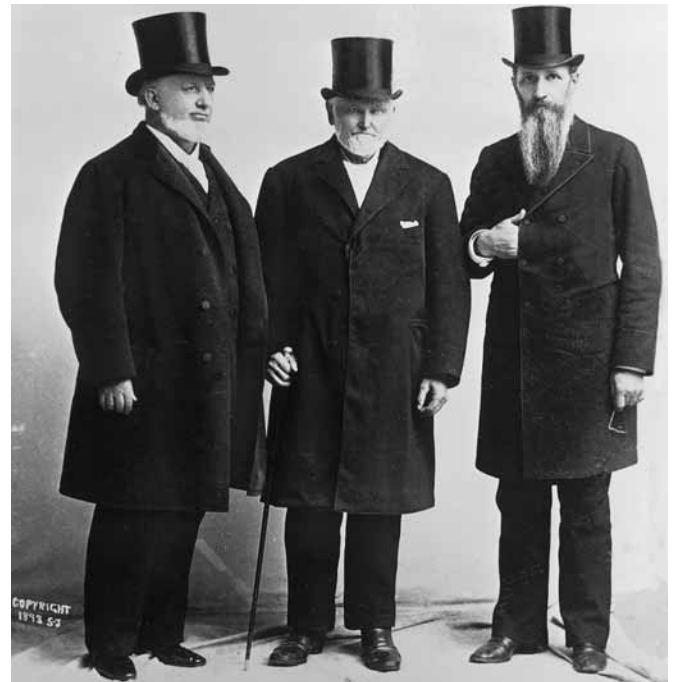
“It would be difficult to find in any part of the world any family where the members manifested greater love and solicitude for each other than in the family of President Joseph F. Smith,” wrote [his son] Joseph Fielding. “No father ever at any age of the world, we feel confident in saying, had a greater love for wife or wives and children, and was more earnestly concerned for their welfare. . . . Out in the world, where marriage is looked upon too frequently merely as a contract, which on the slightest provocation may be broken; where families are constantly racked by disunity, and where, through the action of the divorce courts, children are deprived of the most sacred right of loving parental affection, there is a general feeling that a family such as that of President Smith’s could only be a family of discord and jealous strife and hatred. To the contrary, there was and is no monogamist family which could be more united. To the astonishment of the unbelieving world, the wives loved each other dearly. In times of sickness they tenderly waited upon and nursed each other. When death invaded one of the homes and a child was taken, all wept and mourned together with sincere grief. . . . Two of the wives [Julina and Edna] were skilled and licensed practitioners in obstetrics, and brought many babies into the world. They waited upon each other and upon the other wives, and when babies came all rejoiced equally with the mother.

“The children recognized each other as brothers and sisters, full-fledged not as half, as they would be considered in the world. They defended each and stood by each other no matter which branch of the family was theirs. . . . Joseph F. Smith loved his wives and children with a holy love that is seldom seen, never surpassed.

Like Job of old, he prayed for them night and day and asked the Lord to keep them pure and undefiled in the path of righteousness” (Smith and Stewart, *Life of Joseph Fielding Smith*, 46–47).

HE WAS SEPARATED FROM HIS FAMILY

One of the greatest trials of Joseph F. Smith’s life was being exiled from his family for years; but, under the direction of President John Taylor, he did so to avoid arrest during the so-called “Mormon Crusade,” in which the Church was persecuted for plural marriage. Much of that time he spent in Hawaii directing the work there. Far away, powerless, indignant, and suffering from the most acute illness of his life, he would receive word about the harassment of the Saints, his family’s forced abandonment of their home, the death of a child. But determined, unflinching, he wrote, “Trials are necessary to the perfection of mankind, as friction is necessary to separate the dross of human judgment from the pure gold of divine wisdom” (quoted in Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 280). The day of amnesty finally came, however, and the home found joy as its father returned.



The First Presidency at the time of the Salt Lake Temple dedication, about 1893: George Q. Cannon, Wilford Woodruff, and Joseph F. Smith

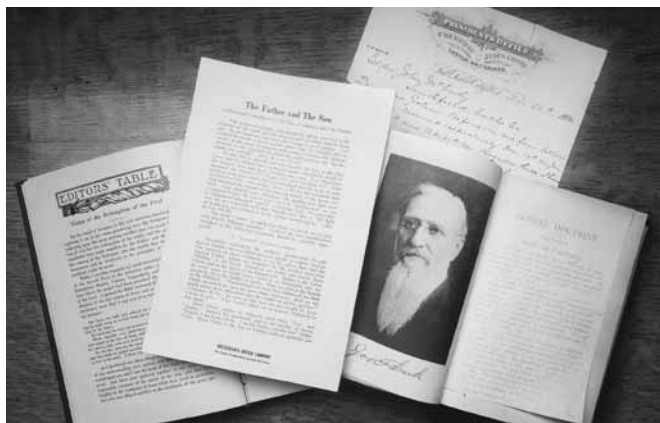
HE KNEW THE GRIEF AND HEARTACHE OF LOSING A CHILD

Ten times Joseph F. Smith and his wives mourned the death of one of their children—children for whom he tenderly and earnestly prayed and helped raise. “In 1898, March 17th, at the passing of another of his

precious babies—Ruth—he related how he had nursed the little one tenderly during her sickness and then prayed earnestly for her recovery. ‘But O, our prayers did not avail!’

“At last I took her in my arms and walked the floor with her and helplessly, powerless to aid my darling, dying child, I watched her feeble breath depart to come no more in time, and her glorious intelligence, her bright angelic spirit took her flight to God from whence she came. It was then about 20 minutes to 8 p.m. With her was swept away all our fond hope and love and joy of earth. Oh! how I loved that child! She was intelligent beyond her years; bright, loving, choice and joyous! But she is gone to join the beauteous and glorious spirits of her brothers and sisters, who have gone before! Sara Ella, M. Josephine, Alfred, Heber, Rhoda, Albert, Robert and John. O my soul! I see my own sweet mother’s arms extended welcoming to her embrace the ransomed glorious spirit of my own sweet babe! O my God! For this glorious vision, I thank Thee! And there too are gathered to my Father’s mansion all my darling lovely ones; not in infantile helplessness, but in all the power and glory and majesty of sanctified spirits! Full of intelligence, of joy and grace, and truth. My darling little petling in her own bright home with those of her brothers and sisters who had preceded her. How blessed, how happy is she! How sorrowful are we!” (Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 463).

HE WAS COURAGEOUS AND UNDAUNTED IN DEFENDING TRUTH



Publications of Joseph F. Smith: *Gospel Doctrine* and *The Father and the Son*

Fearless and articulate, Joseph F. Smith was a powerful preacher and writer. As a tool of the Holy Spirit, he could make tears well, joy distill, and men and women forget the fatigue of a long journey. Once, a veteran newsman became so enthralled with his talk that he forgot to take notes. Joseph F. Smith turned these gifts to the defense of the kingdom—denouncing

its enemies, defending its truths—until he became known as the “Fighting Apostle.”

In a tribute to President Smith, John A. Widtsoe, who would later be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote:

“The Fighting Apostle they called him, as he hurled back the untruths about ‘Mormonism,’ and his relentless watchfulness became a deterrent power among those who planned evil for a good and peaceful people.

“A fighting apostle he has always been—fighting for the cause of truth” (quoted in Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 511). (See *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 431–34, for more details concerning the persecutions of the Saints during the anti-polygamy years.)

HE WAS CALLED AS PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH



President Joseph F. Smith

At the death of President Lorenzo Snow in 1901, the office of President of the Church rested upon the shoulders of Joseph F. Smith. Several leading brethren had long before felt that Joseph F. would become president of the Church.

“Both Presidents Wilford Woodruff and Lorenzo Snow had prophesied that Joseph F. Smith would sometime

become president of the Church. Thirty-seven years earlier in the Hawaiian Islands when President Snow, then a member of the Council of Twelve, nearly lost his life by drowning, he declared that the Lord made known to him ‘that this young man, Joseph F. Smith . . . would some day be the Prophet of God on the earth.’ President Woodruff was once relating to a group of children some incidents in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. ‘He turned to Elder Joseph F. Smith and asked him to arise to his feet. Elder Smith complied. “Look at him, children,” Wilford Woodruff said, “for he resembles the Prophet Joseph more than any man living. He will become the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I want everyone of you to remember what I have told you this morning.”’ After President Woodruff’s death, President Snow told Joseph F. Smith that the spirit of God whispered to him that he, Joseph, would succeed him, Lorenzo, as president of the Church” (Smith and Stewart, *Life of Joseph Fielding Smith*, 124).



In 1906, President Smith and Charles W. Nibley of the Presiding Bishopric toured the European missions of the Church. It was the first time a President of the Church had visited Europe. President Smith returned to Europe in 1910 for a similar tour. He is shown in the lower left-hand corner of the photograph.

President Heber J. Grant said: “Lorenzo Snow was drowned in the harbor of Honolulu, in the Hawaiian Islands, and it took some hours to bring him to life again. At that particular time the Lord revealed to him the fact that the young man Joseph F. Smith, who had refused to get off the vessel that had carried them from San Francisco to Honolulu, and get into a small boat, would some day be the Prophet of God. Answering Lorenzo Snow who was in charge of the company, he said: ‘If you by the authority of the Priesthood of God, which you hold, tell me to get into that boat and attempt to land, I will do so, but unless you command me in the authority of the Priesthood, I will not do so, because it is not safe to attempt to land in a small boat while this typhoon is raging.’ They laughed at the young man Joseph F. Smith, but he said, ‘The boat will capsize.’ The others got into the boat, and it did capsize; and but for the blessings of the Lord in resuscitating Lorenzo Snow he would not have lived, because he was drowned upon that occasion. It was revealed to him, then and there, that the boy, with the courage of his convictions, with the iron will to be laughed at and scorned as lacking courage to go in that boat, and who stayed on that vessel, would yet be the Prophet of God. Lorenzo Snow told me this upon

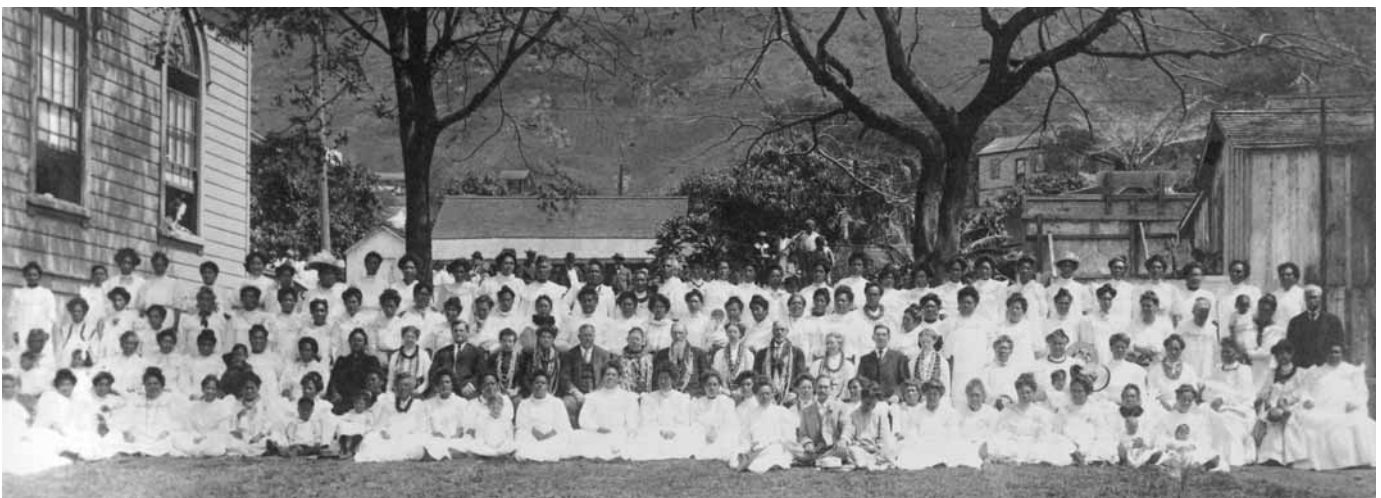
more than one occasion, long years before Joseph F. Smith came to the presidency of the Church” (in Conference Report, June 1919, 10–11).



President Smith in the British Isles, 1906

Elder Melvin J. Ballard, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and closely associated with President Smith, said: “I recall my early recollections of President Smith with a good deal of pleasure—because I admired him, he was to me my ideal, I tried in my life, as I became acquainted with him, to be as he was. I knew as a child, for the Lord revealed it unto me, that President Smith would some day preside over this Church; and in connection with that I saw many things that President Smith would do; and when, last October, he stood before the congregations of the Saints, . . . I knew that all that the Lord had for President Smith to do had been done. That which I saw as a child was fulfilled, finished, completed” (in Conference Report, June 1919, 68).

As President of the Church, Joseph F. Smith continued the emphasis on tithing begun by President Lorenzo Snow and finally saw the Church free from debt. He issued doctrinal statements and was a great instrument in turning away hatred, bigotry, and persecution.



President Smith in Hawaii, about 1909

AS PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH, HE CAME UNDER PERSONAL ATTACK

After the crusade against plural marriage lessened, many men applied for and received amnesty. Joseph F. Smith was one of those men. By the time he became President of the Church in 1901, the persecutions of the late nineteenth century were a thing of the past. But the trials he would face were not yet over. An anti-Mormon political party was organized in Utah. This party launched a massive verbal attack against the prophet and the Church. The chief organ of this attack was the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

Vilified and lampooned in newspapers, maliciously lied about, the “Fighting Apostle” would not so much as write a letter in his own defense. “During these years [1905 to 1911] this newspaper almost daily cartooned President Joseph F. Smith with a spirit of wicked and malicious villification [*sic*]. These papers were scattered all over the United States, and naturally, appearing day by day and month after month, the people of the nation and even beyond the borders of the United States, reached the conclusion that the President of the Church, Joseph F. Smith, was the lowest and most despicable character in all the world. Missionaries out in the world were made to suffer and were persecuted and insulted in all parts of the earth. Yet during it all the Church continued to grow” (Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 350).



The First Presidency, 1901–10: John R. Winder, Joseph F. Smith, and John H. Smith

“Joseph F. Smith endured persecution, the revilings and ravings of the wicked, false accusations coming from the most contemptible and vilest creatures of the human family, and endured it all without a word of retaliation. . . . He took the stand that if Joseph Smith could endure the abuse and vilification which was heaped upon him; if the Son of God could endure it and not return in kind, then he, too, as the humble servant of the Master, could endure in silence, for his fear was not in the arm of flesh but in the Lord, and the time must come when truth would triumph and the falsifier would sink into oblivion and be forgotten” (Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 439).

He insisted all must be forgiven. Truth would eventually dominate. Indeed it did. Upon his death, many of those who had been bitter enemies, enlightened by the purity and strictness of his life, wrote words of sorrow and praise.

HE TESTIFIED BEFORE CONGRESS



In Washington, D.C., lobbying for Utah's statehood in the 1890s

A chilly wind tugged at President Joseph F. Smith's overcoat as he mounted the steps to the senate chambers of the United States Capitol Building in March 1904. The responsibility he bore was ominous. Assembled in a large committee room were men of tremendous power and influence—United States senators. Their expressed purpose for meeting was to examine whether or not Reed Smoot, senator from Utah and an Apostle of the Church, would be allowed to retain his seat as a member of the Senate. But their real motive was far different.

Some of the senators making up the committee of investigation were bitterly hostile toward the Church. Only one of the fourteen senators who comprised this committee would initially show any sympathy or concern. Most of the others wanted to use their influence to embarrass and defame the Church, its president, and its members.

President Smith was called to testify as the first witness. As he climbed the long steps he was fully aware of the real issue and its magnitude. It was not Reed Smoot who was on trial, but the Church. Newspapers across the country would carry reports of the hearings as front-page news. Many of these would be anxious to print anything that would put the Church in a bad light. Yet President Smith was confident.

How different was this tall prophet from the boy who, years before as a missionary to the Hawaiian Islands, had felt “as if I was so debased in my condition of poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge . . . that

I hardly dared look a white man in the face” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 542).



President Smith in the Sacred Grove, 1905

For three days President Joseph F. Smith testified before the Senate committee in defense of Reed Smoot. His sincerity, his openness, and his candor greatly affected some of the members of the committee. Misunderstanding and bigotry began to melt. Though there were those of anti-Mormon sentiment who testified against the Church, many of those called to testify actually told the Church’s story. These testimonies were recorded by the press and many people, for the first time, read and understood the Church’s views and teachings. Everywhere attitudes began to change, and the Church gained acceptance. President Smith’s testimony would require more than two hundred pages in the official record.

Bishop Charles W. Nibley related a discussion he had with President Smith concerning his appearance before the Congress:

“I recall one night we were on shipboard returning from Europe, in 1906. It was a bright moonlight night, and we stood there leaning over the railing enjoying the smooth sea and balmy summer night air. The Smoot

investigation, which had just occurred a little while before and which had stirred up so much controversy throughout the land was fresh in our minds, and we were talking of it. I took the position that it would be unwise for Reed Smoot to be re-elected to the United States Senate. I was conscientious in my objection, and I had marshaled all the facts, arguments, and logic, that I could; and I was well informed, I thought, on the subject, and had presented them to him in as clear and yet in as adroit a manner as I possibly could. It would take too much space here to go over the arguments, but it seemed to me that I had the best of it. I could see he began to listen with some little impatience, and yet he let me have my say, but he answered in tones and in a way that I shall never forget. Bringing his fist down with some force on the railing between us, he said, in the most forceful and positive manner:



The First Presidency, 1910: Anthon H. Lund, Joseph F. Smith, and John H. Smith

“If ever the Spirit of the Lord has manifested to me anything clear and plain and positive, it is this, that Reed Smoot should remain in the United States Senate. He can do more good there than he can anywhere else.’

“Of course, I did not contend further with him, but accepted from that hour his view of the case and made it mine, too. Twelve years have passed since that time, and looking back on it now, I cannot help but think how marvelously and splendidly the inspiration of the Almighty has been vindicated, while my argument, facts and logic have all fallen to the ground” (*Improvement Era*, Jan. 1919, 195).

Reed Smoot served in the United States Senate for thirty years.

HE IDENTIFIED THREE DANGERS THAT THE CHURCH FACES

President Joseph F. Smith warned:

“There are at least three dangers that threaten the Church within, and the authorities need to awaken to the fact that the people should be warned unceasingly against them. As I see these, they are flattery of prominent men in the world, false educational ideas, and sexual impurity. . . .

“. . . The third subject mentioned—personal purity, is perhaps of greater importance than either of the other two. We believe in one standard of morality for men and women. If purity of life is neglected, all other dangers set in upon us like the rivers of waters when the flood gates are opened” (“Three Threatening Dangers, *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1914, 476–77).

HE STRESSED THE NEED FOR MORAL CLEANLINESS

In an article that President Joseph F. Smith wrote for and at the request of the Newspaper Enterprise Association of San Francisco, California, he declared:

“No more loathsome cancer disfigures the body and soul of society today than the frightful affliction of sexual sin. It vitiates the very fountains of life, and bequeaths its foul effects to the yet unborn as a legacy of death. It lurks in hamlet and city, in the mansion and in the hovel as a ravaging beast in wait for prey; and it skulks through the land in blasphemous defiance of the laws of God and man.



Joseph F. Smith



Laie Hawaii Temple site. President Smith visited the Hawaiian Islands four times during his administration. While visiting in 1915, he selected and dedicated this site for the temple at Laie, Oahu. Pictured is a meetinghouse that was begun in 1882. The temple was dedicated in 1919, one year after President Smith's death.

“The lawful association of the sexes is ordained of God, not only as the sole means of race perpetuation,

but for the development of the higher faculties and nobler traits of human nature, which the love-inspired companionship of man and woman alone can insure. . . .

“Sexual union is lawful in wedlock, and, if participated in with the right intent is honorable and sanctifying. *But without the bonds of marriage, sexual indulgence is a debasing sin, abominable in the sight of Deity.* . . .

“Like many bodily diseases, sexual crime drags with itself a train of other ills. As the physical effects of drunkenness entail the deterioration of tissue, and disturbance of vital functions, and so render the body receptive to any distemper to which it may be exposed, and at the same time lower the powers of resistance even to fatal deficiency, so does unchastity expose the soul to divers spiritual maladies, and rob it of both resistance and recuperative ability. The adulterous generation of Christ's day were deaf to the voice of truth, and through their diseased state of mind and heart, sought after signs and preferred empty fable to the message of salvation” (“Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age,” *Improvement Era*, June 1917, 739, 742–43).

HE LIVED IN CLOSE COMMUNION WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

Bishop Charles W. Nibley wrote:

“As we were returning from an eastern trip, some years ago, on the train just east of Green River, I saw him go out to the end of the car on the platform, and immediately return and hesitate a moment, and then sit down in the seat just ahead of me. He had just taken his seat when something went wrong with the train. A broken rail had been the means of ditching the engine and had thrown most of the cars off the track. In the sleeper we were shaken up pretty badly, but our car remained on the track.



President Smith, about 1917

“The President immediately said to me that he had gone on the platform when he heard a voice saying, ‘Go in and sit down.’

“He came in, and I noticed him stand a moment, and he seemed to hesitate, but he sat down.

“He said further that as he came in and stood in the aisle he thought, ‘Oh, pshaw, perhaps it is only my imagination;’ when he heard the voice again,

‘Sit down,’ and he immediately took his seat, and the result was as I have stated.

“He, no doubt, would have been very seriously injured had he remained on the platform of that car, as the cars were all jammed up together pretty badly. He said, ‘I have heard that voice a good many times in my life, and I have always profited by obeying it.’ . . .

“He lived in close communion with the Spirit of the Lord, and his life was so exemplary and chaste that the Lord could easily manifest himself to his servant. Truly he could say ‘Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.’ Not every servant can hear when He speaks. But the heart of President Smith was attuned to the Celestial melodies—he could hear, and did hear” (*Improvement Era*, Jan. 1919, 197–98).

HE HAD A VISION OF THE REDEMPTION OF THE DEAD

During the last months of his life, the veil was very thin and he was in continuous communication with the Spirit. On 4 October 1918, in the opening discourse to his last general conference, one month before he died, he declared: “I will not, I dare not, attempt to enter upon many things that are resting upon my mind this morning, and I shall postpone until some future time, the Lord being willing, my attempt to tell you some of the things that are in my mind, and that dwell in my heart. I have not lived alone these five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and of determination; and I have had my communication with the Spirit of the Lord continuously” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1918, 2).

The day before, 3 October 1918, the heavens were opened and he beheld a vision of the redemption of the dead, wherein he saw the ministry of the Lord in the spirit world. This great revelation is now included in the Doctrine and Covenants as section 138.

HE TRIUMPHED OVER HIS TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS



President Joseph F. Smith

President Joseph F. Smith’s life drew to a close on 19 November 1918. His life had not been easy, yet his character, temperament, and faith were such that he was not overcome by the trials he faced. Those trials helped refine him so that he could behold and reveal those things of the Spirit that the Lord needed made known to His children.

Elder James E. Talmage, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, declared: “I do bear witness to you that Joseph F. Smith was one of the real apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have listened to his ringing words of testimony and warning before the assemblies of thousands, and I have sat with him, on very rare occasions, alone; and on occasions less rare, but still not common, with my brethren and associates, I have heard him preach in conversation, and I have never seen his face so enlightened nor his frame so thrilled with power as when he was bearing testimony of the Christ. He seemed to me to know Jesus Christ as a man knows his friend” (in Conference Report, June 1919, 59).

In greatness, Joseph F. Smith served and led the Church. He refused to let adversity canker his soul or diminish his love. With humble endurance came power; the veil drew thin, and he was permitted to see the Savior, the spirit world, and the things of God. To the end of his life he bore a fervent witness of Christ, whose servant he was.