

Kevin Folkman

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Letters from Joseph F. Smith to His Adopted Son Edward Arthur Smith

Sometime in the mid-1940s, LaVon Lyons Moore saw a piece of paper blowing around in her grandmother's backyard. As she picked up the paper to throw it in the trash, she realized it was a letter written on First Presidency stationery from Joseph F. Smith to her late grandfather Edward Arthur Smith. A quick scramble recovered at least twenty-five letters to Edward, Joseph's adopted son, but many more were lost to a fire in a backyard fireplace. Edward's widow, Cytha Ellen "Ella" Smith, was apparently feeding the fire without thought to the value of the letters in her possession.¹

From these letters, we learn that Edward and his adopted father sustained a frequent and regular correspondence throughout their lives. The surviving letters from Joseph F. Smith show an affectionate and concerned father and offer glimpses into his personal, professional, and religious life. Joseph wrote about parental concerns, shared family news, and discussed with Edward many of his own struggles as a father and Church leader. More importantly, Joseph F. Smith took great interest in building young Edward's character and responsibilities to

Kevin Folkman is an independent researcher and historian living in Redmond, Washington.

his family and his church. The correspondence ended only when Edward died an early death in Raymond, Alberta, Canada, in 1911.

For this article, I have reviewed the contents of these letters and selected the most frequently referenced topics, which cover education and personal development, the importance of work, family health issues, and religious doctrine and instruction. I will also place these letters in the context of the life of Joseph F. Smith and the larger events that shaped the lives of both men.

Biographical Information

While serving as a missionary in England, Joseph F. Smith met the family of an impoverished coal miner and his wife. One of the children was a boy, Edward Arthur Thorpe, born in 1858 in Brampton, Derbyshire, England.² The family gave Edward up to be adopted by Joseph. Little has been known in the Church at large about Edward Arthur Smith, and he is barely acknowledged in the current biographies of Joseph F. Smith.³ Edward was the first of five children that Joseph F. Smith adopted in addition to the forty-three children born to him by five of his six wives.⁴

Edward would have been the oldest child in the Smith's households, only ten years younger than his adoptive mother, Julina Lambson.⁵ Edward's biological mother may have joined the Church, but died sometime in early 1863, and Edward's father was absent and not taking care of Edward and an older sister. The family histories, while differing on the actual date and circumstances of Edward's arrival in the Smith home, indicate that Edward Arthur was eleven years of age at the time. However, Joseph F. Smith's journals give the date as 1863, which would put Edward's age at four. Joseph wrote to his first wife, Levira, shortly before departing from England in 1863 that he had received a "gift" of an orphaned four-year-old boy.⁶ Additional entries mention Joseph purchasing a hat for Edward in 1865 and there is also a letter from 1869.⁷ Edward's whereabouts from 1863 to 1869 are still unclear. It is known that some of his childhood and adolescent years were spent living with the Smith's close relatives, Frank and Rhoda Knowlton of Farmington, Davis County, Utah.

While living with the Knowlton family, Edward became acquainted with Ella Smith, the daughter of neighbors Thomas Sasson Smith and his second wife, Amanda Hollingshead. Edward and Ella were married by Joseph F. Smith in the Endowment House on March 3, 1881, and began their family in Farmington.⁸ By 1884, Edward and Ella, with two daughters, had moved to Sand Creek, Fremont

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County, Idaho, near present-day St. Anthony. Edward worked both as a farmer and a carpenter, served in several Church leadership positions, and added seven more daughters and one son to their family.⁹ In 1902, encouraged by Ella's brothers, Edward took his family to Raymond, Alberta, Canada, to homestead new land. He continued to farm and to work as a carpenter. There, he and Ella had their eleventh child, a son, who died at four months of age in 1904. Edward suffered some unidentified accident or illness in 1909 and died two years later in 1911.

Books and Education

Joseph F. Smith did not have much formal education. As a result of his own struggles, he tried to impress on Edward the importance of schooling and continuous study throughout life. The oldest existing letter from Joseph to Edward stressed this theme. The letter was sent February 11, 1879, while Edward was living and working with the Knowlton family, and was addressed "My Dear Boy." Joseph noted sending several books, including *A Voice of Warning* and *Key to Theology*. "You will see that I have had them many years," he writes. "I have taken great care of them." These books seem to be the volumes by Parley P. Pratt from Joseph's own personal library. "I hope you will prize them for my sake," he continued, "as well as for their intrinsic worth." After a few bits of family news, he closed with the admonition to grow into "a useful, faithful, and upright man."¹⁰

This theme for Edward of educating and bettering himself is repeated often throughout the letters. A year later, on February 8, 1880, Joseph wrote in response to a letter from Edward. "Don't you think it would be a good idea for you to come to the city for a while and go to school? You ought to try and improve your mind all that you can." He asked if Edward had read the books he sent a year earlier, then closed with the phrase, "I am your father and friend."¹¹ On November 30 of that same year, he advised Edward "to read, write, and spell correctly," then underlined this phrase: "But books are good friends to keep by you & to consult often."¹² The formal education that Joseph desired for his son did not come about. Within a year Edward married Ella, and providing for a family precluded any more school.

Some twelve years later, on July 28, 1892, Joseph wrote and lamented that Edward had not better educated himself. "I wish you had better improved your chances at school." Joseph likely had regrets about his own schooling. When a schoolmaster threatened to whip fifteen-year-old Joseph's sister, Martha Ann, Joseph instead "licked him, good and plenty," as Joseph recounted to his close

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friend Charles W. Nibley. The fight ended Joseph's formal schooling.¹³ Joseph continued in his letter to Edward that more school would have been "a great advantage." Perhaps Joseph F. Smith regretted the early end of his own formal education and knew the difficulty of continued self-education. He did not want Edward to brood about it though and recommended that Edward get on with his life. In the same 1892 letter, Joseph explained, "But it is wise to remember that the grist will not be ground by the water which has passed the mill."¹⁴

Joseph never gave up on encouraging Edward to do as he had done, which was to strive to learn as much as he could throughout his life. "Improve your leisure moments in study; . . . give your children all the chances to learn."¹⁵ Books were frequent gifts, both from Joseph and from Edward's adopted siblings.¹⁶ Joseph, whose own spelling was occasionally less than perfect, wanted to help Edward with his. "I would like to give you a few short lessons in spelling, and may do so next time."¹⁷

This personal encouragement of Edward towards more formal education appears to be somewhat contrasting to some of Joseph F. Smith's publicly stated views. For example, in the April 1903 general conference, Joseph encouraged training in agriculture and vocations over books. "We need manual training schools instead of so much book learning. . . . If we would devote more money and time, more energy and attention to teaching our children manual labor in our schools than we do, it would be a better thing for the rising generation."¹⁸ This emphasis on vocational training and home industries became a frequent sermon theme of the public Joseph F. Smith during his tenure as an Apostle and later as President of the Church. Much of this, perhaps, is a reflection of those times. It is not inconceivable to imagine a father wanting a certain type of education for his own son, but maintaining a different attitude towards the needs of the Church as a whole. The Church throughout the nineteenth century in Utah promoted a separation from "the world" and what Brigham Young viewed as corrupting Gentile influences. Only after the First Manifesto of 1890, which called for an end to polygamy, did the Church and its members begin to see interaction with the rest of the nation and greater world as something to be encouraged rather than avoided. President Smith's tenure as Church President marked a transition from the insular society, favored by Young and others, to a fuller integration with American culture and society at large.

Joseph F. Smith still may have preferred a slower transition than he often observed. In the *Improvement Era* in 1903, Joseph wrote the following: "I have

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often thought of the undesirableness of the young men of our community seeking for light employments, and lucrative positions, without regard to manual and mechanical skill, and knowledge and ability in agriculture.”¹⁹

It should be pointed out that the schooling Joseph desired for Edward does not equate to a present-day public-school education. Joseph had a deep mistrust of secular schooling, preferring a primary education that gave as equal an emphasis to religion as to reading and writing. In 1915, at a general conference session, he resisted the introduction of publicly funded high schools, over which the church had no control. “We are having forced upon the people high schools throughout every part of the land. I believe that we are running education mad . . . to teach the learning or education of the world. God is not in it. . . . If we will have our children properly taught in principles of righteousness, morality and religion, we have to establish Church schools or institutions of education of our own.”²⁰

Perhaps the model of education that Joseph desired for his sons can be seen with the examples of Edward’s adopted brothers, Joseph Fielding and Hyrum Mack Smith. Both of these men served as Apostles. Joseph Fielding Smith became, arguably, the Church’s preeminent scriptural scholar in his time, with a number of books published on Church history and doctrine.²¹ Joseph Fielding completed school through the LDS College and received what we today would consider a high school education. Similarly, Hyrum attended the Deseret College, supplemented with a large amount of religious instruction.²²

Work and Economy

Life in the late-nineteenth-century Intermountain West for most people revolved around the hard work of survival. Mormon colonization was still under way, and subsistence farming was the norm for most families. Outside the handful of Wasatch Front cities, land had to be cleared, roads and irrigation canals built, and homes constructed from scratch.²³ The theme of working, knowing how to make a living off the land, and providing for a family was often mentioned by Joseph in his letters to Edward. Joseph wrote about the difficulty of providing for his large family with multiple households. Gardens and livestock for food and farm work were a frequent topic. In 1880, Joseph inventoried his livestock assets as “two horses, three cows, and a calf at home now, and I hardly know what to do with them.” He also inquired about some cedar posts to build some sheds on his urban property in Salt Lake City.²⁴

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After Edward's marriage and move to Idaho, Joseph and Edward often discussed crops and the prospects of the harvest. In 1892, Joseph responded to an optimistic letter regarding Edward's Idaho farm, writing, "I hope your good prospects this year for raising your bread will be all you expect." As for himself, Joseph observed, "I never see an idle day or moment scarcely," even with Joseph's other sons getting old enough to help about the property.²⁵ Later that year, he described to Edward that he had gathered some seventy-five tons of hay from thirty acres of land and noted that his livestock holdings had grown to include five horses, a colt, seven cows, and two calves at his various residences with wives Julina, Sarah, and Edna. He also commiserated with Edward's loss of some wheat to an early frost and hoped that enough could be saved to get Edward's family through until the next harvest.²⁶

Despite all the emphasis on work and self-sufficiency, Joseph and other members of his family frequently discussed the challenges of raising a family as large as Joseph's. Joseph and Julina's daughter Donnette wrote in November 1893 that Mother Julina was sending Edward a "Christmas box or bundle, money is scarce but we will try to send something if it is not much."²⁷

On December 7, 1903, Joseph wrote Edward concerning a number of financial issues. At this time, Joseph appeared to be doing well enough that he was able to send a check for three hundred dollars. Edward, with some of Ella's brothers, had moved to Raymond, Alberta, Canada, to homestead. Homesteading required a house to be built to establish a claim, and Edward, with son-in-law Thomas Lyons, built a home. The check was to cover the first three hundred dollars towards the cost of lumber and other materials, with Edward to satisfy the rest of the bill. Joseph noted, "My taxes this year have reached nearly \$900, and it has been a very heavy pull upon me." Joseph closed with an admonition: "Be sure and pay every dollar of your debts you can, and keep out of debt."²⁸

A follow-up letter that Joseph wrote in February of 1904 indicated, "I am glad you were able to get into your house before the coldest of the winter came."²⁹ Edward, who made his living both as a carpenter and a farmer, had built homes for several of his neighbors as well as his own. He also took jobs from time to time helping to build railroad grades, an opera house in Raymond, and other carpentry jobs.³⁰

In addition to Church duties he performed in the Historian's Office, Joseph also served in the territorial legislature as an Apostle, and in several missions,

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which made him a very busy man.³¹ He occasionally mentioned that work had kept him from replying to letters as promptly as he would have liked, and on one occasion, he apologized and expressed his regrets when Edward and Ella were in Salt Lake City for April conference and Joseph was too busy to see them.³²

There are less direct references in the letters to the difficulties affecting Joseph. In a letter from July 1884, Joseph wrote expressing his concern over Edward's loss of some horses and unspecified "property." He reminded Edward that however much fun "camping out" must be for Edward's young family in warm weather, "it is hard on women and children. And it is certainly not much easier on men." Whatever the specific loss involved, it had left Edward, his wife, and two daughters under three years of age without a home on a new farm in Idaho. After apologizing for his own inability to help Edward make a new start, Joseph said, "This is perhaps about the most difficult time of my life. The children are all small and dependent. They bring nothing in, but cost their keep and clothes and their schooling. . . . I started with nothing and have held my own well, and have gained a little steadily, but have not gathered riches."³³

The time that Joseph is referring to is a time of antipolygamy persecution and related legal troubles. Joseph, if not actually in formal hiding in 1884, was avoiding public appearances to keep the federal marshals at bay. They were seeking him not only to prosecute him for his own cohabitation with plural wives, but also as the Apostle directly responsible for the records and marriages in the Endowment House. Hoping to use these records as evidence and Joseph as a witness, federal officers made Joseph a wanted man.³⁴

A year later, Joseph noted the delays in mail being forwarded to him. "I have not been home for several months, and am now a long way from there." This letter, one of the few not written on First Presidency stationery, was written from Hawaii. Joseph had gone there with Julina and their newest baby under assumed names, hiding from federal officers. Whatever joy Joseph had in returning to his beloved Hawaiian Islands would have been tempered by the knowledge of the circumstances that had forced the travel. He told Edward to send any letters to the First Presidency office in Salt Lake City for forwarding. Joseph may have feared that mail might be intercepted; no mention of his location is given in this letter other than to being "again a missionary in a foreign land." He mentioned the expense of the travel to avoid prosecution had cost him seven hundred dollars in the previous six months. There were about thirty members of the family dependent

on him and “but little except my own income to sustain them.”³⁵ The threat of prosecution for polygamy ended in 1890 with the First Manifesto but left Joseph with five families to continue to provide for. He expressed his concern in October 1892, noting that while he and Julina were back in their old home in Salt Lake City, “The government will not allow me to live with the others, altho[ugh] I may provide for them and visit the children.”³⁶

Health and Hope

Struggles to provide a living were not the only issues of concern for families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Minor illnesses and diseases, which are often disregarded in our day of modern medicine, were serious issues. Preventing and treating infectious disease still overwhelmed medical practitioners in the Mountain West. Nationally, infant mortality rates were high, ranging from 175 to 215 deaths per 1,000 live births in the last half of the nineteenth century, and the life expectancy of someone born in the same period hovered around forty-five years of age.³⁷ As would be expected, the Smith family’s personal letters frequently discussed health, sickness, and occasional deaths. These issues were never far from any of the correspondents’ thoughts.

Colds and coughs were frequently mentioned,³⁸ and a particularly illness-free winter was noted for its happy exception to the rule.³⁹ Other letters expressed serious concerns for family members, and some read like a catalog of health crises and illnesses. In 1896, Joseph wrote, “Joseph R. Aunt Sarah’s oldest boy, now about 23, had to undergo an operation for appendicitis; . . . for 3 weeks we all had a hard pull of it.”⁴⁰ The winter of 1897 again saw serious illness. “Little Ruth, Aunt Ednas youngest . . . was taken very sick just after Christmas with measles and bronchitis combined, and we have had a very serious time with her. . . . Your mother has had a heavy cold and cough a great part of the winter. . . . And several of the little ones have been quite sorely troubled with coughs, sore throats, [etc.]. . . . One of the little ones at the old home has the measles.”⁴¹ Ruth, in fact, lived just over another year, dying at age four in March 1898 from scarlet fever, the eighth and last of Joseph’s offspring to die in childhood.⁴²

Such losses certainly made Joseph more sensitive to the loss of Edward and Ella’s eleventh child, Lester Ray, born in August 1903, who succumbed to illness in January 1904. Joseph sent his sympathy and shared some of his own perspective of loss, along with encouraging the eternal perspective of their shared

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religion. “I also received the . . . sad news of the death of the baby, in which sad loss you and El have my most sincere sympathy. There are worse things than the death of pure innocent little babies.”⁴³ Joseph was not trying to minimize the loss; it was an experience Joseph had been through himself. Of the eight child deaths in the families of Joseph F. Smith and his wives, four died before their first birthday. Four more died under the age of five. While Joseph’s family’s losses were only half the average rate for infant mortality in the United States at the time, these statistics would have been small comfort for Joseph and his wives. Very few fathers of the time would have had to endure losing four infants and four more children in early childhood.

Joseph made mention of these losses, and the pain that it caused him, in his journals and in letters to other family members. In a letter written to his sister Martha Ann two months after the death of Julina’s daughter Mercy Josephine, he wrote: “The weather is very oppressive, and the atmosphere sultry and merky [*sic*], as tho’ impregnated with smoke. Much as it was on the days memorable as the 27th, of June 1844. And the 21st. and 22nd of Sept. 1852—the day of fathers death, and the death and burial of Mother, I recollect them distinctly. It is two months to the day since my own sweet babe joined her grand father and mother in the spirit world, leaving in my hearts affections a void and broken space that time nor earth can ever fill. I mourn the earthly loss of the brightest, purest, dearest, treasure God ever gave me.”⁴⁴

In a similar vein, he had written to wives Julina and Edna on the passing of Julina’s eldest child, Mercy:

O God only knows how much I loved my girl, and she the light and the joy of my heart. The morning before she died, after being up with her all night, for I watched her every night, I said to her, “My little pet did not sleep all night.” She shook her head and replied, “I’ll sleep today, papa.” Oh! how those little words shot through my heart. I knew though I would not believe, it was another voice, that it meant the sleep of death and she did sleep. And, Oh! the light of my heart went out. The image of heaven graven in my soul almost departed. . . . Thou wert a heavenly gift directly to my heart of hearts.⁴⁵

As discouraging as the deaths of eight of his children must have been, they led Joseph F. Smith to ponder the mysteries of immortality. This ultimately led to his vision of the redemption of the dead, received shortly before Joseph’s death in 1844.

and now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants section 138. In 1898, following the death of Edna's daughter Ruth, he recorded a precursor to the 1918 revelation: "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."⁴⁶

Doctrine and Lived Religion

Joseph F. Smith was ordained an Apostle by Brigham Young in 1866. He was involved in preaching and Church leadership from the time that Edward came into his home. Joseph did not neglect instructing his son in regards to matters of doctrine and living his religion. As a Church leader, Joseph F. Smith presented a firm and certain vision of how to live the gospel. Elder John A. Widtsoe, in describing Joseph, called him a "fighting apostle," referring to the often strident and unyielding tone of his public sermons. "His loyalty is such," Elder Widtsoe continued, "and his convictions are so firmly established, that evil may not be spoken about truth without arousing the lion within him, . . . never to give quarter to evil or untruth or injustice."⁴⁷

The admonitions to Edward, though firm, were often simple, such as the reminder in 1884, "I pray for you, pray for yourselves. . . . Stick to duty & be industrious."⁴⁸ Shortly after the birth of Edward and Ella's first daughter, Joseph wrote, "Continue to do right and live your religion."⁴⁹

Others letters reflected on the maturing of Edward in both church and family responsibilities. In an 1894 letter to Edward, then living and farming in Sand Creek, Idaho, he addressed church service. "I am glad you are faithful to your duties in the church. And I wish you had ample information and other qualifications to make you efficient in your labors."⁵⁰ Edward had been called to serve as the superintendent of the Sunday School in the Parker Ward of the Bannock Idaho Stake in 1893, and later in January of 1894 was called to be a "techer [teacher] and counciler [bishop's counselor]" in that same ward. He also appeared to be acting as a clerk in some respects, as his personal journal and account book records items relating to the Parker Ward, including baptisms, fast offerings, priesthood ordinations, and the like. Other pages describe personal records of income, accounts with merchants, and material costs.⁵¹

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In the same 1894 letter, Joseph lamented that some of his other sons—names not specified—were not as obedient as Joseph desired, apparently in regards to both church attendance and education. “Some of the children now feel very much as you did when a boy, as though it was too much of a task to attend Sunday Schools, Improvement meetings, Sunday meetings and go to school. Several of the little boys like to play better than to study. And if they do not take care they will feel the need and regret their neglect when they get older.”⁵²

In 1896, Joseph included some advice to Edward, related to a recent call to be presiding elder or bishop while still living in the Sand Creek area. “I hope you will always do honor to the appellation of ‘Bishop’. You know what Paul said to Timothy about a Bishop. (See 1 Timothy 3:1–7:) (“a bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife. i.e., he should not be a single man, for in those days plural marriage was common.) vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach”—[etc.], [etc.]. The Apostle Paul put upon Bishops a very high estimate.”⁵³

In the same letter he also asked if Edward had received a couple of books, sent to Edward in the hands of a mutual friend. The books included *The Compendium*—presumably a copy of the book by the same name by Franklin D. Richards and James A. Little—and the *Ready Reference*—perhaps the scriptural reference work produced by missionaries in Great Britain, later edited and revised by James E. Talmage in 1917. These were part of an effort to continue Edward’s education and growth in the gospel as Joseph had always encouraged.

Some references to doctrine are more direct and consistent with Joseph F. Smith’s unequivocal public speaking profile. For example, in 1897, he wrote to Edward, “Partaking of the Sacrament is not breaking fast. The only way to break fast is to eat food with the intention to satisfy hunger or gratify the appetite [*sic*]. Partaking of the Sacrament is an ordinance, and it may be partaken of both in Sunday School and in regular Sacrament meeting without affecting the fast at all.”⁵⁴

A stronger statement is made to Edward in a letter that appears to be from 1881 (part of the date is illegible) while Edward was working at a logging or mining camp in Wyoming. Reading this letter, it is obvious to see the concern that Joseph as a father had for his son and new wife living in rough circumstances with questionable coworkers. Three of the four paragraphs in the letter deal directly with the problems that Joseph saw in Edward’s current situation.

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Now my boy, it will be far better for you to keep away as much as possible from the sort of company you mention. Still, you have no need to swear nor drink nor desecrate the Sabbath because others may do so. These may be considered the smaller crimes, but never the less they are crimes. Anything that violates the laws of God—or nature's laws is a crime both against God and his law.

Of course I need not tell you that to steal, or kill, or commit adultery [*sic*] or whoredom [*sic*] is most abominable in the sight of God. Remember your covenants, made in the House of the Lord, and the penalties attaching to the violations of those covenants. Remember that you have a wife, and that you have become a man, that you are no longer a boy, and your friends all expect you to be manly and honorable and good. . . .

You have your fortune to make a name to establish, your character to build up, and your home to procure. The road to these lies through industry and economy.

The letter is signed for emphasis “Your best friend [etc.] Jos. F. Smith.”⁵⁵ These admonitions were in keeping with Joseph’s view. Some sins were certainly more egregious than others, but all sins were to be equally abhorred. At a conference of the Granite Stake in 1917, Joseph emphasized that “determined, premeditated and deliberate wrong in man or woman, in the world—truth will not tolerate it. We can not forgive that kind or class of crime and wickedness.”⁵⁶

On another occasion, he preached, “True repentance is not only sorrow for sins, and humble penitence and contrition before God, but it involves the necessity of turning away from them, a discontinuance of all evil practices and deeds, a thorough reformation of life, a vital change from evil to good.”⁵⁷ One could choose right or wrong, but never be neutral, and it was the duty of fathers to teach their children that principle.⁵⁸

Joseph, however, could be accommodating when the circumstances required. Such a test came in connection with a large family gathering in January of 1904, on the occasion of the 104th anniversary of his father’s, Hyrum Smith’s, birth. Among the two hundred or so family members present was Frederick M. Smith, oldest son and counselor to Joseph Smith III, president of the Reorganized LDS (RLDS) Church. Relations between Joseph F. Smith and his cousins, sons of the Prophet Joseph Smith and leaders in the RLDS Church, had long been strained, with polygamy as a central issue. Joseph F. Smith’s mother, the widow of the Prophet’s

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brother Hyrum Smith, had come west with her children, following Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve after the expulsion from Nauvoo. Joseph Smith's widow, Emma, remained in Nauvoo with her children, rejecting Young's claim to leadership of the Church and the practice of polygamy that had created such great conflict in her marriage. The subsequent establishment of the RLDS Church, the eventual elevation of Emma's son Joseph Smith III to its presidency, and the RLDS rejection of polygamy and Joseph Smith's participation in the practice, created a schism in the extended Smith family. What should have been a bond through a shared sense of loss instead developed into conflicting claims of truth and a deep doctrinal chasm.⁵⁹ Joseph F. Smith had angered Frederick's uncle Alexander, youngest son of Joseph Smith Jr., during an 1883 visit to Salt Lake City. Alexander was speaking to a congregation where his cousin Joseph F. was in the audience. Joseph requested permission to address the gathering, which Alexander granted. Alexander wrote to a friend of what happened next. Joseph bore "his testimony to Polig[polygamy] and charged his father and my father with being Polig's [polygamists] and with lying in their published testimony against it. . . . [I] was heartily ashamed of him to stand before that immense congregation and proclaim his father a *liar*."⁶⁰ It was an awkward moment for both men, to be sure, with each promoting competing narratives of their fathers' legacies.

For Frederick Smith's 1904 visit to Salt Lake City, Joseph took a more conciliatory stance. Joseph wrote to Edward of the events:

"Fred. M. Smith, the oldest son and counselor of my cousin Joseph Smith, of the Re-organized Ch. He is still visiting with us. He is about 30 years of age, is married and has one child. We have not mentioned any of the differences of our views on religion, so that his visit may be as pleasant as possible. Last evening he attended a brilliant gathering of M.I.A. workers at Sister McClunes, and this afternoon he has been visiting with Cousin Clarissa Smith Williams, with your Mother and Aunts Sarah and Edna L. He has nothing to do but to enjoy himself if he will. I cannot guess what he will say about us when he returns home."⁶¹

Again, it must have been an awkward visit; polygamy was no longer being practiced overtly, yet here was Frederick Smith visiting his cousin Clarissa with three of the wives of Joseph F. Smith.

Final Years

Edward appears to have heeded much of Joseph's advice over the years. His descendants remember him as a hardworking and industrious man, yet circumstances denied him from ever being firmly established. He and his family got by, but they did not prosper or accumulate property or wealth. He remained faithful in the LDS Church and served in leadership positions, though never at the same levels as his father.

Farming in southeastern Idaho was not easy, as several of these letters describe. By 1902, with prospects not improving, Edward and his family, which also included his oldest daughter, Julina, and her husband, Tom Lyons, decided to move to Canada to take advantage of lands available for homesteading in southern Alberta. Ella already had brothers in the area, who reported fertile land and a growing population. On July 3, 1902, Edward and Tom staked out claims and went to work as carpenters, building homes for others and erecting buildings in nearby Raymond, Alberta, and the surrounding area. They also worked constructing the railroad between Lethbridge and Raymond and built homes and dry farms for themselves, first in Magrath, then later closer to Raymond.⁶²

In 1909, Edward was involved in an accident, the details of which are not currently known. He lost the use of his legs, later his upper body, and became a complete invalid. Ella wrote to Joseph, prompting a reply written July 20, 1909, to Edward: "I received a letter from Ella, Signed 'Mrs. E. A. Smith,' in which she speaks of your illness and consequent necessities. I should have answered it at once, but I have been so pressed with my work, and so much troubled over Serious Sickness at home, that it seemed as tho' I could not get a moment to write." After describing the illnesses and health issues at home, Joseph continued: "We hope you will soon be better and again recover your health. Ella did not say what ailed you. What is the matter?" After promising some help, he closes the letter: "We all hope and pray that you will soon be better and all right. With love to all, I am [etc.] Jos. F. Smith."⁶³

On November 18, 1909, Julina finally completed a letter to "Edward and 'Ell,'" a task she had been unable to accomplish while tending to her own sick children and helping with the children of Joseph's other wives. Julina had also been involved in helping Aunt Alice, another of Joseph's wives, who had been in the hospital during this time. "I was very much grieved," she writes, "to hear of the

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condition of Edward. I wish something could be done to help him. . . . The children often say to me Mama I think you ought to write to Edward.” Julina closes the letter with hopeful expressions that underscore the seriousness of Edward’s condition. “I hope Edward will be better by the time we hear from you again. The Doctors do not always know. Hoping to hear from you soon I remain ever Mama JLS. Love to all.”⁶⁴

It is unknown whether the doctors referred to were local to Raymond or specialists sent by Joseph to consult on the case as indicated by a letter from one of Edward’s daughters.⁶⁵ On July 17, 1911, Edward finally succumbed to the combination of illness and injury. Julina wrote to Ella eleven days later, expressing her grief:

We received the news of Edward’s death, which was quite unexpected as we did not think of his going so soon. I was making preparations to come up there in August, after Papa’s return home, to visit you. My house has been full of visitors for a long time, and I was unable to get away for his burial. I am here alone looking after company. . . . I am very sorry that I could not come to help you in your time of need. We expect Papa home next week. I sent him word of Edward’s death. The girls will be home from the Canyon tomorrow night. I have had thirteen visitors staying here while they have been gone and have had almost more than I could do as I have been suffering with rheumatism in my ankles and it has been hard for me to get around.

Write and let us know what the funeral expenses were and how you are fixed.

Papa will write you as soon as he returns home.

Praying the Lord to bless and comfort you in your berievement [*sic*], I am,
Lovingly your mother, Julina L. Smith.⁶⁶

Conclusions

Joseph F. Smith’s family was unusually large, even by standards of nineteenth-century plural marriage. With forty-three children, five wives, and multiple households, the addition of five more adopted children was not a trivial undertaking. Edward was the first to be adopted, but also the oldest of all of Joseph F. Smith’s children, taken in while Joseph was serving a foreign mission and sent back to Utah to an unsuspecting and childless first wife, Levira.⁶⁷ Edward’s treatment by his father seems typical of Joseph F. Smith’s relationship to all of his

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children, regardless of which wife they called mother or whether they were biological or adopted.

From these letters, we can see that Joseph F. and Julina Smith took great interest in Edward's family and welfare throughout Edward's life, even as Edward moved away to Idaho and Canada, far from the close family circle in northern Utah. Concerned parental advice is mixed with family news and shared struggles and continued to emphasize living Joseph F. Smith's expected standards for church activity and commitment to a gospel-centered life. Largely unknown outside of his direct descendants, Edward Arthur Smith can now be recognized as a regular member of the Smith family. Saved from a backyard bonfire, these letters show that Joseph's 1880 admonition for Edward to grow into a "useful, faithful, and upright man," coupled with Joseph's continuing support and encouragement through struggles and challenges, resulted in a life that fulfilled the expectations of Edward's remarkable father.

Notes

1. Cytha Ellen Smith is variously referred to as Cytha, Ellen, or Ella. As Ella is the most common usage in these letters, I have chosen to use Ella to identify Edward Arthur Smith's wife in this article, except where source documents use another name. Family History of Edward Arthur Smith and His Descendants, no author listed, assembled and privately distributed to family members by various grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Edward Arthur Smith, copy in my possession, three pages, n.p., n.d. (hereafter EAS family history).
2. As with much of Edward Arthur Smith's beginnings, even his birth date is in dispute. All of the family genealogy lists his birth date as November 1, 1858. However, in a copy of Edward's personal journal and account book, he lists in his own handwriting a birth date of November 1, 1859. Edward Arthur Smith, journal and account book, n.p., n.d., copy in my possession, 137.
3. Joseph Fielding Smith, who authored a biography of his father Joseph F. Smith, makes no mention of Edward Arthur, except in a listing of all family members in the appendix; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1938), 477. Biographer Francis Gibbons makes one reference to Edward in his book *Joseph F. Smith: Patriarch and Preacher, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 87.
4. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 487–90. The others were Marjorie Virginia, Alice May, Heber Chase, and Charles Coulson Smith.
5. Exactly how young Edward came to the Smith family is uncertain. Family tradition tells that Joseph brought him home from one of his missions to England; however, Joseph F. served his first mission to Great Britain in 1860 to 1863, prior to his marriage to Julina, and next served as President of the European Mission in Liverpool during parts of 1874 and 1875. Joseph and Julina's daughter Donnette Smith Kessler related in a letter that her father met the family while in England in 1868, but admits that family information does not agree. Joseph F. notes in a journal entry dated January 20, 1870, "Edward was very sick tonight, vomiting severely.

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- I think he has the mumps,” indicating that Edward was resident in Joseph and Julina’s home early in 1870. Joseph F. Smith, journal, in *Selected Collections of the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Richard E. Turley Jr., 2 vols., DVD (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2002). Donnette also indicated that Edward may have been brought from England by her “uncle” William W. Burton, also a relative of the Smith family, but Joseph’s journal entries indicate that Edward boarded an America-bound ship in 1863 with a family by the name of Cook. Donnette Smith Kessler to Wilburta Moore, June 7, 1955, correspondence; EAS family history; Joseph F. Smith, journal, May 4, 25, 26, and 29, 1863, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
6. Joseph F. Smith and Levira Annette Clark Smith, May 13, 1863, correspondence, Joseph F. Smith papers, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
 7. Joseph F. Smith autobiographical writings and notebooks, April 9, 1865, Church History Library.
 8. Edward A. Smith, journal, 137–38.
 9. Edward A. Smith, journal, 137–38.
 10. Joseph F. Smith (hereafter “JFS”) to Edward Arthur Smith (hereafter “EAS”), correspondence, February 11, 1879, Church History Library.
 11. JFS to EAS, February 8, 1880, correspondence.
 12. JFS to EAS, November 30, 1880, correspondence.
 13. Gibbons, *Joseph F. Smith*, 26–27.
 14. JFS to EAS, July 28, 1892, correspondence.
 15. JFS to EAS, October 19, 1892, correspondence.
 16. JFS to EAS, December 14, 1893, correspondence; also JFS to EAS, April 17, 1896, correspondence.
 17. JFS to EAS, March 28, 1894, correspondence.
 18. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 347.
 19. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 343.
 20. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, October 1915, 6.
 21. Gary James Bergera, review of *Joseph Fielding Smith: Gospel Scholar, Prophet of God*, in *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 157–60.
 22. Authoritative information about the education of Hyrum Mack Smith and Joseph Fielding Smith has proved elusive. Most of what is known is from undocumented family histories and anecdotal comments.
 23. See, for example, Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter Day Saints, 1830–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), particularly chapter 7, “A Decade of Growth: Planning for Self-Sufficiency.”
 24. JFS to EAS, February 8, 1880, correspondence.
 25. JFS to EAS, July 28, 1892, correspondence.
 26. JFS to EAS, October 19, 1892, correspondence.
 27. Donnette Smith to EAS, November 26, 1893, correspondence.
 28. JFS to EAS, December 7, 1903, correspondence and JFS to EAS, October 16, 1903, correspondence.

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29. JFS to EAS, February 12, 1904, correspondence.
30. EAS family history.
31. JFS to EAS, February 11, 1879, correspondence.
32. JFS to EAS, April 17, 1896, correspondence.
33. JFS to EAS, July 14, 1884, correspondence.
34. Gibbons, *Joseph F. Smith*, 137–51.
35. JFS to EAS, April 27, 1885, correspondence; Gibbons, *Joseph F. Smith*, 137–51.
36. JFS to EAS, October 19, 1892, correspondence.
37. Michael Haines, “Fertility and Mortality in the United States,” *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 178.
38. JFS to EAS, February 11, 1879, correspondence; JFS to EAS, February 10, 1894, correspondence; JFS to EAS, March 28, 1894, correspondence.
39. JFS to EAS, February 8, 1880, correspondence.
40. JFS to EAS, April 17, 1896, correspondence.
41. JFS to EAS, January 30, 1897, correspondence.
42. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 487–90; JFS to EAS, December 7, 1898, correspondence.
43. JFS to EAS, February 12, 1904, correspondence.
44. JFS to Martha Ann Smith Harris, August 6, 1870, correspondence, quoted in David M. Whitchurch, “The Pedagogy of a Church Leader: Lessons Learned from Joseph F. Smith’s 1854–1916 Letters to His Sister, Martha Ann Smith Harris,” *Religious Educator* 2, no. 2 (2001): 97.
45. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 456–57.
46. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 463.
47. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 511.
48. JFS to EAS, July 14, 1884, correspondence.
49. JFS to EAS, September 19, 1882, correspondence.
50. JFS to EAS, March 28, 1894, correspondence.
51. Edward A. Smith, journal, 250–61.
52. JFS to EAS, March 28, 1894, correspondence.
53. JFS to EAS, April 17, 1896, correspondence.
54. JFS to EAS, January 30, 1897, correspondence.
55. JFS to EAS, August 7, 188[unintelligible], correspondence.
56. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 214.
57. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 100.
58. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 287–88.
59. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 280–95; Gibbons, *Joseph F. Smith*, 91–92.
60. Ronald E. Romig, “Alexander H. Smith: Remembering a Son of Joseph and Emma Smith,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 37.
61. JFS to EAS, February 12, 1904, correspondence.
62. EAS family history; Edna Smith Patrick, *Brief Histories of the Family of President Joseph F. Smith and Julina L. Smith*, booklet, n.p., n.d., Edna Smith Patrick collection, 1–4.
63. JFS to EAS, July 20, 1909, correspondence.
64. Julina L. Smith to EAS, November 18, 1909, correspondence.

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65. Edna Smith Patrick, *Brief Histories*, 3; Florence Adelia Smith Anderson, May 25, 1967, correspondence.
66. Julina L. Smith to Cytha Ellen Smith, July 28, 1911, correspondence.
67. Joseph includes Edward as an unusual “gift” pressed upon him just prior to his departure from England in 1863 in a letter to Levira. The ultimate relationship of Levira and Edward is not known; in all correspondence, Joseph F. Smith refers to his second wife, Julina, as Edward’s mother, a sentiment echoed in the handful of Julina’s letters to Edward and his family. For Joseph’s letter to Levira informing her of Edward’s adoption, see correspondence, JFS to Levira, May 13, 1863 (n. 6).