



“My Dear Charlie”: The Friendship of Joseph F. Smith and Charles W. Nibley

In late June 1911, Joseph F. Smith, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, sat in front of a special House of Representatives committee investigating the influence of the Sugar Trust in the nation’s sugar industry. A subpoena had brought President Smith, who also served as president of the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, to Washington, DC, and he was not in a talkative mood. Facing Representative Thomas W. Hardwick, chairman of the committee, President Smith, who just a few years earlier had had a less-than-pleasurable experience before the Senate committee investigating Reed Smoot’s right to sit as a senator,¹ volunteered little information other than the bare minimum needed to answer Hardwick’s questions. At one point during Smith’s testimony, Hardwick, who was seeking information about the Lewiston Sugar Company in Utah, asked him, “Who is Charles W. Nibley?” The following exchange occurred:

Mr. SMITH. I understand he is the president of that company [the Lewiston Sugar Company].

Matthew C. Godfrey is the managing historian of The Joseph Smith Papers at the LDS Church History Department in Salt Lake City.

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The CHAIRMAN. He is also the business manager of the church, is he not—the bishop in charge of its temporal affairs?

Mr. SMITH. He is the presiding bishop of the church; yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Is he not the one man who is supposed to be the real business manager of the church's business affairs?

Mr. SMITH. Well, I presume so; yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you know whether he has any money of the church in that concern [i.e., the Lewiston Sugar Company] or not?

Mr. SMITH. I do not think he has.

The CHAIRMAN. You do not think he has?

Mr. SMITH. No, sir.²

The questioning then went in a different direction.

Taking Smith's terse responses to Hardwick at face value, one might think that he was only vaguely familiar with Nibley. In reality, Bishop Nibley and President Smith had been close friends, even best friends, for nearly thirty-five years and had made the journey to Washington, DC, together. The two regarded each other as brothers, traveling together frequently, corresponding, remembering each other's birthdays, and vacationing together with their families. "It is doubtful if Joseph F. Smith had at any time among his brethren a closer or more trusted friend" than Charles Nibley, Joseph Fielding Smith, son of Joseph F., explained, and "it is equally doubtful if Charles W. Nibley was ever drawn so near any other man as he was to Joseph F. Smith."³ Correspondence between the two that began in 1877 and continued until Smith's death in 1918 provides insights into what attracted these two men to each other and why they maintained such a close friendship. Examining this close friendship provides a glimpse into the human side of both of these Church leaders. It also provides a window into the views of two men who were key leaders of the Church in the early 1900s, as well as key leaders of the Church's business enterprises.

Like many Latter-day Saints in Utah Territory in the mid-1800s, both Joseph F. Smith and Charles W. Nibley experienced childhoods filled with adversity and economic deprivation. Smith was born in 1838 in Far West, Missouri, just before the Saints were driven from that area by Missourians intent on fulfilling Governor Lilburn Boggs's extermination order. When Smith was five, his father, Hyrum, was killed in Carthage, Illinois, along with his uncle, Joseph Smith.

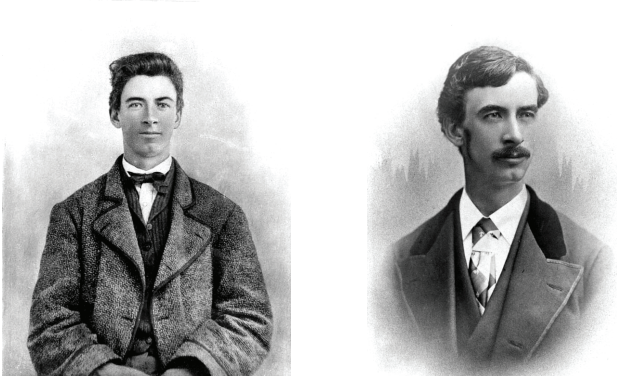
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Joseph F. Smith shortly after his mission to the Hawaiian Islands, 1858. This copy print was probably based on an earlier daguerreotype. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

In 1846, Smith, together with his family, began the trek from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Great Basin, arriving in what would become known as Utah in 1848. Although still young, Smith assumed many responsibilities on the trek, including driving a team of oxen. After arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Smith and his

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Left: Glass plate photo of Charles W. Nibley at age sixteen, ca. 1865. Courtesy of USU Special Collections and Archives; right: Charles W. Nibley, 1873.

family eked out a meager existence. According to one biography, Smith learned from his mother, Mary, the importance of hard work and thrift, as she was “the soul of thrift and economy, of industry and tireless energy.” In September 1852, however, Mary died, leaving Smith an orphan at the age of thirteen. From that point on, he had to fend for himself, working as a “herd-boy.”⁴

Nibley had similar difficulties in his upbringing. Born in 1849 in Scotland, Nibley and his family migrated to the United States in 1855 after his parents’ conversion to Mormonism. Staying for a period of time in Rhode Island, the family moved to Utah Territory in 1860. There, they relocated to Cache Valley, an area in northern Utah still in the infancy of settlement. Residing in Wellsville, the family tried to make a living from the land, but it proved difficult. Nibley remembered living in “a little one-room, part dugout and part log house” for several years, as well as wearing clothing made from a tent. He and his family had only a paltry amount of food to eat. At the age of twelve, Nibley hired out as a sheep-hand “on the hills southeast of Wellsville,” allowing him to help provide for his family. Those years were not easy for the young teenager. “It was a scramble of the severest kind for a mere existence,” he later remembered. Yet, much like Smith, Nibley learned the value of hard work and thrift from his mother, who “was all energy and push and never seemed to tire of working and scheming to get on in the world.”⁵

Their similar experiences, which were not unusual for Latter-day Saints trying to survive in the Great Basin, may have been one reason why Smith and Nibley formulated such a deep friendship. However, the two did not know each

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other until many of these hardships had passed. Nibley recalled that the first time he saw Joseph F. Smith was when the recently called Apostle preached in Cache Valley in the late 1860s. Nibley later remembered the Apostle as "a fine specimen of young manhood," blessed with "a beautiful voice, so full of sympathy and affection, so appealing in its tone." He regarded Smith as a "preacher of righteousness" without compare: "He was the greatest that I ever heard—strong, powerful, clear, appealing."⁶

In 1877, the two became better acquainted when both were called to serve in the European Mission: Smith as mission president and Nibley as a missionary.⁷ According to Smith, the friendship blossomed after Nibley, who had never actually met the Apostle, approached Smith and asked whether he needed any kind of financial assistance to travel to Europe. The offer touched Smith, who reflected on it many times in later years, explaining that "the generosity of that act impressed me with the tenderness of heart and nobility of soul that prompted it." Smith stated that he "was thankful that [he] did not need to accept" Nibley's offer, but the gesture still provided "a grand lesson which my soul and sense approve and applaud."⁸

After traveling to England, Smith and Nibley worked closely together, as Nibley served in the mission office as financial manager. This enabled him to become acquainted with Smith's family. Evidently, one of Smith's young sons—Joseph Richards, who was four at the time—took a liking to Nibley and formed a close bond with him, calling him Uncle "Shawlie" and gaining a place in Nibley's heart.⁹ Smith's wife Sarah, who accompanied him on the mission, also treated Nibley with kindness, especially during a bout of homesickness that Nibley experienced.¹⁰ In addition, Nibley's financial prowess and administrative abilities gained Smith's trust. "I have the utmost confidence in you, that you will do all you can to save and use wisdom in the management of matters committed to you," Smith told Nibley on one occasion.¹¹ On another occasion, after reviewing financial records prepared by Nibley, Smith commented, "it is certainly a good showing, the credit of which is largely due to the 'chief clerk.'"¹²

After only a few months, Smith returned to Salt Lake City because of Brigham Young's death, remaining there indefinitely. He was not immediately released as president of the European Mission, though, and thus kept a close correspondence with Nibley relative to mission matters.¹³ For example, Smith provided advice and counsel to his friend on the migration of Saints from Europe to the United States while also requesting that Nibley send him financial records. He instructed Nibley

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to chastise leaders of the conferences in Europe for a downturn in the payment of tithing, and advised him on potential leaders in the mission.¹⁴ Engaging in such close counsel increased Smith's respect for the missionary. One example shows how Nibley's abilities and initiative impressed Smith.

In January 1878, Smith told Nibley that he had "full power to consummate any bargain for next year" in terms of rates for emigrants crossing the Atlantic Ocean.¹⁵ Nibley thus executed a contract for such rates. Perhaps surprised at how quickly the missionary fulfilled his instructions, Smith expressed concern at what he regarded a premature action. The Church's agent had not yet closed on railroad rates in New York, Smith explained, and now might not be able to obtain "as favorable terms [*sic*] with the R. Roads" because of Nibley's contract. "What surprised me the most," Smith declared to Nibley, "was that you closed a bargain without first letting us know something of the terms." He hoped that the situation would "work out all right."¹⁶ Smith's initial reservations, however, vanished after receiving the terms of the contract. "I was and am very much gratified with the bargain closed with Mr. Ramsden," he declared. "I think you did well." Smith was so pleased with the arrangement that he told Nibley that he had his "heartly approval in all [he] did."¹⁷ Just two weeks later, Smith reinforced this trust, telling his friend that he was "leav[ing] matters of expediency entirely with [him] as to the emigration." Nibley could "do in every emergency just what you think for the best, and I will back you."¹⁸ Nibley's business sense and efficiency had clearly earned Smith's respect.

Even after Smith was released as president of the European Mission in June 1878,¹⁹ he continued to keep a close correspondence with Nibley. Smith also became acquainted with Nibley's young family in Utah, taking the opportunity whenever he was in Cache Valley to check on Nibley's wife Rebecca and his children. "We found your family in excellent health and spirits, prosperous and happy as they can be without you," Smith informed Nibley in May 1878. "'Alex' [who was two years old] wanted to come with me to 'yide on the T'ain,' but when I asked him to wait till tomorrow, he said 'All Yite.' and was happy."²⁰ Nibley reciprocated his correspondent's kindness by purchasing silk in England for Julina and Edna, two of Smith's wives, so they could make "coats or capes for themselves."²¹ He also expressed sympathy when Smith's son Alfred passed away on April 6, 1878, the third of the Smith children to die at a young age.²² Since Nibley had experienced the death of his own child—his first daughter at the age of one and a half

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in 1871²³—he could empathize with his friend. "I appreciate your kind sympathy . . . in the temporal loss of my beloved little Alfred J.," Smith told Nibley. "I regard my present loss however as another strong link in the chain binding and drawing me closer to the other and better world."²⁴

When Nibley returned from his mission in 1879, Smith met him at the train station and allowed him to stay at his home in Salt Lake City for a few days. The two then went their separate ways. Nibley moved back to Cache Valley, where he took a job as the manager of the United Order Lumber Company and served in the superintendency of the Cache Stake Sunday School, while Smith continued his service as an Apostle, worked in the Church Historian's Office, and became a counselor to President John Taylor in 1880. Both men experienced some difficulties in the 1880s because of their practice of plural marriage. In 1880, Nibley married Ellen Ricks, who joined Rebecca Neibauer as one of Nibley's wives. He then married Julia Budge in 1885 as his third wife. Smith had first entered plural marriage in 1866 when he married Julina Lambson as his second wife. Smith had also married Sarah Ellen Richards in 1868, Edna Lambson (Julina's sister) in 1871, Alice Ann Kimball in 1883, and Mary Taylor Schwartz in 1884.²⁵

As the federal government increased its efforts under the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1882 to prosecute those practicing plural marriage, both Nibley and Smith were forced into hiding to avoid arrest. Despite his efforts, Nibley was arrested in Idaho in 1885 for unlawful cohabitation, although he was never convicted.²⁶ Although plural marriage engendered hardships, both men believed strongly in the principle. According to Nibley, it was "a true principle revealed from God through the Prophet Joseph Smith for the salvation and blessing of all those who are worthy to receive it." The principle, he believed, had "greatly enlarged our souls and made us just a little more God-like in our lives."²⁷ Joseph F. Smith shared similar sentiments, calling plural marriage "a pure and holy principle" and one that could only be "practiced acceptably before God" by righteous individuals.²⁸

It is unclear from extant records just how much interaction Nibley and Smith had in the 1880s, but in the 1890s, they became associated in business when Smith took some stock in the Oregon Lumber Company, a firm that Nibley started with David Eccles and John Stoddard in 1889.²⁹ Beginning this enterprise fit well with Smith's beliefs about the necessity of Church members engaging in industries that would benefit the Latter-day Saints as a whole. In 1878, he had discussed with Nibley the issue of the Union Pacific Railroad having a monopoly

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over rail transportation. “We are at the mercy of the U.P. for every ton of coal we use; and we pay them a royalty of from 2\$ to 4\$ pr. ton on the same.” According to Smith, such a situation was problematic. “Why should we not own our Rail Roads when we have built them?” he asked. Or “why should we sell our coal mines when we need them for our own use, and can work them with our own labor?” In Smith’s view, the Latter-day Saints were “shaping, it would seem, to become the ‘hewers of wood and the drawers of water,’ [t]he tail and not the head.” He hoped that, “with God’s help,” the Saints could build up their own industries, bringing in “millions” to Utah and allowing them “to weald [*sic*] a scepter of power, that would startle, and command the admiration of our nation and the world.”³⁰ Although there is no evidence that Nibley was acting on Smith’s concerns in establishing the Oregon Lumber Company with Eccles and Stoddard (both of whom were also Latter-day Saints), creating the business was a step in the direction that Smith wanted the Saints to go, as it provided lumber and other necessities to church members living in Utah, Idaho, and the Pacific Northwest.

Nibley’s management of the company meant that he had to relocate to Baker City, Oregon, leading to a renewal of his correspondence with Smith. Letters between the two often touched on financial issues, as well as on the management of the Oregon Lumber Company. When the financial panic of 1893 hit, for example, Smith declared to Nibley that “no such close times as we are having now, have been experienced here since 1857”—the time when Albert Sidney Johnston led a contingent of federal troops to Utah Territory in response to accusations of rebellion among the Mormons.³¹ “Our fears of Johnstons [*sic*] Army and the hard times were only as flea-bites compared to the bite of scorpions,” Smith related, “in comparison to our fears of financial stringency and prospective hard times now.”³² Yet the Oregon Lumber Company continued to prosper despite the larger economic downturn, in part because of a contract it had concluded with the Union Pacific Railroad for favorable rates in lumber shipments—a contract that Nibley had a large hand in obtaining. Because of Nibley’s role in securing the contract, he believed that he was entitled to a greater portion of compensation than David Eccles, the company’s president, was allowing him. Although Smith was careful not to disparage Eccles, he agreed that Nibley had a right to the extra compensation. “As a stock-holder who had benefitted, in common with the rest, out of that transaction,” he explained to Nibley, “I am willing, and feel that I ought to share a portion of such benefits or profits with you who secured, and to

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whom I am indebted [*sic*], for them."³³ The outcome of this particular situation is not clear from the historical record, although Nibley and Eccles would break off their business relations just a few years later.³⁴

As he explained to his friend, Smith was grateful for the dividends that he received from Oregon Lumber—dividends that resulted from Nibley's capable management. "Surely kind Providence and the energetic managers of the O.L.C. deserve better than mere thanks from the Stockholders," Smith declared in 1895. "They are entitled to the highest of praise for their indefatigable labors and their skillful management of the business."³⁵ In making such statements, Smith hoped that Nibley understood that he did not "love money"; however, with "33 Souls, exclusive of myself, to feed, clothe, house and warm and school," he had "need of it." Therefore, whenever he received any kind of monetary sum, he "thank[ed] the Lord and my good friends who make it for me and supply me with it."³⁶

While in Oregon, Nibley sometimes received visits from Smith and his family. In 1896, Smith traveled to Oregon, staying with Nibley in Baker City; in 1899, he made another visit, traveling with Nibley and his family to Portland and the Oregon coast. "How richly we enjoyed the precious season and sweet pleasure of our visit with you," Smith told Nibley.³⁷ These vacations led to a practice of frequent travel for the pair. After Smith was appointed President of the Church in 1901, he and Nibley took several trips together to Europe and Hawaii. In 1906, for example, when he had "a nice little bank account," Nibley paid for Smith and his wife Edna to travel to Europe with Nibley for a three-month visit. The group went to Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, and France.³⁸ Although the group met with many Church members in these countries and President Smith gave several talks, he still found time to relax and later remembered the excursion as his "first real free-from-care trip" since becoming President and "an oasis in my sort of desert life."³⁹ Traveling together became a favorite pastime of the two and a way for Smith to relax from his responsibilities. By 1918, the two had taken four trips to Hawaii and two trips to Europe. "Surely it was a great favor and blessing to me to be thus privileged to associate with one whom I so dearly loved and who was always so companionable with me," Nibley declared.⁴⁰

On these excursions, as well as at other times and in their correspondence, the two conversed about a variety of subjects, especially politics and economics. Both men were staunch Republicans at the time; after the 1900 election, for example, Smith exulted to Nibley about the Republicans' success, both in national

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and Utah politics.⁴¹ Yet, in terms of Republican Reed Smoot's service as one of Utah's senators, the two friends disagreed. As the two returned from Europe in 1906, they discussed Smoot, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and his role as senator. "I took the position that it would be unwise for Reed Smoot to be re-elected to the United States Senate," Nibley recalled, in part because of the controversy congressional hearings into Smoot's right to sit as a senator had generated between 1904 and 1906. After listening to Nibley's "facts, arguments, and logic," Smith pounded the railing with his fist and declared, "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." The argument ended at that point; Nibley later explained that he "accepted from that hour [Smith's] view of the case and made it [his], too."⁴² Indeed, Nibley became one of Smoot's strongest supporters and consulted with him frequently in the 1910s on matters affecting Nibley's business interests.⁴³

The two friends also shared similar ideas about economics. Both men considered frugality to be a key aspect of economic life, in large part because of their meager upbringing. "I have learned to value even the small things, from necessity," Smith related to Nibley in 1877, while also declaring that he tried to steer clear from debt.⁴⁴ "I abhor debts," he informed Nibley at one point, "and so should every man."⁴⁵ Accordingly, whenever Nibley—who became a wealthy man in the 1890s and 1900s from his different business ventures—loaned Smith money or paid for some of his expenses, Smith tried to repay him promptly. "Please find herewith my cheque No. 4, of this date, for \$1,319.50 for payment of my note of April 13th last," he wrote Nibley in 1916. This sum covered the original note plus interest for three months.⁴⁶ At other times, Smith was unable to repay his friend, something that weighed on his mind. "I dispair [*sic*] of ever getting even with you," he declared in 1903. "[I]t seems so far beyond my reach, but if ever I can requite you or yours in part, it will be a happy day for me."⁴⁷

Smith's aversion to financial obligations extended to the Church as well, and he frequently counseled Church members and those responsible for Church finances to avoid debt. "By all means the Conferences must be clear from debts," Smith had instructed Nibley in 1877 in regard to the European Mission, "and none of them should be suffered to run behind."⁴⁸ When, in the late nineteenth century, the Church had considerable debt, Smith looked

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forward to the day when it could extricate itself from its obligations. "We hope soon to be able to return to the simple tithing of the people for the building of the temples, and for all other legitimate expenses of the church; . . . that Zion may prosper, and all be well," he had stated in 1877.⁴⁹ In the early twentieth century, after the Church had eliminated its debt, President Smith told his son David Smith, one of Nibley's counselors in the Presiding Bishopric, to tell Nibley, who by then was Presiding Bishop of the Church, to "see to it that I and no other man, in his time, shall ever suffer the Church again to get into debt."⁵⁰

Nibley shared Smith's views of the necessity of living within one's means, but he also believed it worthwhile to contract some debt, especially when it led to more money down the road. In 1914, Nibley was presented with an opportunity to buy out the interest of the American Sugar Refining Company in the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company and the Amalgamated Sugar Company. According to his autobiography, Nibley "tried to induce President Smith to take more of the stock and still more, but he naturally shrinks from debt" and refused to purchase a large amount.⁵¹ "The President," Nibley explained to Hyrum M. Smith, Joseph F.'s son, "dislikes to pay interest on borrowed money, and, of course, dislikes to borrow any money."⁵² Nibley was able to convince Smith to allow him to purchase a large number of shares for the Church, but it was only after working with him "rather strenuously."⁵³ Soon after Nibley had concluded the transaction, the First World War broke out in Europe, disrupting sugar production there. The price of sugar soared, and Utah's sugar companies took advantage of the diminished production in Europe to expand their own operations. Because of this expansion and the elevated prices, the value of stock in the Utah-Idaho and Amalgamated Sugar companies increased tremendously; in 1915, Nibley estimated that he "could dispose of those same holdings and give the Church a profit of from \$1,000,000.00 to \$1,200,000.00 net profit."⁵⁴ He later recalled, "Never in the history of the west, I think, has such a large deal been turned out of which so much money has been made by everybody concerned."⁵⁵

Nibley's willingness to borrow money, however, eventually led to difficulties in his personal life, indicating to him the wisdom of Smith's views. In 1911, Bishop Nibley noted to another associate that he had been "much worried" because of the large personal debts that he held. Explaining that President Smith had "counseled and advised" him "for a long time back" to pay off his

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obligations, Nibley expressed his desire to “make a strenuous effort to free myself.”⁵⁶ Although Nibley made strides towards this, he also assumed additional obligations by agreeing to serve as security for notes contracted by friends and family. When the stock market collapsed in 1929, those obligations were called in, and Nibley had to sell much of his holdings to pay off his debts. He successfully did so, but at a significant reduction in his net worth.⁵⁷

The two friends at times did not see eye to eye on other matters. For example, in the early 1900s, Nibley served as a director in the Amalgamated Sugar Company, which had factories in Ogden and Logan, Utah, among other places. However, by 1903, Nibley was anxious to begin his own sugar factory independent of Amalgamated and found financial backing from Henry Havemeyer, an eastern cane sugar magnate. Nibley thus proposed constructing an independent factory in Lewiston, Utah, controlled by him. When word got out about Nibley’s proposal, Smith, who was serving as a director of Amalgamated Sugar, and other Amalgamated officials were not pleased, especially because of the financial backing of Havemeyer. David Eccles, president of the company, declared the proposed factory a menace to the Amalgamated’s interest and Smith traveled to Oregon in the summer of 1903 to try to dissuade Nibley from undertaking the enterprise. Nibley told Smith that he would continue with his plans to build a Lewiston factory “unless, he, as president of the Church . . . would counsel against it.” Smith informed Nibley that “it was out of the question” for him to provide counsel either for or against the concern in his official role as President of the Church, so Nibley decided to proceed.⁵⁸ Amalgamated Sugar eventually absorbed the Lewiston sugar factory, but the situation showed that Nibley was not above taking a financial position adverse to Smith.

Despite their sometimes differing views, Smith greatly admired Nibley’s financial abilities and trusted his friend’s advice. When Smith’s wife Edna “c[a]me into a ‘fortune’” of \$500 in 1907, for example, Smith asked Nibley where to invest it.⁵⁹ Probably in part because of his confidence in Nibley’s financial acumen, Smith appointed him Presiding Bishop, and thus responsible for the Church’s temporal affairs, in December 1907. According to Smith, the call came from God and was not a result of his friendship with Nibley. In Bishop Nibley’s words, Smith told him that “more than once or twice in my life I have heard the voice which has given revelation to me, and never in my life did I hear it more plainly or clearly than when this man was called to be Bishop of the Church.”⁶⁰

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As Presiding Bishop, Nibley worked closely with President Smith in administering the Church's temporal affairs until Smith's death in 1918. During Nibley's tenure as Presiding Bishop, the Church constructed a new administration building, as well as temples in Alberta, Canada, and Hawaii. Working with Smith and his counselors, Bishop Nibley was able to get the Church to pay its employees in cash, rather than in tithing scrip. He also convinced his friend—"with great difficulty"—to discontinue the Church's butcher shop on the tithing block. In addition, Nibley became intimately involved in the management of the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, assuming the position of general manager of the company in 1917 and directing an unprecedented expansion of the company's holdings. As both largest stockholder and general manager, he worked closely with Smith, who served as the company's president. Looking back on his tenure as Presiding Bishop under Smith, the Bishop declared, "The Church has never been so prospered, either in a material way or spiritual way."⁶¹

Even though they worked closely together on ecclesiastical issues, most of the two friends' personal correspondence focused on family and friendship, things which both men valued greatly. Whenever Smith had a birthday, for example, Nibley would send him a short note wishing him a happy birthday and expressing his love for him. Smith generally did the same. "I thank you, my best earthly friend, for your purest friendship for me," Smith wrote after receiving one such birthday note from his friend. "My soul overflows with gratitude for such a brother and such a friend."⁶² In a similar vein, the Bishop wrote to President Smith on his birthday in 1918 (just shortly before Smith's death), calling him "my best and dearest Friend" and exclaiming, "My life has been bound up in yours for more than forty years. How much, O how much I owe to you."⁶³

In these declining years of President Smith's life, the two friends took up the game of golf, becoming members of the Salt Lake City Country Club and the Brentwood Country Club in Santa Monica, California, a vacation spot for both men. "Although our game was usually not of the best," Nibley explained, "we have enjoyed many happy days together on the golf field."⁶⁴ Even though Nibley was a novice at the game, he served as his playing partner's instructor. "Just a line or two to remind you of my obedience to your commands," Smith wrote Nibley in 1916. "I am bold to inform you that I have so far made good, each time cutting down my score over the track from one to four points, last play coming down to 58 for the nine holes."⁶⁵ Just a couple of years later, the Bishop stated that both he and Smith

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could play nine holes in forty-five strokes. “On the whole,” Nibley declared, “I believe I could beat him at golf more than I could beat him at checkers.”⁶⁶ Indeed, checkers was another pastime that both enjoyed. On their trips to Europe and Hawaii, the two often played checkers. Nibley admitted that President Smith was a “much better” player than him and “could beat me four times out of five, but once in a while, when I played more cautiously, and no doubt when he was more careless, I could beat him.” If Smith was winning, he rarely objected if Nibley drew back a misplaced checker, but if the Bishop had won a few games, Smith was less merciful. “No you don’t, leave it right there,” Nibley remembered Smith saying “in that positive way of his” on several occasions. According to Nibley, “it is in these little incidents that we show the human side of our natures.”⁶⁷

On November 19, 1918, at the age of eighty, President Smith passed away, succumbing to a bout of pleurisy that had developed into pneumonia. Because he considered the President to be his dearest friend, Bishop Nibley took the death hard. “The whole world is changed now, to me,” Nibley declared to Reed Smoot.⁶⁸ Likewise, Nibley told his son Nathan, who was serving a mission in Tennessee, “It has been a sad time with us owing to the death of President Smith and we are just recovering a little from the blow; just trying to gather ourselves so to speak.”⁶⁹ Three years later, the pain was still there, and Nibley confided in his reminiscences that the death of his friend “brought the greatest sorrow into my life, for to me he was my ideal.”⁷⁰

That Nibley would feel such sorrow at the death of his friend was not surprising, for they considered each other more as brothers than friends. Such a bond existed for various reasons. Both men came from childhoods fraught with hardships and poverty, and both had experiences that taught them the value of money and hard work—lessons reinforced by their mothers, whom they both loved and deeply admired. Both men had similar views on economics and politics, and both were, as the Bishop described President Smith, “hard-headed, successful business m[e]n.”⁷¹ Both men valued loyalty, friendship, and family, traits which helped cement their friendship. Both also had characteristics that the other admired. President Smith’s spirituality and ability to preach impressed Nibley, while Smith appreciated the Bishop’s business prowess and administrative capabilities. Nibley’s generosity, exhibited on numerous occasions through gifts and loans to Smith, also strengthened their friendship. As the two men aged together, they found pleasure in leisure, traveling together, playing checkers, and learning

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the game of golf. All of these experiences created strong bonds of friendship that were hard to break, even when the two did not see eye to eye on financial or other matters. “With this little scrap of paper; and grateful memories reaching back a long, long way,” President Smith wrote Bishop Nibley in 1917, “I simply remind you, that true friendship will always live in true hearts.”⁷² Such true friendship characterized Nibley and Smith’s lengthy association.

Notes

1. See Michael H. Paulos, “Under the Gun at the Smoot Hearings: Joseph F. Smith’s Testimony,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34 (Fall 2008): 181–225.
2. “Testimony of Mr. Joseph F. Smith,” June 27, 1911, *Hearings Held Before the Special Committee on the Investigation of the American Sugar Refining Co. and Others*, 62nd Cong. 1038 (1911), 1st session. See also Matthew C. Godfrey, *Religion, Politics, and Sugar: The Mormon Church, the Federal Government, and the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2007), 60–61.
3. Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Life of Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1938), 235.
4. Smith, *The Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 117–124, 129–130, 147–155, 157–158, 160, 162–163.
5. Charles W. Nibley, *Reminiscences, 1849–1931* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1933), 5, 7–8, 14–23, 25, 28–33.
6. Charles W. Nibley, “Reminiscences of President Joseph F. Smith,” *Improvement Era*, January 1919, 191, 195. Ironically, in later years, Smith would compliment Nibley on his speaking abilities, insisting that he would never be able to preach as well as Nibley. Joseph F. Smith (hereafter referred to as JFS) to Charles W. Nibley, July 23, 1907 correspondence; JFS to Nibley, November 16, 1907, correspondence, both in Charles W. Nibley Papers, box 3, folder 12, MS 1287, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; hereafter referred to as Nibley Papers. All sources quoted from Nibley Papers herein come from boxes 1, 2, 3, 4, or 10; and from folders 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, or 15.
7. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 72–73.
8. JFS to Nibley, June 27, 1894, in Nibley Papers.
9. See JFS to Nibley, December 11, 1877; JFS to Nibley, February 17, 1879; Nibley to JFS, December 20, 1877, in Nibley Papers.
10. Nibley to JFS, December 6, 1877, in Nibley Papers.
11. JFS to Nibley, October 22, 1877, in Nibley Papers.
12. JFS to Nibley, February 17, 1879, in Nibley Papers.
13. JFS to Nibley, September 21, 1877; JFS to Nibley, October 9, 1877, in Nibley Papers; Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 74.
14. JFS to Nibley, December 6, 1877; JFS to Nibley, January 5, 1878; JFS to Nibley, February 15, 1878, in Nibley Papers.
15. JFS to Nibley, January 25, 1878, in Nibley Papers.
16. JFS to Nibley, March 6, 1878, in Nibley Papers.
17. JFS to Nibley, April 30, 1878, in Nibley Papers.
18. JFS to Nibley, May 14, 1878, in Nibley Papers.

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19. JFS to Nibley, May 27, 1878; JFS to Nibley, July 23, 1878, in Nibley Papers.
20. JFS to Nibley, May 6, 1878, in Nibley Papers; emphasis in original.
21. JFS to Nibley, May 24, 1878; see also JFS to Nibley, July 16, 1878, in Nibley Papers.
22. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 487–90. Mercy Josephine, born on August 14, 1867, to Joseph and Julina Lambson Smith, died on June 6, 1870, while Sarah Ella, born on February 5, 1869, to Joseph and Sarah Richards Smith, died six days after her birth.
23. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 64.
24. JFS to Nibley, May 14, 1878, in Nibley Papers.
25. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 78–79, 81, 84; Michael Elvin Christensen, “The Making of a Leader: A Biography of Charles W. Nibley to 1890” (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1978), 115–116; Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 252, 487–90.
26. The arrest warrant was issued in Utah, but Nibley was arrested in Idaho. When he was brought to court in Salt Lake City, the judge released him because of this technicality. Before a new warrant could be issued, Nibley left Salt Lake City and went to Paris, Idaho. “This ended my escapade of arrest and slipping away as successfully as I did,” he later recalled. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 86–95.
27. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 81.
28. Joseph F. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 20:26–27.
29. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 100–101.
30. JFS to Nibley, February 19, 1878, in Nibley Papers.
31. For more information on Johnston and what was known as the Utah War, see Donald R. Moorman with Gene A. Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1992); Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850–1859* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1960); William P. MacKinnon, ed., *At Sword’s Point* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2008); David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America’s First Civil War, 1857–1858* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2011).
32. JFS to Nibley, June 30, 1893, in Nibley Papers.
33. JFS to Nibley, June 30, 1893, in Nibley Papers; emphasis in original.
34. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 109–12.
35. JFS to Nibley, November 25, 1895, in Nibley Papers.
36. JFS to Nibley, February 20, 1893, in Nibley Papers; emphasis in original.
37. Unsigned letter to Nibley, October 24, 1896; see also JFS to Nibley, September 27, 1899; JFS to Nibley, September 11, 1899, in Nibley Papers.
38. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 114; Smith, *The Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 396–398.
39. JFS to Nibley, July 23, 1907, in Nibley Papers; Smith, *The Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 396–98.
40. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 122–23.
41. JFS to Nibley, November 8, 1900, in Nibley Papers.
42. Nibley, “Reminiscences of President Joseph F. Smith,” 195; see also Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 125–26.
43. See, for example, Nibley to Reed Smoot, October 27, 1915, correspondence, in Reed Smoot Papers, MS 1187, box 41, folder 2, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT; hereafter referred to as Smoot Papers.
44. JFS to Nibley, December 6, 1877, in Nibley Papers.
45. JFS to Nibley, December 11, 1877, in Nibley Papers.

"My Dear Charlie"

46. JFS to Nibley, July 3, 1916, in Nibley Papers.
47. JFS to Nibley, June 23, 1903, in Nibley Papers.
48. JFS to Nibley, December 11, 1877, in Nibley Papers.
49. JFS to Nibley, November 21, 1877, in Nibley Papers.
50. JFS to David Smith, July 14, 1914, in Nibley Papers.
51. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 127–128; see also Godfrey, *Religion, Politics, and Sugar*, 94–96.
52. Nibley to Hyrum M. Smith, December 14, 1914, in Nibley Papers.
53. Nibley to Hyrum M. Smith, December 6, 1915, in Nibley Papers.
54. Nibley to Hyrum M. Smith, December 6, 1915, in Nibley Papers; see also Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 127–28; Godfrey, *Religion, Politics, and Sugar*, 94–96.
55. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 127–128.
56. Nibley to George Stoddard, November 4, 1911, in Nibley Papers.
57. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 153.
58. Leonard J. Arrington, "Notes on Minutes of the Utah Sugar Company, Dec. 1902 to July 1907," 2–3, Leonard J. Arrington Papers, Series 12, box 10, folder 1, Manuscript Collection 1, Leonard J. Arrington Historical Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah; Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 110–11; Godfrey, *Religion, Politics, and Sugar*, 66–67; J. R. Bachman, *Story of The Amalgamated Sugar Company, 1897–1961* (Ogden, UT: The Amalgamated Sugar Company, 1962), 17–18, 21–23.
59. JFS to Nibley, July 23, 1907, in Nibley Papers.
60. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 117–121.
61. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 126–127; see also Godfrey, *Religion, Politics, and Sugar*, 95–96, 100.
62. JFS to Nibley, November 16, 1907, in Nibley Papers; emphasis in original.
63. Nibley to JFS, November 13, 1918, in Nibley Papers.
64. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 115.
65. JFS to Nibley, August 24, 1916, in Nibley Papers.
66. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 116.
67. Nibley, "Reminiscences of President Joseph F. Smith," 194.
68. Nibley to Reed Smoot, November 20, 1918, Smoot Papers, box 41, folder 4.
69. Nibley to Nathan Nibley, November 30, 1918, in Nibley Papers.
70. Nibley, *Reminiscences*, 138–39.
71. Nibley, "Reminiscences of President Joseph F. Smith," 197.
72. JFS to Nibley, June 1, 1917, in Nibley Papers.