



Joseph F. Smith and the Shaping of the Modern Church Educational System

From 1901 to 1918, President Joseph F. Smith presided over one of the most expansive eras in the history of Latter-day Saint education, when the Church operated a series of after-school religion classes, private secondary academies, normal colleges, and a university. “The course of the church educational system from 1900 to 1930,” noted historian Thomas G. Alexander, “resembled nothing quite so much as a balloon. Expanding during the period to 1920, it shrank rapidly during the 1920s.”¹ Interestingly, though President Smith chaired the Church Board of Education during an era of explosive educational growth, near the end of his presidency he remarked, “I believe that we are running education mad.”² Responding to this concern, the policy decisions made by President Smith during his administration set the stage for the Church’s drastic reduction of the academy system following his death. Ultimately, it was his presidency that supported the creation of the released-time seminary program, the innovation that reshaped Church education, guiding it toward the supplementary education model it employs today. This paper analyzes the educational background, philosophy, and legacy of Joseph F. Smith and his impact on Church education. Beginning with

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his own limited education, it traces the role President Smith played in expanding the academies as a counselor in the First Presidency and later facilitating the formation of the seminary system as Church President. It places these changes within the context of the dramatic growth in public education that occurred in the West during the Smith era, demonstrating the transformative role he played in the formation of the modern Church Educational System.

Joseph F. Smith's Educational Background and Philosophy

While little is known about Joseph F. Smith's formal education, it seems apparent that his early life experiences heavily influenced his later educational philosophy. Though he grew up in frontier settlements, education was a hallmark of the communities where Smith was raised. Nauvoo, where he lived until he was nearly eight years old, enjoyed a robust educational system. Joseph F. Smith's uncle Don Carlos Smith editorialized in the *Times and Seasons* in 1841, lamenting that "from the unsettled state of the Saints, in consequence of being driven from their inheritances, and their sudden transitions from affluence to poverty; the education of their children has consequently been neglected." "But," he continued, "we hope the night of darkness has passed away, and that we behold the dawning of a refulgent morn, which shall shine upon our youthful city."³ Encouraged by this educational zeal, each of the city's four wards operated a school, overseen by the Board of Regents of the University of the City of Nauvoo. These common schools were augmented by numerous private schools throughout the city.⁴ However, while schools were available in Nauvoo, we know only that Joseph F. Smith frequented school one winter in the City of Joseph, attending Merilla Johnson's class in the basement of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* print building.⁵

Smith had what one of his biographers later termed an abbreviated childhood, brought about by the death of his father five months before the boy turned six.⁶ For what should have been his common school years, his widowed mother, Mary Fielding Smith, tutored Joseph. "Well-educated, in her own right, and properly reared," Mary Fielding Smith received an education in her native Britain, reared in "the home of a pious, refined, intellectual and educated family."⁷ In Kirtland, Ohio, she taught school and tutored pupils privately for a brief time in the fall of 1837 before marrying Hyrum Smith later that December.⁸ The influence she had on her son Joseph left a deep impression. Later in life, he declared, "To her I owe my

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very existence as also my success in life, coupled with the favor and mercy of God.”⁹ His son Joseph Fielding Smith similarly observed, “Most of his education up to the time of his mother’s death had been obtained from her. Busy as she was with the many cares and tribulations, she nevertheless found time to teach her children some of the fundamentals of education, she being a well educated woman.”¹⁰

Though Nauvoo was different for the Church and for Joseph F. Smith following the death of his father and uncle, the drive to educate the children of the Church was not extinguished. At a conference in October 1845, the Church and its leaders discussed various business items preparatory to their westward exodus the following winter. Addressing the congregation, Heber C. Kimball declared, “There is yet another piece of business of great importance to all who have families; that is, to have some school books printed for the education of our children, which will not be according to the Gentile order.” Answering the call, it was moved that “W. W. Phelps write some school books for the use of children.”¹¹ Joseph F. Smith, however, seemed not to have benefited much from these educational endeavors. Rather, leaving Nauvoo for the West prior to his eighth birthday, Smith’s education became a practical one as he forsook formal education for the rigors of riding herd and leading oxen.

Education continued to be stressed in the Utah territory of Smith’s boyhood. The first schoolhouse in the Salt Lake Valley sprung up in an old military tent just three months after the arrival of Brigham Young and his pioneer company. By 1850, the *Deseret News* reported, “Common schools were beginning in all parts of the city for the winter; and plans for the construction of school houses in every ward were being made, with a view for a general system of school houses throughout the city.”¹² While conditions varied throughout the territory, historian Leonard Arrington later summarized, school “was held wherever a place could be found.”¹³

Arriving in the valley in September 1848, Joseph F. Smith settled with his mother and siblings in the Mill Creek area, where they built a small cabin. While schools were being established around him, Smith continued his practical learning. “My principal occupation from 1848 to 1854,” he later recalled, “was that of a herd-boy, although I made a hand always in the harvest field and at threshings, and in the canyons cutting and hauling wood.”¹⁴ His son later wrote, “After the family was settled in the Salt Lake Valley, the children found time to attend school a portion of the time, but the many cares and labors of those early days did not permit of any extended course of schooling.” The lack of formal education seems

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not to have deterred Joseph F. Smith's learning. His son continued, "However, being of a studious mind, Joseph F. Smith never let an opportunity to gain knowledge escape him. The early records which he kept all bear strong evidence of this great desire, and it can truthfully be said, that in later life he stood preeminently among his fellows for the extensive knowledge and wide understanding which he possessed."¹⁵ Smith's youth was further affected when his mother died and he lost his guiding light. "It was in 1852 that my blessed Mother passed away," he later recalled, "leaving me fatherless & motherless, but not altogether friendless at the early age of 13 years. . . . After my mother's death there followed 18 months—from Sept 21st, 1852 to April, 1854 of perilous time for me. I was almost like a comet or fiery meteor, without attraction or gravitation to keep me balanced or guide me within reasonable bounds."¹⁶

While it is unclear what formal schooling Smith received in Utah prior to his mother's death, one known reference to his education comes from the era of imbalance that followed her passing. Speaking of the influence Church leaders had on Joseph F. Smith, George A. Smith recalled, "His father and mother left him when he was a child, and we have been looking after him to try and help him along. We first sent him to school, but it was not long before he licked the schoolmaster, and could not go to school. Then we sent him on a mission." Years later, President Smith himself elaborated on the incident:

The reason [I] had trouble with the schoolmaster was that the schoolmaster had a leather strap with which he used to chastise the children. He was a rather hard-hearted schoolmaster, one of the olden type that believed in inflicting bodily punishment. My little sister [Martha Ann] was called up to be punished. I saw the school-master bring out the leather strap, and he told the child to hold out her hand. I just spoke up loudly and said, "Don't whip her with that!" and at that he came at me and was going to whip me, and instead of him whipping me, I licked him good and plenty.¹⁷

Ending his limited formal education, Smith began informal education at the hand of the Lord and his servants. In addition to his several missions, where he learned to preach the gospel and administer its ordinances, Smith worked in the Church's Historian's Office, learning from Elder George A. Smith and other leading brethren about the history of the Church as well as about gospel principles and Church organization. "This contact in the Historian's Office," his son later wrote,

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“was also a wonderful school for the young man who had spent so much time in the mission field.” In addition to his work in the Historian’s Office, Smith “also engaged in the ordinance work and recording in the Endowment House under the direction of Presidents Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and the Apostles, who were trained in this labor under the Prophet Joseph Smith,” further expanding his knowledge of the gospel.¹⁸

The shaping influence of Smith’s lack of formal education coupled with his practical training by Church leadership is reflected in his later statements regarding education. Acknowledging that truth could come from many sources, Smith argued as Church President that ignorance was inexcusable. “Search out the truth of the written word; listen for and receive the truth declared by living prophets and teachers; enrich your minds with the best of knowledge and facts. Of those who speak in his name, the Lord requires humility, not ignorance. Intelligence is the glory of God; and no man can be saved in ignorance.”¹⁹ While encouraging the acquisition of “knowledge and fact,” Smith also reflected his upbringing, placing a primacy on the spiritual over the secular. “Educate yourself not only for time, but also for eternity. The latter of the two is the more important. Therefore, when we shall have completed the studies of time, and enter upon the commencement ceremonies of the great hereafter, we will find our work is not finished, but just begun.”²⁰

While emphasizing the significance of spiritual education, Smith also drew upon his experiences learning from his mother to shape his educational philosophy. As Church President, he challenged parents, “Let [your children] see that you are earnest, and practice what you preach. Do not let your children out to specialists in these things, but teach them by your own precept and example, by your own fireside. Be a specialist yourself in the truth. Let our meetings, schools and organizations, instead of being our only or leading teachers, be supplements to our teachings and training in the home.”²¹ He later declared, “Schools are instituted to help the home, not to domineer and direct it.”²² The value of education in the home was reflected in Smith’s later support for the “Home Evening” program, which he instituted in 1915.

Emphasizing more than mere book learning, Joseph F. Smith also reflected the influence of his own practical education in the rural society in which he was raised. “We need manual training schools instead of so much book-learning and the stuffing of fairy tales and fables which are contained in many of our school books of today,” Smith counseled. “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.”²³ Though he allowed educational diversity in Church schools, Smith editorialized in 1903, “None can deny that there is too great a tendency among the young men, especially in our larger cities, to seek the lighter employments. Politics, law, medicine, trade, clerking, banking are all needful and good in their place, but we need builders, mechanics, farmers, and men who can use their powers to produce something for the use of man.”²⁴

The Championing of Educational Expansion

Armed with an educational philosophy emphasizing both the spiritual and the temporal, Joseph F. Smith was called to Church leadership at a young age. At the age of twenty-seven he was ordained an Apostle and called as a counselor to Brigham Young. He continued to serve as a counselor in the First Presidency to Church Presidents John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow until his call as President of the Church in October 1901. Educationally, these callings placed him on the Church Board of Education, giving him influence during a time of significant educational change. In fact, some of the First Presidency statements issued during Smith’s years as counselor heavily directed Church education into the path it took during his own presidency.

At the height of the antipolygamy opposition, in March 1886, John Taylor’s First Presidency issued a lengthy epistle to the Saints. In part, it decried efforts in the Idaho Territory to revoke teaching licenses for Church members. Fearing “placing . . . our children, by the help of our taxes, under the tuition of those who would gladly eradicate from their minds all love and respect for the faith of their fathers,” the Presidency declared, “The duty of our people under these circumstances is clear; it is to keep their children away from the influence of the sophisms of infidelity and the vagaries of the sects. Let them, though it may possibly be at some pecuniary sacrifice, establish schools taught by those of our faith, where, being free from the trammels of State aid, they can unhesitatingly teach the doctrines of true religion combined with the various branches of a general education.”²⁵ Six months later, another First Presidency epistle praised the work of the Brigham Young Academy in Provo and the Brigham Young College in Logan, declaring, “We would like to see schools of this character, independent of the District School system, started in all places where it is possible.”²⁶ The call for Church schools came to fruition when, following the death of President John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff



The First Presidency, 1880–87 (left to right: George Q. Cannon, John Taylor, and Joseph F. Smith). As a counselor in the First Presidency, Joseph F. Smith participated in the dramatic expansion of the Church academy system by Presidents John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff.

announced in 1888, “We feel that the time has arrived when the proper education of our children should be taken in hand by us as a people.” Woodruff formed the Church Board of Education, and stakes were instructed to organize their own local boards and create a stake academy “as soon as practicable.”²⁷

As a counselor to President Woodruff and his successor, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith witnessed the Church’s enthusiastic response to the call for separate education. From 1888 through President Smith’s presidency, the Church operated as many as fifty-seven separate schools.²⁸ For those unable to attend one of the Church academies, Smith and others championed the formation of the Religion Class program, an after-school supplement to the secular education prevalent in public schools. In 1890, Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith wrote to local leaders, lamenting “training which our youth receive in the district schools,” noting that it did not “increase their feelings of devotion to God and love for His cause, for, as is well-known, all teachings of a religious character are rigorously excluded from the studies permitted in these institutions.” Their remedy was “that in every ward where a Church school is not established, that some brother or sister or brethren and sisters well adapted for such a responsible position by their intelligence and devotion, as well as their love

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Brigham Young Academy, circa January 4, 1892. Joseph F. Smith rode in the buggy being pulled by white horses, accompanied by Karl G. Maeser and George A. Brimhall. Greatly concerned by the expenses necessary to operate Church academies, President Smith set in motion the policy decisions that led to the replacement of most Church schools with seminary and institute alternatives.

for the young, be called, as on a mission . . . to take charge of a school wherein the first principles of the Gospel, Church history and kindred subjects shall be taught. This school is to meet for a short time each afternoon after the close of the district school.”²⁹ As Church President, Smith oversaw a boom in Religion Class enrollment as well as further expansion to the educational system, including the creation of the St. George Stake Academy, Snowflake Stake Academy, Big Horn Stake Academy, San Luis Stake Academy, Millard Academy, and the Knight Academy, all under his watch.

As Church school alternatives expanded early in Joseph F. Smith’s presidency, public school options likewise blossomed. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only six high schools existed in the entire state of Utah. Of the six schools, only the schools in Salt Lake City and Ogden boasted student populations

of more than sixty-five.³⁰ By 1902, the second year of Smith's presidency, the State Superintendent's report counted nineteen public high schools in Utah; only three years later, there were thirty-three.³¹ In 1914, during the height of Smith's presidency, State Superintendent of Public Instruction A. C. Matheson summarized, "No other branch of the public school system has developed so rapidly during recent years. In a little more than a decade the number of high schools has increased from four to forty and the enrollment of students from one thousand to eight thousand." Matheson boasted that the state of Utah constructed twenty-five high school buildings in a six-year period from 1908 to 1914, ranging from "substantial modern structures costing \$40,000 each to the East Side High School, Salt Lake City, which represents an expenditure of \$600,000." Jordan High School in Sandy, Matheson continued, "is declared by leading educators to be the finest and best equipped rural high school in the west."³²

A System "Run Mad": Reining in Educational Exuberance

The expansion of public high schools in the West during the early twentieth century led to a dramatic educational shift during the Smith presidency. During the early years of his presidency, the Church moved toward supporting public schools, in spite of rhetoric by Smith's predecessors against taxation for secular curriculum. The softened position towards public education came, in part, because of the realization that many members were unable to send their children to Church schools. In fact, if the Church and the public school systems were in competition, the Church's program was clearly losing, at least from a statistical perspective. In 1890, for example, public high schools in Utah enrolled only 5 percent of the state's secondary student population. By the decade after President Smith's death, 90 percent of all students attended public schools.³³

In February 1905, President Smith and his counselors endorsed the growing public school system. Interestingly, they also expressed support for its secular curriculum. "We wish it distinctly understood that we are not in favor of, but are emphatically opposed to, denominational teachings in our public schools. We are proud of that splendid system of schools, and do not desire that they should be interfered with in any way whatever. For religious and devotional training, other institutions are provided, by our Church as well as by other churches, and we cannot too strongly urge that the two systems continue to be kept entirely separate and apart."³⁴ Two years later, Smith and his counselors further clarified,

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“It has been charged that ‘Mormonism’ is opposed to education. The history of the Church and the precepts of its leaders are a sufficient answer to that accusation.” Summarizing the Church educational legacy from its founding to the present, Smith concluded, “The State of Utah, now dotted with free schools, academies, colleges, and universities, institutions which have given her marked educational prominence, furnishes indisputable evidence that her people—mostly ‘Mormons’—are friends and promoters of education.”³⁵

Not only did President Smith openly support public schools, he sought to get Latter-day Saint teachers employed in them. In May 1911, Smith wrote to the State Board of Education, requesting “recognition of the normal work in our Church schools, so that the graduates from our normal courses may be regarded in the same class as State normal graduates, and be granted certificates to teach in the public schools without examination.”³⁶ This was done to satisfy the growing need for public school teachers in the region while providing employment opportunities for Church school graduates.

Though he appeared supportive, President Smith’s endorsement of public education may have been a practical response to the realization that Church members were flooding public school classrooms. In fact, though the state superintendent of public instruction claimed “the rapid growth of high schools in the state is a matter of congratulation,” the expense of the burgeoning public and private educational system eventually worried Joseph F. Smith, a man whose education came from the home and the herd.³⁷ Knowing he would be “criticized by professional ‘lovers of education’ for expressing [his] idea in relation to this matter,” Smith voiced his concern about escalating costs to support the new programs in his opening address of the October 1915 general conference. “I hope that I may be pardoned for giving expression to my real conviction with reference to the question of education in the State of Utah,” Smith declared. “I believe that we are running education mad. I believe that we are taxing the people more for education than they should be taxed. This is my sentiment.”³⁸ During his presidency, Smith founded educational alternatives and issued cautions regarding expansion, setting the stage for the rise of the modern Church Educational System.

Finding a way to provide religious instruction for the children of Church members attending public schools led to the creation of the most significant educational legacy of President Smith’s administration, the formation of the modern released-time seminary program. Formed by the Granite Stake Presidency

as an alternative for Latter-day Saint students attending Salt Lake City's Granite High School instead of one of the Church's academies, with Smith's support the program quickly blossomed from one program in 1912 to thirteen by his death in 1918.³⁹ Enrollment jumped from 70 students the first year to 1,528 students in 1918.⁴⁰ At the same time, high school enrollment at Church academies remained steady, ranging between four and five thousand students from 1912 to 1918.⁴¹

Spiritual and Temporal Concerns within Church Education

While the seminary program flourished, Church academies caused problems for President Smith during his presidency. In particular, controversial teachings relating to evolution and biblical interpretation shaped Smith's educational legacy. Reflecting on one of the most divisive religious issues of their era, in 1909 President Smith and his First Presidency published a statement entitled, "The Origin of Man." The following year, one of his biographers noted, "President Smith's conservative approach toward education collided with the competing desires of some of the faculty and students on the Provo campus [of Brigham Young University]."⁴² Perpetuating modernist critiques on the authenticity of the Bible and the origin of man, three Brigham Young University professors, Ralph Chamberlain, Joseph Peterson, and Henry Peterson, were eventually let go from the faculty.⁴³

The flare-up elicited several comments by President Smith and ultimately a warning regarding the dangers false educational ideas could pose. At the Church's general conference in April 1911, he defended sources of eternal truth: "I believe that the Latter-day Saints, and especially the leading men in Israel, have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the principles of the gospel that they know the truth, and they are made free by its possession—free from sin, free from error, free from darkness, from the traditions of men, from vain philosophy, and from the untried, unproven theories of scientists, that need demonstration beyond the possibility of a doubt." Reflecting the supremacy he placed on revealed truth and the skepticism he shared for unproven ideas, Smith continued, "We have had science and philosophy through all the ages, and they have undergone change after change. Scarcely a century has passed but they have introduced new theories of science and of philosophy that supersede the old traditions and the old faith and the old doctrines entertained

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by philosophers and scientists. These things may undergo continuous changes, but the word of God is always true, is always right.”⁴⁴ He later warned of the influence of false ideas in a caution to the Church, “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.”⁴⁵

Concerns about false teachings at Church schools were coupled with rising costs to maintain the schools. In a 1909 letter to Brigham Young College, President Smith voiced his concern about escalating expenses at Church schools, “Within less than a decade the annual appropriation for maintaining the Church schools has increased almost ten fold, so rapid has been the growth of the schools. This is altogether out of proportion to the increase of the revenues of the Church; a ratio that cannot longer be maintained.”⁴⁶ In general conference in 1916, he further lamented Church school costs. Summarizing Church expenditures for the fifteen-year period from 1901 to 1915, he reported spending \$3,714,455 for schools, the largest expenditure in the entire Church budget for the time period. By comparison, \$3,279,900 had been spent through all Church channels aiding the poor during the same era. Slightly over \$2,000,000 was spent building meetinghouses and only \$1,169,499 was spent on maintenance and repair of temples.⁴⁷ Of concern to President Smith, Church schools were receiving the lion’s share of the faith’s funds and requesting more at an alarming rate.

Church Board of Education minutes for April 28, 1915, reflect Smith’s growing apprehension regarding educational expenses. Responding to Weber Academy’s request for funding to add a normal course, the minutes record:

President Smith explained to the brethren the condition of the Church finances and clearly pointed out that the trustee-in-trust is in no position at present to promise an increase of funds for educational purposes. While he was heartily in favor of the idea of our turning attention to the making of teachers and would be very glad if some of the smaller schools could be turned into public high schools, to have the means thus saved expended for normal work, he did not see how he could undertake at present to branch out and incur more expense; we should simply have to trim our educational sails to the financial winds.⁴⁸

While the minutes report President Smith's concern, they also hint at his solution. By transforming smaller schools into public high schools, focusing on teacher training in the remaining institutions, and augmenting religious instruction with the seminary system, President Smith saw a way out of the fiscal dilemma Church schools presented.⁴⁹ Ultimately, it was this approach that his successor—President Heber J. Grant—adopted, concluding the educational transformation begun by Joseph F. Smith by closing or transferring to the state nearly all of the Church academies during the 1920s and early 1930s, replacing them with an expanded seminary and institute program.⁵⁰ President Smith's plan, implemented by President Grant, charted the course of the Church Educational System across the remainder of the twentieth century.

Summary and Conclusion

Ezra Taft Benson taught, "Each President has been uniquely selected for the time and situation which the world and Church needed. All were 'men of the hour.'"⁵¹ President Joseph F. Smith's life and administration witness to the Lord's preparing him for his particular mission. The last Church President to have known Joseph Smith personally, Joseph F. Smith was a transitional figure, leading the faith from its pioneer founding into its modern era, turning Church attention beyond the Intermountain West.⁵² His legacy continues to impact Church teachings and practice today.

The shaping of Church education was one of Smith's most important legacies. The least formally educated Church President of the twentieth century, Joseph F. Smith marked the faith's educational trajectory for the century. He presided over the formation of the Church's seminary program, laying the groundwork for the transition to supplementary religious education. Nurtured at his own mother's knee, he encouraged the beginnings of the modern family home evening program, counseling parents to "gather their boys and girls about them in the home and teach them the word of the Lord."⁵³ His fiscal restraint reined in excess, curtailing Church academy growth. Educationally, he placed a primacy on spiritual learning and his teachings continue to guide understanding of eternal things.⁵⁴ Indeed, much of the doctrinal understanding and educational practice of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today are an outgrowth of the life and ministry of Joseph F. Smith.

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Notes

A longer version of this piece appeared in *BYU Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2013): 39–62.

1. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986), 157–58.
2. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, October 1915, 4.
3. “The City Council, and General Bennett’s Inaugural Address,” *Times and Seasons*, February 15, 1841, 319.
4. Paul Thomas Smith, “A Historical Study of the Nauvoo, Illinois, Public School System, 1841–1845” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1969), 80–81.
5. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith: Sixth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 225–26.
6. Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph F. Smith: Patriarch and Preacher, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 7–9.
7. Don Cecil Corbett, *Mary Fielding Smith: Daughter of Britain* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 13; Susa Y. Gates, “Mothers in Israel,” *Relief Society Magazine*, March 1916, 123.
8. Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, eds., *Women’s Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 58–68.
9. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 4.
10. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 225. Mary reared the five surviving children of Hyrum Smith and his first wife Jerusha Barden, who died in 1837. A seven-year-old son died in September 1841. The oldest daughter, Lovina, married Lorin Walker in June 1844, shortly before her father’s martyrdom. Mary also gave birth to Hyrum’s two youngest children, Joseph Fielding and Martha Ann.
11. “Conference Minutes,” *Times and Seasons*, November 1, 1845, 1015.
12. *Deseret News*, November 27, 1850, cited in Levi Edgar Young, “Education in Utah,” *Improvement Era*, July 1913, 879.
13. Leonard J. Arrington, “The Latter-day Saints and Public Education,” *Southwestern Journal of Social Education* 7, no. 9 (Spring–Summer 1977): 11.
14. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 163.
15. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 226.
16. Joseph F. Smith to Samuel L. Adams, May 11, 1888, cited in Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and R. Q. Shupe, *Joseph F. Smith: Portrait of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 20.
17. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 229.
18. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 225–26.
19. Joseph F. Smith, “Testimony Bearing,” *Juvenile Instructor*, August 1906, 466.
20. *Gospel Doctrine: Sermons and Writings of President Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 269.
21. Joseph F. Smith, “Worship in the Home,” *Improvement Era*, December 1903, 138.
22. Joseph F. Smith, “Dress and Social Practices,” *Improvement Era*, December 1916, 173.
23. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1903, 3.
24. Joseph F. Smith, “Looking for Easy Work,” *Improvement Era*, January 1903, 229.
25. John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833–1964* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft,

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- 1966), 3:58–59. Joseph F. Smith did not sign the epistle because he was serving a mission in Hawaii at the time.
26. John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:86–87.
27. Wilford Woodruff, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:168.
28. Because of some short operational lives, enumerating the exact number of Church schools is problematic. Researchers for Brigham Young University's Education in Zion exhibit found that the Church operated as many as thirty-five stake academies and twenty-two other schools, called seminaries because a corresponding stake academy already existed in the stake. These twenty-two seminaries are not to be confused with the present Church education endeavor of the same name that was also begun during Smith's presidency at Granite High School in Salt Lake City in 1912. C. Terry Warner and Brett D. Dowdle to Scott C. Esplin, e-mail, June 5, 2008; see also Scott C. Esplin and Arnold K. Garr, "Church Academies: 1875–1933," in *Mapping Mormonism: An Atlas of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Brandon S. Plewe, S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2012), 126–27.
29. Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:196–97.
30. Public high schools operated in the communities of Salt Lake, Ogden, Park City, Brigham City, Nephi, and Richfield at the dawn of the twentieth century. *Third Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Utah for the Biennial Period Ending June 30, 1900* (Salt Lake City: State of Utah, Department of Public Instruction, 1901), 25–26.
31. *Fourth Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Utah for the Biennial Period Ending June 30, 1902* (Salt Lake City: Star Printing, 1903), 22; William E. Berrett and Alma P. Burton, eds., *Readings in LDS Church History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 3:338.
32. *Tenth Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Utah for the Biennial Period Ending June 30, 1914* (Salt Lake City: Arrow Press, 1915), 24.
33. William E. Berrett and Alma P. Burton, eds., *Readings in LDS Church History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 3:338.
34. Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, "Religion Classes and School Buildings," *Improvement Era*, February 1905, 302.
35. Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, "An Address. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the World," *Improvement Era*, May 1907, 485.
36. Joseph F. Smith to the State Board of Education, May 5, 1911, in William Peter Miller, Weber College—1888 to 1933, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
37. *Tenth Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 24.
38. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, October 1915, 4.
39. Seminary programs formed during Smith's presidency include Granite (1912), Box Elder (1915), Mount Pleasant (1916), American Fork (1917), Lehi (1917), Huntington (1918), Mesa, AZ (1918), Sandy (1918), Blanding (1918), Roosevelt (1918), Richfield (1918), Pleasant Grove (1918), and Heber (1918). Historical Resource File, 1891–1989, Church Educational System (1970–), Church History Library.
40. Historical Resource File, 1891–1989, Church Educational System (1970–), Church History Library. For a brief history of the first seminary and its teacher, Thomas J. Yates, see Casey Paul Griffiths, "The First Seminary Teacher," *Religious Educator* 9, no. 3 (2008): 115–30.

JOSEPH F. SMITH: REFLECTIONS ON THE MAN AND HIS TIMES

41. Seminary and Institute Statistical Reports, 1919–53, Unified Church School System (1953–70), Church History Library.
42. Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph F. Smith: Patriarch and Preacher, Prophet of God*, 254–55.
43. For additional information about the modernism controversy at BYU, see Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 1:412–33.
44. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1911, 7–8.
45. Joseph F. Smith, “Three Threatening Dangers,” *Improvement Era*, March 1914, 476–77.
46. Minutes of the General Church Board of Education, June 30, 1909, cited in Centennial History Project Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
47. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1916, 7.
48. General Church Board of Education minutes, April 28, 1915, in Miller, Weber College—1888 to 1933.
49. Minutes from the Church Board of Education on June 30, 1909, reflect support for limiting the number of Church schools and emphasizing teacher training:

This recommendation was also unanimously adopted by the General Board of Education.

It is not the feeling of either of the committees, nor is it thought a wise policy by this Board to use from the limited money available the large sums that would be needed in giving college education to the comparatively few who are able to take it; but it is thought that this portion of the tithes of the people should be spent in making many Latter-day Saints of our children in high schools rather than a comparative few in colleges.

Though desirable, the Church cannot maintain a complete system of schools from the primary grade to the college work and has, therefore, concentrated its efforts in maintaining a system of high schools to best meet the needs of the young people.

Nevertheless, the need for teachers, not only for our own schools, but for the many other organizations of the Church, make it necessary to have a teachers’ college; but neither the money at our disposal nor the number of college students in the Church at present who desire to become teachers, is sufficient to warrant maintaining properly more than one such college.

Therefore the General Board of Education has decided to discontinue all college work in the Church schools except what is really necessary to prepare teachers; and we feel that when the people understand this matter they will see the wisdom of the decision and feel satisfied with it.

We would be pleased if you would furnish copies of this communication to all the Presidents of Stakes included in the Brigham Young College district that it may be read at their conferences or priesthood meetings or ward meetings.

Your brethren and fellow laborers in the gospel,

The General Church Board of Education,

Joseph F. Smith, President.

Joseph F. Smith and the Shaping of the Modern Church Educational System

Minutes of the General Church Board of Education, June 30, 1909, cited in Centennial History Project Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

50. Of the more than thirty Church academies, only four (Brigham Young University, Ricks College, LDS Business College, and the Juárez Academy) survived as Church-sponsored institutions after 1933. Meanwhile, seminary enrollment grew exponentially from nearly three thousand students in 1920 to thirty-four thousand students in 1933. For additional information regarding the discontinuance of Church academies and the growth of the seminary and institute program, see Scott C. Esplin, "Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888–1933" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 2006).
51. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 142.
52. During his administration, the first temple outside the continental United States (Laie, Hawaii) and the first temple outside the United States itself (Cardston, Alberta, Canada) were announced. Historically, he also guided Church efforts in acquiring and developing significant historic sites including the Carthage Jail, the Joseph Smith farm, the Sacred Grove, the Joseph Smith birthplace, and the Hill Cumorah.
53. Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:338.
54. Of Joseph F. Smith's teachings, Harold B. Lee observed, "When I want to seek for a more clear definition of doctrinal subjects, I have usually turned to the writings and sermons of President Joseph F. Smith" (in Conference Report, October 1972, 18).