

1-1-2006

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Recommended Citation

Bushman, Richard. "The Inner Joseph Smith," *Journal of Mormon History* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 65-81.

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similar sentinels scouting the border's other side. To fit squarely into the American cultural pegboard, Mormons will have to give up the sense of who they know themselves to be. I do not see them doing so anytime soon.

THE INNER JOSEPH SMITH

Richard Lyman Bushman

ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION in the 1970s, Leonard Arrington, the founder of this organization, told me I should write a psychological sketch of Joseph Smith. Leonard was probably thinking of Fawn Brodie's brief analysis of Joseph in the second edition of *No Man Knows My History*.¹ Brodie thought Joseph might conform to a psychological type, "the impostor," described by psychoanalyst Phyllis Greenacre. A few years earlier, I had spent two years studying psychoanalysis, and Leonard probably thought I was as well prepared as anyone to write about Joseph Smith's psychodynamics. Arrington could not have foreseen the assortment of psychological studies that would begin appearing after 1976 by T. L. Brink, Jess Groesbeck, William D. Morain, Robert D. Anderson, and Lawrence Foster, most of them describing the Prophet as suffering from one psychological disease or another.² After all this work, none of it particularly satisfying to Mormons, Leonard has

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¹Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd ed. rev. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 418-19.

²T. L. Brink, "Joseph Smith: The Verdict of Depth Psychology," *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 73-83; C. Jess Groesbeck, "The Smiths and Their Dreams and Visions," *Sunstone* 12 (March 1988): 22-29; William D.

earned the right to a hearty "I told you so."

I held back because, in the 1970s, I was on the rebound from a psychoanalytic period in my career. After completing my study of Connecticut society and culture published as *From Puritan to Yankee*,³ I was contemplating work on political and religious ideology in the mid-eighteenth century. I thought that the descriptions of the tyrannical king in political discourse and of the oppressive Calvinist God in religious writings resembled one another psychologically and might have their roots in an overarching struggle with authority.⁴ As I began the project, Erik Erikson's psychoanalytic study, *Young Man Luther*, and Alexander and Juliet George's *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House* were the talk of the profession, and a number of historians were contemplating an alliance with psychology.⁵ In his 1957 presidential address to the American Historical Association, William Langer argued that "The Next Assignment," as he called it, was for historians to integrate psychological analysis into their studies.⁶ Thinking that depth analysis might help with my project on authority, I plunged in.

In 1963 I received a post-doctoral fellowship for interdisciplin-

Morain, *The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr., and the Dissociated Mind* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1998); Robert D. Anderson, *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999); Dan Vogel, "Joseph Smith's Family Dynamics," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 32 (2002); Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004); Lawrence Foster, "Toward an Introduction to a Psychobiography of Joseph Smith," in *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith*, edited by Bryan Waterman (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 183-208.

³Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

⁴Jay Fliegelman later wrote the book I was contemplating: *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁵Erik H. Erickson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1958); Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House* (New York: John Day, 1956).

⁶William Langer, "The Next Assignment," *American Historical Review* 63 (1958): 283-304.

ary study at Brown University. Barnaby Keeney, then president of Brown and soon to be the first director of the National Endowment for the Humanities, had devised a two-year program for scholars wishing to explore another field. In the first year the fellows were to give a course in their own fields to establish contact with students and faculty and, in the second year, offer a new course combining their old field with the new. My seminar, combining history and psychology, was entitled "Varieties of American Character."

To prepare myself, I applied for a seminar at Harvard offered by Erik Erikson, fresh from his Luther book and working then on Gandhi.⁷ Erikson personally interviewed all the applicants to the seminar. A tall Dane with pink cheeks, a high forehead and swept-back hair, he had a preternatural gift for discerning the inner workings of people's psyche. His effect on me was to dissolve me into my various psychological particles. During our interview, I felt called upon to forewarn him that I might attack him in class. I had spent a semester in the seminar of Harvard political theorist Louis Hartz and found myself repeatedly challenging the thesis he had developed in *The Liberal Tradition in America*. At one point in the class, Hartz turned to me and demanded, "Why do you feel obliged to attack every word I say?" I had no idea but thought there must be psychological reasons. During the interview with Erikson, I tried to warn him of what was ahead. He looked at me calmly and said serenely, "I feel perfectly safe in your hands."

Erikson attracted social scientists from all over the Boston area interested in psychoanalytic insights. Robert Coles, soon to publish the first of his many books on children, participated for a year. My paper for the seminar examined the journal of Jonathan Edwards from a psychoanalytic perspective. I thought I saw an overpowering superego or conscience in Edwards that constantly punished him for the slightest infraction and which, for the most part, caused him intense suffering. Only when he could placate his superego by abasing himself mercilessly could Edwards enjoy peace of mind—and then he was ecstatically happy. Edwards called it conversion, I thought it was psychodynamics.⁸ In a slightly different vein, I did a study of Benjamin Franklin the next year in connection with the seminar on American character at Brown. In this case, I noted Franklin's tendency as recorded in his

⁷Erik H. Erickson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969).

⁸Richard L. Bushman, "Jonathan Edwards and Puritan Conscious-

autobiography to avoid confrontation. His tactic was to pull back when he came up against opposition and negotiate a resolution that would help him gain advantage for himself without a struggle. I observed this pattern not only in simple happenings in his childhood but also in his life as a diplomat on the public stage. I speculated about the origins of this strategy in relations with his mother.⁹

I believed what I wrote about Edwards and Franklin. I thought I had been true to the historical record and to psychoanalytic insight; and yet, in the end, I was dissatisfied. In each case—especially with Edwards—I had taken an influential, energetic, highly effective person and reduced him to a patient on a doctor's couch. The power and vitality of the two men disappeared in my search for the inner structures of their personalities. Each one was so much more than I had made of him, and yet my method did not allow me to account for their strengths. The very use of medical terminology made them both seem sick. In dissecting the frog, I had killed it. This failing may account for the fact that psychological studies fade rapidly. My work on Jonathan Edwards played no part in George Marsden's recent prize-winning biography of the great theologian, and Reformation historians tell me that Erik Erikson's biography is now viewed as an historiographical artifact with little influence in the field.¹⁰

Ironically, Erikson's method was designed to avoid the very trap I had fallen into. He was termed an "ego psychologist" by the profession at that time. He believed that the ego had more strength than other psychoanalysts had credited it with. It was thought that, in the struggle between the id (the dark source of passions and drives) and the superego (the conscience that attempts to drive the id back into its lair), the ego (the "I" which has the job of negotiating between the two) was generally trampled upon. Contrary to the prevailing orthodoxy, Erikson believed the ego had strengths of its own in forming an identity, and he gave credit to its work. In Erikson's scheme, the ego's task was to blend the shape of the psyche as it developed in childhood with the options offered by the culture. From this negotiation of inner

ness," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 5 (Fall 1966): 383-96.

⁹Richard L. Bushman, "On the Uses of Psychology: Conflict and Conciliation in Benjamin Franklin," *History and Theory* 5 (Fall 1966): 225-40.

¹⁰George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003).

and outer came the person's social and psychological identity. To understand Luther and Gandhi, Erikson delved deeply into German and Indian culture. His studies were a blend of history, culture, and personality. Understandably, historians found Erikson's variety of psychohistory to be more useful than the historically shallow investigations of most psychoanalysts. Instead of implicitly calling people with problems sick, he honored them for their success in integrating the contending forces within their personalities.¹¹

Most important for historians—and for this paper—Erikson developed a view of historical leadership. The people who confronted the underlying tensions of a period and offered a resolution were precisely the ones who exercised influence. He thought Luther spoke to his generation because he confronted the deep issues of his time. In a sense, Luther was a sick man, but he suffered from the sickness of the age. Without having suffered, he could not have led. That he came through these trials and created a functioning psycho-cultural identity made his life story therapeutic. He was listened to because he spoke out of the struggles of a people. Luther did not necessarily solve the problems, but his life and teachings offered hope. His experience gave him a compelling authenticity.¹²

Although I knew all this, somehow I lacked Erikson's deft touch when I worked on Edwards and Franklin. Disappointed with the results, I backed away from studying Joseph Smith or anyone else psychologically. The application of psychological language seemed to me to obscure historical subjects and even worse, in my estimation, reduced strong figures to patienthood. I wanted to recover all of my subjects' powers and strengths and not leave them lying haplessly on the couch.

And yet, with all these reservations, after completing the biography of Joseph Smith last year, I realized that the wily old master had worked his influence upon me. Without taking thought, I had introduced psychological themes into my account of Joseph

¹¹Before *Young Man Luther*, Erikson had influenced historians through a collection of essays laying out his theories: *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963). For a précis of his theories of leadership, see Lucian W. Pye, "Personal Identity and Political Ideology," in *Political Decision Makers*, edited by Dwaine Marvick (Glencoe, N.Y.: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962).

¹²Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 251-67.

Smith, and, what is more, given them an Eriksonian treatment. I had come to believe that Joseph was influential *because* of his personal struggles. He confronted the issues of his time and, if he did not find solutions, dealt with them in his life and teachings. He was an Eriksonian example of a person leading from weakness transformed into strength. Without intending to, I had accepted Leonard's invitation after all. At least I had an inkling of the inner Joseph when it came to two issues—fatherhood and the sealing of families—which can serve as examples of Erikson's method. Both of these were personal to Joseph Smith and, at the same time, essential to his doctrine. In fatherhood and sealing, I found instances of the psychological, the religious, and the historical interacting as Erikson said they must.

In a television interview soon after the publication of *The Beginnings of Mormonism*, a reporter asked me who was most influential in Joseph Smith's life, his father or his mother. I balked at this unanswerable question; but if asked again, I would probably say his father. Joseph Jr. was invariably loyal to Joseph Sr. Joseph Jr. went to such pains to honor his father that one wonders if he was compensating for some underlying shame. He called Joseph Sr. to be Patriarch to the Church and sat him in the highest place in the ascending pulpits of the Kirtland Temple. In a blessing, Joseph said his father would sit with the great patriarchs of the Bible in the last day, and in a vision of "the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof" that he had in 1836 while his father was still alive, he saw Joseph Sr. (along with Lucy, brother Alvin, "Father Adam, and Abraham") as one of the "heirs of that kingdom" (LDS D&C 137:1, 5, 8).

Joseph Jr.'s love may have gone back to the leg operation when he had said he could bear the pain if his father would hold him in his arms. Joseph Sr. must have been an attractive man, tall, straight, and handsome. Lucy once imagined him as a tree swaying in a field with a band of burnished gold surrounding him. Irresistibly drawn to him, Joseph Jr. stood by his father in all his trials. When Lucy and three of the children joined the Palmyra Presbyterian Church in the 1820s, Joseph Jr. and the others stayed home with Joseph Sr.¹³

Joseph Jr. shared his father's low opinion of the churches. Joseph Sr.'s five religious dreams opened onto a desolate landscape

¹³For Joseph Smith's life, see Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a*

where religion and salvation were not to be found. He was wandering, alone, and endlessly seeking. In real life, he periodically tried to attend church with Lucy but then pulled back, repelled by some lack or fault. His dreams show him desperately hungry for salvation but incapable of finding it. By age twelve, Joseph Jr. shared his father's opinion. Even before the First Vision, Joseph Jr. had concluded that humankind "had apostatised from the true and living faith."¹⁴ Both father and son were confused about religion, wanting salvation but unsure where to look. Although offering no leadership himself, Joseph Sr.'s example kept Joseph Jr. from joining the Presbyterian Church with Lucy.

Joseph showed more emotion at his father's baptism on the day of the Church's organization than at any other time in his life. Lucy said that Joseph Jr. grasped his father's hand as he came from the water and cried out, "Oh, my God! have I lived to see my own father baptized into the true church of Jesus Christ!" According to Joseph Knight, Joseph Jr. "bast out with greaf and Joy and seamed as tho the world Could not hold him. He Awent out into the Lot and appeard to want to git out of site of every Body and would sob and Crie and seamed to Be so full that he could not live." Knight and Oliver Cowdery went after Joseph and finally brought him back to the house. "He was the most wrot upon that I ever saw any man," Knight said. "His joy seemed to Be full."¹⁵

The incident not only spoke of the bond between father and son but also shows that Joseph Jr. had taken responsibility for his father's salvation. A few years later in an unguarded moment, Joseph told his brother William that "I brought salvation to my father's house, as an instrument in the hands of God when they were in a miserable situation," one of the few instances when Joseph acknowledged that his fa-

Prophet, and Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*.

¹⁴Joseph Smith, "History 1832," in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 11.

¹⁵Joseph Knight, Sr. "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," edited by Dean C. Jessee, *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 37; Joseph Smith, "History, 1839," in Joseph Smith, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989-92): 1:303; Lavina Fielding Anderson, *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 477.

ther had been a failure.¹⁶

Joseph Sr. was no more successful economically than religiously. He had begun life auspiciously with a farm provided by his father Asael and a thousand dollar nest egg from Lucy's brother Stephen and Stephen's partner, but he lost both through bad judgment and the villainy of a business partner. For fourteen years, he moved from one tenant farm to another. With the help of his growing sons, he tried again in Manchester to purchase a farm but failed to make the payments and lost the property. While his grandfather Samuel was a respected farmer and town leader at the peak of Topsfield society, Joseph Sr. dropped into the lower ranks of rural society in Vermont and New York.

At age fifty-four, he had nothing. He had failed in the primary responsibility of farm fathers in those days: to support his family from day to day and at the same time accumulate enough in addition to give his sons and daughters a start in life. Families hoped to get ahead of their everyday needs in the years when the older boys were still working for their fathers before striking out on their own. Joseph Sr. had the boys but overextended himself in building a frame house to replace their log house. He could not make the payments on both house and land, and by trying for too much, he lost all. His own father, Asael, had given his boys farms as they came of age in Vermont; Joseph Sr. had nothing to give. Instead, he was reduced to living with Hyrum and his wife. As he entered his declining years, he had neither religion nor land to offer his family.

Broken by circumstances and bad luck, he turned to drink and to treasure-seeking. His drinking was not excessive for his time; it was period of increasing alcohol consumption, resulting eventually in the temperance movement of the 1830s. The critical neighbors' affidavits never implied that he led his family to wrack and ruin as happened in the worst cases. But his drinking was a source of shame and added to his feeling of failure. At first, he was not ashamed of his treasure-seeking, even though some neighbors ridiculed him for it. Joseph Sr. may have felt that his son's gifts for seeing in a stone gave him

¹⁶Joseph Smith, Kirtland, Letter to William Smith, December 18, 1835, in Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 6 vols. published 1902-12, Vol. 7 published 1932; 1971 printing), 2:343.

an advantage in the search for lost treasure, the resort of the poor all over New England in those times. For four or five years after 1822, when Joseph Jr. found a seerstone in a well, Joseph Sr. pressed his son to help with the expeditions, doubtless hoping to recover from his losses in farming. Finally in 1826, Joseph Sr. acknowledged that here, too, he had gone astray; Joseph Jr.'s marvelous gifts, he said at his son's 1826 trial, should be used for higher purposes.¹⁷

Joseph Sr.'s was a sad story, but not an uncommon one. It was an age of failed fathers. We celebrate the westward movement and the growth of cities as signs of American optimism and enterprise, but they were more often than not the outcome of failed farm families. Fathers could not accumulate sufficient land to provide for their children, and so they were forced to sell out and move on. In Indiana settlers squatted on fresh land for twenty years and at the end still lacked the cash to purchase the land they had worked, compelling them to move again. In Rhode Island fathers put their wives and children into the spinning mills to make the money the farm could not provide. In Massachusetts daughters worked in the mills while their mothers ran boarding houses after the family farmsteads were lost through debt. Every move to the city, every trek west was more likely than not to indicate that the old system was broken. Fathers could not provide for their children in towns where their ancestors had lived for generations.

Thomas Lincoln, the father of Abraham, began with three farms in Kentucky when his son was young. In 1816 (the same year the Smiths moved to Palmyra), faulty titles forced Thomas to sell the land at a loss and move across the Ohio to Indiana. There he worked a backcountry farm with the help of his children, but that operation failed and he moved to Illinois. At that point, young Abraham bailed out. He could see that his father's fortunes were running down hill and that he would have little to offer his son. Abraham left the family and moved into storekeeping, politics, and law where there were brighter prospects. He attended to his father as best he could but had little hope for his economic recovery. Lincoln subscribed instead to the Whig program of bolstering the market economy—canals and roads, protective tariffs, and a national bank. Only by turning to commercial agriculture, Lincoln believed, would men like Thomas Lin-

¹⁷William D. Purple, "Reminiscences," April 28, 1877, in Dan Vogel, ed. *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (1996-2003), 4:135.

coln get ahead. Losing patience with his family's frequent requests for loans, Abraham refused to visit his father in his final illness and did not attend his funeral.¹⁸

Joseph Sr.'s prospects were even dimmer than Thomas Lincoln's, but Joseph Jr. never gave up on his flawed, lovely father. In late 1833 or 1834, Joseph ordained his father as patriarch.¹⁹ Although couched in formal language, Joseph's blessing on Joseph Sr., expressed the feelings of a son for a father who had suffered repeated defeats. This was a man who had lost two farms and, at age fifty-eight when the Church was organized, was back in tenancy, with no house or land to call his own. Defeated by the rigors of the economic order, he was told by his son he would be a prince over his posterity. "Blessed of the Lord is my father," Joseph said, "for he shall stand in the midst of his posterity and shall be comforted by their blessings when he is old and bowed down with years, and he shall be called a prince over them." Like Adam, he would assemble his children—his one undoubted accomplishment—and "sit in the general assembly of patriarchs, even in council with the Ancient of Days when he shall sit and all the patriarchs with him—and shall enjoy his right and authority under the direction of the Ancient of Days." Whatever else Joseph Sr. lacked, "his seed shall rise up and call him blessed. . . . His name shall be had in remembrance to the end."²⁰

Joseph Sr. seemed to understand that his sons had redeemed his life. When he blessed Joseph and Hyrum in December 1834, he

¹⁸David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 24–25, 36, 152–53.

¹⁹There is a dispute over whether the ordination was in December 1833 or December 1834. The earlier date, the most generally accepted, is based on an entry in December 18, 1833. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 47, chief critic of the December 18, 1833, date, points out that Joseph Sr. did not give blessings to his children until December 9, 1834, a puzzling year-long lapse before exercising his office if he had been ordained a year earlier. The traditional chronology is laid out by Irene M. Bates and E. Gary Smith, *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 34–37.

²⁰Patriarchal Blessings, Book A, p. 9, Archives, Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

thanked them for enduring the hardships of their early lives. Hyrum, Joseph Sr. said, had "borne the burthen and heat of the day" and "labored much for the good of thy father's family." As a father, he expressed gratitude for Hyrum's kindness and tolerance: "Thou hast always stood by thy father, and reached forth the helping hand to lift him up, when he was in affliction, and though he has been out of the way through wine, thou has never forsaken him, nor laughed him to scorn." Joseph Sr.'s candid words bespeak the sorrows of a failing father in a cruel time. Besides his business failures, his intemperance had further weakened him and could have exposed him to the scorn of his own children, but his sons had not mocked him: "For all these kindnesses the Lord my God will bless thee." In return, he could bless Hyrum with "the same blessings with which Jacob blessed his son Joseph, for thou art his true descendant." He could not give his son wealth, but he could say that "thy posterity shall be numbered with the house of Ephraim, and with them thou shalt stand up to crown the tribes of Israel."²¹

Joseph Sr. could make these promises because Joseph Jr. had given him priesthood, while the father had given his son only hardship. Joseph Sr.'s blessing on Joseph Jr. acknowledged: "Thou has suffered much in thy youth, and the poverty and afflictions of thy father's family have been a grief to thy soul." Joseph Jr. had mourned his family's humiliations and assumed responsibility for lifting them from their low state. "Thou has stood by thy father, and like Shem, would have covered his nakedness, rather than see him exposed to shame." He alludes to what must have been at least one episode of public humiliation—"when the daughters of the Gentiles laughed," but Joseph Jr.'s "heart has been moved with a just anger to avenge thy kindred." The words may explain why Joseph joined his father in money-digging ventures despite his reluctance, why he stayed home from church when his mother took the other children to Presbyterian meetings, and why Joseph wept when his long unchurched father was baptized into the Church of Christ on its day of organization. He had made his father's pain his own. Now, at last, the father could bless his son "with the blessings of thy fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Joseph Sr. had given his son nothing for a worldly inheritance, and Joseph Jr. had met this lack by giving his father the power

²¹*Ibid.*, Book A, pp. 1–2.

to bless his sons.²²

Joseph Sr.'s blessings suggest the personal meaning of priesthood to early members. Whether weak or strong, rich or poor, priesthood holders could now bestow priesthood on their sons. The 1835 priesthood revelation named the patriarchs who received the priesthood from father Adam: Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah. As a later revelation was to say, the priesthood "came down from the fathers" (Abr. 1:3). Priesthood was a father's legacy to his son, counting for more than lands and herds.

Moreover, in the overall plan, material possessions also had a part. Zion promised an "inheritance" to all who migrated there. Fathers in Zion who lacked the wealth to provide for their children, as many did in this fast-moving age, were promised land in the holy city. The word "inheritance" for describing properties in Zion expressed a father's wish to bestow a legacy on his children.²³ In restoring priesthood, Joseph restored fatherhood.

I first became aware of Joseph's intense relationship with his father in reading Joseph Knight's account of Joseph Sr.'s baptism where Joseph Jr. "bast out with greaf and Joy." It was obvious from that incident alone how much the son's life was bound up in his father's. I began to examine sealing, my second psycho-historical theme, after a close reading of the priesthood marriage revelation.²⁴ I was struck by the concern about family relations coming to an end. "All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations"—in short, every kind of human relationship—"are of no efficacy, virtue, or force, in and after the resurrection" unless "entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed." Though ordained by "thrones, or principalities, or powers" every worldly relationship not sealed by God "shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead" (D&C 132:7, 13).

To me, the revelation showed a fear of termination and an intense desire to stabilize human relationships. According to its principles, husbands who are sealed to their wives will attain to unimagi-

²²Ibid., Book A, p. 3; Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898*, typescript, edited by Scott G. Kenny, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85), 1:109, November 27, 1836.

²³Bates and Smith, *Lost Legacy*, 34.

²⁴Doctrine and Covenants 132. All quotations in this article are from the current (1981) LDS edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

able glory, while those who are not sealed will remain alone. Glory is juxtaposed against loneliness. The letter announcing the principle of baptism for the dead, written in September 1842 (D&C 128), makes much the same point. Joseph was thrilled to discover that by baptizing and recording he could seal human relationships after death. "The nature of this ordinance," the letter said, "consists in the power of the priesthood, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, wherein it is granted that whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." Creating these ties, the letter went on, was of utmost importance. "It is sufficient to know," Joseph wrote, "that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other." Joseph seems to be saying that the situation was desperate. He had written earlier that unless the hearts of the children turned to the fathers and those of the fathers to the children "the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his [the Lord's] coming" (D&C 128:8, 18; 2:3). Families had to be welded or all was lost.

Especially in the closing years of his life, Joseph talked often of death and separation. He worried that people would lose track of one another in the resurrection. He proposed to build a tomb for all his family so that they could rise together and clasp hands. "If I had no expectation of seeing my mother Brother & Sisters & friends again my heart would burst in a moment & I should go down to my grave. The expectation of seeing my friends in the morning of the first resurrection cheers my soul," and enabled him "to bear up against the evils of life."²⁵ One of the advantages of gathering to Nauvoo was the opportunity of being buried near one another, "that in the morn of the resurrection they may come forth in a body. & come right up out of their graves, & strike hands immediately in eternal glory & felicity rather than to be scattered thousands of miles apart."²⁶ Joseph seemed to visualize what it would be like: "If to morrow I shall be called to lay in yonder tomb. In the morning of the resurrection, let me strike hands with my father, & cry, my father, & he will say my son, my son."²⁷ Joseph had a passion for family. He did not lust for wives so much as for kin. The priesthood marriage revelation promised him "an hundred-

²⁵Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980), 196.

²⁶Ibid., 194-95.

²⁷Ibid., 195.

fold in this world, of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and land, wives and children" (D&C 132:55). He wanted them all around, bound to him forever.

Joseph could not bear to be alone. When forced into inactivity away from the company of the Saints, he grew morose. When he was stalled for a month en route from Missouri while Newel Whitney's broken leg mended, he wrote plaintively to Emma in 1832 of how sorrows flooded over him and his willingness to die for Christ. In hiding from officers seeking his extradition in 1842, he could only fight off "melancholy and the dumps" by talking to a companion.²⁸ He pleaded with the Whitneys to visit him "in this my lonely retreat."²⁹ Emma seemed to understand his need to be surrounded by company. When W. W. Phelps suggested to Emma, beleaguered at every meal with guests, that "you must do as Bonaparte did have a little table, just large enough for yourself and your order thereon," Emma replied out of long experience, "Mr. Smith is a bigger man than Bonaparte. He can never eat without his friends."³⁰

The sources of this desire for connection and the fear of separation perhaps can be glimpsed in Joseph's family's experience. The deaths of Lucy's two older sisters, Lovisa and Lovina, shadowed all her childhood memories. "Seldom do I meet with an individual with whom I was even acquainted in my early years," she wrote later in life, "and I am constrained to exclaim the friends of my youth! Where are they? The tomb replies, Here are they!"³¹ Lucy lost her first son as an infant, another who was born in 1810 and lived only eleven days, and her favorite, Alvin, when he was twenty-five. The entire family suffered from Alvin's death. He had been Joseph Sr.'s chief support, cosigning the note for their Manchester property as if he were an auxiliary father. Since the whole family depended on Alvin's earning power, his death partly accounts for the loss of the farm. Joseph Jr.'s vision of Alvin in the celestial kingdom showed that he was on the family's mind more than a dozen years after his

²⁸Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 554.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 567.

³⁰Joseph Smith Jr., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, edited by Scott H. Faulring (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in Association with Smith Research Associates, 1989), 437-38.

³¹Lavina Fielding Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 255. Editing apparatus removed.

death. Joseph experienced the deaths of four children, before his namesake son, Joseph Smith III, was born and survived babyhood. Altogether, Joseph and Emma lost six of their eleven children in childbirth or infancy, making death and separation common occurrences in their lives.

Such fatalities had been a constant in family life from time immemorial, but the separations caused by American mobility were a new factor in Joseph's time. The same phenomenon that bore so harshly on fathers, westward migration and urban growth, also disrupted families. Each departure for the city or for the West meant separation. Family members went off, perhaps never to return. Letters linked people for a time, but they usually petered out and knowledge of a son or daughter or father was lost. The prodigious response to the gold rush indicated how loosely tied people were to their moorings. They left in an instant when the promise of easy wealth presented itself. Lewis Bidamon left Emma for a year shortly after their marriage to seek riches in California. Bidamon returned, but many did not. The narrowing of opportunity at home and the rumors of opportunity abroad meant that American family life was a series of farewells, departures, and separations.

Joseph's grandfather, Asael, was the first in the Smith line to feel these pressures in America. The Smiths had lived in Topsfield for nearly a century when Asael's father, Samuel, died in 1785. Asael was the first of the sons to leave, moving first to New Hampshire, then to Vermont. The Smiths were probably no more dependent on one another than most rural families, but it is evident that their chief associations were with each other. No other institution came close to rivaling family for providing comfort, religion, work, financial security, and education.

Asael seemed to sense the dangers of dispersal in the "Few words of advice" he wrote his children in 1797: "My last request and charge is that you will live together in an undivided bond of love," he wrote them. "You are many of you, and if you join together as one man, you need not want anything. What counsel, what comfort, what money, what friends may you not help yourselves unto, if you will all as one contribute to your aids." When they separated as he knew they would, he urged them to "send to and hear from each other yearly and oftener if you can. . . . And when you have neither father nor mother

left, be so many fathers and mothers to each other."³²

Perhaps in consequence, the Smiths made heroic efforts to stick together. Joseph Sr. took news to his brothers and sisters of Joseph Jr.'s visions, and many of the Smiths joined the Church and moved to Kirtland. But all along the line, family members dropped away, not to be heard from again. In the face of these losses, Joseph Jr.'s search for a method of sealing families together for eternity came in a direct line from Asael's words of advice to "live together in an undivided bond of love." Priesthood sealings were a theological solution to a social problem: how to bind families together in a mobile society. The priesthood marriage revelation spoke of eternity but the meaning of sealing for people also lay in their lives in the here and now.

Does it detract from the divinity of a revelation for it to resolve personal and social problems? Does it make eternal marriage less heavenly if it calmed a deep fear of termination and separation in this life? Surely we want revelation to be relevant, to save us in the present, and not just in the hereafter. Baptism for the dead had an immediate appeal to the Saints. Joseph announced the doctrine in a funeral sermon in September 1840 that was not even recorded, but the principle immediately caught hold. The Saints began baptizing each other on behalf of their dead in the Mississippi River almost at once. In the following year, six thousand of these proxy baptisms were performed. The leadership could scarcely keep up with the demand. They began teaching the doctrine in conferences, but not until September 1842 in a letter to the Church did Joseph fully elaborate it. By then one of the greatest incentives for finishing the Nauvoo Temple was retaining the right to baptize for the dead. The threat of baptisms being stopped until the temple was complete drove the Saints to even greater exertions. The Church as a whole, and not just Joseph, was searching for a welding link. He was not the only one to want a permanent seal on family relationships.

Can we speculate that the relevance of the doctrine to common, deep problems may account partly at least for Joseph's influence? He did seem to experience certain issues acutely and, by supplying a theological response, offered a salve to the wounds of a generation. Fathers in Zion recovered their dignity in the priesthood. They could give sons with no other inheritance the powers of the priesthood and

³²Richard L. Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 127-28.

the promise of an inheritance in Zion. Sealing and baptism for the dead brought together families broken up by immigration and death. Without having consciously diagnosed the strains on his generation of Americans, Joseph spoke to their needs.

Leonard Arrington probably had a different kind of psychology in mind when he called for a sketch of Joseph Smith. But if an Eriksonian version of psychohistory will satisfy Leonard then I can, partially at least, answer his call. I believe in any event that we should follow Erikson's lead in our psychological investigations, examining how personality, doctrine, and society interact. By combining all the elements, the full force of the teachings is more perfectly appreciated.