JOSEPH SMITH
A PHOTOBIOGRAPHY
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APSEN BOOKS
Salt Lake City, Utah
gazing at something at a great distance, and said, "I am gazing upon the valleys of those mountains." Joseph went on to describe the land and the scenes of hardship his people would pass through. But he assured those listening that the priesthood would overcome. Some of those present would do a great work in that unsettled land, and "see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains."

It seemed that Joseph always knew more than people realized. Sometimes this knowledge saved his life. In May, 1842, the Legion gathered for exercises and a practice battle. John C. Bennett urged Joseph to lead the charge. When Joseph refused, Bennett asked Joseph to take a position in the rear without his guard. Joseph refused again. Even at this early date, Joseph knew that John C. Bennett’s heart had turned against him. He knew that Bennett might make an attempt on his life during the mock battle. Weeks later, John C. Bennett was exposed as a "corrupt and vile man," and he was removed from his office as mayor and excommunicated from the Church. Joseph was truly blessed by this gift of knowledge.

Three days before the Legion parade, Joseph had introduced to six of his closest brethren the sacred rites of the endowment. These would yet be performed in all the temples of the Church. He gave the keys of the priesthood and all the endowments to the Twelve as they returned from their missions abroad. The completion of this work filled him with joy, and he confided to his friends, "Now if they kill me you have got all the keys—the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom . . . on your shoulders will the responsibility of leading the people rest, for the Lord is going to let me rest awhile." He felt deeply the burden he had carried by himself. Now he conferred on Brigham Young the keys of the sealing power which had been bestowed upon him by Elijah.

Joseph taught that families are eternal. Part of the New and Everlasting Covenant was the practice of plural marriage—a man
having more than one wife. This was first revealed to Joseph in 1831, but he did not live it then. He felt strongly that this principle would cost him his life. During the summer of 1840 an angel visited the Prophet and commanded him to obey the law or perish. Thus, after ten years of anguished thinking and waiting, Joseph took this difficult step. In doing so, he opened the last chapter of his life.

When he began to teach this principle to his closest friends, they responded with disbelief. Brigham Young said that he would have preferred death to the burden of plural marriage. Emma also had difficulty accepting it. Once after Joseph had tried to explain it to her, Hyrum offered his help. He said that he would read the revelation to her and get her to accept it.

Joseph smiled and said, "You do not know Emma as well as I do." Hyrum took the revelation in and tried to read it to her, but he came back out soon after. Joseph asked him how it had gone. Hyrum replied "that he had never received a more severe talking to in his life."

Emma struggled against this practice. Sometimes she was bitter, and at other times she felt the illumination of the Spirit which promised great things to the faithful. She wanted the promises of an eternal family but could not completely embrace this principle.

When Joseph attempted to teach his good friend, Benjamin Johnson, this principle, the young man’s response was violent. Joseph had asked for Benjamin’s sister in marriage.

“Brother Joseph,” he said, “it may all be true—you know, but I do not. If ever I know you do this to degrade my sister I will kill you, as the Lord lives.”

The Prophet gazed at him calmly and responded that he would “never see that day, but you shall see the day you will know it is true, and you will fulfill the law and greatly rejoice in it. At this morning’s