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## Not for Tourists

Richard Bushman's *Joseph Smith:  
Rough Stone Rolling*

David J. Whittaker

In reading this volume<sup>1</sup> I have imagined that its author, Richard Lyman Bushman, early in his academic career, found himself trolling through the literary remains of early Mormonism in a way similar to Edward Gibbon, as the latter wandered among the physical remains of the Forum in Rome in October 1774. Gibbon must have seen the tourists to the ancient city, interested only in carrying away a stone or two as a reminder of their visit, with little desire to probe or understand Rome's rich history. In his *Memoirs*, Gibbon spoke about the qualities he felt were needed for the real traveler, including a restless curiosity, an interest in life not studied in the closet, and a "flexible temper which can assimilate itself to every tone of society."<sup>2</sup>

Like Gibbon, Bushman could not remain a tourist, nor could he be satisfied with just walking among the remains of something older and no longer alive. He would have to bring the past to life, not for entertainment's sake or as a museum relic, but as a living, dynamic force. While Gibbon would treat the decline and fall of Rome, Bushman would treat the rise and vitality of a major religion, and especially its founder.

Tourists, as Daniel Boorstin reminds us, seldom travel to leave the familiar behind. Hence, the "packaged tour," which is usually led by a guide with a memorized monologue that is guaranteed to insulate one from the reality of another culture or time while providing all the amenities of home. Tourists travel to be entertained and often to be reassured that their home world is, after all, really the best. But "travel," as Boorstin reminds us, which "was originally the same word as 'travail,'" is an activity that requires something laborious or troublesome. The traveler is an

active person at work. Where the tourist has become passive, the traveler is active.<sup>3</sup>

Despite its obvious limitations, the traveler metaphor is useful when addressing Mormon historical studies. As all tourists quickly learn, travel is never ideal: the weather may be bad; museum pieces may be away on loan; not all that is seen is self-interpreting; docents and tour guides have their own slants and sometimes make mistakes; and some trips turn out to be more rewarding than others. And while we all may begin as historical tourists, the danger is that any biography or historical treatise can easily become a commodity marketed only to tourists, and offer little of lasting value. Ultimately, the risk is that historical study itself can easily become more of a spectator sport than a discipline demanding active intellectual participation. If Latter-day Saint histories and biographies only reassure and comfort their readers, they will never venture into new worlds or offer better ways of seeing the world they inhabit; they will simply pander to the popular rather than lead the reader into areas that produce new insights and encourage spiritual growth.

Bushman's biography is probably not for the historical tourist. For those wanting easy answers or emotional reassurances of a simple faith, they should probably stick with the older or safer biographies, the kind of studies that removed Mormonism from its historical and informational environment. But if you are willing to become a traveler, willing to open yourself up to new perspectives, to travel into and through the life and times of Joseph Smith, then this is a study you will want to read and have as a resource in your library.

### **The Daunting Task of Writing a Joseph Smith Biography**

The work of a biographer, James Boswell warned long ago, is a "presumptuous task." His great work, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, was a monumental accomplishment based on personal knowledge, close observation, acquaintance with, and encouragement from his subject. But Boswell still worried that his portrait of Johnson was incomplete and inadequate to fully convey the breadth and depth of Johnson's life and thought. The challenge to a modern biographer of Joseph Smith is even greater.

Richard Lyman Bushman is not the first to prepare a full-length biography of Joseph Smith Jr. (1805–1844),<sup>4</sup> but he brings to this task a deep preparation from his degrees at Harvard University and a lifetime of teaching early American history at such schools as Brigham Young University, Boston University, the University of Delaware, and, most recently, Columbia University (as the Gouverneur Morris Professor of History).

In addition to authoring a number of books—one of which received the prestigious Bancroft Prize<sup>5</sup>—and a number of shorter studies of Joseph Smith,<sup>6</sup> he has served in the LDS Church as a bishop, stake president, and patriarch. Thus he brings a long apprenticeship in worlds both sacred and secular to his work.

Bushman's strength was augmented by his collaborator, Jed Woodworth, a PhD candidate at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Woodworth brought a valuable familiarity with Mormon history and its archival sources to the project. Bushman writes that Woodworth “checked my text against the sources, tested my claims, elaborated ideas, and enriched the scholarship” (xxiii).

Without purporting to give the final word on the subject, *Rough Stone Rolling* is clearly the most professional Joseph Smith biography to date, and it will likely remain so for several years to come.<sup>7</sup> Its presentation is generally well researched in the contemporaneous sources and is well informed by much current scholarship. It is a complex and finely nuanced study of Mormonism's founder and founding years, a study that is sensitive to the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the formation of a new religion. The subtitle of the book, and name by which it will largely be referred, is an excerpt from a sermon delivered by Joseph Smith on May 21, 1843: “[I am like a] rough stone rolling down hill.” Willard Richards recorded only the words “rough stone rolling down hill.” The complete-sentence version was created by the Historian's Office staff and printed in the multivolume *History of the Church*. Bushman acknowledges this textual history in the book's front matter when he brackets the nonscribal words “I am like a” in the reproduction of the quote. In saying he was “rough,” Joseph sought to differentiate himself from the polished, academy-trained theologians and ministers of his day. Joseph commented that, like Jesus, he was from humble beginnings in a noncosmopolitan village.

The volume itself consists of twenty-nine chapters plus a prologue and an epilogue. Its presentation is chronological, with six chapters devoted to the New England and New York period (1805–1831), fourteen chapters on the Ohio and Missouri period (1831–1838), and seven chapters to the Illinois period (1839–1844). The earliest chapters draw heavily upon his previous study, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (1984), and are thus a little dated, failing, for example, to make use of work published since then such as Don Enders's ongoing research on the Smith family. But these chapters present a fine overview of the family background and early religious experiences of Joseph Smith. One of the keys to understanding Joseph Smith, which is a major subtheme of *Rough Stone Rolling*, is to trace his constant yearning for family and kin.

In fact, *Rough Stone Rolling* could be considered the most consolidating study in Mormon history since Leonard J. Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom* (1958). As the Arrington volume was both a culmination and summation of a wide range of scholarship to 1958, Bushman's volume provides the same kind of contribution to LDS scholarship to 2005, the bicentennial of Joseph Smith's birth. But both volumes are more, because each provides insightful perspectives on their subjects and both point the way to further work.

To accomplish his goal, Bushman, or anyone who would comprehend Joseph Smith, must face and try to overcome at least three realities in Mormon history:

1. He or she must navigate the Mormon folk memory of Joseph Smith, images that are reinforced (and thus perpetuated) in Sunday School and in other church classes. Any presentation that assumes Joseph Smith walked out of the grove in 1820 a polished stone will have a very difficult time dealing with the historical record or Joseph's own autobiographical statements. By the end of the nineteenth century, the generation that knew Joseph Smith was almost gone, and with them went a major check on the accuracy of the historical memory. At the same time, the visual portrayals and popular works on the early Church were simplifying and smoothing out the rough edges. Even B. H. Roberts, when he edited the *History of the Church* in the early years of the twentieth century, moved to modernize the language and spelling as well as to ameliorate some of the reports of Joseph's personal habits.

2. The modern scholar must conquer the huge secondary literature on Joseph Smith and early Mormon history and thought. Bibliographies that guide the researcher to this material are available, but they can be intimidating to the beginning student.<sup>8</sup> This work is not just a problem of quantity, for the modern student must navigate a historical literature that is highly polemical. Joseph Smith is not a person that people are neutral about, and this has been so from the earliest years of the Church. Hence, one's religious assumptions will always influence the work of reconstructing the past.

The scholarly handling of religious topics is always a charged problem. The vocabulary is charged, and the assumptions of faith (or lack thereof) that always accompany such a work are difficult to address. In a "truth-in-advertising," upfront way, Bushman makes his assumptions of faith clear to his readers when he says that he is a believer (xix). The difficult part of being a believing author is having to deal with the specifics, not the generalities. Topics always become complicated by the textual changes to the revelations and a closer examination of the cultural environment.

Here Bushman leads the reader into considering the possible horizontal and vertical dimensions of the revelatory process. But such an approach will always be unsatisfactory to those who refuse to allow the possibility of communication from the heavens, and it will also bother those who see the process as entirely divorced from the earthly.

3. Finally, and most importantly, the student must work through the serious challenges that face any researcher who uses manuscripts containing material created during Joseph Smith's lifetime. While there is not always as much information as historians would like, there is enough to keep students occupied for a long time. The real challenge, one currently being addressed by the editors of the forthcoming multivolume Joseph Smith Papers project, is the difficulty in dealing with records that are often in the handwriting of other people, have been filtered through at least one other mind, and are thus at least once removed from the Prophet himself.

### **The Challenge of Handling the Joseph Smith Sources**

To get a sense of these challenges of comprehensively and accurately recovering the history of Joseph Smith from the extensive historical documents,<sup>9</sup> consider the issues arising in each of the following record categories that are being used to organize and publish the Joseph Smith Papers:

**Journals.** In the Church Archives in Salt Lake City are ten volumes containing the journals of Joseph Smith. They comprise 1,587 manuscript pages, but of these pages, only 31 contain holographic or personal writing of Joseph Smith, and only about 250 additional pages were probably dictated by Joseph Smith to his scribes. That means the remaining 1,306 pages (or about 80 percent of the total) are primarily the work of four men whom Joseph Smith appointed to keep his journals for him: William Clayton, James Mulholland, Willard Richards, and George W. Robinson. Such a practice was common at the time, but it does mean that much of the content of the Prophet's journals are the products of other men's work and minds and are thus one step removed from the Prophet himself. And, the number of days for which entries could have been made (from November 27, 1832, when the first journal entry was made, until Joseph's death on June 27, 1844) total 4,229, but the extant journals contain entries for only 1,228 days (or about 25 percent of the possible total days), thus leaving large gaps in the daily record of the Prophet's life.<sup>10</sup>

**Sermons and Discourses.** Just what records do we have of Joseph's sermons? Dean Jessee has summarized the challenges in dealing with the public discourses of Joseph Smith:

During the last eighteen months of his life, the Prophet is known to have given 78 public addresses, or an average of a little more than one a week.

Assuming conservatively that he averaged 30 speeches a year during earlier years, the total discourses of his public ministry (1830–44) would number about 450. Available sources, however, identify only about 250 discourses, and his published history gives reasonably adequate summaries of only about one-fifth of these. Not until the last eighteen months of his life were the Prophet's speeches reported with reasonable consistency. Of the 52 addresses reported in some detail in his history, 35 date from that time period. The remaining 17 average about two a year between 1834 and 1842. These figures suggest that probably not more than one in ten of Joseph Smith's discourses were recorded, and most of these come from the last three years of his life.<sup>11</sup>

Of the 52 extant reports, Willard Richards and Wilford Woodruff recorded 40 of them. Those who reported Joseph Smith's speeches did not know shorthand. (Even when George D. Watt began to advertise for his classes in shorthand in Nauvoo, it does not appear that Joseph sent any of his scribes or clerks to learn the system). To record longhand the comments as a speaker spoke was a slow process and clearly an incomplete one, and thus the handwritten record is a serious limitation on our attempts to understand the Prophet.

**Revelations.** There are about 100 extant manuscripts of revelations received through Joseph Smith in addition to the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses (which includes materials from Enoch), the Book of Abraham, and Joseph Smith's revisions of the Bible. These date from July 1828 to November 1843. There are, in addition to the revelations printed in the Doctrine and Covenants, about 60 other known revelations, of which texts are extant for about 30. Thus the total number of known revelations is about 170. These provide the texts for the biographer to examine and then relate to Joseph Smith's life. But the greater challenge is to understand the process of revelation behind these texts and their emendations through time, a process that the Prophet consistently refused to discuss in detail. But Bushman understands the difference between revelation and the record of revelation, and he also knows that revelatory texts are best understood from within the religious community that produced them.

**Correspondence.** There are approximately 308 extant letters written by Joseph and 380 of which he was the recipient. These letters cover the Prophet's whole ministry, and treat just about every conceivable subject—but few are ordinary. Joseph's letters convey his strength of leadership, his prophetic mantle, and his concerns over his family and his people. But they also convey his doubts, his loneliness, his deep religiosity, and his tendency toward melancholy. Again, Bushman has mined this rich source to provide a deeply personal interpretation of Joseph Smith.

**Joseph Smith's History.** On the day the Church was officially organized, April 6, 1830, the first verse of the first formal revelation received that day instructed, "Behold, there shall be a record kept" (D&C 21:1). All of Joseph's attempts to keep a record of both his own life and the Church he presided over date from that commandment, even though it took years to understand who would keep the record and what would go into it. From the early instructions to John Whitmer (D&C 47) to the later counsel to the whole Church to create accounts of their experiences and losses in Missouri (D&C 123), direction gradually came. Joseph also moved to keep his own history. His seriousness about record keeping is illustrated in this example from an experience of November 7, 1843:

Mr. Cole moved the tables back into the hall, when [Willard] Richards and [William W.] Phelps [who were clerks working on the history] called to report that the noise in the school disturbed them in the progress of writing the History. I gave orders that Cole must look out for another place, as the history must continue and not be disturbed, as there are but few subjects that I have felt a greater anxiety about than my history, which has been a very difficult task, on account of the death of my best clerks and the apostasy of others, and the stealing of records by John Whitmer, Cyrus Smalling and others.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, one of the great projects begun under the Prophet's directions, but not finished until years after his death, was the preparation of a multi-volume "History of the Church," or, in its manuscript title, "History of Joseph Smith." It runs to 2,300 pages in six manuscript volumes. There were eleven principal scribes and clerks who worked on the project. Howard Coray, one of the clerks, recalled the process or methodology used to create this history: "The Prophet was to furnish all the materials; and our business, was not only to combine, and arrange in cronological [*sic*] order, but to spread out or amplify not a little, in as good historical style as may be."<sup>13</sup>

The work on the history began on April 27, 1838,<sup>14</sup> and was finished on November 6, 1856, twelve years after the Prophet's death (it was compiled only up to August 5, 1838, when Joseph was killed in June 1844). The history's featured text was Joseph Smith's journals, which obviously helped keep the focus on him. The project was mostly a kind of documentary scrapbook of the early Church over which Joseph presided. In its published form, it is often referred to as the "Documentary" History of the Church. So anxious was Joseph that his people have access to it that it began to appear in serialized form in the Nauvoo *Times and Seasons* in March 1842, and it was reprinted in the Church's British publication *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, and later in the *Deseret News*.

At the end of the nineteenth century, first George Q. Cannon (d. 1901) and finally B. H. Roberts received permission to gather this history into a multivolume format. It is this version (revised in 1956) we know today. Roberts added to the problems by placing on the title pages the words “By Joseph Smith Himself,” which distorted and thus complicated modern attempts to either understand or use this important record.

**Additional Records.** A full discussion of the records of Joseph’s life must include the various institutional record books of the organizations the Prophet played a key role in establishing and directing—for example, the Kirtland High Council Minute Book, 1832–1837; the Far West Record (Conference Minutes and Record Book), 1830–1844; the Relief Society Minutes, Nauvoo, 1842–1844; and the Nauvoo Legion Minute Book, 1841–1844. And not to be neglected are the Joseph Smith legal papers (there are about 180 known lawsuits, about 70 of which related directly to the Prophet, not to mention the voluminous land and financial records); printed sources, both Mormon and non-Mormon (newspapers, books, travel accounts, pamphlets); personal records and sermons of the people who knew Joseph Smith and left us a record of their interactions with him (for example, Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, and William Clayton); and the large body of reminiscences spoken and recorded years later, which reveal the emergence of Joseph Smith in Mormon folk memory and therefore must be used with some degree of caution.

These challenges and resources make it clear that no biography of Joseph Smith is ever likely to be worthy of the accolade “definitive.” These difficulties also explain why all biographers must select an approach in leading travelers on a tour through such materials.

### **A Cultural Religious Approach**

Bushman’s study basically takes the approach of a cultural biography. It is a serious work that tries to situate Joseph Smith in his culture and time. Bushman regularly uses selected contemporary records, movements, and persons to provide insights into and comparisons with Joseph Smith. Cultural biographers use contextual materials to help evaluate the documentary record. The process is somewhat similar to the peeling of an onion. The real Joseph Smith is down in there somewhere, but many layers must be peeled back in the attempt to get closer to him.

Bushman’s biography does just that. The Joseph Smith presented here is not a static, perfected individual, but rather a person who grows, changes, has real spiritual experiences, feels deeply about his calling, and has to learn

from his revelations. Above all, this biographical study is a deep meditation on early Mormon thought, growing out of the known sources.

Bushman is not hesitant to point out questions about the date of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood (he argues for a post-April 1830 date). He can treat Joseph as a man of deep feelings with an occasional temper, who did not like to be crossed by his followers but was also quick to forgive. He presents his views about the origins of Joseph's plural marriage in Kirtland (323–25), expansion of the practice in Nauvoo (437–46), and its destructive impact on his marriage to Emma (490–99); for many, this obscure subject is the most sensitive and morally challenging aspect of Joseph's life.

*Rough Stone Rolling* offers an explanation of Joseph Smith that situates him in his world but that allows for real religious experiences and motivation in his life. As Bushman unfolds this life story, he also answers a larger question: what was there in Joseph Smith's thought and teachings that assured its survival and growth when most contemporary religions hardly lived past their founder's death? Thus, embedded throughout the narrative are thoughtful moments of exegesis that connect Joseph Smith to his biblical heritage, to a deeply religious family, to the larger field of religious studies, and to the internal coherence of Mormon thought, thereby providing the reader with insights into the nature of the Latter-day Saint religious experience itself. Some of this seems to be an internal dialogue the author is having with himself, but most of the time Bushman is trying to help the serious traveler understand "a prophet of puzzling complexity" (143).

Revelation is the key that Bushman uses most often to elucidate Joseph Smith's life. For Joseph, revelation was both horizontal and vertical; it surely reached up into the heavens, but it also looked out into the environment, and he invited everyone to share in these experiences. In chapter 4, Bushman provides a fine discussion on the meaning and place of the Book of Mormon in Church history. Throughout the volume he remains aware of the role of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures in providing windows into Joseph Smith's religious views. While he does not say it outright, Bushman provides reasons for seeing Joseph's prophetic calling as more involved in revealing the past than in predicting the future. But he does provide plenty of evidence that Joseph was constantly striving to connect the modern house of Israel with both ancient Israel and early Christianity. Whether Joseph was establishing Zion or the kingdom of God, he saw himself as gathering people and ideas into cities where Saints could be made. At its core, his religious genius was to be able to bring old worlds into the new lives of his followers.

Thus, for example, in his discussion of Freemasonry, Bushman shows Joseph's awareness of the movement and its ritual forms but shows that Joseph "had a green thumb for growing ideas from tiny seeds" (449) and thus went beyond what the Masons offered. Here Joseph

turned the materials to his own use. The Masonic elements that appeared in the temple endowment were embedded in a distinctive context—the Creation instead of the Temple of Solomon, exaltation rather than fraternity, God and Christ, not the Worshipful Master. Temple covenants bound people to God rather than to each other. (450)

For Joseph, these rituals stabilized and perpetuated the deepest purposes of the endowment and keys of sealing that were revealed earlier in 1836 in Kirtland (449–51).

The religious richness of this cultural biography can hardly be more than suggested in any short review. Bushman's discussion of the religious path of Joseph Smith from a village seer to a translator to a called prophet offers an insightful analysis that allows the folk religions of his New England background to prepare the young boy for greater callings (48–52, 54, 127–31). Bushman's insightful tracing of the Church's institutional growth also offers new insights to the role of councils and conferences in the early Church (251–58). He specifically argues that almost all of Joseph Smith's "major theological innovations involved the creation of institutions" and that he "thought institutionally more than any other visionary of his time, and the survival of his movement can largely be attributed to this gift" (251).

Bushman writes as a believing Latter-day Saint, and occasionally he stops short when dealing with some of the more problematic episodes of the Prophet's life. His study will not please everyone, but he has understood that what attracts people to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that its founding narrative weaves a coherent story that continues to make sense to people worldwide. Because of this, the volume left me wishing it could have come out as a longer, two-volume work.

In his great and, as it turned out, last general conference address (April 7, 1844), Joseph Smith said something that should give us all pause: "You don't know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it: I shall never undertake it. I don't blame any one for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I would not have believed it myself."<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps Joseph Smith was saying the same thing that Mark Twain later noted. In a fragment found among his autobiographical writings, Mark Twain further pondered the real challenge of telling a person's life story:

What a wee little part of a person's life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head and is known to none but himself. All day long, and every day, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his thoughts, not those other things, are his history. His acts and his words are merely the visible, thin crust of his world, with its scattered snow summits and its vacant wastes of water—and they are so trifling a part of his bulk! a mere skin enveloping it. The mass of him is hidden—it and its volcanic fires that toss and boil, and never rest, night nor day. These are his life, and they are not written, and cannot be written. Every day would make a whole book of eighty thousand words—three hundred and sixty-five books a year. Biographies are but the clothes and buttons of the man—the biography of the man himself cannot be written.<sup>16</sup>

Richard Bushman has provided a very good mapping of the life, thought, and experience of Joseph Smith. Joseph himself gives us fair warning in our continuing journey to seek a better understanding of him and the genesis of Mormonism. The richness and rigors of that pursuit assure us that the journey will be best undertaken by serious travelers, not casual tourists.

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1. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

2. Edward Gibbon, *Memoirs of My Life*, ed. George A. Bonnard (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), 135–36. Gibbon dates the beginning of his great work on *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* from this experience.

3. Daniel J. Boorstin, “From Traveler to Tourist: The Lost Art of Travel,” in *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (1962; New York: Atheneum, 1973), 84–85, 97.

4. The other full-length biographies, in chronological order, include: Henry Caswall, *The Prophet of the Nineteenth Century: or, The Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Mormons, or Latter-day Saints* (London: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1843);

Edward W. Tullidge, *Life of Joseph the Prophet* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1878);

George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith, the Prophet* (1888; American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2005);

Thomas Gregg, *The Prophet of Palmyra* (New York: John B. Alden, 1890);

I. Woodbridge Riley, *The Founder of Mormonism: A Psychological Study of Joseph Smith, Jr.* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1902);

Harry M. Beardsley, *Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931);

- John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith, an American Prophet* (New York: Macmillan, 1933);
- Preston Nibley, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1944);
- Daryl Chase, *Joseph the Prophet: As He Lives in the Hearts of His People* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1944);
- Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1945);
- Norma J. Fischer, *Portrait of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960);
- John J. Stewart, *Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Hawkes, 1966);
- Carl Lamson Carmer, *The Farm Boy and the Angel* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970);
- Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith, the First Mormon* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977);
- Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph Smith: Martyr, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1977);
- Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984);
- Norman Rothman, *The Unauthorized Biography of Joseph Smith, Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Norman Rothman Foundation, 1997);
- William D. Morain, *The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr., and the Dissociated Mind* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1998);
- Heidi S. Swinton, *American Prophet: The Story of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 1999);
- Robert V. Remini, *Joseph Smith* (New York: Viking, 2002);
- Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2004); and
- Richard Lloyd Dewey, *Joseph Smith: A Biography* (Arlington, Va.: Stratford Books, 2005).

For discussions of biographies of Joseph Smith, see Richard Lyman Bushman, “A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-First Century,” in Richard Lyman Bushman, *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 275 n. 6; and Richard Lyman Bushman, “Joseph Smith’s Many Histories,” in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2006), 3–20.

5. Bushman’s best-known publications include *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992); *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press); and *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut (1690–1765)* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1967), winner of the Bancroft Prize—one of three in 1968 for works of American history and/or diplomacy that are awarded annually by Columbia University in honor of historian Fredric Bancroft.

6. See “Joseph Smith and Culture,” a series of eight essays in Bushman, *Believing History*, 143–278.

7. It is not surprising that *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* won the “best book of 2005” award from the Mormon History Association.

8. A useful bibliography, whose title is absent from Bushman's bibliography, is James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker, *Studies in Mormon History, 1830-1997: An Indexed Bibliography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

9. For more on the sources of Joseph Smith biography, see Dean C. Jessee, "Sources for the Study of Joseph Smith," in *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Sources and Collections in the United States*, ed. David J. Whittaker (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1995), 7-28; and David J. Whittaker, "Joseph Smith in Recent Research: A Selected Bibliography," in Whittaker, *Mormon Americana*, 29-44. For an extended bibliography of writings on Joseph Smith, see Davis Bitton, *Images of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Aspen, 1996), 171-96.

10. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989-1992), 2:xxii-xxiii.

11. Dean C. Jessee, "Priceless Words and Fallible Memories: Joseph Smith as Seen in the Effort to Preserve His Discourses," *BYU Studies* 31, no. 2 (1991): 23. Jessee notes that the surviving records "do not measure up to the stature of the life they chronicle" (22).

12. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 6:66; see also 2:198-99; 4:470; 6:409 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

13. Howard Coray, "Autobiography," ed. Dean C. Jessee, *BYU Studies* 17, no. 3 (1977): 346.

14. Joseph Smith Journal, April 27, 1838, in "General" Record Book, 1838, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

15. *History of the Church*, 6:317. In an earlier moment of self reflection, on April 6, 1843, Joseph told a general conference, "If I had not actually got into this work and been called of God, I would back out. But I cannot back out: I have no doubt of the truth." *History of the Church*, 5:336.

16. *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, with an introduction by Albert Bigelow Paine, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924), 1:[xviii]. Twain's comments were originally called to my attention by William G. Hartley.