

INSIDE BRIGHAM YOUNG: ABRAHAMIC TESTS AS PREPARATION FOR LEADERSHIP

Ronald K. Esplin

Recently a competent observer and writer on the Mormon past read to a literary group a chapter of an unpublished work. Discussion followed on the suffering and sacrifice associated with many of Brigham Young's demands upon the Saints. The audience wondered how he could make such requests. Were his perceptions untempered by an appreciation of the human pain and sacrifice involved? It was concluded that the Church leader was neither naturally sensitive nor was he taught by experience to *feel* the cost of what he asked. The discussion was not necessarily critical of Brigham Young: it was agreed only that certain harsh exigencies often demand this type of leadership.

The fact that competent students of the Mormon past could agree on a conclusion so out of harmony with President Young's real inner character highlights the difficulty of getting at a man's motivations and deepest emotions. As with many public figures, Brigham Young's public persona and popular stereotypes interfere with understanding the man. Highly disciplined, he seldom allowed his tender emotions to surface publicly. Nor do most of his letters, coming to us through a clerk's hand, preserve certain important nuances of his personality.

Rare personal (holograph) writings where Brigham Young bares his soul during times of trial provide some of the best windows to his inner self. Of these, none is better than a recently available holograph letter from Brigham Young, written while he was in England, to his wife, who remained in Nauvoo. By considering this important letter in its larger historical setting, we come to better appreciate the qualities of Brigham Young's personality that have long been obscured but that really were the basis for his leadership, qualities that his people responded to.

In April 1838, a revelation through Joseph Smith counseled Brigham Young to settle on his newly purchased Missouri farm "until I shall command him to go hence, and not to leave his family until

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they are amply provided for."¹ But violence and the forced removal from Missouri followed a short season of respite with his family, and soon Brigham was needed again in the ministry in spite of the fact that his family, like most of the refugee Mormons, was penniless.

Nothing could have been more difficult for Brigham than to leave his family poorly housed, without provisions and prostrated by sickness. Yet duty was unmistakable. The very circumstances that had impoverished his family had also shattered the Church. It was imperative, Joseph explained, to seek new blood and new resources in England. And there was a promise: while he was away on the Lord's errand, his family would be protected and provided for. Without hesitation—though not without pain—he embarked.

It was September 1839 when Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball left the Mississippi river bottoms that would become Nauvoo. Brigham's family members, all sick with river fevers, were poorly housed with other Missouri refugees in abandoned Fort Des Moines on the Iowa side of the river. His wife Mary Ann had delivered a baby girl only ten days before. Brigham, also suffering from river sickness, required assistance even to walk.

By the time they arrived in England, Elder Young's health had improved enough to lead the Twelve in a highly successful mission. Trusting his family to God freed his mind and energies for missionary service. Still, he could not forget his distant loved ones. Nor could he suppress entirely the longing to be with them again, to labor with his own hands to protect and provide for his own.

This letter—really a series of letters—was written more than a year after Brigham's last glimpse of his wife and children and many months after he left the shores of his beloved America. It reveals an important quality of this future Church leader seldom seen in the records of his public activities—his deep concern and affection for his family and, equally important, his great empathy for the families of all those with whom he was associated. Further comment on the significance of this side of his personality will follow the document.²

¹Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), 3:23; hereafter cited *HC*.

²After many years in private hands, this holograph letter was recently donated to the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is here reprinted with their permission. Paragraphing has been supplied, along with minimum punctuation for clarity. Personal and place names and the first word of each sentence have been capitalized even in cases where they were not in the original. Spelling and grammar remain the same as in the document.

Mrs. Mary A. Young
Nauvoo Post Office
Hancock County—
State of Illinois
North America

Via steam ship Packet
to Halifax and
Boston

Manchester oc 16 1840
No 1 Chapman Street

Once more I take my pen to wright to you. It is about five weaks sence I wrote; it was [sent] by Brother [Theodore] Turley who saled from Liverpool the 7 of september with about 200 of the Brethren. We have not hered from them yet, but think we shall before long. Brother P[arley] P. Pratt, that left here the first of July for New York for to bring his famely, we have not hered a word from him. We have hered of O[rson] Hyde & J[ohn] E. Pages starting for Jerusalem but have not seene them yet. We hope we shall before we leve England. They doe not apear to progress in there jorney much faster then we did. I am verry ancious to have them arive here for I long to see them. Brother Levi Richards wrote from Richmond July the 18th if I reculect right. He stated in his letter that about 10 of the Bretherin would start from New York the first of September. I hope they will be here soon for we want help in the vinyard. The work is grate in this country—and to all apperence it will be verry short for nothing but destruction awates this Nation; it will spedilly be upon them. I have not herd who is acoming but I trust they will be good men that will be sent, for churely it requires men of strong mind and determined persistence to due all things right, & then due nothing more.

I find I am not in America althou there is carsly [scarcely] a night but what I dreme of being in my own native country with some of my old frends. Brother O Pratt received a letter from his wife and one from Dr. [Lucien R?] Foster dated September. They boath stated that the families of the Bretherin ware all well, which gave me feelings of joy to here from my wife and children while in a far contry. I am rejoiced to here that you are this side [of] the missicppy River. I hope you and the rest of the Bretherin will have the priveledge of staying their [in the Nauvoo area] till we returne and could wish that we might still have the prevelige of staying their and makeing our selves comfortble.

I trust within one year from this time I shall have the priveledge [of] injoying the society of my famely; I feel as though their faceses would look and voices sound better then ever before. How I long to see my wife and children. When I let my mind meditate upon past scenes and the triels we have past through to gether, I feele as thou I could not concent to be so far from them, and whare I cannot administer to their comfort. But so it is, and I must be content. One thing I have to say prase God for it: I have wanted for nothing but what I could get. All of my wants have ben suplied. There has ben an efectual dore opened for us sence we left home. Could I be sure that my famely fared as well as I due, I would be happy. Still I have not ben concerned about them, for the Lord said by the mouth of Brother Joseph that they should be provided for, and I believed it. And through the goodness of God I have ben anabled to send some little help to you, which I hope you have injoyed the good of in a degree.

We have past through scenes that when I think of it causes my hart [to] greve and morn, your scenes in Kirtland and going up to Mos. [Missouri], your sickness the summer we ware there, and fortugue [fatigue] comming out of the State. I never want you to moove agan unless I am with you, if it can be so. But I trust I shall be recounciled to all things, knowing that all shall worke to gether for good especily to them that love the Lord. And I think we have grate reson to love and serve him. To think that we have the priveledge of seeing and knowing what we doe in these last days, while thousands are in midnight darkness.

Sence we have ben in Manchester We have don all that we posably could to spread this work. We have succeeded in makeing the priest mad, so that they rave like demonds. We keepe Baptiseing every weak which causes much per[se]cution. We have Baptised som of the old Westl[y]ans, which makes them feele verry uneasy.

I am with Brother [Willard] Richards at Present. His wife[']s sister Jennette has got a fine Boy. His name is Hebor John. He was born last Sabath the 11 of oct about 10 C—A.M. Brother and Sister Richards talks much about you. He thinks he has got the best woman for his wife that there is in the World, excep you. Their is non better in his eye then coson Mary ann. Brother [Heber C.] Kimball is with me. We are agoing to leve here soon for Preston and Liverpool on som buysness concerning the Book of Mormon.³ When we get through with our buysness in this part of country we expect to g[o] to London to [spend] the Winter or the most of it their.⁴ I think it will be an advantage to my helth. I doe not enjoy good heth in this place though my helth is much better then it was. I trust I shall regain my heth agan by a nother year. If [I] could be in a warm contriy it would be better for me.

I som expect som to goe in to Hamburgh Germany befor I return home. We have one Elder there. I hope there will be a church there before we leve this contriy. Their is a smal branch in Ireland. Brother Theadoah [Theodore] Curtis from New York is laboring their. Brothers [John] Taylor and [Hiram] Clark is on the Ile of Man; the work takes grate hold their.

[Four days later, October 20]

20—Yesterday about 2 oclock in after noon Brother P.P. Pratt his wife, wife[']s sister and children arived here in Manchester. Brothers Kimball & Richards and my self had jest recieved two letters. One from Orson Hyde. He was in Pheledelphy. Brother Page was not with him. He thought he should come with Brother Pratt. The other letter was from Father John Smith to George Smith. We ware just rejoicing for the knews from America when P. P[ratt] and famely arived. I know [now] am at liberty to goe to other places to Preach and attend to business. Br. P. Pratt had a long jorney, 37 days going to New York, 34 on there return to Liverpool. But they are all well and in good spirits. But I think they will get enuph of old England before one year roles around. I am glad that my famely is in America and if it was the will of the Lord I should be willing to be their my self though I am contented here at present.⁵

How much I think of [the] children. I want them to be [good?] children. I pray for you all continually that God will preserve you from all evel from sickness and from sin. My daughter Elizabeth be a good girl. Love and serve the Lord with all your hart. Stay at home, goe not into company unless it is among humble ones. Let your mother direct you in all things. I pray the Lord to preserve you and the rest of the

³The Twelve Apostles published the Book of Mormon in Liverpool during their mission.

⁴Inserted at corner of manuscript page:

“Mr. Brigham Young
52 Iron Monngor Row St. Luke Church
London
in care of Henry Connor

direct all of your letters to me after you receive this as above states as I expect to spend the winter and Spring their. B. Young.”

⁵For Brigham Young's reactions to England see Ronald W. Walker's “The Willard Richards and Brigham Young 5 September 1840 Letter from England to Nauvoo,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 18 (Spring 1978): 466–74. Thoroughly American, Brigham Young did not think England compared favorably with the land of his birth.

children. I have sent you som presents, but I have one for you and Vilate that I keep till I com home and bring it to you my self. Elizabeth doe not run about anny but take good care of your heth and take care of the little children and mind your mother. I want my daughter Vilate to be a good girl and mind your mother. Spend all the time you can get in stud[y]ing your book and instructing the little children.

[Ten days later]

Oct 30 I jest arrived in Liverpool with Brother Kimball. There was a letter here fore him from his wife. It gave us good knews from our famelys except the sickness of Elizabeth and Vilate which I hope is over by this time. I aske my Hevenly Father to preserve my famely till I returne home. How I long to see my famely or know they are well and provided for so that they doe not suffer for food and rament. And I know that the Church is poor and it is as much as they can doe to attend to without doing enything for my famely. I know they woul[d] [have] done [something] if they could but th[e]y cannot.⁶ Sister Kimball states in hir letter that you boath had recieved a present we sent you. I am thankeful that I had it in my power to send you som assistance, and be fore this I hope you have recived som things from Br Turly which will cause you to rejoice I think.

Last weak Brother Kimball and my self left Manchester for Preston and Liverpool on buisness about the Book of Mormon. Last Monday a letter came to Preston from Br Richards. Stated that Br Lorenzo Snow had arived from Nauvoo. Had brought a letter from you [and] one from Presedent Joseph Smith in ancer to mine to him. We wrote to Manchester to have Br Richards to keep all the letters till we returne to that place. When I com to your letter I excpet I shall want to wright agane but I doe not know what the knews will be but hope it will [be] good. The worke of the Lord is rolling on in this contry. The Elders are going in every direction to preach. The people are reciving there testimony and they are building up Churches in meny parts of the Land. The Book of Mormon will not be out of press as soon as we expecd but we shall get it to the People as soon as we can.

I feele to say [a] fue words of what past yesterdy. We ware in South Port at the house of Sister Dickson, Brother Peter Mellen [Melling] the Patriarch was there. He was fild with the holy Spirit of the Lord [which] was upon him. He Proveside [prophesied] concerning things which caused my hart to rej[oi]ce in the Lord. I feele to say no more about it at present but may hereaf[t]er.

Sister Kimball stated in hir letter there had ben about 50 deths this seson. This gives pane of hart but still I feele they are better of[f] [there] then they are here. Nauvoo is a sickely place. I think the mob will not truble them selves about the saints while they are in Nauvoo. I expect I should hardly know the Place if [I were] to come home now. And my Children will grow out of my knowledge so things will will [sic] apear strange to me no doubt when I doe come. I hope and pray you will not have so much trial to pass through as to alter you so I shall not know you. Sister Vilate says your house could hardly be caud [called] a shelter. This makes me fee[l] bad but I will doe [all] I can for you to help you to make you and the Children comfortable while I am in the vinyard.

⁶In spite of a Church resolution 4 August 1839 "that the Twelve proceed on their mission as soon as possible, and that the Saints provide for their families during their absence," Brigham Young had no illusion about Church resources to do so. *HC*, 4:5.

Doe tell mee somthing about T[homas] B. Marsh when you wright agan if you can and tell me about him.⁷ I have som dreams about him and others. Sister Kimball allso states that Br Joseph Smith was agoing to send for som of the Elders to come home and takcare of their famelies. Perhaps I am one of them. I have not seene his letter yet. I think we shall get home jestebout the right time. I want the Lord to conduct the hol matter, for I doe not feele as though I could doe enny thing with out him. The Lord must guide me or I shall goe rong.

How doe the church feele about Br Joseph Smith at [this time?] Is there feelings agant him. I have ben informed he has said the Brotherin would for sake him and som of them would secke his life and he would have to swim the Missi[ssi]p[pi] River to get out of their hands.⁸ I shall be glad when [the] Church understand things and Lern that the Lord is God and he will takcare of his own work, and Moses will doe the work the Lord tells him to doe. May the Lord preserve us from provoking him as the Children of Isreal did the Lord and Moses in there day. I aske one thing of the Lord God the Eternall Father in [the] name of Jesus Christ that is that our Moses⁹ that the Lord has given us, may live to see the winding up scene of this generation, sin and inequtiy destroyed from the face of the Earth and Jesus come to raign with his people on the Earth and he go into the promist Caneneon [Canaan].

To Brother Joseph Young: we wis[h] you and your Br[ethre]n the Presedents of the 70ts woul[d] send som faithfull Elders that are men of judgment and that is capable of buylding up the Church—and managen things in the Church. And also see the Presedent of the Hy Priest Quorum and send som high preast. We have hered their is som on the way but we have seene non. L[orenzo] Snow is in Manchester. We want menny. Brothers Hadlock [Reuben Hedlock] and [Hiram] Clark will soon be gone over with companys. The Saints have got a start for to gether to America and goe they will, and nothing can stop them. And it is nessary to send some one of the America Brotherin with them. But for Heven sake due not send men here that is to big to be counsled. We doe not want men to leve there famelies to suffer for we can see enuph of poverty here with out here [hearing] of it from home among the Church there.

Some have sa[iled] for New Orleans. Brother Mulner [Samuel Mulliner] and som famelies from Scotland—they have ben gone about 2 weaks. We expect a company to start about the first of february. Provibly Br Hadlock will goe with them. A nother company in spring early as posable. And so[on] they [will?] have so much of the spirit of getherin that they would goe if they knew they would die as soon as they got there or if they knew that the mob would be upon and drive them as so[on] as they got there. They have the spirit of the times here as well as the Church there. They get the spirit of Provisi [prophecy] upon them and they tell many things that is

⁷Thomas B. Marsh was President of the Quorum of the Twelve when he left the Church in Missouri, 1838, leaving Brigham Young as senior member and President of the Quorum.

⁸Note the foreshadowing of Joseph's death including his crossing the Mississippi River to escape events that when acted out four years later would thrust Brigham Young to the head of Church administration. Had Joseph anticipated that event as early as 1840?

⁹Those aware of Brigham Young's leadership after Joseph's death have often likened him to a latter-day Moses. To Brigham Young the disciple, Joseph Smith was clearly "our Moses," an analogy he used more than once.

about so and all we can due is to laugh at them a little and so pass it off.¹⁰ There will be a grate menny comming next seson.

I wish you would get councel from Br Joseph Smith and doe acordinly. We will not ask you to send more Elders to us then we send to you. A change of Pasters [pastures] makes fat calves. So it is in comparson with the Elders. They due better in a strange contry then in there own as a general thing. Give my love to [your wife] Jane and the children and to all my fr[i]end[s]. I have not time and paper to menchen names—I remember all of them—I am your Br in the New Cv. [Covenant]. Brigham Young

Mary: I shall not have time and room to say much more to you at present. I shall wright agan soon as I trust you will be anabled to take letters out of the office. I dremed last night of seeing the house whare you live & that it looked very open and cold. I feele for you. Tell [the] Brs of the first Presedent [Presidency] my love to them. I want you to see Br. Truman Angel for me and if you can due enny thing for him due it for me or my sake. Give my love to Mother Angel and Careoline. I am glad that you have not come a way from that contry. I trust I shall have plashier of seeing that contry agan. I am rejoiced to here that the Bretherin are settin up west and north. Take good care of the little Children. I have sent som presents to the Children. I am your husben and

frend in [the] E[verlasting]. C[ovenant]. Brigham Young

[Note: Brigham Young penned three postscripts before finally posting the letter, the last short greeting being added after the letter was sealed and addressed:]

Mary take no concern about me for I am doing as well as I can and fare as well as I can ask. The Bretherin and Sisters would pluck out there eyes for me if it ware nessary. They due all they can for my comfort. They feed me and give me close and monny. They wash my feet and wate upon me as they would a little child. And may the Lord bless them for it and he will and they shall stand upon Mount Zion.

The climet dos not agree with me in this contry. I expect to try London this winter to see how that place will agree with me though my helth is a grate deal better then it was when I first came here. The helth of all the Bretheren is better. Be of good chere, the time will soon come when we shall meet agan and rejoice to gether. I suppose the time seemes long to you and the Children that I am gon; it would seeme longer ware it not the will of Lord. When I think how diligent you are and how faithful to my famely and willing to suffer for the sake of my going to preach the gospel, you must be blest and blest you shall be. I pray the Lord to Bles you and I Bles you and all the faithful sisters—so farewell.

I am now in Liverpool but shall goe to Manchester to morrow or next day. Shall see Br Snow and find out more about things. I want to here from Br [Sidney] Rigdon and know how he is and Br. G. Roberson [George W. Robinson]. Give my love to them. Tell my Br[others] acording to the flesh to not come here till I returne home. May the Lord bless you and the Children and preserve your lives and helthes. I am as ever.

Bro Kimball sends his love to you and the children and all the frends.

¹⁰Joseph and Hyrum Smith both instructed the elders that only the first principles of the gospel should be taught abroad. Additional doctrines should be taught only in Nauvoo where priesthood direction could insure their correctness. In the spirit of this principle, Brigham Young chose to treat doctrinal questions and speculations—even when prompted by the Spirit—with humor, rather than with confirmation or denial.

Elder Young returned to Nauvoo in the spring of 1841 to find his family well. A few weeks later he learned through Joseph that the Lord recognized the successful completion of his trial:

Dear and well-beloved brother, Brigham Young, verily thus saith the Lord unto you: My servant Brigham, it is no more required at your hand to leave your family as in times past, for your offering is acceptable to me.

I have seen your labor and toil in journeyings for my name. I therefore command you to send my word abroad, and take especial care of your family from this time, henceforth and forever.¹¹

No more would he travel abroad, leaving his family a year or more at a time. But shorter missions continued. The summer of 1843, for example, found him again on assignment in the East with his family ill in Nauvoo. Though he had largely recovered from his almost fatal illness of the winter before, his own health was still poor. Deeply concerned about his family, he had already sent five letters homeward without response before writing again on 17 August: "When I was so sick, I thought if I could only be home, I should be thankful. There is no place like home to me." Nonetheless, if only he had health to labor, he was willing to leave "home and all that is deare to me for the sake of the gospel." "You and I," he wrote Mary Ann, "must take some masure to recover our helth or we shall not last a grate meny years; and I want that we should live for meny years yet and due much good on the earth."¹²

Indeed, continuing sickness was the reason that Mary Ann had not written sooner. The day before Brigham Young posted the above letter Mary Ann had finally written. "My dear and well Beloved husband," she began. "While our little family is quirely resting in bed, which has been very seldom for four weeks past," she could steal a few moments to write a tale of suffering and sickness. She and the children had been ill with everything from influenza and scarlet fever to little Mary's canker "so she did not swallow for ten or eleven days eny thing But drink." Daughter Vilate had just taken sick

in a very severe manner so she appeared nigh unto Death, But through mercy of God and the utmost exertion She is quite comfortable. The children are all geting Better and I can truly Say, I feel thankful for I am much worn down with Standing over them By day and By night and hearing their cries with pain and distress oftentimes calling for Father to

¹¹Doctrine & Covenants section 126.

¹²Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, 17 August 1843, Western Americana, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

come and lay hands on them. I am shure it pierced my heart with much Sorrow. There has Some children died with the Same disease our family has had.

In closing Mary Ann assured her husband that she had had enough provisions for the family and then declared:

I do not want to say things to you to trouble you. You must excuse me for Saying so much about the distress we have passed through. I feel sometimes as though I could never get eny thing else on my mind. May the Lord Bless You and make you an instrument of doing much good. You have all our Prairs.¹³

One can easily imagine Brigham's feelings upon receipt of such a letter. Less than two weeks later Willard Richards wrote to inform him of the death of little Mary Ann: "I have called to see them many times & prayed for & with them," Willard explained to his friend as he provided the details of Brigham's child's passing. "Little Mary had every thing done for her possible. By this I mean her mother has been supported to watch over & administer to her child. Her ability & faithfulness you know."¹⁴

Brigham Young and his family learned pain and suffering firsthand and together learned to rely on the Lord as sustenance and balm. Inevitably, experiences like these influenced his leadership and prepared him to know and appreciate the sacrifices of his people. After he returned to England, Elder Young stressed to new missionaries their responsibility to provide well for their families before departing. He and his brethren had left their families destitute only by "special command . . . & God promised to provide for them, but God does not require the same of the Elders now. They Must take care of their families."¹⁵ Over the years of Brigham Young's leadership this advice remained constant.

President Young's personal understanding of the trauma of a husband and father called to leave home led to another kind of advice that, taken out of context helped create the image of harshness. In an age of slow travel and poor communication a missionary had to muster the faith to trust his distant family to God: "Let a man suffer his mind to be drawn out all the time after his family, and he will become inactive in the work of the Lord." Thus his frequent reminder:

¹³Mary Ann Young to Brigham Young, 16 August 1843, Brigham Young Papers, Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁴Willard Richards to Brigham Young, 28 August 1843, Brigham Young Papers.

¹⁵General minutes collection, 10 April 1843, Church Archives.

When you leave, understand it, you have neither wife nor children: you have handed them all over to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let the brethren go and say, I will keep my eyes straight before me on the object of my mission, and not look behind me to my family.¹⁶

True to the thrust of his faith and labors, but with exaggeration as he stressed the ideal, he reminisced:

In my first administrations in the gospel . . . when I went out to preach, I would leave my family and friends in the hands of the Lord, and I gave them no further thought. . . . I did not think about wife, children, home, native land or friends; but my thoughts were on the great work before me. This should be the state of our feelings continually.¹⁷

The truth is that he *did* think of his family and felt deeply the trials and suffering of his fellow Saints, but he disciplined himself to keep private his emotions:

There is not a father who feels more tenderly towards his offspring, and loves them better than I love this people; . . . my heart yearns after them with all the emotions of tenderness, so that I could weep like a child; but I am careful to keep my tears to myself.¹⁸

Because of this reticence, public glimpses into his deep sensitivity and empathy are rare. One of these occurred September 1848, as Brigham re-entered his new Zion—this time his family in tow—never to leave the Great Basin again. He was filled with joy and gratitude that an era of wandering and tribulation was now ended; his emotions overflowed as he addressed the Saints:

I also trust to have command over my feelings to speak in a childlike spirit and yet with the confidence and courage of a man, although it may be hard to suppress my feelings. . . . Perhaps not another person in [this] congregation . . . has the sensations I have. This people have been scattered and driven homeless and houseless, scattered in a world friendless not knowing where to go. . . . This is but a small portion . . . of that weight that has been on my shoulders. I have felt their sufferings and all their feelings from the death of Joseph till now. I doubt if there [are] four persons that feels as I do . . . having to guard every moment from bursting into tears and sitting down like a child. We are

¹⁶Sermon, 28 August 1852, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855–1886; reprint ed., 1967), 6:276; hereafter cited *JD*.

¹⁷Sermon ca. June 1865; *JD*, 11:116.

¹⁸Sermon, 9 April 1852; *JD*, 1:49. One month earlier Brigham Young had said “my feelings sympathize so with the injured, that I am grieved and distressed, and my head aches, and large drops of cold sweat sit upon my brow, and no man or woman knows anything about my feelings, and I do not want them to know. . . . I calculate to carry my own sorrows just as long as I live . . . and when I go to the grave, I expect them to go there.” Sermon, 4 March 1852; *JD*, 1:31. Brigham Young was not one who could express such feelings easily even when he would. In 1849 he confessed to the Twelve, “I never cry—all disappointments losses & crosses never bring a tear,” this in spite of remembering that upon the death of Joseph “I felt as tho my head would crack.” Minutes, 12 February 1849, Brigham Young Papers.

here, thank the Almighty God of Israel. . . . I say brothers and sisters please to receive my warmest thanks and receive the choicest blessings of the Lord.¹⁹

Brigham Young personally experienced poverty, sickness and want. He ached when forced to leave his children and beloved Mary Ann improvident. Such sacrifice, common in his early career, made him fully aware of the price his later presidential leadership exacted. Part of his success as a leader lay in his ability to demand sacrifice for the gospel even though he knew well and felt personally what he was asking. Indeed, such shared experience helped create the bond between Brigham Young and his people. At his request and under his direction they gave their all.

¹⁹Thomas Bullock Minutes, 24 September 1848, Church Archives. Clerk's abbreviations expanded.