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Joseph Smith, retouched photograph of a daguerreotype of a painting or copy of the daguerrotype from the Carter collection, LDS Church Archives.

Parting the Veil: The Visions of Joseph Smith

Alexander L. Baugh

God granted to the Prophet Joseph the gift of visions. Joseph received so many that they became almost commonplace for him. The strength and knowledge Joseph received through these visions helped him establish the Church.

Joseph Smith the seer ushered in the dispensation of the fullness of times. His role was known and prophesied of anciently. The Lord promised Joseph of Egypt that in the last days a “choice seer” would come through his lineage and would bring his seed to a knowledge of the covenants made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2 Nephi 3:7; JST Gen. 50:27–28). “That seer will the Lord bless,” Joseph prophesied, specifically indicating that “his name shall be called after me” (2 Nephi 3:14–15; see also JST Gen. 50:33). Significantly, in the revelation received during the organizational meeting of the Church on April 6, 1830, the first title given to the first elder was that of seer: “Behold, there shall be a record kept . . . and in it thou [Joseph Smith] shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (D&C 21:1).

In the Book of Mormon, Ammon defined a seer as one who possessed “a gift from God” to translate ancient records (Mosiah 8:13; see also 28:11–16). However, the seeric gift is not limited to translation, hence Ammon’s additional statement that “a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have” (Mosiah 8:16). In actuality, a seer is a see-er.¹ Among other gifts and powers, he sees visions, which visions are seen with spiritual eyes.² This study attempts to compile and analyze all of the known visions, visitations, or visual revelations experienced by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Visions can take various forms. Personal visitations or appearances of deity, angels, or even Satan and his emissaries certainly come under the heading of visions. Visions can also include seeing vivid images where the veil is lifted from an individual’s mind in order to see and comprehend the things of God. Certain dreams could be considered visions, particularly when heavenly or spiritual messages are conveyed. Finally, certain revelations received through the Urim and Thummim mediums such as the Nephite interpreters and the seer stone may also be classified, in the ancient sense, as visions.

While the visions received by Joseph Smith were also revelatory experiences, revelations were not always visionary. Hence, in researching Joseph Smith's visions, I attempted to distinguish between visions and other kinds of inspiration or revelation. More often than not, when a vision was involved, the wording of the source material indicated that a vision—not a more general “revelation”—had been received. However, in some instances, the visual nature of the experience was not quite clear, so I made some judgment calls whether a particular revelation involved a vision based on the graphic detail in the account and the perceptual circumstances of the manifestation.

This difficulty in determining what actually constitutes a vision is illustrated by the following example. In January 1841, Joseph Smith gave a detailed description of the Apostle Paul's physical appearance and mannerisms:

He is about five foot high; very dark hair; dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated and then it almost resembles the roaring of a Lion. He was a good orator active and diligent [*sic*], always employing himself in doing good to his fellow men.³

A cursory reading of the Prophet's statement might lead to the conclusion that his knowledge of Paul's physical characteristics could have been learned only by means of a vision. However, the Prophet's description resembles depictions of Paul found in familiar apocryphal writings.⁴ Thus, while Joseph may have received an actual vision of Paul, he possibly gained his understanding of the ancient Apostle's appearance from the traditional Christian literature of the day and accepted it as accurate. Due to this ambiguity and in the interest of cautious scholarship, I have not included the Prophet's statement on Paul among the visions listed in the appendix below.

Three major points became apparent as I researched Joseph Smith's visions. First, and perhaps most remarkable, is the sheer number of visions the Prophet received. The majority of these visions are not found in the standard works but pervade the Prophet's own history and the records kept by contemporaries who were present when a vision was received or when Joseph Smith spoke about his sacred communications. A major purpose of this study is to document those visions not generally known. As I began collecting the accounts of the visions, I realized that any attempt to total the number of visions would risk excluding some, since evidence of visions relies upon documentation, and some visions may have been purposely unrecorded. Of one vision Joseph remarked, “I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them.”⁵

Second, the Prophet was privileged to receive so many visions that it appears they became almost commonplace experiences for him. For

example, in 1843 he said, “It is my meditation all the day, and more than my meat and drink, to know how I shall make the Saints of God comprehend the visions that roll like an overflowing surge before my mind.”⁶ Perhaps because his visionary experiences were so frequent, he often left out details or failed to record certain events altogether.

Finally, in a number of instances, others witnessed Joseph Smith’s visionary experiences. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, Sidney Rigdon, Heber C. Kimball, Frederick G. Williams, John Murdock, Zebedee Coltrin, and others were present when the Prophet had visions, often seeing the manifestation with him. The recorded statements of these witnesses and co-participants give additional testimony and credibility to the reality of the Prophet’s seeric experiences.⁷

For the sake of clarity and organization, the Prophet’s visions will be discussed in a historical context using two periods: 1820–30 and 1831–44.

JOSEPH SMITH’S VISIONS, 1820–1830

Joseph Smith’s visions between 1820 and 1830 fall into three of the broad categories mentioned earlier: personal visitations of deity, angels, and Satan; visions received via the seer stone and the Urim and Thummim; and visions opened to the mind. One vision in particular seems to be in a category of its own.

Visitations

Ammon said that through a seer “secret things [shall] be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light” (Mosiah 8:16). Joseph Smith brought to light many truths he learned from heavenly beings, and he learned to distinguish those truths from their opposites through his encounters with Satan.

The First Vision. The most magnificent and certainly the most historically and doctrinally significant theophany occurred in the Sacred Grove in spring 1820, when the Father and the Son—and “many angels,” according to Joseph’s 1835 account—ushered in the opening of the Restoration. This initial spiritual manifestation has appropriately come to be known among Latter-day Saints as the “First Vision,” a title that recognizes that more visions soon followed. Although Joseph Smith was privileged to have additional visions of the Father and the Son later, the First Vision is the only known instance during this ten-year period that the young prophet was privileged to have a vision of either of these two members of the Godhead. Historical evidence demonstrates that the Restoration was brought to pass primarily through the ministration of angels and other forms of revelation rather than by direct appearances of either of these two supreme deities.

Visions of Heavenly Messengers. Of the heavenly messengers who personally appeared to the youthful prophet in the years 1820–30, Moroni was the most regular visitor. Best known are the three visits that occurred during the night of September 21–22, 1823; the appearance while Joseph returned from work in his father’s field the next day; the meeting with Moroni at the Hill Cumorah; and the four annual visits that subsequently took place each September until 1827. However, in total over twenty appearances by the last survivor of the Nephite nation can be documented.⁸

One of Moroni’s visits, in particular, is worth recounting. During Joseph and Emma’s move from Palmyra, New York, to Harmony, Pennsylvania, in December 1827, Joseph protected the plates and the other Nephite artifacts by placing them in a barrel of beans. Shortly after departing, he and his wife were accosted by a group of men intent on taking the plates. After a thorough search, the men left empty-handed, and the couple and the plates eventually arrived safely in Harmony. A year and a half later, because of increased persecution, Joseph and Oliver were forced to leave Harmony, departing for Fayette, New York, around June 1. David Whitmer came from Fayette to transport them to his father’s home. However, on this move, the plates were not in their possession. Prior to the trio’s departure, Joseph had returned the plates and sacred relics to Moroni, who had informed him they would be returned upon arrival at the Whitmer homestead. Soon after the party’s departure by wagon, Moroni paid them an interesting visit. David Whitmer told the following incident on numerous occasions over the years. One account reads:

“When I was returning to Fayette with Joseph and Oliver, all of us riding in the wagon, Oliver and I on an old fashioned wooden spring seat and Joseph behind us, we were suddenly approached by a very pleasant, nice looking old man in a clear open place, who saluted us with ‘Good morning, it is very warm,’ at the same instant wiping his face or forehead with his hand. We returned the salutation and by a sign from Joseph I invited him to ride if he was going our way, but he said very pleasantly, ‘No, I am going to Cumorah.’ This was something new to me, I did not know what Cumorah meant, and as I looked enquiringly at Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared so that I did not see him again.”

... “He was, I should think, about 5 feet 9 or 10 inches and heavy set. . . . He was dressed in a suit of brown, woolen clothes; his hair and beard were white. . . . I also remember that he had a sort of knapsack on his back, and something was in it which was shaped like a book. It was the messenger who had the plates.”⁹

In this fascinating account, Whitmer gives some idea of Moroni’s physical stature and more unexpectedly demonstrates that angels are occasionally given to amusement when executing their missions among mortals. This incident further illustrates that celestial glorified messengers can appear in a telestial form and condition.

Moroni was not Joseph's only seeric tutor. Statements and testimonies by some of the Prophet's contemporaries reveal that the young seer was visited and taught by numerous ancient prophets and apostles. In the Wentworth Letter, published in March 1842, Joseph Smith stated, "After having received many visits from the angels of God unfolding the majesty and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days, on the morning of the 22nd of September, A.D. 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into my hands."¹⁰

Three major points stand out in this statement. First, Joseph Smith received "many visits from the angels of God." Second, these angels visited him to unfold events that would soon transpire. And third, these visits occurred before he obtained the plates in September 1827 and thus took place concurrently with his years of instruction by Moroni at Cumorah. Orson Pratt stated that during the years 1823–27, Joseph "was often ministered to by the angels of God, and received instruction concerning the work that was to be performed in the latter days."¹¹ George Q. Cannon taught that during these preparatory years Joseph "was visited constantly by angels. . . . He had vision after vision in order that his mind might be fully saturated with a knowledge of the things of God, and that he might comprehend the great and holy calling that God has bestowed upon him."¹²

Joseph never mentioned publicly, as far as we know, who these angelic ministrants were, but his close associates spoke of these appearances. John Taylor gave some indication of their identity in these two typical statements:

And when Joseph Smith was raised up as a Prophet of God, Mormon, Moroni, Nephi and others of the ancient Prophets who formerly lived on this Continent, and Peter and John and others who lived on the Asiatic Continent, came to him and communicated to him certain principles pertaining to the Gospel of the Son of God.¹³

The principles which he had, placed him in communication with the Lord, and not only with the Lord, but with the ancient apostles and prophets; such men, for instance, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Adam, Seth, Enoch, and . . . the apostles that lived on this continent as well as those who lived on the Asiatic continent. He seemed to be as familiar with these people as we are with one another. Why? Because he had to introduce a dispensation which was called the dispensation of the fulness of times.¹⁴

Lucy Mack Smith had fond memories of Joseph's maturing years and recalled some of the things her son learned from these interviews, particularly from the ancient American prophets. "During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined," Lucy said, continuing:

He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their

buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them.¹⁵

The Prophet left specific record that on May 15, 1829, John the Baptist appeared and conferred Aaronic Priesthood keys and authority upon Joseph and Oliver Cowdery. Besides Joseph's brief account describing this visitation, Oliver Cowdery also left his written testimony of that event. Significantly, by the time John the Baptist appeared, Joseph had received numerous heavenly visitors, but this was one of Cowdery's first visions. When Cowdery wrote about the incident five years later, his words still expressed exhilaration and spiritual elation. "The veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message," he wrote.

What joy! what wonder! what amazement! . . . our eyes beheld—our ears heard. . . . Then his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, "I am thy fellow servant," dispelled every fear. We listened—we gazed—we admired! 'Twas the voice of the angel from glory—'twas a message from the Most High! and as we heard we rejoiced, while his love enkindled upon our souls, and we were rapt in the vision of the Almighty! . . .

. . . The assurance that we were in the presence of an angel . . . is to me, past description, and I shall ever look upon this expression of the Savior's goodness with wonder and thanksgiving.¹⁶

The appearance of Peter, James, and John and their bestowal of the Melchizedek Priesthood upon Joseph and Oliver followed. While Joseph and Oliver left no record of the exact date of this event, the traditional view is that the higher priesthood was conferred during the visitation of these ancient Apostles in late May or early June 1829, approximately two weeks following the bestowal of the Aaronic Priesthood.¹⁷

Another heavenly visitor whom Joseph Smith saw during the 1820–30 period was an angel who is not identified in surviving records. This messenger appeared during the first week of August 1830 to instruct Joseph concerning the emblems of the sacrament. Newel Knight and his wife, Sally, had traveled from Colesville, New York, to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to visit Joseph and Emma. Both women had been baptized, but neither had been confirmed nor had yet partaken of the sacrament. Joseph authorized both ordinances and "set out to procure some wine for the occasion," wrote Newel Knight. "He had gone only a short distance, when he was met by a heavenly messenger and received the first four verses of the revelation" (that is, D&C 27:1–4). The Prophet returned to the small group, which also included John Whitmer, prepared some wine in accordance with the instructions from the angel, partook of the sacrament, confirmed the two sisters, and "spent the evening in a glorious manner."¹⁸

Visions of Satan. Joseph had at least two personal encounters with Lucifer during the 1820s. The best-known confrontation occurred prior to his theophany in the Sacred Grove, when Satan sought to physically destroy him. The other confrontation with Satan is mentioned only briefly, in Doctrine and Covenants section 128. In verse 20, the Prophet wrote of hearing “the voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light.” Clearly, he heard Adam’s (Michael’s) voice and also saw the devil. Satan’s appearance also seems to be associated with the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood since Joseph refers to Peter, James, and John’s appearance on the Susquehanna in the very next sentence. Simply interpreted, Satan appeared as an angel of light, hoping to deceive Joseph and Oliver in some manner and thereby thwart the restoration of authority. Satan’s presence, however, was detected by Michael, who informed Joseph and Oliver of the deception, concluding the incident.

Visions through the Urim and Thummim

During this early period, the youthful prophet received many visions through the medium of “Urim and Thummim”—sometimes a seer stone and, more particularly, the Nephite interpreters. Both of these instruments apparently operated in much the same spiritual manner, and through them Joseph received an undetermined number of visions in addition to the translation of the Book of Mormon. The young prophet obtained a seer stone, described as dark brown in color, while digging a well for Willard Chase around 1822.¹⁹ This discovery occurred only two years after the First Vision and one year before Moroni’s first visits. Joseph made use of the seer stone for five years before obtaining the Nephite interpreters from Moroni in 1827. Latter-day Saints should not be surprised to learn that prior to being engaged specifically in the work of the Lord—that is, prior to beginning the work of the translation of the plates—the youthful Joseph apparently recognized that God had given him visionary powers enabling him to see supernatural visions in a wide variety of areas. Between 1822 and 1827, he successfully obtained an unspecified number of visions by means of the seer stone. He even gained a reputation for such activities, which may explain why men such as Josiah Stowell, who lived more than one hundred miles away, near South Bainbridge, New York, sought out Joseph Smith and employed him to locate buried treasure in the fall of 1825.²⁰

Several examples of Joseph’s ability to receive visions by means of a seer stone illustrate the power associated with the Prophet and this instrument. Martin Harris steadfastly believed Joseph possessed an uncanny ability of seership. This was perhaps due in part to the following incident:

I was at the house of his father in Manchester, two miles south of Palmyra village, and was picking my teeth with a pin while sitting on the bars. The pin

caught in my teeth, and dropped from my fingers into shavings and straw. I jumped from the bars and looked for it. . . . I then took Joseph on surprise, and said to him—I said, “Take your stone.” I had never seen it, and did not know that he had it with him. He had it in his pocket. He took it and placed it in his hat—the old white hat—and placed his face in his hat. I watched him closely to see that he did not look [to] one side; he reached out his hand beyond me on the right, and moved a little stick, and there I saw the pin, which he picked up and gave to me.²¹

Joseph’s use of the stone may have also encouraged him to propose marriage to Emma Hale. At Joseph’s annual visit to the Hill Cumorah in September 1826, Moroni told him that he could have the plates the following year if, in Joseph Knight’s words, “he Brot [*sic*] the right person.” Knight recounted this conversation further:

“Who is the right Person?” The answer was you will know. Then he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale, Daughter of old Mr Hail of Pennsylvania, a girl that he had seen Before, for he had Bin Down there Before with me. . . . He came to me perhaps in November and worked for me until about the time that he was Married . . . and I furnished him with a horse and Cutter to go and see his girl Down to Mr. Hails. And soon after this he was Married and Mr Stowel moved him and his wife to his fathers in Palmyra Ontario County.²²

David Whitmer learned during his very first meeting with Joseph that, by means of the seer stone, Joseph was able to see in detail actions many miles away. In late May of 1828, at the request of Oliver Cowdery and Joseph, David traveled from Fayette, New York, over one hundred miles to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to take the two men back to his father’s farmhouse so they could complete the translation. As he neared Harmony, he was surprised to meet Joseph and Oliver, who “were coming toward me, and met me some little distance from the house.” David reported further:

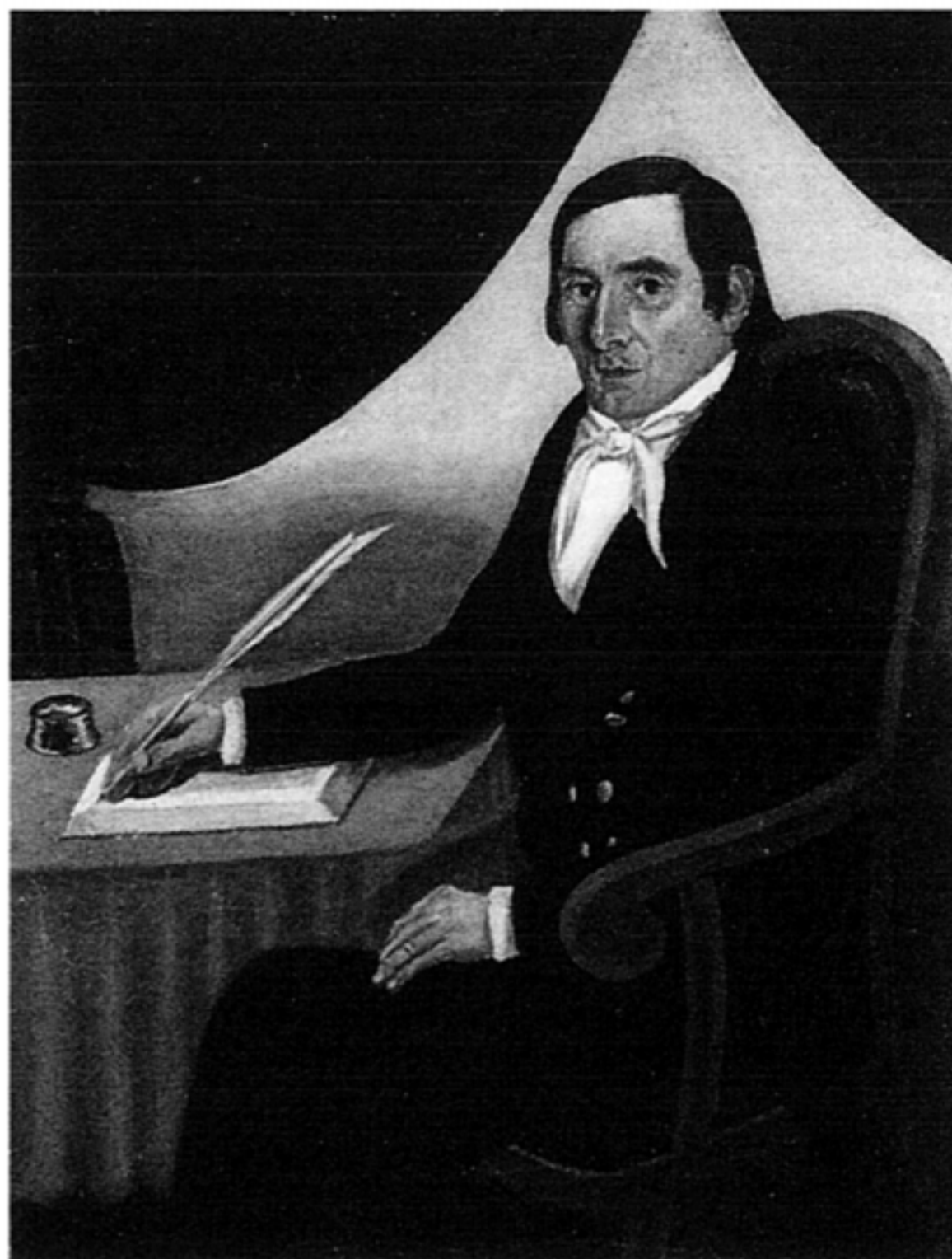
Oliver told me that Joseph had told him when I started from home, where I had stopped the first night, how I read the sign at the tavern, where I stopped the next night and that I would be there that day before dinner, and this was why they had come out to meet me, all of which was exactly as Joseph had told Oliver, at which I was greatly astonished.²³

Moroni gave Joseph possession of the plates, breastplate, and interpreters on September 22, 1827. When Joseph Smith first put on the spectacles, “his entire past history [was] revealed to him,” David Whitmer recounted. This experience, Whitmer believed, helped Joseph recognize the greater supernatural power God had now given him.²⁴ Joseph Knight Sr., who was at the Smith home in Palmyra when Joseph returned from the Hill Cumorah, remembered conversing with Joseph about the sacred relics the morning after he gained possession of them. “It is ten times Better than I expected,” he remembered Joseph saying. He recalled further the

Prophet's particular fascination with the spectacles. "He seemed to think more of the glasses or the urim and thummim than [than] he did of the Plates," wrote Knight, "for, says he, 'I can see any thing; they are Marvelous.'"²⁵ Indeed they were, for as the Prophet's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, recalled, by means of the instrument "the angel showed him many things which he saw in vision."²⁶ These tools were not used for trivial or spectacular sensations. One major purpose of the spectacles (and perhaps also the seer stone) was to help protect the plates and Joseph's life. Lucy said her son "always kept the Urim and Thummim about his person" so "he could also ascertain, at any time, the approach of danger, either to himself or the Record."²⁷ Lucy Mack Smith and Martin Harris mention three incidents where the plates were kept safe because of information received by means of the Urim and Thummim.²⁸

Soon after acquiring the ancient relics, Joseph wondered how he could proceed without some personal assistance, particularly financial aid, so that he could devote himself entirely to the work of translation. The answer came in a vision through the holy interpreters. During one of his interviews with the angel Moroni, probably in September 1827, Joseph asked who could assist him. He was told "to go and look in the spectacles, and he would show him the man that would assist him." The man he saw was Martin Harris. A short while later, the Prophet told Harris what had been made known to him. The Palmyra farmer later recalled how the message "struck me with surprise. I told him I wished him to be careful about these things. 'Well,' said [Joseph], 'I saw you standing before me as plainly as I do now.'"²⁹ Martin subsequently received a testimony of Joseph Smith's divine calling to translate the Book of Mormon and later gave liberally of his wealth to the work.

Joseph Smith never detailed the method or procedure of translation.³⁰ However, Martin Harris, who assisted with the translation of the first 116 pages in 1828, and David Whitmer, a firsthand observer who lent assistance



Joseph Knight Sr. (1772–1847) records the Prophet's use of the "seer stone" in 1826 when asking the Lord who should accompany him to retrieve the plates from the Hill Cumorah in 1827. Oil on canvas, ca. 1830. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

beginning in June 1829, gave some particulars. Harris gave the following testimony to Edward Stevenson:

Sentences would appear and were read by the Prophet and written by Martin, and when finished he would say, "Written," and if correctly written, that sentence would disappear and another appear in its place, but if not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used.³¹

David Whitmer stated a similar procedure for the translation:

Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.³²

Clearly, the main purpose of the interpreters was to assist the seer in the translation of the Book of Mormon. The testimonies of Emma Smith and David Whitmer agree that the Prophet used the Nephite interpreters to translate the first 116 pages, after which this instrument was returned to the angel in consequence of the incidents surrounding the lost manuscript. Thereafter, the seer stone was used, both instruments being essentially a "urim and thummim."³³ In essence, every time Joseph translated he was seeing some kind of vision. Furthermore, in the Doctrine and Covenants at least nine revelations were received by means of the Urim and Thummim and the seer stone—sections 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 17.³⁴ Since it is likely the information was conveyed to the Prophet in much the same manner as the translation of the Book of Mormon (that is, the words would appear in some fashion within the instruments), perhaps these revelations could be better described as "visions" received through the Nephite interpreters or the seer stone. Soon after the translation of the Book of Mormon was complete, visions using the seer stone as a medium seemed to cease. David Whitmer remembered Joseph saying that "we would all have to depend on the Holy Ghost hereafter to be guided into truth and obtain the will of the Lord."³⁵

Visions Opened to the Mind

Documentation exists for three visions received in the mind of the youthful prophet during the ten-year period of 1820 to 1830, each associated with his initial interviews with Moroni. The first two occurred in conjunction with Moroni's inaugural appearance on the evening of

September 21–22, 1823, in the Joseph Smith Sr. log house. In the Prophet's 1839 history, he related that as the heavenly messenger was telling him about the gold plates, "the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it" (JS-H 1:42). In the 1842 Wentworth Letter, he added that during this initial interview he was informed about the ancient American inhabitants and "shown who they were, and from whence they came; a brief sketch of their origin, progress, civilization, laws, governments, of their righteousness and iniquity, and the blessings of God being finally withdrawn from them as a people."³⁶ A similar experience occurred the following day at the hill. After determining where the stone box was located, and after removing the large stone that covered it, Joseph made several attempts to obtain the record. As Joseph began to pray, Moroni appeared. He then told the young seer to

"Look!" and as he thus spake he beheld the prince of darkness, surrounded by his innumerable train of associates. All this passed before him, and the heavenly messenger said, "All this is shown, the good and the evil, the holy and impure, the glory of God and the power of darkness, that you may know hereafter the two powers and never be influenced or overcome by that wicked one."³⁷

In a very real sense, what Joseph experienced on these three occasions was a "vision within a vision" since he received visual instruction at the same time he was in the presence of a celestial personage.

A Unique Visionary Experience

A well-known vision of this period warrants a brief examination, but it is difficult to classify and explain. After the completion of the translation, Joseph returned the plates to Moroni, who appeared a very short time later at a location near the Whitmer farm to show the plates to the Three Witnesses. The plates were then loaned back to the Prophet, who showed them to the Eight Witnesses, who were in the vicinity of Manchester. The Prophet and Oliver Cowdery then went to Cumorah to return the record for the last time. While at the hill, an unusual phenomenon took place. Brigham Young explained:

I believe I will take the liberty to tell you of another circumstance that will be as marvelous as anything can be. This is an incident in the life of Oliver Cowdery, but he did not take the liberty of telling such things in meeting as I take. . . . Oliver Cowdery went with the Prophet Joseph when he deposited [returned] these plates. . . . When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but that it

was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room more plates than probably many wagon loads; they were piled up in the corners and along the walls. The first time they went there the sword of Laban hung upon the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates; it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: "This sword will never be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and his Christ." I tell you this as coming not only from Oliver Cowdery, but others who were familiar with it.³⁸

The incident is substantiated by two other statements made by Brigham Young and recorded by William H. Dame and Wilford Woodruff.³⁹ Others of the Prophet's contemporaries giving similar reports included Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, and David Whitmer.⁴⁰

Summary of the 1820–1830 Period

This decade was distinguished by the following: First, the most significant experience of Joseph Smith during this period was the personal visitation of the Father and the Son, who opened the latter-day dispensation with a personal appearance. This vision is also the only recorded appearance of the two supreme beings during the decade of the 1820s. Second, the period is characterized by a series of visitations from heavenly messengers, including ancient prophets from both hemispheres who appeared to indoctrinate and teach the young seer. Third, Joseph had at least two spiritual encounters with Satan, the first being a vision involving a destructive force immediately before the appearance of the Father and the Son, and the second, a more subtle appearance where Satan was disguised as an angel of light. Fourth, around 1822, Joseph Smith began to receive visions by means of a seer stone. Later, in 1827, he received the Nephite spectacles. Both of these instruments acted as a Urim and Thummim, and by them Joseph Smith received divine light and knowledge. Evidence further suggests that the entire translation process of the Book of Mormon and the receipt of several early revelations through the Urim and Thummim were in essence visionary experiences. Fifth, the Prophet had visions opened to his mind, albeit rarely, during this time period. Sixth, the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery experienced a singular visionary phenomenon when they returned the plates to the Hill Cumorah.

JOSEPH SMITH'S VISIONS, 1831–1844

From 1831 to 1844, Joseph received personal visitations from the Father and the Son together, the Son alone, other heavenly beings, and Satan. The Prophet also received visions where the method of receiving the vision is

not clearly recorded. Examples of those visions will be discussed according to subject or event.

Visions of Beings

Joseph the seer continued to have visions of heavenly and satanic personages. These experiences gave him increasing knowledge of the unseen world.

Visions of the Father and the Son. During the first five years of the 1831–44 period, Joseph Smith was privileged to see both the Father and the Son in vision on at least four occasions. On June 4, 1831, during a four-day conference held in Kirtland, Joseph had a vision of these two beings. Levi Hancock was present and stated that the vision occurred in a schoolhouse on the hill above the Isaac Morley farmhouse, about one mile northeast of the Newel K. Whitney store. Hancock reported that the elders were meeting together when Joseph “stepped out on the floor and said, ‘I now see God, and Jesus Christ at his right hand, let them kill me, I should not feel death as I am now.’”⁴¹ Hancock’s wording suggests a vision similar to that experienced by Stephen, who saw the Father and the Son before being stoned before Jewish accusers (Acts 7). Considering the persecution Joseph was continually experiencing, he must have considered death a long-desired relief from his sufferings.

Joseph Smith and his spokesman, Sidney Rigdon, saw the Father and the Son in 1832 in the vision now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants section 76. Often, discussion of this vision focuses on the degrees of glory, perdition, and the attendant requirements for each. However, the highlight of the section is a vision of the Father and the Son, the premortal life, and Lucifer’s fall. The vision of the two supreme members of the Godhead was apparently of considerable length. The manifestation led them to write, “The glory of the Lord shone round about. And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness; And saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, worshiping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever” (D&C 76:19–21). So powerful was the vision of what they both saw and heard, they chose to bear testimony of the Savior, a testimony declaring “that he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father” (D&C 76:22–23).

On March 18, 1833, God the Father and the Son also made a brief personal appearance to members of the School of the Prophets. Two eyewitnesses left a dramatic record of their experience. The first comes years later from Zebedee Coltrin:

At one of these meetings after the organization of the school, . . . when we were all together, Joseph having given instructions, and while engaged in silent prayer, kneeling, with our hands uplifted each one praying in silence,



Zebedee Coltrin (1804–1887), a member of the School of the Elders in 1833, provides two accounts of the appearance of the Father and Son to Joseph Smith in Kirtland. Copy print from unknown source. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.

no one whispered above his breath, a personage walked through the room from East to west, and Joseph asked if we saw him. I saw him and suppose the others did, and Joseph answered that is Jesus, the Son of God, our elder brother. Afterward Joseph told us to resume our former position in prayer, which we did. Another person came through; He was surrounded as with a flame of fire.⁴²

In the presence of this personage, Coltrin “experienced a sensation that it might destroy the tabernacle as it was of consuming fire of great brightness.” Joseph Smith identified this personage as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and Coltrin gave the following description:

I saw His hands, His legs, his feet, his eyes, nose, mouth, head and body in the shape and form of a perfect man. . . . This appearance was so grand and overwhelming that it seemed I should melt down in His presence, and the sensation was so powerful that it thrilled through my whole system and I felt it in the marrow of my bones.⁴³

On another occasion, Coltrin stated that as the Father passed through the room, the “glory and brightness was so great . . . that had it continued much longer, I believe it would have consumed us.”⁴⁴ The second testimony of this vision comes from John Murdock:

During the winter that I boarded with Brother Joseph . . . we had a number of prayer meetings, in the Prophet’s chamber. . . . In one of those meetings the Prophet told us, “If we could humble ourselves before God, and exercise strong faith, we should see the face of the Lord.” And about midday the visions of my mind were opened, and the eyes of my understanding were enlightened, and I saw the form of a man, most lovely, the visage of his face was sound and fair as the sun. His hair a bright silver grey, curled in most majestic form; His eyes a keen penetrating blue, and the skin of his neck a most beautiful white and he was covered from the neck to the feet with a loose garment, pure white: Whiter than any garment I have ever before seen. His countenance was most penetrating, and yet most lovely. And while I was endeavoring to comprehend the whole personage from head to feet it slipped from me, and the vision was closed up. But it left on my mind the impression of love, for months, that I had never felt before to that degree.⁴⁵

On January 21, 1836, Joseph Smith was more in heaven than on earth. That day he received at least two, and possibly three, visions of different events. In one of these visions, he saw “the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son” and those who became heirs of the celestial kingdom. It is this portion of the vision that has been canonized as section 137. However, in addition, Joseph observed William E. McLellin proselyting in the South, Brigham Young working in the Southwest, and others bringing about the redemption of Zion. He also saw the Twelve standing together in a foreign land (probably Great Britain). The Prophet indicated they were “much fatigued, with their clothes tattered and feet swollen, with their eyes cast downward, and Jesus standing in their midst, and they did not behold Him. The Savior looked upon them and wept.”⁴⁶ Subsequently, he observed that the Twelve had successfully accomplished their work on earth and had entered the celestial city, where the Savior embraced and kissed each one and then crowned them in the presence of God the Father. This vision left such a powerful impression on the Prophet, wrote Heber C. Kimball, “that he never could refrain from weeping while rehearsing it.”⁴⁷

Visions of the Son. In addition to the four appearances of the Father and Son during this five-year span (1831–36), historical sources reveal that Joseph Smith saw Jesus Christ separately on four occasions. Thirteen-year-old Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner was present when one of these visitations transpired. She remembered the event occurring in 1831, at a meeting of Saints held at the Isaac Morley farm, where the Prophet was the main speaker. She recalled Joseph speaking very solemnly during the meeting. “All at once his countenance changed and he stood mute,” Rollins recounted. “Those who looked at him . . . said there was a search light within him, over every part of his body. I never saw anything like it on the earth. I could not take my eyes off of him. He got so white that anyone who saw him would have



Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner (1818–1913) preserves an account of visitation of Jesus Christ to the Prophet Joseph Smith at meeting of the Saints held at Isaac Morley’s farm in Kirtland in 1831. Copy print from unknown source. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.

thought he was transparent. I . . . thought I could almost see the bones through the flesh.” The Prophet stood silent for several minutes before he asked those present if they knew who had been in their midst. Martin Harris told them it was the Savior, to which the Prophet responded that God had revealed that truth to Martin. He then said, “Brothers and Sisters, . . . the Savior has been here this night and I want to tell you to remember it. There is a veil [*sic*] over your eyes for you could not endure to look upon Him.”⁴⁸

During an intimate meeting in Kirtland on December 18, 1833, the Prophet experienced a singular vision of the premortal Jehovah ministering to Father Adam in mortality. Scribe Oliver Cowdery noted that while Joseph Smith was setting apart his father, Joseph Smith Sr., as Patriarch to the Church, “the visions of the Almighty were open to his view,” and he beheld a great ancient council meeting at Adam-ondi-Ahman held three years previous to Adam’s death. “The Lord appeared unto them,” Cowdery recorded, and “administered comfort unto Adam.”⁴⁹ In July 1839, during a meeting with the Twelve and the Seventy, Joseph Smith briefly recounted the vision. “I saw Adam in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman,” he said. “The Lord appeared in their midst, and he (Adam) blessed them all.”⁵⁰

Joseph Smith had two additional visions of the Savior during the week of the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. The Prophet’s history for March 30, 1836, three days after the formal dedication, states that “the Savior made His appearance,” while “angels ministered unto others.”⁵¹ Although Joseph did not give any additional information concerning this manifestation, Harrison Burgess, a member of the Seventy, was present and provided the following recollection:

I was in a meeting for instruction in the upper part of the [Kirtland] Temple, with about a hundred of the High Priests, Seventies and Elders . . . and I beheld the room lighted up with a peculiar light such as I had never seen before. It was soft and clear and the room looked to me as though it had neither roof nor floor to the building and I beheld the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum Smith and Roger Orton enveloped in the light: Joseph exclaimed aloud, “I behold the Savior, the Son of God.” Hyrum said, “I behold the angels of heaven.” Brother Orton exclaimed, “I behold the chariots of Israel.” All who were in the room felt the power of God to that degree that many prophesied, and the power of God was made manifest, the remembrance of which will remain with me while I live upon the earth.⁵²

On Sunday, April 3, 1836, Joseph and Oliver, perhaps feeling that a manifestation was about to take place, retired to the veiled Melchizedek Priesthood pulpits in the Kirtland Temple, where a glorious vision of the Lord was opened to them. As stated in Doctrine and Covenants section 110, the first and second elder saw Jesus Christ “standing upon the breastwork

of the pulpit. . . . His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun” (110:2–3). This occasion is the last documented vision of Joseph Smith seeing the Lord Jesus Christ. Including the First Vision, there is documentation for five visions of the Father and the Son together, and four visions of the Savior individually, totaling nine.

Visions of Other Heavenly Beings. During his years as Church President, Joseph Smith also had visions of, manifestations about, and visitations from ancient prophets and apostles and other heavenly messengers. Father Adam was among the prophets most frequently seen. As stated above, Joseph heard Adam detect Satan as an angel of light during the 1820–30 period. In addition, on at least three instances Joseph Smith saw Adam in vision during the decade of the 1830s. The two most familiar accounts are included in scripture. Joseph saw in vision the great council at Adam-ondi-Ahman, where Adam and other patriarchs—including Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah—as well as all of Adam’s righteous posterity, assembled three years prior to Adam’s death (D&C 107:53–57).⁵³

Joseph later saw Adam in his vision of the celestial kingdom, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants section 137. Concerning this vision, Heber C. Kimball stated that Joseph also “saw Adam open the gate of the Celestial City and admit the people one by one.”⁵⁴ The most personal account of Adam in vision is not recorded in scripture. In April 1834, the Prophet held a conference of the Church at New Portage, Ohio. There Joseph asked Oliver Cowdery and Zebedee Coltrin to walk with him “to a place where there was some beautiful grass, and grapevines,” Coltrin later recounted. The Prophet then requested they each pray in turn. After praying, Joseph said, “Now breth[r]en . . . we will see some visions.” Joseph laid on the ground, and Oliver and Zebedee rested their heads on his outstretched arms. “The heavens gradually opened,” Coltrin recalled, and the brethren “saw a golden throne, on a circular foundation, something like a light house, and on the throne were two aged personages, having white hair, and clothed in white garments.” These personages were “the two most beautiful and perfect specimens of mankind” Coltrin had ever seen. Joseph called them “our first parents, Adam and Eve.” Coltrin remembered Adam as a “large broadshouldered man, and Eve as a woman . . . large in proportion.”⁵⁵ That the Prophet knew Adam’s visage is also evident from a brief statement he made in January 1843, while reminiscing about his deceased brother, Alvin, where Joseph called his oldest brother “a very handsome man, surpassed by none but Adam and Seth.”⁵⁶

The Prophet also saw other angelic ministrants and prophets during this period. As the Kirtland Temple neared completion in early 1836, an

outpouring of spiritual appearances by heavenly beings began. On January 21, at a meeting held in the not-yet-dedicated temple, angels ministered unto those present, the Prophet reported, “as well as my self. . . . For we all communed with the h[e]avenly host’s.”⁵⁷ Bishop Edward Partridge stated that “a number saw visions & others were blessed with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.”⁵⁸ Oliver Cowdery called the scene “too great to be described, . . . therefore, I only say, that the heavens were opened to many, and great and marvelous things were shown.”⁵⁹ Recorded in the Prophet’s journal for the next day, January 22, is a comparable occurrence: “The heavens were opened, and angels ministered unto us. . . . [They] mingled their voices with ours, while their presence was in our midst.”⁶⁰ On January 28, Joseph saw another glorious vision, which he did not describe.⁶¹

Divine messengers attended the dedicatory services of the Kirtland Temple on March 27, 1836. As the Prophet read the dedicatory prayer, “we, having our heads bowed,” Truman O. Angell later testified, “felt a sensation very elevating to the soul.” At the completion of the prayer, President Frederick G. Williams arose “and testified that midway during the prayer an Holy Angel came and seated Himself in the stand.”⁶² Heber C. Kimball



Kirtland Temple (lower auditorium), ca. 1920. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.

could see the personage from where he sat, describing him as “very tall . . . [with] black eyes, white hair, and stoop shouldered; his garment was whole, extending to near his ankles; on his feet he had sandals. He was sent as a messenger to accept of the dedication.”⁶³ After a midday adjournment, the first thing Joseph Smith did was announce to those assembled that “the Personage who had appeared in the morning was the Angel Peter [who] had come to accept the dedication.”⁶⁴ David Whitmer testified that at the dedication he also saw angels in the house.⁶⁵

On the evening of the dedication day, the priesthood quorums again met in the temple. It was during this meeting that a pentecostal outpouring transpired. The Prophet’s history states:

A noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation. The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place.⁶⁶

Two or three days later, the leading brethren and quorums met to perform anointings. On this occasion, noted Heber C. Kimball, another heavenly personage appeared—“the beloved disciple John was seen in our midst by the Prophet Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and others.”⁶⁷

The most significant manifestation during this spiritual season in Kirtland occurred a week after the dedication, when the Lord appeared and accepted the temple and the sacrifice of the Saints. Then, following that theophany, the great lawgiver, Moses, appeared and bestowed the keys of gathering. His appearance was followed by a personage, whom the Prophet simply called Elias, who restored the keys associated with the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham. Finally, Elijah, an ancient Israelite prophet, bestowed the keys of the sealing power upon the first and second elders, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (D&C 110:11–16). So ended the week in which, according to Orson Pratt, heaven and earth were brought so close together that “people were blessed as they never had been blessed for generations and generations that were passed and gone.”⁶⁸

Several of Joseph Smith’s close associates left record of an angel, whose identity was not recorded, visiting him on several occasions. The purpose of these appearances was to encourage the Prophet to move ahead with the principle of celestial marriage. According to one of the Prophet’s plural wives, this angel appeared three times between 1834 and 1842.⁶⁹ Another plural wife, Eliza R. Snow, described an angel that “stood by him with a drawn sword, [who] told him that, unless he moved forward and established

plural marriage, his Priesthood would be taken from him.”⁷⁰ Documents currently available do not record Joseph Smith receiving visitations from heavenly beings after 1842.

Visions of Satan. The Prophet encountered the adversary face-to-face during the 1830s and 40s. In 1831, while returning to Ohio from his first excursion to Missouri, the Prophet received a revelation at McIlwaine’s Bend on the Missouri River. This revelation came, according to the Prophet’s history, after W. W. Phelps saw Satan, in broad daylight, moving in power upon the surface of the water. Although the record does not indicate how much of this manifestation the Prophet also saw, he knew distinctly who was involved and what had taken place in the vision.

A more direct encounter took place shortly after the Prophet moved into his home in Far West in 1838. Heber C. Kimball related the incident:

One of his children was taken very sick; he laid his hands upon the child, [but] when it got better; as soon as he went out of doors, the child was taken sick again; he again laid his hands upon it, so that it again recovered. This occurred several times, when Joseph inquired of the Lord what it all meant; . . . he had an open vision, and saw the devil in person, who contended with Joseph, face to face, for some time. He said it was his house, it belonged to him, and Joseph had no right there. Then Joseph rebuked Satan in the name of the Lord, and he departed and touched the child no more.⁷¹

As early as June 1839, Joseph Smith instructed the Twelve, prior to their departure to England, how to differentiate messengers of God from messengers of Satan. At the time the Prophet gave these instructions, Parley P. Pratt was imprisoned in the Columbia, Missouri, jail, and did not receive these instructions until returning from Great Britain in 1843, when the Prophet taught these principles to him personally. On that occasion, William Clayton recorded Joseph’s words, which now comprise section 129, outlining the three grand keys for discerning spirits. This revelation shows that the Prophet evidently had firsthand experience in such matters. When Heber C. Kimball returned from his first mission to Great Britain, he and Joseph took a walk down by the Mississippi River. Heber told the Prophet how he, Orson Hyde, and Willard Richards had been buffeted by Satan when they first arrived in Preston, England. The Prophet then told Brother Kimball about his own contests with the prince of darkness, in which Joseph saw Satan “face to face” and was “handled and afflicted” by him.⁷²

Visions of Zion

Although Kirtland was the hub of Mormonism between 1831 and 1838, Joseph focused on the establishment of Zion in Missouri during these years. Through revelations and visionary experiences, the Lord revealed many truths to this modern-day seer about the land where the New

Jerusalem would be established. In June 1831, just four months after moving to Ohio from New York, Joseph received a revelation in which the Lord instructed Joseph, Sidney Rigdon, and thirteen pairs of elders to travel to Missouri, where “the land of their inheritance” would “be made known unto them” (D&C 52:5). Joseph later stated that the commandment to travel “to the western boundaries of the State of Missouri” was received “by a heavenly vision” and that the main purpose of the expedition was to “designate the very spot which was to be the central place for the commencement of the gathering together of those who embrace the fullness of the everlasting Gospel.”⁷³ Soon after the elders’ arrival in Missouri in mid-July, the Prophet alluded to another vision, giving the precise location of Zion: “He manifested Himself unto us, and designated, to me and others, the very spot upon which He designed to commence the work of the gathering, and the upbuilding of an ‘holy city,’ which should be called Zion.”⁷⁴

Visions Received during Zion’s Camp

The Prophet received two unusual visions in 1834. Following the expulsion of some 1,200 Latter-day Saints from Jackson County in 1833, the Prophet called for a contingent of Saints to travel to Missouri and there assist the exiled Saints in reclaiming their lands. The expedition, known as Zion’s Camp, was led by Joseph Smith. After traveling for over a month, on June 3, 1834, near the Illinois River, the expedition came across some peculiar mounds. While surveying one of these formations, the Prophet received a remarkable vision. Seven members of the camp wrote about this event, now known simply as the Zelph story.⁷⁵ Regardless of the many differences in these accounts, Joseph received some divine understanding concerning Zelph, apparently through visionary means, as noted in the following published report:

We encamped on the bank of the river until Tuesday the 3rd during our travels we visited several of the mounds which had been thrown up by the ancient inhabitants of this county, Nephites, Lamanites, &c., and this morning I went up on a high mound, near the river, accompanied by the brethren. . . .

On the top of the mound were stones which presented the appearance of three alters, . . . and human bones were strewn over the surface of the ground. The brethren procured a shovel and hoe, and removing the earth to the depth of about one foot discovered [the] skeleton of a man, almost entire, and between his ribs was a Lamanitish arrow, which evidently produced his death. Elder Brigham Young retained the arrow and the brethren carried some pieces of the skeleton to Clay county. The contemplation of the scenery before us produced peculiar sensations in our bosoms; and the visions of the past being opened to my understanding by the spirit of the Almighty I discovered that the person whose skeleton was before us, was a white Lamanite, a large thick set man, and a man of God. He was a warrior and chieftain

under the great prophet Omandagus, who was known from the hill Cumorah, or Eastern sea, to the Rocky Mountains. His name was Zelph. The curse was taken from him, or at least, in part; one of his thigh bones was broken, by a stone flung from a sling, while in battle years before his death. He was killed in battle, by the arrow found among his ribs, during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites.⁷⁶

Joseph received at least one other vision while leading Zion's Camp. It illustrates how the Prophet could receive a vision at almost any time and on almost any matter. Nathan Tanner stated that while traveling with the camp

I had the pleasure of seeing him [Joseph] in a vision when he saw the country over which we had traveled in a high state of cultivation. This was while he was riding, and when he camped, he had a wagon run out in the middle of the corral of wagons, and got up into it, and told the camp what he had seen while in the Spirit. It was glorious and grand to hear.⁷⁷

Visions of Church Organization

The Prophet received visionary instruction concerning Church structure and organization. During the first part of February 1835, Joseph Smith called for a meeting of the men who had participated in Zion's Camp. Brigham and Joseph Young met with the Prophet a week prior to the meeting. At that time, President Smith told the two brothers, "I have seen those men who died of the cholera in our camp; and the Lord knows, if I get a mansion as bright as theirs, I ask no more." As Joseph Young remembered this meeting, the Prophet "wept, and for some time could not speak." This vision apparently included information about the organization of the Council of the Twelve and the Quorums of Seventy. After Joseph Smith told the Young brothers about his vision, he informed Brigham that he would be called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, not yet organized, and "proceeded to enlarge upon the duties of [the Twelve's] calling." Turning next to Joseph Young, the Prophet said, "Brother Joseph, the Lord has made you President of the Seventies."⁷⁸ These councils were organized later in the month—the Quorum of the Twelve on February 14, 1835, and the Seventy on February 28. The following month, the Prophet dictated section 107, which connects these councils to a visionary experience. "And it is according to the vision showing the order of the Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy" (D&C 107:93). Perhaps it was in part this vision of Church councils to which Joseph Smith referred when, according to Parley P. Pratt, he explained to the Twelve shortly before his death, "I have now finished the work which was laid upon me, by committing to you all things for the building up of the kingdom according to the heavenly vision, and the pattern shown me from heaven."⁷⁹

Visions of the Future

Joseph Smith saw events in the near and distant future. The year 1831 opened with Joseph Smith and several other leading elders receiving a unique vision of the Church in the future. Among these elders was Sidney Rigdon, who was converted to Mormonism in Kirtland in November 1830 by four missionaries en route to Indian Territory on the western borders of Missouri (see D&C 32). Soon after his conversion, Rigdon journeyed to New York in order to meet the Prophet. He took with him Edward Partridge, who was not yet baptized. The two men arrived at Lucy and Joseph Sr.'s home on the Seneca River on December 10, 1830. They stayed for several weeks and were present at the conference held in Fayette during the first week of January. Fourteen years later, while addressing the Saints in Nauvoo, Rigdon reflected on this conference and recalled how small the Church had been in 1831. He remarked, "All the members met in conference in a room twenty feet square"—referring to the Whitmer farmhouse. Then continuing, he added, "We knew fourteen years ago that the Church would become as large as it is today," for, "we saw by vision the Church of God, a thousand times larger."⁸⁰

The Prophet received another interesting vision either prior to his departure to Ohio in January 1831 or while en route. Like Rigdon, Newel K. Whitney encountered Mormonism through the preaching of the missionaries on their way to teach the Lamanites. After joining the Church, Whitney was unable to travel with Rigdon and Partridge to New York to meet Joseph Smith and instead remained behind, apparently petitioning the Lord to bring Joseph to Ohio. According to Whitney family tradition, Joseph had a vision of Whitney praying for the Prophet to come to Kirtland. When the Prophet and his company pulled up in front of Whitney's store on February 1, Joseph

alighted, and springing up the steps, walked into the store. Upon seeing Whitney the Prophet said, "Newel K. Whitney! Thou art the man!" meaning that he was the person whom he had seen in his vision. The storekeeper "could not call [Joseph] by name" so he enquired as to who he was. With obvious reference to his vision the Mormon leader responded, "I am Joseph, the Prophet. . . . You've prayed me here; now what do you want of me?"⁸¹

The experience no doubt helped confirm in Whitney's mind the power that attended the youthful prophet.

Joseph's visions of the future included views of kingdoms and eternal worlds. Doctrine and Covenants sections 76 and 137 are the best examples. He also saw the tragic events of the last days as well as the glories of the Resurrection.

On July 2, 1839, the Prophet addressed several members of the Twelve prior to their departure to Great Britain. During his remarks, he referred to

some of the things the Lord had revealed to him concerning the wickedness of men, future wars, and the destruction that awaits the disobedient. “I saw men hunting the lives of their own sons,” Joseph explained, “brother murdering brother, women killing their own daughters, and daughters seeking the lives of their mothers. I saw armies arrayed against armies. I saw blood, desolation, fires. . . . These things are at our doors.”⁸²

Tragic visions such as these were offset by more hopeful visionary experiences. While speaking at the funeral of Lorenzo D. Barnes in 1843, Joseph Smith reflected on the death of some of his own family members, particularly his father. He discussed the sanctity of the body and the need for a proper and honorable burial, and then he stated his desire to be buried beside his father and mother and other family members and friends. “Would you think it strange if I relate what I have seen in vision in relation to this interesting theme?” he asked.

I actually saw men, before they had ascended from the tomb, as though they were getting up slowly. They took each other by the hand and said to each other, “My father, my son, my mother, my daughter, my brother, my sister.” And when the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am laid by the side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I embrace them and they me.⁸³

Visions of Temple Patterns

Like Moses, David, and Solomon, who obtained divine knowledge pertaining to the construction of Israel’s tabernacle in the wilderness and temple in Jerusalem, Joseph Smith received visionary understanding on the architectural design, construction, and function of four temples—Kirtland, Independence, Far West, and Nauvoo. Joseph received a divine commission to erect a temple in Kirtland in late 1832, several months before the pattern was revealed to him (see D&C 88:119–20). The Lord instructed the Saints to build “after the manner which I shall show unto three of you” (D&C 95:14). Those three, according to Truman O. Angell, the temple’s primary craftsman, comprised the First Presidency of the Church. Frederick G. Williams, the Prophet’s Second Counselor, told Angell, “Joseph received the word of the Lord for him to take his two counselors . . . and come before the Lord and He would show them the plan or model of the House to be built.” Williams continued:

We went upon our knees, called on the Lord, and the Building appeared within viewing distance. I being the first to discover it. Then all of us viewed it together. After we had taken a good look at the exterior, the Building seemed to come right over us, and the Makeup of this Hall [the lower auditorium] seemed to coincide with what I there saw to a minutia.⁸⁴

Scriptural evidence indicates that the patterns for the Independence, Far West, and Nauvoo Temples were also given in vision. Concerning the temple in Jackson County, the Lord stated on August 2, 1833, “Verily I say unto you, that it is my will that a house should be built unto me in the land of Zion, like unto the pattern which I have given you” (D&C 97:10). On June 25, 1833, over a month before receiving section 97, Joseph Smith had sent Church leaders in Jackson County detailed instructions concerning the size, features, and function of the temple complex in Independence plus an explanation of the layout and arrangement of the city of Zion. From this information, one might infer that Joseph Smith received the pattern of the city of Zion together with the vision shown to him for the temples of that early era.⁸⁵

Concerning the temple at Far West, Joseph Smith received the following set of instructions:

But let a house be built unto my name according to the pattern which I will show unto them. And if my people build it not according to the pattern which I shall show unto their presidency, I will not accept it at their hands. But if my people do build it according to the pattern which I shall show unto their presidency, even my servant Joseph and his counselors, then I will accept it at the hands of my people. (D&C 115:14–16; see also v. 10–13)

This particular revelation specifically states the pattern would be given to the First Presidency. Any such revelation was not documented but must have been received before the summer of 1838, when the cornerstones were laid and construction began.⁸⁶

The Nauvoo Temple stood as a crowning monument to the life and mission of the Prophet. God was the architect, but Joseph was the engineer. “And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the priesthood thereof, and the place whereon it shall be built. And ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it, for that is the spot which I have chosen for you to build it” (D&C 124:42–43). Three other temple-building passages specifically state that the pattern would be revealed by the Lord, and the Prophet’s history makes it clear that a pattern was indeed given. In February 1844, the Prophet called on William Weeks, temple architect. In Weeks’s drawings, Joseph Smith noticed semicircular windows in the half stories separating the upper and lower halls. The Prophet politely instructed Weeks that the windows should be completely circular. Weeks protested, stating that circular windows “were a violation of all the known rules of architecture.” Determined to have circular windows, Joseph responded, “I wish you to carry out *my* designs. I have seen in vision the splendid appearance of that building . . . and will have it built according to the pattern shown me.”⁸⁷

Visionary Dreams

Holy writ teaches that certain dreams can be visions or views sent from God. Ancient scripture contains numerous examples of God communicating to his servants visually through dreams. However, an examination of the historical sources leads to the conclusion that Joseph Smith did not receive most of his divine understanding through dreams in the night. Apparently, God chose more direct methods of communicating to him. Although the Prophet told of some of his dreams, he did not usually detail or interpret what he envisioned in those dreams.⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

On October 9, 1843, Joseph Smith spoke at the funeral services of James Adams. “Could you gaze into heaven five minutes,” he remarked, “you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject.”⁸⁹ He was privileged to view the heavens not just for five minutes but for extended periods on many occasions. As far as historical records indicate, Joseph Smith received more visions than any other prophet, past or present. His receiving numerous visions occurred in part because he was called and appointed to bring about the “restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

But Joseph’s calling as a seer also came because of his spiritual capacity and sensitivity. As Brigham Young taught, “There are thousands in the world who are natural born Seers, but when the Lord selected Joseph Smith to be his vice-regent and mouthpiece upon the earth in this dispensation, he saw that he would be faithful and honor his calling.”⁹⁰

Extolling the visionary gifts of Joseph Smith, President John Taylor penned a poem entitled “The Seer,” which was later set to music by Ebenezer Beesley. A portion of its first stanza follows:

The seer;—the seer:—Joseph the seer—
 I’ll sing of the Prophet ever dear:
 His equal now cannot be found,—
 By searching the wide world around.
 With Gods he soared, in the realms of day;
 And men he taught the heavenly way.
 The earthly seer! the heavenly seer,

 He gazed on the past, on the present too;—
 And ope’d the heav’nly world to view.⁹¹

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THE SEER.

Written for the dedication of the Seventy's Hall, and
dedicated to President BRIGHAM YOUNG:

BY JOHN TAYLOR.

The seer;—the seer:—Joseph the seer—
I'll sing of the Prophet ever dear:
His equal now cannot be found,—
By searching the wide world around.
With Gods he soared, in the realms of day;
And men he taught the heavenly way.
The earthly seer! the heavenly seer,
I love to dwell on his mem'ry dear:—
The chosen of God, and the friend of men,
He brought the priesthood back again,
He gazed on the past, on the present too;—
And ope'd the heav'nly world to view.

Of noble seed—of heavenly birth,
He came to bless the sons of earth:
With keys by the Almighty given,
He opened the full rich stores of heaven,
O'er the world that was wrapt in sable night,
Like the sun he spread his golden light.
He strove,—O, how he strove to stay,
The stream of crime in its reckless way—
With a mighty mind, and a noble aim
He urg'd the wayward to reclaim:
'Mid the feaming billows of argry strife—
He stood at the helm, of the ship of life.

The saints;—the saints; his only pride,
For them he liv'd, for them he died!
Their joys were his;—their sorrows too;—
He lov'd the saints;—he lov'd Nauvoo.
Unchanged in death, with a Saviors love
He pleads their cause, in the courts above.
The seer;—the seer—Joseph the seer!
O, how I love his memory dear,
The just and wise, the pure and free,
A father he was, and is to me.
Let fiends now rage in their dark hour;—
No matter, he is beyond their power.

He's free;—he's free;—the Prophet's free!
He is where he will ever be,
Beyond the reach of mobs and strife,
He rests unharm'd in endless life,
His home's in the sky;—he dwells with the Gods,
Far from the furious rage of mobs.
He died; he died—for those he lov'd,
He reigns;—he reigns in realms above,
He waits with the just who have gone before,
To welcome the saints to Zions shore;
Shout, shout ye saints—this boon is given,
We'll meet our martyr'd seer in heaven.

“The Seer,” broadside, ca. 1844–45. Written and published by John Taylor. Courtesy BYU Archives.

1. The Hebrew *chāzāh* comes from “the usual word for ‘see’ in the various dialects of Aramaic, . . . referring both to the natural vision of the eyes and to supernatural visions of various kinds.” G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 4:281–82. The manner in which revelation was received by the Old Testament seers is not entirely clear, but it predominantly involved hearing the word of the Lord at night, although the eyes were also “somehow involved” (4:285). The obscure Hebrew term *chāzāh* is translated in the Greek LXX as *blepōn*, literally “looker,” and then translated into English as “seer.”

2. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 258. Orson F. Whitney stated: “A seer is one who sees. But it is not the ordinary sight that is meant. The seeric gift is a supernatural endowment.” Orson F. Whitney, *Saturday Night Thoughts: A Series of Dissertations on Spiritual, Historical and Philosophic Themes* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1921), 39. See also Steven C. Walker, “Seer,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1292–93.

3. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Orem, Utah: Grandin, 1991), 59. See also Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 180. The Prophet compared his description of Paul to John C. Bennett’s appearance. For more on how Bennett may have resembled the ancient apostle, see Ehat and Cook, *Words*, 82, n. 2.

4. See J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 364.

5. 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, 1958), 5:402 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

6. *History of the Church*, 5:362.

7. For a general discussion and overview of Joseph Smith’s visionary experiences, see Larry C. Porter, “Visions of Joseph Smith,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1512–16. For an examination of Joseph Smith’s visionary contemporaries, see Richard L. Bushman, “The Visionary World of Joseph Smith,” *BYU Studies* 37, no. 1 (1997–98): 183–204.

8. See H. Donl Peterson, “Moroni: Joseph Smith’s Tutor,” *Ensign* 22 (January 1992): 22–29; Peterson, “Moroni: Joseph Smith’s Tutor,” in Larry C. Porter, Milton V. Backman Jr., and Susan Easton Black, eds., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: New York* (Provo: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1992), 49–70; and Robert J. Woodford, “Book of Mormon Personalities Known by Joseph Smith,” *Ensign* 8 (August 1978): 12–15. See also H. Donl Peterson, *Moroni: Ancient Prophet, Modern Messenger* (Bountiful: Horizon, 1983).

9. Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 27. Whitmer told the story on a number of occasions, leaving at least five additional versions of the incident. See Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 13, 41–42, 49–50, 181–82, 213–16.

10. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92), 1:431.

11. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 15:185, September 22, 1872 (hereafter cited as *JD*). On another occasion, Orson Pratt stated, “After having received from time to time, visits from . . . glorious personages, and talking with them, . . . he was permitted to go and take [the] plates from the place of their deposit.” Orson Pratt, in *JD*, 13:66, December 19, 1869.

12. George Q. Cannon, in *JD*, 23:362, October 29, 1882.

13. John Taylor, in *JD*, 17:374, April 8, 1875.
14. John Taylor, in *JD*, 21:94, April 13, 1879. For additional statements concerning the heavenly beings who appeared to Joseph Smith, see *JD*, 13:47; 18:326; 20:174–75; 21:65; 21:161, 163; and 23:48–49.
15. Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: Published for Orson Pratt by S. W. Richards, 1853), 85. See also Woodford, “Book of Mormon Personalities,” 12.
16. Oliver Cowdery, *Messenger and Advocate*, October 1834, 15–16; and Jessee, *Papers*, 1:30–32. It is significant to note that in his narrative Cowdery twice mentions that the voice of the Lord was heard. The Prophet’s history does not mention this fact.
17. Larry C. Porter, “Dating the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood,” *Ensign* 9 (June 1979): 4–10; Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Priesthood,” *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 9, no. 3 (May 3, 1995): 3–7; and Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods,” *Ensign* 26 (December 1996): 30–47.
18. Newell Knight, “Newel Knight’s Journal,” in *Scraps of Biography, Faith-Promoting Series*, no. 10, published in *Classic Experiences and Adventures* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 62–63.
19. Willard Chase, in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: Eber D. Howe, 1834), 241–42. For eyewitness descriptions of the seer stone, see Richard Van Wagoner and Steve Walker, “Joseph Smith: ‘The Gift of Seeing,’” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (summer 1982): 59.
20. See Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 69–70, 97, 103.
21. Martin Harris, in [Tiffany,] “Mormonism—No. II,” *Tiffany’s Monthly* 5 (May 1859): 164.
22. Dean Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 1 (1976): 31–32.
23. Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 27. For slightly different accounts, see Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 41, 48–49, 114–15, 123, 191, 213, 215.
24. Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 150.
25. Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection,” 33.
26. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 106.
27. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 106.
28. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 102–8. The three incidents were: (1) the need to take the plates from the old birch log where he had initially deposited them, (2) the need to conceal the plates beneath the hearth, and (3) the need to hide the plates in some flax in the loft of the cooper’s shop. Harris’s recollections parallel that of Mother Smith. See [Tiffany,] “Mormonism,” 166–67.
29. [Tiffany,] “Mormonism,” 169.
30. For recent discussions of translation, see Neal A. Maxwell, “By the Gift and Power of God,” *Ensign* 27 (January 1997), 36–41; Royal Skousen, “Translating the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript,” in Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 61–93; John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 130–44; Stephen D. Ricks, “Joseph Smith’s Means and Methods of Translating the Book of Mormon” (Provo, Utah: FARMS paper, 1986); John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, “The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information” (Provo, Utah: FARMS paper, 1986).
31. Edward Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses: Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris,” *Millennial Star* 44 (February 6, 1882): 86–87.

32. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Mo.: n.p., 1887), 12.

33. “Now the first that my <husband> translated, [the book] was translated by the use of the Urim, and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone.” Emma Smith Bidamon to Emma Pilgrim, March 27, 1870, in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 532. David Whitmer stated:

This unpardonable carelessness [of giving Martin Harris the manuscript] evoked the stormiest kind of chastisement from the Lord, who took from the prophet the urim and thummum [*sic*] and otherwise expressed his condemnation. By fervent prayer and by otherwise humbling himself, the prophet, however, again found favor, and was presented with a . . . stone . . . which, it was promised, should serve the same purpose as the missing urim and thummim. . . . With this stone all of the present Book of Mormon was translated. (Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 200; see also 72, 156–57, 175, 230)

34. Although not indicated in the historical record, it is likely that section 10 was received through the Urim and Thummim. Sections 3 and 10 were probably received through the Nephite interpreters since these revelations were given in conjunction with the loss of the 116 pages.

35. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers*, 32. The seer stone passed through a series of owners. Soon after the translation of the Book of Mormon was complete, Joseph Smith gave the stone to Oliver Cowdery, who possessed the stone until his death in 1848. That same year Phineas Young visited Oliver’s widow, Lucy Cowdery, and persuaded her to give it to him. He returned to Salt Lake City and presented it to his brother, Brigham Young. The stone has remained in the possession of the Church since that time. See Whitmer, *Address to All Believers*, 32; Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 200; Zina Young Card to F. D. Richards, July 31, 1896, F. D. Richards Letter Collection, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives), as cited in Van Wagoner and Walker, “‘Gift of Seeing,’” 66, n. 53. Edward Stevenson remembered Joseph Smith using a seer stone at least four years after the Book of Mormon was translated. See Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: By the author, 1893), 6.

36. *History of the Church*, 4:537; also Jessee, *Papers*, 1:431.

37. Oliver Cowdery to [W. W. Phelps], *Messenger and Advocate*, October 1835, 198; also Jessee, *Papers*, 1:87. Although this was a vision of Satan and his associates, it was given to Joseph Smith by Moroni and the powers of heaven.

38. Brigham Young, in *JD*, 19:38, June 17, 1877.

39. The two additional statements by Brigham Young concerning the cave and the plates are given here. William H. Dame was present when Brigham Young

related a story told to him by Hyrum Smith which was as follows: Joseph, Hyrum, Cowdery, and Whitmere [*sic*] went to the hill Cormorah [*sic*]. As they were walking up the hill, a door opened and they walked into a room about 16 ft square. In that room was an angel and a trunk. On the trunk lay a book of Mormon & gold plates, Laban’s sword, Aaron’s brestplate. (William H. Dame, Diary, manuscript, January 14, 1855, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah [hereafter cited as BYU Archives])

On December 11, 1869, Wilford Woodruff heard Brigham Young relate to the Salt Lake School of the Prophets,

President Young said in relation to Joseph Smith returning the Plates of the Book of Mormon that He did not return them to the Box from wh[ence?] He had Received But He went [in?] a Cave in the Hill Comoro with Oliver Cowdry & deposited those plates upon a table or shelf. In that room were deposited a large amount of gold plates Containing sacred records & when they first visited that Room the sword of Laban was Hanging upon the wall & when they last visited it the sword was drawn from the scabbard & [laid?] upon a table & a Messenger who was the keeper of the room informed them that that sword would never be returned to its scabbard untill the Kingdom of God was Esstablished upon the Earth & untill it reigned triumphant over Evry Enemy. Joseph Smith said that Cave Contained tons of Choice Treasures & records. (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898*, Scott G. Kenney, ed., 9 vols. [Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85], 6:508–9 [hereafter cited as *Woodruff, Journal*])

40. In 1856, Heber C. Kimball made brief mention of the Nephite depository in the Hill Cumorah. “How does it [the crossing of the plains] compare with the vision that Joseph and others had, when they went into a cave in the hill Cumorah, and saw more records than ten men could carry? There were books piled up on tables, book upon book.” *JD*, 4:105, September 28, 1856. Several years later, Kimball spoke to a missionary meeting at the Church Historians’ Office and “related about Father Smith, Oliver Cowdery and others walking into the Hill Cumorah and seeing records upon records piled upon tables, they walked from cell to cell and saw the records that were piled up.” Brigham Young Manuscript History, May 5, 1867, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives. Orson Pratt made at least four statements attesting to his belief in the Cumorah library. See *JD*, 14:331; 15:183; 17:30; and 17:281–82. David Whitmer believed the cave existed but felt it was in a location other than the Hill Cumorah. See Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 22; A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:525–26; and Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet*, 14–15.

41. Levi W. Hancock, “The Life of Levi Ward Hancock,” typescript, 33, BYU Archives, quoted in Karl Ricks Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland: Eyewitness Accounts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 107–8.

42. “Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minute Book, 1883,” October 3, 1883, typescript, 56–57, BYU Archives.

43. “Salt Lake City School of Prophets Minute Book, 1883,” October 3, 1883, 57.

44. Zebedee Coltrin, in Utah Stake Minutes, Spanish Fork High Priests, February 5, 1870, LDS Church Archives.

45. John Murdock, Journal, typescript, 13, BYU Archives; also quoted in Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 267. Joseph Smith made brief reference to the appearance of the Father and the Son on this occasion. See *History of the Church*, 1:334–35.

46. Jessee, *Papers*, 2:157.

47. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball: An Apostle, the Father and Founder of the British Mission* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974), 93–94.

48. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, in Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland*, 112–13.

49. See Smith, *Teachings*, 38–39; and Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith, Sixth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret

News Press, 1938), 34–35. A careful reading of D&C 107:53–57 indicates that these verses are given almost verbatim with those of the Joseph Smith Sr. December 1833 blessing, thus revealing the initial source.

50. *History of the Church*, 3:388.

51. The Prophet's history indicates the Savior made his appearance "to some." Although the record does not state Martin actually saw Christ, the fact that Martin knew the being was Christ indicates he more than likely did see the Savior. See Jessee, *Papers*, 2:207; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:432–33.

52. Harrison Burgess, "Sketch of a Well-Spent Life," in *Labors in the Vineyard: Twelfth Book of the Faith-Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), 67. For a discussion of the dating of this vision, see appendix to this article, n. 53.

53. See footnotes 50 and 51 above.

54. Heber C. Kimball, in *JD*, 9:41, March 17, 1861. See also Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 93–94.

55. "Salt Lake City School of the Prophets Minute Book, 1883," October 11, 1883, 67. The Prophet's history is the source for the date of the conference which took place April 21, 1834. See *History of the Church*, 2:52–54.

56. *History of the Church*, 5:247.

57. Jessee, *Papers*, 2:158.

58. Edward Partridge, Journal, January 21, 1836, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

59. Leonard J. Arrington, "Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, 'Sketch Book,'" *BYU Studies* 12, no. 4 (1972): 419.

60. Jessee, *Papers*, 2:160.

61. Jessee, *Papers*, 2:164.

62. Truman O. Angell Sr., "His Journal," in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 10:198.

63. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 91.

64. Angell, "His Journal," 198. In her reminiscence of the Kirtland Temple dedication, Lydia Knight indicated that the personage who appeared during the services was none other than Jesus. See Lydia Knight, *Lydia Knight's History: The First Book of the Nobel Women's Lives Series* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), 33. In an 1864 address, George A. Smith also identified the messenger as being the Savior. *JD*, 11:10, November 15, 1864. Angell's account is accepted as being the most accurate since he claims to have received the information from Joseph Smith.

65. *History of the Church*, 2:427. Reminiscing about the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Orson Pratt later declared:

God was there, his angels were there, the Holy Ghost was in the midst of the people, the visions of the Almighty were opened to the minds of the servants of the living God; the veil [*sic*] was taken off from the minds of many; they saw the heavens opened; they beheld the angels of God; they heard the voice of the Lord; and they were filled from the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet with the power and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. . . .

. . . In that Temple, set apart by the servants of God, and dedicated by a prayer that was written by inspiration, the people were blessed as they never had been blessed for generations and generations. (*JD*, 18:132, October 9, 1875)

66. *History of the Church*, 2:428.

67. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 92. Kimball did not state on what day the anointings took place. However, the events of March 29–30 seem to indicate the appearance must have occurred on one of those two dates. See *History of the Church*, 2:428–34.

68. See Orson Pratt, in *JD*, 18:131–32, October 9, 1875.

69. Mary Elizabeth Lightner [1905], as cited in Danel W. Bachman, “A Study of Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith” (masters thesis, Purdue University, 1975), 74.

70. Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow, One of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884), 69–70. Additional statements about the angel are Joseph B. Noble Affidavit, [1869], as quoted in Bachman, “A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage,” 74; and Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs, April–October 1903, in E. Dale LeBaron, *Benjamin F. Johnson: Friend to the Prophets* (Provo, Utah: Grandin, 1997), 227.

71. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 258–59.

72. Heber C. Kimball, in *JD*, 3:229–30, March 2, 1856.

73. *History of the Church*, 2:254.

74. *History of the Church*, 2:254.

75. Kenneth W. Godfrey has made a thorough examination of each of the accounts, noting their similarities and differences. See Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The Zelph Story,” *BYU Studies* 29, no. 2 (1989): 31–56.

76. “History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (January 1, 1846): 1076, and *History of the Church*, 2:79–80. These accounts are written as if Joseph Smith were telling the story.

77. Nathan Tanner, “Reminiscences,” in George S. Tanner, *John Tanner and His Family* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1974), 382–83.

78. *History of the Church*, 2:181 n.

79. Parley P. Pratt, “Proclamation,” in *Millennial Star* 5 (March 1845): 151. See also Robert J. Matthews, “A Plainer Translation”: *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 258–60. It is likely Joseph Smith received a vision of the purpose and function of other types of Church councils, particularly the high council, at least a year prior to receiving his understanding concerning the Twelve and the Seventy. At a meeting of high priests in February 1834, he explained in explicit detail the decorum that existed in ancient councils. See *History of the Church*, 2:25–26. One week later he proceeded to organize the Kirtland High Council (see Doctrine and Covenants 102). Then in July of that same year, while in Clay County with Zion’s Camp, he organized the high council in Missouri. See *History of the Church*, 2:122–24. At one time the Mormon leader declared that all Church councils were to be conducted according to an ancient pattern which had been shown him by “vision.” Joseph Smith, February 17, 1834, in Fred C. Collier and William S. Harwell, eds., *Kirtland Council Minute Book* (Salt Lake City: Collier’s, 1996), 24.

80. *History of the Church*, 6:289.

81. Orson F. Whitney, “Newel K. Whitney,” *Contributor* 6 (January 1885): 125; also in *History of the Church*, 1:146 n.

82. *History of the Church*, 3:391.

83. *History of the Church*, 5:361–62. Wilford Woodruff recorded portions of this sermon in his journal. He quoted the Prophet as saying: “In speaking of the resurrection I would say that God hath shown unto me a vision of the resurrection of the dead & I saw the graves open & the saints as they arose took each other by the hand even before they got up or while getting up & great Joy & glory rested upon them.” Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 2:227 [April 16, 1843].

84. Angell, “His Journal,” 10:198. Lyndon W. Cook has given substantial historical evidence which indicates section 95 was actually received in early June 1833, while

section 94 was received in August, some two months after section 95. As further evidence of this, Cook states that “verses 1–2 of section 94 indicate that the pattern for constructing the Kirtland Temple had already been given.” Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 195. In Doctrine and Covenants 94:3–12, Joseph Smith was instructed to build a house for the Presidency and a house for printing, the patterns of which were also to be revealed. Whether the patterns for these two buildings were ever given is not known. For more on the pattern of the Kirtland Temple, see Elwin C. Robison, *The First Mormon Temple: Design, Construction, and Historic Context of the Kirtland Temple* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 7–26.

85. See *History of the Church*, 1:357–62.

86. The Far West Temple revelation was received on April 26, 1838. Four days later, Thomas B. Marsh wrote a letter wherein he indicated the “plan is yet to be shown to the first presidency.” See Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, April 30, 1838, Wilford Woodruff Papers, LDS Church Archives. This letter was published in Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff [April 30, 1838], in *Elder’s Journal* 1 (July 1838): 38. The cornerstones of the temple were subsequently laid on July 4, 1838. “Celebration of the 4th of July,” *Elder’s Journal* 1 (August 1838): 60. During the summer and fall of 1838, work on the temple proceeded slowly due to the Missouri persecutions. According to Missourian William A. Wood, the walls were built to a height of two or two and a half feet. See William A. Wood, “An Old Mormon City in Missouri,” *Magazine of American History* 16 (1886): 99; also Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 237.

87. *History of the Church*, 6:196–97.

88. The recorded dreams of Joseph Smith are in *History of the Church*, 2:387; 5:254–55, 394; 6:194–95, 461–62, 609–10.

89. *History of the Church*, 6:50; italics in original.

90. “Report of Remarks Made at the Tabernacle, 23 December 1860,” *Deseret News Weekly*, December 26, 1860, 341, quoted in Ronald W. Walker, “Joseph Smith: The Palmyra Seer,” *BYU Studies* 24 (fall 1984): 468.

91. John Taylor, “The Seer,” broadside (N.p.: John Taylor, ca. 1844–45) BYU Archives (see page 49 of this issue); reprinted as “The Seer, Joseph the Seer,” in *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1927), no. 96.

Appendix: The Visions of Joseph Smith

The following collection of historical documents attempts to bring together all the known visions of Joseph Smith with the exception of various forms of visionary inspiration received as part of the translation of the words of the Bible, Book of Mormon, or Pearl of Great Price, which are too numerous to mention here. Synopses of visions are arranged chronologically. In the left-hand column is the date, either exact or approximate, Joseph Smith received the vision. In the right-hand column is a close paraphrase of each vision taken from a document judged to be the most comprehensive account available. The source for this account follows each paraphrase. Some details in a paraphrase may derive from a second source, listed in the footnotes. Following each main source is the date when the document was written. Date spans indicate the period of time within which the vision was received, not the length of the vision. A “ca.” (circa) before a date means the date is unknown but assumed based on historical evidence. Footnotes do not include every known account of each vision, but instead give some sources where readers can go to learn more. Because this collection depends on record keeping and the preservation of historical documents, the list should not be taken to represent an exhaustive set of Joseph Smith’s visions.

Spring 1820	God the Father, Jesus Christ, and many angels appeared to Joseph Smith. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839). ¹
September 21–22, 1823	The angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith on five separate occasions. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839). ²
September 21–22, 1823	Joseph Smith saw the location of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839). ³
September 21–22, 1823	Joseph Smith was shown the ancient inhabitants of “this country.” Main source: Joseph Smith (1842). ⁴
September 22, 1823	Joseph Smith saw the prince of darkness and his innumerable associates. Main source: Oliver Cowdery (1835). ⁵
September 22, 1823– September 22, 1827	Joseph Smith received many visits from God’s angels. Main source: Joseph Smith (1842). ⁶
September 22, 1824– September 22, 1826	Joseph Smith met with Moroni at three annual intervals. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839). ⁷

- September 22, 1826 Joseph Smith saw that he should take Emma Hale with him to the Hill Cumorah the following year. Main source: Joseph Knight (ca. 1833–1847).⁸
- Early 1827 Moroni instructed Joseph Smith near the Hill Cumorah. Main source: Lucy Mack Smith (1845).⁹
- September 22, 1827 Moroni delivered the plates and sacred relics to Joseph Smith. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).¹⁰
- Late 1827 Joseph Smith saw his “entire past history” through the Urim and Thummim. Main source: David Whitmer (1884).¹¹
- Late 1827–Early 1828 At various times after receiving the plates, Joseph Smith saw when he or the plates were in danger. Main source: Lucy Mack Smith (1845).¹²
- Late 1827–Early 1828 Joseph Smith was shown the man who would assist him in translation, Martin Harris. Main source: Martin Harris (1859).¹³
- 1827–1828 Joseph Smith was shown the location of a pin lost by Martin Harris. Main source: Martin Harris (1859).¹⁴
- June–July 1828 Moroni took the Urim and Thummim from Joseph Smith. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).¹⁵
- June–July 1828 Moroni returned the Urim and Thummim to Joseph Smith. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).¹⁶
- Summer 1828 Moroni took the plates and, again, the Urim and Thummim from Joseph Smith. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).¹⁷
- September 22, 1828 Moroni returned the plates and the Urim and Thummim to Joseph Smith. Main source: Lucy Mack Smith (1845).¹⁸
- May 15, 1829 John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).¹⁹
- ca. May–June 1829 Satan appeared to Joseph Smith as an angel of light. Main source: Joseph Smith (1842).²⁰
- ca. May–June 1829 Peter, James, and John appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Main source: Joseph Smith (1830).²¹
- May–June 1829 Joseph Smith saw David Whitmer en route from Fayette, New York, to Harmony, Pennsylvania. Main source: David Whitmer (1884).²²

- May–June 1829 Joseph Smith gave the plates to Moroni before proceeding to Fayette, New York. Main source: Lucy Mack Smith (1845).²³
- May–June 1829 Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer saw Moroni along the road to Fayette, New York. Main source: David Whitmer (1886).²⁴
- May–June 1829 Joseph Smith received the plates from Moroni after arriving in Fayette, New York. Main source: Lucy Mack Smith (1845).²⁵
- June 1829 Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer saw an angel who showed them the plates and other sacred relics. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).²⁶
- June 1829 Joseph Smith and Martin Harris saw an angel who showed them the plates and other sacred relics. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).²⁷
- June 1829 Moroni delivered the plates so that Joseph could show them to the Eight Witnesses. Main source: Lucy Mack Smith (1845).²⁸
- ca. June 1829 Joseph Smith returned the plates to the angel. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).²⁹
- August 1830 Joseph Smith received a revelation on the sacrament from a heavenly messenger. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).³⁰
- January 1831 Joseph Smith and others saw by vision the growth of the Church. Main source: Sidney Rigdon (1844).³¹
- January 1831 Joseph Smith saw in vision the face of Newel K. Whitney. Main source: Orson F. Whitney (1885).³²
- June 3–6, 1831 Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ. Main source: Levi W. Hancock (before 1883).³³
- June 1831 By heavenly vision, Joseph Smith was commanded to travel to western Missouri and there designate the location for a temple and central gathering place of Zion. Main source: Joseph Smith (1835).³⁴
- July 1831 Joseph Smith and others were shown where the temple at Independence and the city of Zion would be located. Main source: Joseph Smith (1835).³⁵

- 1831 Joseph Smith identified the presence of Jesus Christ in a meeting of the Saints. Main source: Mary Elizabeth Lightner (1905).³⁶
- February 16, 1832 Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon saw the Son of Man on the right hand of God, events in the pre-mortal life, and postmortal glories. Main source: Joseph Smith (1832).³⁷
- May–June 1832 Joseph Smith was shown the mode of travel he and Newel K. Whitney would take after leaving Greenville, Indiana. Main source: Joseph Smith (1839).³⁸
- March 18, 1833 Joseph Smith identified the physical presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ in the School of the Prophets. Main source: Zebedee Coltrin (1883).³⁹
- June 1833 Joseph Smith, Frederick G. Williams, and Sidney Rigdon viewed the plan for the Kirtland Temple. Main source: Truman O. Angell (1885).⁴⁰
- ca. February 1834 Joseph Smith saw the pattern and organization of Church councils. Main source: Joseph Smith (1834).⁴¹
- April 18, 1834 Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Zebedee Coltrin saw Adam and Eve. Main source: Zebedee Coltrin (1870).⁴²
- May–June 1834 Joseph Smith saw land passed over by Zion's Camp in a high state of cultivation. Main source: Nathan Tanner (1884).⁴³
- June 1834 By vision, Joseph Smith was taught about Zelph, a Lamanite warrior. Main source: Wilford Woodruff (1834).⁴⁴
- ca. February 1835 Joseph Smith saw the postmortal condition of those who died in Zion's Camp and the order of the priesthood. Main source: Joseph Smith (1835).⁴⁵
- ca. 1835 Joseph Smith saw Christian martyrs' condition. Main source: Edward Stevenson (1893).⁴⁶
- January 21, 1836 Joseph Smith saw the celestial kingdom, some of its inhabitants, the Twelve in foreign lands, the Savior standing in their midst, the redemption of Zion, and many other things that the tongue of man cannot fully describe. Main source: Joseph Smith (1836).⁴⁷

- January 22–23, 1836 Visions of God attended Joseph Smith through the night. Main source: Joseph Smith (1836).⁴⁸
- January 28, 1836 Joseph Smith saw a glorious vision in the Kirtland Temple. Main source: Joseph Smith (1836).⁴⁹
- January 28–29, 1836 Visions of the Lord attended Joseph Smith through the night. Main source: Joseph Smith (1836).⁵⁰
- March 27, 1836 Joseph Smith beheld the Kirtland Temple filled with angels. Main source: Joseph Smith (1836).⁵¹
- March 27, 1836 Joseph Smith identified the presence of John the Beloved in the Kirtland Temple. Main source: Orson F. Whitney (before 1889).⁵²
- ca. March 30, 1836 Joseph Smith saw Jesus Christ and angels in the Kirtland Temple. Main source: Harrison Burgess (before 1885).⁵³
- April 3, 1836 Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery saw Jesus Christ, Moses, Elijah, and Elias in the Kirtland Temple. Main source: Joseph Smith (1836).⁵⁴
- April–May 1836 Joseph Smith saw Frederick G. Williams's daughter and her family en route to Missouri. Main source: Caroline Barnes Crosby (before 1885).⁵⁵
- April 6, 1837 Joseph Smith saw the future of Kirtland. Main source: Wilford Woodruff (1837).⁵⁶
- Summer 1837 Joseph Smith was blessed with glorious visions during an illness. Main source: Mary Fielding (1837).⁵⁷
- September 1837 Joseph Smith was shown in vision the enlargement of Zion's borders. Main source: Mary Fielding (1837).⁵⁸
- March 1838 Joseph Smith saw William Marks carried away by an angel. Main source: Joseph Smith (1838).⁵⁹
- March–October 1838 Joseph Smith saw Satan face to face. Main source: Heber C. Kimball (before 1869).⁶⁰
- Before 1839 Joseph Smith was shown the pattern for the temple in Far West, Missouri. Main source: Thomas B. Marsh (1838).⁶¹
- April 11–12, 1839 Joseph Smith saw the means of escape from Liberty Jail and danger awaiting Stephen Markham. Main source: *History of the Church* (1845).⁶²

- Before July 2, 1839 Joseph Smith saw persecutions and judgments that would occur prior to the Second Coming. Main source: *History of the Church* (1845).⁶³
- Before March 4, 1840 By the visions of the Almighty, Joseph Smith saw the end of the United States if she disregards cries of virtuous citizens. Main source: *History of the Church* (1845).⁶⁴
- August 6, 1842 Joseph gazed upon the valleys of the Rocky Mountains. Main source: Anson Call (ca. 1854).⁶⁵
- August 15–16, 1842 Through dream and vision, Joseph was persuaded against traveling to the “Pine country.” Main source: Joseph Smith (1842).⁶⁶
- Before 1843 At least three times since 1834, an angel appeared to Joseph Smith and commanded him to enter into the practice of plural marriage. Main source: Joseph B. Noble (1869).⁶⁷
- Before January 20, 1843 Joseph Smith dreamed that he was in the Illinois statehouse among enemies. Main source: *History of the Church* (1845–46).⁶⁸
- Before April 16, 1843 Joseph Smith saw in vision the resurrection of the dead. Main source: Wilford Woodruff (1843).⁶⁹
- Before May 19, 1843 Joseph Smith dreamed that writing and compiling the history of the Church must move forward. Main source: *History of the Church* (1854–56).⁷⁰
- Before February 3, 1844 Joseph Smith saw himself in a dream swimming safely in troubled waters. Main source: Wilford Woodruff (1844).⁷¹
- Before February 5, 1844 Joseph Smith saw in vision the pattern for the Nauvoo Temple. Main source: *History of the Church* (1854–56).⁷²
- June 1844 Joseph Smith saw in vision what would happen to the Saints if the *Nauvoo Expositor* press was not destroyed. Main source: George Laub (1845).⁷³
- Before June 13, 1844 Joseph Smith dreamed that he escaped a pit where his enemies had thrown him. Main source: *History of the Church* (1854–56).⁷⁴
- June 26–27, 1844 Joseph Smith dreamed that his life was threatened. Main source: *History of the Church* (1854–56).⁷⁵

Date Unknown Joseph Smith saw the common progenitors of several early Church leaders. Main source: Heber C. Kimball (1856).⁷⁶

1. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92), 1:267–75; Joseph Smith, History, 1834–1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:125–27. The account of the vision in the 1839 history was canonized in Doctrine and Covenants 20:5. For other accounts of this vision prepared under Joseph Smith’s direction, see Jessee, *Papers*, 1:3–7, 429–30, 448–49. For accounts written by those who claimed to hear Joseph rehearse this vision, see Jessee, *Papers*, 1:443–44, 461; and Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980), 215. For contemporaneous accounts prepared by Joseph Smith’s close associates, see Jessee, *Papers*, 1:389–91, 405–9.

Many of the accounts listed in this appendix have been published previously, some of them with minor changes in spelling and punctuation, in 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). Primary source documents, when available, are cited first, followed by reprints in *History of the Church* and Joseph Smith—History in the Pearl of Great Price. References to *History of the Church* have been omitted when the same material appears in the Doctrine and Covenants or Pearl of Great Price.

2. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:275–82; Joseph Smith—History 1:27–53. See also Doctrine and Covenants 2; 20:5–9; 27:5. For other accounts of this vision prepared under Joseph Smith’s direction, see Jessee, *Papers*, 1:8–9, 127–28, 430–31, 449–50. For contemporary accounts prepared by Joseph Smith’s close associates, see Jessee, *Papers*, 1:50–54, 73–76, 85–90, 392–94, 409–21. Context is provided by Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: Orson Pratt and S. W. Richards, 1853), 78–85.

3. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:279; Joseph Smith—History 1:42. Joseph Knight said Joseph had a “vision” of the location. Dean C. Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 1 (1976): 30–31.

4. Joseph Smith, “Church History,” 1842, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:431; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 4:537.

5. Joseph Smith, History, 1834–1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:87. See also Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 83–85. Cowdery’s account was first published in the October 1834 issue of the *Messenger and Advocate* as the eighth of a series of letters projected to give “a full history of the rise of the church of the Latter Day Saints.” *Messenger and Advocate*, October 1834, 13. Joseph offered his assistance at the beginning of the writing stage and later directed copying the letters into his journal. See Jessee, *Papers*, 1:16–17.

6. Joseph Smith, “Church History,” 1842, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:431; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 4:537. The Doctrine and Covenants alludes to Joseph Smith’s experience with some of these angels. In 1842, Joseph described hearing the “voice” of “divers angels” from Adam “down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood” (D&C 128:20–21). The voices of Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael were among those Joseph heard (D&C 128:20). Several of the Prophet’s associates later made reference to

some of these visits. See John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 17:374, April 8, 1875 (hereafter cited as *JD*); John Taylor, in *JD*, 18:326, December 31, 1876; John Taylor, in *JD*, 20:174–75, April 8, 1879; John Taylor, in *JD*, 21:65, January 4, 1880; John Taylor, in *JD*, 21:94, April 13, 1879; John Taylor, in *JD*, 21:161–63, December 7, 1879; John Taylor, in *JD*, 23:48–49, April 9, 1882; Orson Pratt, in *JD*, 13:67, December 19, 1869; Orson Pratt, in *JD*, 15:185, September 22, 1872; George Q. Cannon, in *JD*, 13:47, December 5, 1869; George Q. Cannon, in *JD*, 23:362, October 29, 1882.

7. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:282; Joseph Smith—History 1:54. See also Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 85–86.

8. Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection,” 31.

9. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 98–99. Lucy’s account was published in 1853 but dictated in 1845. See Richard L. Anderson, “Circumstantial Confirmation of the First Vision through Reminiscences,” *BYU Studies* 9, no. 3 (1969): 386–88. According to Lucy, the angel told Joseph that he had “‘not been engaged enough in the work of the Lord,’” and that he “‘must be up and doing.’” Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 99.

10. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:283; Joseph Smith—History 1:59. See also Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 99–106; and Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection,” 32–33.

11. David Whitmer interview with the *St. Louis Republican*, July 16, 1884, as cited in Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 150.

12. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 103–9. Among the places Joseph Smith hid the plates from those intent on seizing them was beneath the floor of the local cooper’s shop. Martin Harris remembered Joseph Smith saying an angel warned him when the plates were no longer safe underneath the floor. See [Joel Tiffany,] “Mormonism—No. II,” *Tiffany’s Monthly* 5 (May 1859), 167.

13. [Tiffany,] “Mormonism,” 169.

14. [Tiffany,] “Mormonism,” 164.

15. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:287; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:21–22. This vision is implied; Joseph said he was required to give the plates up “in consequence of my having wearied the Lord in asking for the privilege of letting Martin Harris take the writings.” Jessee, *Papers*, 1:287; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:21.

16. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:287, reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:21–22.

17. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:287; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:23; Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 124–25.

18. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 124–25; Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:287; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:23.

19. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:290; Joseph Smith—History 1:68–73. See also Doctrine and Covenants 13; 27:7–8. All presently known primary source accounts of this event are published in Brian Q. Cannon and BYU Studies Staff, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1995–96): 175–96.

20. Doctrine and Covenants 128:20. The date of the vision assumes the contiguity of Satan’s appearance with the appearance of Peter, James, and John, listed in this verse of scripture, and the placement of both events in Pennsylvania. See also note 6. The import of the Melchizedek Priesthood would seem to warrant some resistance from Satan, as was the case with the First Vision.

21. Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13. See also Joseph Smith—History 1:72 and Doctrine and Covenants 128:20. All presently known primary source accounts of this event were published in Cannon and Studies Staff, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,”

175–96. For a discussion of the May–June 1829 date, see Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods,” *Ensign* 26 (December 1996): 30–47; Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Priesthood,” *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 9, no. 3 (May 3, 1995): 1–12; Larry C. Porter, “Dating the Melchizedek Priesthood,” *Ensign* 9 (June 1979): 4–10.

22. David Whitmer interview with James H. Hart, March 10, 1884, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 123. See also Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 27, 41, 48–49, 114–15, 191, 213, 215.

23. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 137. Although Lucy did not name the angel, David Whitmer identified him as Moroni. See Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 50, 181–82. David said the translation in Fayette occupied “about one month,” beginning on June 1, 1829, placing Moroni’s appearance around this date. Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 62.

24. David Whitmer interview with Edward Stevenson, February 9, 1886, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 180–82. For other Whitmer accounts of this event, see Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 13, 27, 41–42, 49–50, 213–16.

25. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 137.

26. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:296; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:54–55. See also Doctrine and Covenants 20:10; 128:20. Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer testified of the vision in “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” which appeared in the first edition of the Book of Mormon (1830) and in every edition thereafter. For David Whitmer’s testimony of the vision, see Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 11, 15, 18–20, 25–26, 40–41, 63, 75–76, 86–87, 127, 166, 175–76, 181, 192–93, 197–98, 213, 229, 250–51. This vision was used by participants as a missionary tool to help convince of the divinity of the Book of Mormon. William McLellin first heard the gospel preached in 1831 near Paris, Illinois, when David Whitmer “bore testimony to having seen an Holy Angel who had made known the truth of this record to him.” Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–1836* (Provo, Utah, and Urbana: BYU Studies and University of Illinois Press, 1994), 29.

27. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:296–97; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:55. See also Doctrine and Covenants 20:8–10; 128:20; and Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 21, 64, 76. As one of the Three Witnesses, Martin Harris testified of this vision in “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” located in all editions of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith’s exultation immediately after his vision with the Three Witnesses is recorded in Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 139.

28. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 140. Lucy said the site where the Eight Witnesses saw the plates was “a place where the family were in the habit of offering up their secret devotions to God.” Joseph went there because “it had been revealed” to him that the “plates would be carried thither” by “one of the ancient Nephites.” Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 140.

29. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 141. Lucy placed the timing of this meeting after the Eight Witnesses had handled the plates and had “returned to the house.” Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 141. More descriptions of this vision can be found in Brigham Young, in *JD*, 19:38, June 17, 1877; Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898*, typescript, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Book, 1983–84), 6:508–9 [December 11, 1869] (hereafter cited as Woodruff, *Journal*). Heber C. Kimball called Joseph and Oliver’s experience a “vision” in which they “went into a cave in the hill Cumorah.” Heber C. Kimball, in *JD*, 4:105, September 28, 1856. Oliver Cowdery’s brother-in-law, David Whitmer, heard Oliver recount his experience in the cave. P. Wilhelm Poulson asked David in 1878 where the plates were then, and David told him they were “in a cave, where the angel has hidden them up till the time arrives when

the plates, which are sealed, shall be translated.” Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 22. See also Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: By the author, 1893), 14–15; William H. Dame, *Journal*, January 14, 1855, typescript, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as BYU Archives).

30. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:321; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:106. See also Doctrine and Covenants 27:1–4. Joseph said the “first four paragraphs” of the revelation now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 27 were received “at this time,” that is, at the time the angel appeared in August 1830, near Harmony, Pennsylvania. The remainder of the revelation was received a month later. See Robert J. Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,” 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 1:393–94.

31. Sidney Rigdon, in General Church Minutes, April 6, 1844, Historian’s Office, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives); reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:289.

32. Orson F. Whitney, “Newel K. Whitney,” *Contributor* 6 (January 1885): 125; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:146 n.

33. Levi Hancock, “Diary of Levi W. Hancock,” typescript, 48, BYU Archives.

34. Joseph Smith to the Elders of the Church of Latter Day Saints [1835], in *Messenger and Advocate*, September 1835, 179; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:254. Joseph departed Kirtland for Missouri on June 19, 1831, after receiving a revelation on June 7 commanding him and Sidney Rigdon to “journey to the land of Missouri” where “the land of your inheritance” should be revealed to them. *History of the Church*, 1:177, 188; Doctrine and Covenants 52:3, 5. Joseph did not indicate whether this June 7 revelation is the same June vision mentioned in his 1835 letter to the elders.

35. Smith to the Elders, September 1835, 179; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:254. See also Doctrine and Covenants 52:3–5; 57:1–3.

36. Mary Elizabeth Lightner, in Karl Ricks Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland: Eyewitness Accounts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 112–13.

37. Doctrine and Covenants 76. See also Jessee, *Papers*, 1:372. Of this vision Joseph later said: “I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them.” *History of the Church*, 5:402. Philo Dibble was present when Joseph and Sidney had the vision and later recounted the event in “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor* 27 (May 15, 1892): 303–4.

38. Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in Jessee, *Papers*, 1:383–84; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 1:272.

39. Zebedee Coltrin, in “Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minute Book, 1883,” October 3, 1883, typescript, 56–57, BYU Archives. See also Zebedee Coltrin, in Utah Stake Minutes, Spanish Fork High Priest’s Quorum, February 5, 1870, LDS Church Archives; and *History of the Church*, 1:334–35.

40. Truman O. Angell to John Taylor and Council, March 11, 1885, John Taylor Presidential Papers, LDS Church Archives. Angell, who did much of the interior work on the Kirtland Temple, was informed by Frederick G. Williams, a member of the First Presidency and a participant in the vision. The First Presidency was given the vision in accordance with a promise given on June 1, 1833: “Let [the house] be built after the manner which I shall show unto three of you.” (D&C 95:14; see also D&C 94:1–2). Orson Pratt confirmed that the plan came through a vision. *JD*, 13:357, May 5, 1870; *JD*, 14:273, April 9, 1871. For more on the design of the Kirtland Temple, see Elwin C. Robison, *The First Mormon Temple: Design, Construction, and Historic Context of the Kirtland Temple* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 7–25.

41. Joseph Smith, February 17, 1834, in Fred C. Collier and William S. Harwell, eds. *Kirtland Council Minute Book* (Salt Lake City: Collier's, 1996), 24. See also *History of the Church*, 2:25–26, 122–24.

42. Zebedee Coltrin, in Utah Stake Minutes, Spanish Fork High Priest's Quorum, February 5, 1870, LDS Church Archives. See also *History of the Church*, 2:50.

43. Nathan Tanner, "Reminiscences," in George S. Tanner, *John Tanner and His Family* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1974), 382.

44. Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:10 [June 1834]. See also *History of the Church*, 2:79–80. This vision came after the Prophet and the other members of Zion's Camp, including Woodruff, marching to Missouri, unearthed human remains from a burial mound located in Pike County, Ohio. For additional accounts of the vision, see Kenneth W. Godfrey, "The Zelph Story," *BYU Studies* 29, no. 2 (1989): 31–56.

45. *History of the Church*, 2:181–82. See also Doctrine and Covenants 107:93–97. Joseph Young recalled hearing Joseph Smith discuss this vision on February 8, 1835. "I have seen those men who died of the cholera in our camp," Joseph Smith told Young and his brother, Brigham. "At this relation he [Joseph Smith] wept, and for some time could not speak," said Joseph Young. When the Prophet regained his composure, Joseph Young believed the Prophet picked up where he left off, again relaying information he had received in vision. Addressing himself to Brigham, Joseph Smith continued: "I wish you to notify all the brethren living in the branches, within a reasonable distance from this place, to meet at a general conference on Saturday next." The Prophet then told Brigham Young that he would be one of twelve special witnesses—the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—who would be called at the conference to "open the door of the Gospel to foreign nations." To Joseph Young the Prophet said, "The Lord has made you President of the Seventies." *History of the Church*, 2:181 n. See also Parley P. Pratt Jr., ed., *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 97.

46. Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph*, 6.

47. Doctrine and Covenants 137; Joseph Smith, *Journal*, January 21, 1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:156–58; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:380–82. Heber C. Kimball said Joseph saw "Father Adam" admit people one by one through the "gate of the Celestial City" and thereafter "conduct them to the throne" where "they were crowned Kings and Priests of God." Heber C. Kimball, in *JD*, 9:41, March 17, 1861. See also Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, An Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Kimball Family, 1888), 105–6. According to Joseph's journal for this period, others were present when Joseph had his vision, and some of them also had visions of the Savior and other heavenly beings. See Joseph Smith, *Journal*, January 21, 1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:158. See also Leonard J. Arrington, "Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, 'Sketch Book,'" *BYU Studies* 12, no. 4 (1972): 419.

48. Joseph Smith, *Journal*, January 22, 1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:160; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:383.

49. Joseph Smith, *Journal*, January 28, 1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:164; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:387. Immediately before Joseph's vision, Zebedee Coltrin, one of the Seven Presidents of Seventy, saw the Savior "extended before him as upon the cross." Joseph Smith, *Journal*, January 28, 1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:164; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:387.

50. Joseph Smith, *Journal*, January 28, 1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:164; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:387.

51. Joseph Smith, *Journal*, March 27, 1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:203; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:428. See also Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 103.

52. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 104.

53. Harrison Burgess, "Sketch of a Well-Spent Life," in *Labors in the Vineyard: Twelfth Book of the Faith-Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office,

1884), 67. Burgess, writing years later, dated this vision to 1835. The anointings he described in connection with the vision, however, did not begin until the Kirtland Temple neared completion in early 1836. Milton V. Backman, personal conversation with author, Provo, Utah, September 15, 1998. An entry from Joseph's journal on this date confirms the setting and content of the Burgess account. "The Savior made his appearance to some," said the Prophet, "while angels ministered unto others." Joseph Smith, Journal, March 30, 1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:207; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:432.

54. Doctrine and Covenants 110; Joseph Smith, Journal, April 3, 1836, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:209–10; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 2:435.

55. Caroline Barnes Crosby, *Memoirs*, as cited in Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, eds., *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 51.

56. Woodruff, *Journal*, 1:134 [April 6, 1837].

57. Mary Fielding to Mercy Thompson, July 1837, as cited in Dean Jessee, "The Spirituality of Joseph Smith," *Ensign* 8 (September 1978): 20.

58. Mary Fielding to Mercy Thompson and Robert Thompson, October 7, 1837, as cited in Godfrey, Godfrey, and Derr, *Women's Voices*, 67–68. In the letter, Fielding dated Joseph's vision to "soon before" his departure from Kirtland. He departed on September 27, 1836. *History of the Church*, 2:518.

59. Joseph Smith to the Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Kirtland, March 29, 1838, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:223–24; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 3:10–12. Joseph described the vision in a letter dated March 29, 1838, written from Far West, to Marks and his counselors in the stake presidency at Kirtland. In the letter, Joseph reported events from January 12, 1836, when he departed from Kirtland, through his arrival in Far West on March 14, to the end of that month. Joseph's statement that the vision took place "while on the road" apparently means during the eight weeks he was traveling from Ohio to Missouri. For dates of Joseph's journey, see *History of the Church*, 3:1, 8.

60. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 269–70. Heber C. Kimball died June 22, 1868.

61. Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, April 30, 1838, Wilford Woodruff Papers, LDS Church Archives. See also Doctrine and Covenants 115:13–16.

62. *History of the Church*, 3:316. By the time Joseph Smith was martyred, Willard Richards had written the *History of the Church*, under the Prophet's direction, through August 5, 1838. From that point, Thomas Bullock resumed the writing of the history in February 1845, and within two months he had completed through the year 1839. See Dean Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (1971): 466–67. Bullock, who was not present with Joseph Smith at Liberty Jail or at the trial that immediately followed, relied on the testimonies of those who were—including Stephen Markham, the Prophet's bodyguard. Markham, present with the Prophet the first few days of the trial, April 9–12, 1839, informs Bullock's writing of *History of the Church* for this time period. For evidence of this, see *History of the Church*, 3:309–19.

63. *History of the Church*, 3:391. Joseph mentioned the vision in a discourse dated July 2, 1839. The account in *History of the Church* was written into the history by Thomas Bullock in 1845. See Jessee, "Joseph Smith's History," 467. Wilford Woodruff's account of this discourse was not, apparently, the only source Bullock used in his compilation. Compare the account in *History of the Church* with Ehat and Cook, *Words*, 6–8.

64. *History of the Church*, 4:89. On March 4, 1840, Joseph returned to Nauvoo from Washington, D.C., after seeking unsuccessfully to obtain redress from President Martin Van Buren for losses the Saints suffered in Missouri. Thomas Bullock wrote this portion of the history in 1845. See Jessee, "Joseph Smith's History," 467.

65. Anson Call, Statement [ca. 1854], LDS Church Archives; Anson Call, Autobiography and Journal, 22, LDS Church Archives. See also *History of the Church*, 5:85–86; Brigham Young, in *JD*, 3:257–58, March 16, 1856.

66. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, August 16, 1842, in Jessee, *Papers*, 2:430; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 5:104. In a letter he wrote to Emma Smith while in exile from his enemies, Joseph mentioned the dream and vision. The “Pine country” was probably Joseph’s term for the region along the Black River of Wisconsin where the Saints obtained lumber for the Nauvoo Temple. See Dennis Rowley, “The Mormon Experience in the Wisconsin Pineries, 1841–1845,” *BYU Studies* 32, nos. 1, 2 (1992): 119–48.

67. Joseph B. Noble [1869] and Mary Elizabeth Lightner [1905], as cited in Danel W. Bachman, “A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith” (master’s thesis, Purdue University, 1975), 74. See also Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884), 69–70; Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, April–October 1903, in E. Dale LeBaron, *Benjamin F. Johnson: Friend to the Prophets* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1997), 227.

68. *History of the Church*, 5:254–55. Willard Richards and Thomas Bullock compiled this portion of the history during the winter months of 1845–46. Jessee, “Joseph Smith’s History,” 468.

69. Woodruff, *Journal*, 2:226–27 [April 16, 1843]; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 5:361–62.

70. *History of the Church*, 5:394. That portion of *History of the Church* where Joseph’s dream is recorded was completed under the direction of George A. Smith, who began his work on April 10, 1854, and finished in August 1856. Jessee, “Joseph Smith’s History,” 469–72.

71. Woodruff, *Journal*, 2:346–47 [February 3, 1844]; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:194–95.

72. *History of the Church*, 6:196–97. Joseph Smith mentions this vision under the date of February 5, 1844, in a conversation with William Weeks, an architect of the Nauvoo Temple. Weeks, who lived in Utah Territory during the time George A. Smith compiled this portion of the history, could have easily supplied Smith with the 1844 conversation. See J. Earl Arrington, “William Weeks, Architect of the Nauvoo Temple,” *BYU Studies* 19, no. 3 (1979): 337–59. George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff said that the clerks and historians who did this work were “‘eye and ear witnesses of nearly all the transactions recorded,’” and in cases where they were not, “‘had access to those who were.’” Jessee, “Joseph Smith’s History,” 473. The pretext to Weeks’s recollection is a revelation, dated January 19, 1841, in which the Lord promised, “I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house” (D&C 124:42).

73. George Laub, *Journal*, in Eugene England, ed., “George Laub’s Nauvoo Journal,” *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 160.

74. *History of the Church*, 6:461–62.

75. *History of the Church*, 6:609–10.

76. Heber C. Kimball, in *JD*, 5:215–16, September 6, 1856.