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AN ANALYSIS OF THE ACCOUNTS RELATING

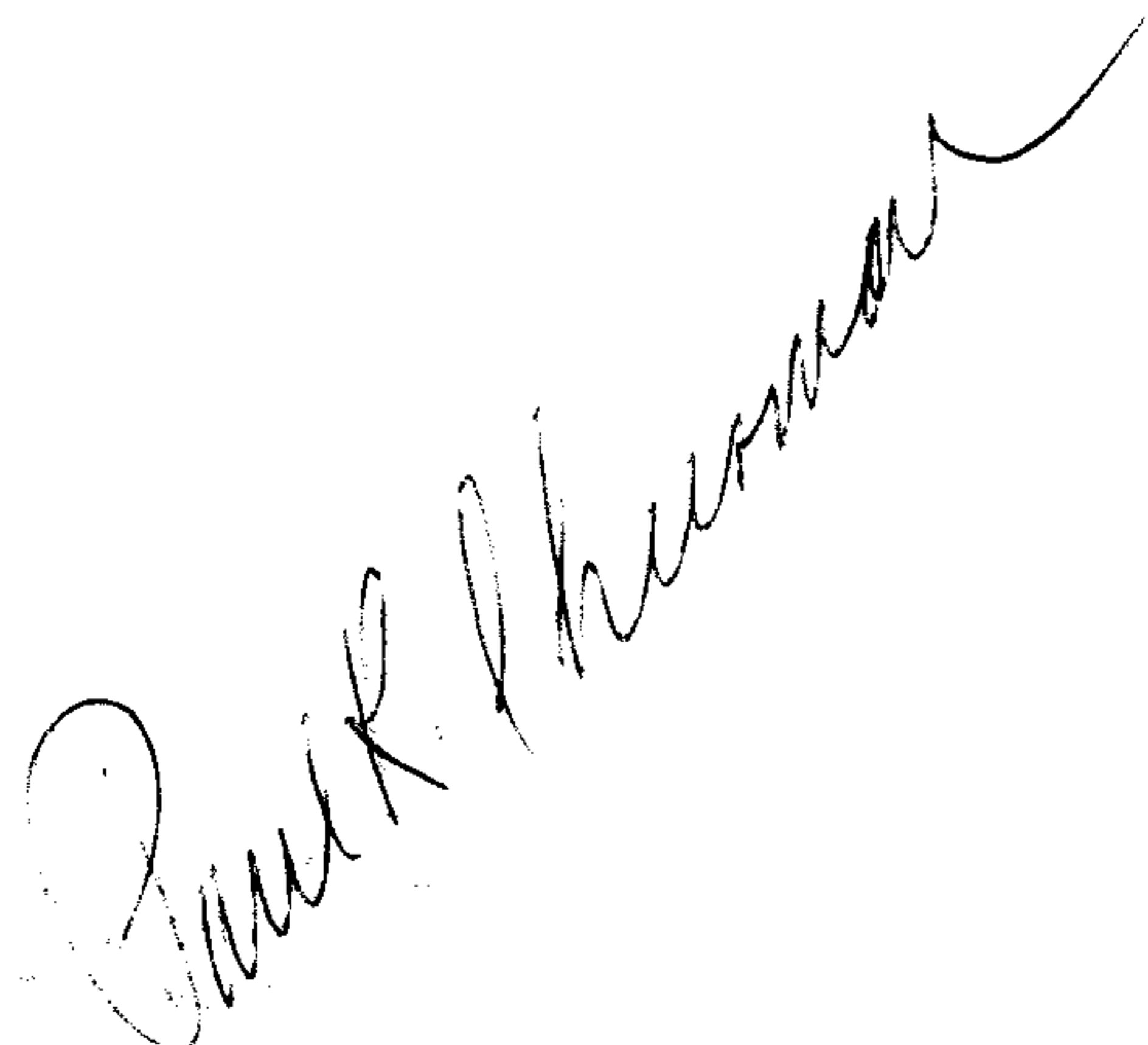
JOSEPH SMITH'S EARLY VISIONS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of Graduate Studies in
Religious Instruction, Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Religious Education

by



Paul R. Cheesman

6-7-89

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Survey of the Problem

Joseph Smith, prophet and founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stated that when he was fourteen years old he had received a visitation from two members of the Godhead: the Father and the Son. He was alone when he went into the woods to pray, and was therefore the only witness to the manifestation of these personages. He also declared that when he was seventeen years old he was visited by an angel named Moroni. Again he was without witnesses. For a first-hand account of these two experiences we must rely on a single source, Joseph Smith. All other sources of the story of his visions of Moroni and the Father and Son are secondary since they have been retold after the authors had heard Joseph's story.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rely upon the story of Joseph Smith as a foundation of their faith. Details left by Joseph himself, however, are only sketchy in nature, making a historical analysis of the events highly difficult. Further problems arise when accounts by other writers who knew Joseph Smith not only fill in a few missing details, but also sometimes present some conflicting details. A survey of these sources and problems, together with an analysis of Joseph Smith's several efforts to re-tell the story, would be helpful to "Mormons" and non-"Mormons" alike in determining what consistent "threads" might run through all the stories, as well as pin-pointing what historical problems may still remain in

correlating various accounts. This thesis is not an effort to prove beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith was telling the truth, for this cannot be done by empirical methods. It is simply an effort to analyze as objectively as possible the various sources and to suggest possible reasons for some of the problems and conflicts. It also shows that Joseph Smith was consistent in his recitation of the major aspects of his story over the years.

For the main aspects of the visitations of the Father and the Son and Moroni, the following narrative is in Joseph Smith's own words as it appears in the original written account.

After I had retired into the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God, I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me and had such astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. But exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction, not to an imaginary ruin but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world who had . . . [unclear word] such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being. Just at this moment of great . . . [unclear word] I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon . . . [unclear word] me I saw two personages (whose brightness and glory defy all description) standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me calling me by name and said (pointing to the other) "This is my beloved Son, hear him," My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which to join. No sooner therefore did I get possession of myself so as to be able to speak, than I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right, (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong) and which I could join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong, and the Personage who addressed me said that all their Creeds were an abomination in his sight, that their professors were all corrupt, that they draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of Godliness but they deny the power thereof." He again forbade me to join with any of them and many more things did he say unto me which I cannot write at this . . . [unclear word] time.

. . . On the evening of the above mentioned twenty first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me that I might know ~~of~~ my state and standing before ~~him~~. For I had fully confidence in obtaining a devine (sic) manifestation as I had previously had one. While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in the room which continued to increase untill (sic) the room was lighter than at noonday when immediately, a personage appeared at my bedside standing in the air for his feet did not touch the floor. He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond any earthly I had ever seen, nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked and his arms also a little above the wrist. So also were his feet naked as were his leggs a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe as it was open so that I could see into his bosom. Not only was his robe exceedingly white but his whole person was glorious beyond description. And his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but no so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him I was afraid, but the fear soon left me. He called me by name and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Moroni.¹

Time-lapse aspect

One of the problems in connection with the story's authenticity is the time-lapse between the events and the written accounts. Joseph Smith reported that the first vision took place in 1820. Joseph Smith's journal story of his visions was first published in the Times and Seasons, the Church's official publication, March 15, 1842. As the narration shows, this story was dictated May 2, 1838. A much shorter account by Joseph was published just two weeks previously, March 2, 1842, in the same paper and is known as the Wentworth Letter. Some accounts authored by those other than Joseph Smith were published prior to 1842, although not prior to 1840, and will be treated in the body of the thesis and listed in the Appendix. It is also notable that Joseph Smith evidently attempted to dictate an account of these experiences as early as approximately 1833.

¹See Appendix A, pp. 7-12.

This was never corrected, completed, or published. It is found in Appendix D of this thesis.

John A. Widstoe, a biographer of Joseph Smith and an apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, made the following comment regarding the time-lapse problem:

Because this "first vision" was not published by the Prophet in printed form (1842) until after the Prophet began his "history," in 1838, the conclusion has been offered that the whole story is a fabrication; that it did not occur; that it was invented to bolster up the Prophet's claims to revelation. It is much the same as to say that the doings of Jesus are fiction because the gospels recounting them were not written until after the death of Jesus, or that Abraham Lincoln was not a rail-splitter because the story of his youth was not printed until he was a mature man. It is a new and astonishing historical dictum.²

Secrecy Aspect

Possible reasons why Joseph's story was not put into written form until eighteen years after its occurrence and then not published until four years later require attention. It is recognized, however, that the following are only possible, though logical, explanations. The fact still remains that Joseph Smith recorded other revelations as they happened, even preparing some of them for publication as early 1831. The book of Commandments which came from the press in 1833 contained many of these revelations and it is a question for speculation whether or not Joseph Smith intended to publish the account which he apparently began to dictate about that year.

Joseph did not tell his story promiscuously; in fact, as he stated in the beginning of his story, it was only because of the many rumors which were circulated that he felt compelled to write it in the first place.³

²John A. Widstoe, Gospel Interpretations (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1947), p. 118.

³See Appendix A. p. 4.

At the semi-annual conference of the Church at Far West, Missouri, October 25, 1831, the clerk of the conference paraphrased Joseph Smith's remarks:

. . . it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and also . . . it was not expedient for him to relate these things.⁴

As a part of the dictated history of the beginning of the church, Joseph also stated:

In the meantime we were forced to keep secret the circumstances of having received the Priesthood and our having been baptized, owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested itself in the neighborhood.⁵

By implication this might also include other spiritual manifestations.

The history of Joseph Smith written by his mother includes her son's story of the vision precisely as he recorded it. At the end of account is the following comment concerning the importance of secrecy.

. . . accordingly, by sunset the next day, we were all seated and Joseph commenced telling us the great and glorious things which God had manifested to him; but, before proceeding, he charged us not to mention out of the family that which he was about to say to us, as the world was so wicked that when they came to a knowledge of these things they would try to take our lives; and that when we should obtain the plates, our names would be cast as evil by all people. Hence the necessity of suppressing these things as much as possible, until the time should come for them to go forth to the world.⁶

These things, of course, pertain to experiences other than the visitation of the Father and the Son, but they illustrate Joseph Smith's apparent conviction that personal spiritual experiences should be kept from the general public. This could be a possible explanation for his long hesitation in telling the very special and sacred story of the

⁴Joseph Smith, History of the Church (hereafter referred to as D.H.C.), (Salt Lake City; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948), I, 220.

⁵Ibid., I, 43-44.

⁶Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith, ed. by Preston Nibley, (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1945), p. 82.

appearance of the Father and the Son.

It is possible that Joseph Smith kept this vision a secret because he felt that communications of this nature were to be treated as sacred and not to be made public at first. This thought is reflected in an article dated June 15, 1842, on the subject of the Holy Ghost in which the Mormon Prophet discussed his ideas on God's methods of communication between God and man:

The manifestations of the gift of the Holy Ghost, the ministering of angels, or the development of the power, majesty or glory of God were very seldom manifested publicly, and that generally when angels have come, or God has revealed Him-self, it has been to individuals in private, or their chamber; in the wilderness or fields, and that generally without noise or tumult. The angel delivered Peter out of prison in the dead of night; came to Paul unobserved by the rest of the crew; appeared to Mary and Elizabeth without the knowledge of others; spoke to John the Baptist whilst the people around were ignorant of it. When Elisha saw the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, it was unknown to others. When the Lord appeared to Abraham it was at his tent door; when the angels went to Lot, no person knew them but himself, which was the case probably with Abraham and his wife; when the Lord appeared to Moses, it was in the burning bush, in the tabernacle, or in the mountain top; Elijah was taken in a chariot of fire, it was unobserved by the world; and when he was in a cleft of a rock, there was loud thunder, but the Lord was not in the thunder; there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and then there was a still, small voice, which was the voice of the Lord, saying, "What doest thou hear, Elijah? The Lord cannot always be known by the thunder of His voice, by the display of His glory or by the manifestation of His power; and those are the least prepared to meet them, and were the Lord to manifest His power as He did to the children of Israel, such characters would be the first to say, "Let not the Lord speak anymore, lest we His people die."⁷

There are also some who interpret certain Biblical passages to suggest the importance of secrecy about some things. "To you it is given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven," Christ told a few of his disciples, "But to them it is not given."⁸ Again in John; "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believed not," said the Lord, "How shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things."⁹

⁷Joseph Smith, D.H.C., V, 30-31.

⁸Matt. 7:6.

⁹John 3:12.

After eighteen years, Joseph Smith apparently felt that the need for secrecy had passed. No effort was made from that time forth to keep silent on the visitations. It is conceivable, too, that some of the details of the visions were never intended to be made public and remained secret, known only to Joseph.

Problem of Secondary Sources

An interesting note found in Joseph Smith's dictated writings under date of May 30, 1838, states: "The First Presidency were engaged in writing the Church history and in recitation of grammar lessons, which recitations at this period were usually attended each morning before writing."¹⁰

It appears that men other than Joseph Smith had something to do with writing the history of the church. The counselors in the First Presidency and the clerk, having written part of the church history and having known the story of the visions, would be in a position to correct any error that might have crept into the record. The men who served as counselors to Joseph Smith at this time were Sidney Rigdon (1833-1844) and Hyrum Smith (1837-1841). The clerk was George W. Robinson (1838-1840). There is no evidence to indicate that these men varied from the story as published by Joseph Smith except in the case of the Nephi-Moroni problem which is treated in Chapter III of this thesis.

Joseph's account was dictated to his scribe on May 2, 1838. After this account was printed, some of the writers of the secondary accounts had access to it as well as the information they received from continuous association with Joseph Smith. John Taylor, one who was closely associated with Joseph Smith, stated: "I can tell you what he [Joseph Smith] told

¹⁰ Joseph Smith, D.H.C., III, 26.

me about it [the visions]."¹¹

As may be expected in the case of all retold stories, there are some discrepancies in the various narrations. These secondary sources are interesting since some of them contain details which Joseph Smith did not incorporate into his own written account. It must be assumed that these details are either (1) additional facts that Joseph told orally but did not incorporate into his written account, or (2) embellishments by the authors which were original with them and not necessarily what Joseph related.

Skeptics have tried to show that the names and number of the personages who appeared were not made clear in the reports and accused Joseph and his family and friends of fabricating the story. Various detailed additions in the secondary sources have been classified by some as intentional changes. Some accounts have been described as confusing. Many writers claim that Joseph's experience was a result of environment and his youthful imagination. Acusations of fraud based on hypnosis, hallucinations, dreams and pure prevarications have been hurled at him. On the other hand Joseph Smith never seemed to have changed the essential elements of his story during his lifetime and was called upon to die a martyr's death to seal his witness.

The contributions of these secondary accounts are very valuable. Joseph Smith published his account only in the Times and Seasons and in the Wentworth Letter. If his story were true, however, it would be natural for him to have spoken of those experiences to his close associates. Since Joseph gave his story publicly only a few times, these secondary

¹¹Brigham Young, et al., Journal of Discourses (Hereafter referred to as Journal of Discourses,) (London, F. D. and S. W. Richards, 1854-1886), XXI, 161.

sources add much valuable detail. For the believer they make the story more complete.

No attempt will be made in this thesis to prove or disprove Joseph Smith's story. An analysis will be made of the visions and it will be pointed out that the primary source, Joseph Smith, did not vary in telling his account and died without refuting or denying the association he had with heavenly messengers. As to the secondary accounts, the analysis will extend to comparing the retold stories with the primary source pointing out the differences, apparent embellishments and additions. This should help to determine if the story is supported by adequate testimony.

Environment Of Joseph Smith

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints interpret the following words of Joel as pertaining to the environment of this day and age when he said: "Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions . . . and I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth."¹² As the first President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph is acknowledged as a prophet, seer, and revelator to the millions who have become members of that church.

The Smith family, consisting of the parents and eight children, migrated in 1815 from the State of Vermont to Western New York. They first lived in Palmyra, which had been settled for only twenty-five years. Later they moved to Manchester, a nearby town.

In the 1820's the life of the ordinary Western American family centered on the home and, if the family were religious, the church. Religion seemed to be the topic of conversation in many gathering,

¹²Joel 2:28, 30.

although less than fifteen percent of the population actually belonged to any church. The religious atmosphere became exciting and some of the discussions resulted in the flaring of tempers and even more violent outbursts.

In the words of Joseph Smith:

Sometime in the second year after our removal to Manchester, there was, in the place where we lived, an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region. Indeed, the whole district of our country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, "Lo, here" and others, "Lo, there!" Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.

For, notwithstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifested by the respective clergy, who were active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they were pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the converts began to file off, some to one party and some to another, it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real for a scene of great confusion and bad feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued - priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.¹³

It should be observed that many revivals of Western New York were different in character from some of the violent, body-twisting demonstrations typical of areas such as Kentucky. New York revivals were seldom accompanied by extreme bodily contortions but were more refined in nature and accompanied by much praying.

Whitney Cross, a noted historian, describes the conditions:

This was a period of revivals and enthusiasm. The great awakening of the 1740's and the religious fervor of the 1790's left lasting impressions upon the country, but after the War of 1812, the religious upheavals surpassed all previous experiences. It appears that Western New York was more intensively engaged in revivalism than

¹³Smith, D. H. C., I, 2-3.

were other portions of the Northeast.¹⁴

Gustive Larson, a prominent Mormon historian, observes in his recording of Mormon beginnings that competition between religious denominations resulted in numerous camp meetings which drew thousands from the countrysides. Some attended out of curiosity but many came charged with excitement expecting divine manifestations.¹⁵

Lowry Nelson, sociologist and historian, describes the purpose of these revivals:

The essential idea in these revivals was the Millennium and the Second Coming along with the restoration of Pentecostal manifestations.

Emotional instability, literal acceptance of the Bible as revelation, renewed interest in the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, characterized the peoples of the sections of New York and Ohio, in which Mormonism had its formative years.¹⁶

It should be noted that these revivals at times resulted in some good. Many excellent men have traced their sincere piety, which distinguished them through life, to such an origin. Many revival enthusiasts, however, became affected only during the life of the current meetings, and then went back to their normal living. There was also the danger that the genuine enthusiasm of some might provoke hypocrisy in others.

It was during one of these revival periods that four of the Smith family were influenced and united with the Presbyterian Church. Joseph says that in his early life he "became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect."¹⁷ He also stated that he was not able to decide which church was

¹⁴Whitney Cross, *The Burned Over District, The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1950), pp. 11-12.

¹⁵Gustive O. Larson, *Outline History of Utah and The Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1958), p. 20.

¹⁶Lowry Nelson, *The Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1952), pp. 33-34.

¹⁷See Appendix A. p. 6.

right.

Willard Bean, a historian, who lived many years in Western New York, tried to gain an insight into the environmental conditions of the people living at this time. He wrote:

The revival started the latter part of April, before the rural people could get onto their land to begin spring plowing, which gave the farmers a chance to attend the meetings. Even business and professional men neglected their work and all but shut up shop. By the first of May, the revival was well under way, with scores of people confessing religion, and each new convert becoming a self-appointed missionary to solicit friend and neighbor. The prevailing question among people of the neighborhood was, "What shall I do to be saved?"

During the second week in May the revival began to show signs of breaking up, and the many converts were solicited by the different preachers to join their respective churches. This caused considerable rivalry and contention among the ministers. So warm did this contention become, that harsh accusations were hurled by certain of their numbers. It was during this stage that one of the Methodist ministers took his text from the first chapter of James, fifth and sixth verses, which reads as follows: "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given unto him. But let him ask in faith nothing waivering." The minister made a special appeal to those who were yet undecided, those who could not make up their minds and were procrastinating the day of the repentance. It was rather effective and found ready response with a young lad named Joseph Smith, Jr., who was present. . . . He felt more concerned about salvation than ever before, but could not account for the contention among the ministers. Joseph Smith at this time was fourteen years of age and had never made the teachings of the respective churches of the vicinity a minute study, hence he did not know that there was any particular difference in their doctrine but he felt much concerned as to which church he should join. The family Bible and the "Christian Almanac" with the patent medicine recipes, made up the principal reading matter of the average home during the pioneer days of Palmyra, and when he got home that evening he got the family Bible and looked up the first chapter of James and read the minister's text. . . . He read it again and again, and the more he read it the more it impressed itself on his mind. He lacked wisdom. He was worried, and wanted to know which of the churches was right, and which he should join. He definitely made up his mind to take James, who spoke for the Lord, at his word, and carry out his instructions. He could scarcely sleep during the night for thinking about it, and even made up his mind where he would go put it to the test.¹⁸

These were the times when the religion was taught constantly simply

¹⁸Willard Bean, A. B. C. History of Palmyra and the Beginning of Mormonism (Palmyra, N. Y.: Palmyra Courier Co., Inc., 1938), pp. 21-24.

and earnestly. The people became excited over the sinful condition of mankind and many of their souls yearned for religious satisfaction. A religious revolution seemed to be in the air. A recent work in American history states the following:

men's minds had become unsettled, visions of a new moral world had come down upon them. Tradition had lost its hold, and transition its terrors.¹⁹

Joseph Smith's mother recorded in her writings that the Smith family for many generations back had had independent natures which led them constantly to seek truth. Joseph Smith's paternal grandfather, Asael Smith, of Topsfield, Massachusetts, was very liberal in his views. Asael could not reconcile the conflicting creeds of the sects with scripture. His advice to his family was to search the scriptures and consult sound reason.

Joseph Smith's mother likewise maintained her independence, despite the efforts of the ministers. She refused to acknowledge any spiritual authority greater than the scripture and her private convictions. She also said that spiritual manifestations and serious thought were part of her ancestor's everyday living. God and the many teachings comprising the gospel were an inspiring force among the Smith family many generations prior prior to Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith, Senior, the prophet's father, claimed to have visions which have been recorded and give indication of his spirituality.²⁰

William Smith, last surviving brother to Joseph Smith, states:

My mother, who was a very pious woman and much interested in the welfare of her children, both here and hereafter, made use of every means which her parental love could suggest, to get us engaged in seeking

¹⁹John R. Commons, et al., Documentary History of American Industrial Society (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1910), V, 20.

²⁰Preston Nibley, Joseph Smith the Prophet (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1946), pp. 1-50.

for our souls' salvation. . . . She prevailed on us to attend the meetings, and almost the whole family became interested in the matter, and seekers after truth. . . . This extraordinary excitement prevailed, not only in our neighborhood, but throughout the whole country. Great numbers were converted.²¹

It is difficult to determine the amount of influence all this had on Joseph Smith. It is quite obvious from his own story that deep impressions were made. According to his mother, Joseph was much less inclined to the reading of books than any of the other children. He was more inclined towards meditation and deep study. He was not ~~forbid~~, but rather cheerful and mature beyond his years. He was neither terrified by the threats of revivalists into an acceptance of their dogmas nor driven by their divisions into unbelief in revealed religion. The question with him seemed to be, "Which of all the churches is the Church of Christ?"²²

Joseph Smith's boyhood was spent in clearing, preparing and cultivating the acreage of the family's home in Manchester. He would sell the chopped wood resulting from the clearing of their heavily timbered land. A Mormon. Francis Kirkham, adds his description to the boy's early environmental analysis:

Joseph Smith grew to manhood among God's noblemen, men of faith, self-reliance, initiative and determination. They worked twelve hours a day with hand tools to build their homes and supply food and clothing for their families. Travel for pleasure was unknown. The first railroad had not yet competed with the horse-drawn vehicle. Roads were poor and usually maintained by a tax or a toll. . . . In addition to the Bible, one might find in the home, the almanac, and a few books of travel. Children went to school for about three months a year, until they could read, write, and cipher. Modern science was unknown, persons suffering with fever were denied water, and people were bled when blood infusion would have saved their lives. Children died from communicable diseases, now prevented by inoculation. People lived near to nature and believed in the love and mercies of God.²³

²¹See Appendix H, p. 2.

²²See Appendix A, p. 6.

²³Francis W. Kirkham, A New Witness for Christ in America (Independence, Jackson County, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1942), pp. 36-37.

These environmental influences must have had their effect upon young Joseph Smith in his impressionable years.

Religious Doctrines Taught

In the religious excitement of the age many doctrines were expounded. As George S. Tanner points out, some religious issues later developed into Mormon theology were major points of discussion among religious leaders:

Among Mormon ideas which had their counterparts in other religious movements was the desire to restore the ancient organization and practices of the Church of Christ. Even Roger Williams had recognized the need of Apostles, and had stated that until God set them there would not be the authority of God upon the earth. The Separate Baptists in the South actually chose Elder Samuel Harris as an apostle in 1774, and all the ministers present laid their hands on his head and ordained him to that office. About 1800, Able M. Sargent founded a sect in Southern Ohio and gathered around himself twelve apostles, mostly women.²⁴

A Latter-day Saint Church publication, The Millennial Star, further points out:

In England, between the years 1830 and 1835, a sect known as the Irvingites believed that twelve apostles among the gentiles were necessary in preparation for Christ's second coming and had appointed the twelve by 1835. The Irvingite leaders also received revelations, predicted the future, and had the gift of healing and the gift of tongues.²⁵

Joseph Smith never claimed to have a monopoly on the truth. It appears, however, that many of his religious teachings were unique. Certainly the concept of the Godhead, with the Father and Son separate personages of flesh and bones and the Holy Ghost as a third member, as a spirit, was new. Also the judgement of three degrees of glory, premortal existence, temple work, location of the Garden of Eden, salvation of the dead,

²⁴George Shepherd Tanner, "The Religious Environment in Which Mormonism Arose" (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Chicago, June 1931), pp. 21; 77-79.

²⁵Millennial Star, July, 1853

additional scrippure other than the Bible, organization of the church, concept of "Zion," gospel taught prior to Christ were all singular features of the doctrine of Joseph Smith.

The elaboration and clarification that Joseph Smith made on all the doctrines then expounded could, of course, be listed, documented, and compared, but that is not the purpose of this treatise. It would be sufficient to summarize by suggesting that Mormons acknowledge the idea that a great deal of revelation from God to man comes in response to man's needs and his search for truth. Since factors in the environment influence man's needs and interests, certainly revelation would come, in many instances, as a result of these factors. Mormons would argue that most of the great revelations have come to man because someone asked. According to the Bible Moses and other spiritual leaders of ancient days asked for direction before the Lord revealed his will. The way the Lord seems to function is to wait for man to realize a need; then He reveals and instructs. Joseph Smith stated that he had to ask which church was right before the answer came. Therefore, it seems to be man's need which opens the heavens and allows communication to flow between God and man, through inspiration, dreams and even visions.

Almost with an attitude of prophecy, in an address delivered before the senior class of the Divinity School of Harvard University of July 15, 1838, Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the greatest minds of Joseph Smith's time, described the religious conditions in the United States and yearned for modern revelations. He stated:

. . . the need was never greater for new revelation than now . . .
 [there was been a] universal decay, if not almost death of faith in society. . . . I look for the hour when the supreme Beauty which ravished the souls of those Eastern men, and chiefly of those Hebrews, and through their lips spoke Oracles to all times, shall speak in the West also. . . .²⁶

²⁶Frederick I. Carpenter, Emerson Handbook (New York: Hendricks House, 1953), pp. 79-88.

Orson Pratt, a convert to the Church and one who knew Joseph Smith intimately, describes Joseph's situation:

What were the circumstances that enabled him to have manifestations from Heaven at that early period of his life? He was very anxious, as most of mankind are, to be saved; and he was also very anxious to understand how to be saved. But on this point he was at a loss, he did not understand the way to be saved. He was a farmer's boy; he was not brought up and educated in high schools, academies or colleges; he was merely a poor farmer's boy.²⁷

Under all of these environmental influences Joseph records that he was moved to go into the woods to pray for an answer to his religious problems. Certainly Joseph Smith's environment, whether natural or created by God, became an important influence in establishing the Mormon faith.

Theological Importance of the Visions

According to Biblical history, visions and dreams have constituted a means of communication between God and man in every dispensation of the Priesthood. The scriptures record that to Adam, the Patriarch of the race, God revealed His will and gave commandments. Enoch spoke face to face with the Lord, who counselled him.²⁸ According to the Book of Mormon account, the Brother of Jared was given a vision of history and prophecy concerning men.²⁹ To Moses, God revealed His will through a physical manifestation of fire.³⁰ Lehi was instructed by dreams, regarding his future in the land we now call America.³¹ The Old Testament prophets were favored similarly: Jacob,³² Job,³³ Jeremiah,³⁴ Ezekiel,³⁵ Daniel,³⁶ Habakkuk,³⁷ and Zechariah.³⁸

²⁷Journal of Discourses, XII, 353.

²⁸Exher 3.

³¹I Nephi 2:2-4.

³³Job 4:12-21.

³⁵Ezekial 1:1.

³⁷Habakkuk 2:2,3.

²⁸Moses 6:27-39.

³⁰Exodus 3:2.

³²Genesis 46:2.

³⁴Jeremiah 1:11-16.

³⁶Daniel 7, 8.

³⁸Zechariah 1:8-11.

The dispensation of the Meridian of Time, when Christ was upon the earth, was characterized by many examples of the Lord speaking, inspiring, instructing in person. His birth and that of His cousin, John the Baptist, were prefaced by visitations from heavenly messengers.

As they review all of the communications that have been recorded between God and man in the existing histories, there are some who state that the experience which Joseph Smith reported could be considered one of the greatest and most outstanding scriptural stories known to man. Let us examine the situation to see if there is any credibility to this assertion.

Joseph Smith's account is unique in that the Father and the Son appeared together and they both spoke. To those who accept the Bible and the Book of Mormon as authentic, nowhere in these histories do we have another example that parallels this experience in this respect. Paul the apostle had an experience, but he declared only that a single member of Deity appeared.³⁹ The apostle Peter's relationship to the Lord was similar in that respect.⁴⁰ John's revelation recorded in his book must have been a unique experience, but as far as the text states, we learn that God alone revealed it to him.⁴¹

A few scriptural examples of the appearance of two members of the Godhead are as follows:

manifestation

And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.⁴²

This scriptural story was repeated by Mark and Luke and was

³⁹Acts 16:9.

⁴⁰Acts 10:10-16.

⁴¹Revelation 1:1-2.

⁴²Matthew 3:16, 17.

confirmed in most details in each gospel. The Savior of the world was baptized in the water; the voice of the Father was heard and a symbol, the dove, gave representation of the Holy Ghost. Since all three members of the Godhead were represented, this event was also unique and unparalleled in scriptural history.

Another outstanding example is seen in the description of the transfiguration. Jesus took Peter, James and John and ascended a high mountain. With this privacy, Jesus left the apostles and, alone, communed with His Father. As a result of His prayer, He was glorified, so much so that His countenance was altered and His raiment glistened. "His face did shine as the sun and His garments became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them." Thus Jesus was transfigured before the three disciples. With Jesus were two personages, Elijah and Moses. The Lord conversed with these two glorified personages concerning His death, as the three apostles listened intently. Peter entered into the conversation with a proposition to erect a memorial reverencing this wonderful occasion. A bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." This was the Eternal Father, introducing and sanctioning the manifestation. The apostles fell prostrate. Jesus touched them and told them not to be afraid. When they looked, they saw they were alone with the Savior; the whole experience was over and the disciples were left with a greater understanding of the Savior's mission.⁴³ In this experience the three men witnessed evidences of the two members of the Godhead, but saw only one of them.

Recorded in the Book of Mormon are details of the appearance of

⁴³Matthew 17:1-8.

the Savior to some of the ancient inhabitants of the American Continent. In fulfillment of promises made, Christ appeared to the Nephites in the land of Bountiful. Just prior to Jesus' appearance, a voice was heard three times; twice it was unintelligible; the third time it was distinct: "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name; hear ye Him." As the intent multitude gazed upwards they beheld the personage of the resurrected Jesus Christ, their Redeemer and Savior. He spoke and inspired them so much that the multitude prostrated themselves before Him. Again we witness a scriptural story with two personages in evidence, yet only the Son showing His body.⁴⁴

The only other instance that is available to us in religious history is that of Stephen, the martyr. As Stephen bore his last testimony to mortal man, the persecutors threw stones at him and thirsted for his blood. At this moment, Stephen, energized by the Holy Ghost, looked steadfastly upward and exclaimed, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." After this vision, Stephen prayed. "Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit."⁴⁵ Thus, in Stephen's experience, two of the Deity were shown in vision with no speaking or personal message evidenced.

In Joseph Smith's experience he states that both the Father and the Son manifested themselves and communicated with him:

. . . exerting all my power to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the

⁴⁴Third Nephi 11.

⁴⁵Acts 7:55-60.

enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, pointing to the other, "This is my beloved Son, hear him."⁴⁶

Following this, the other personage, Jesus Christ gave instructions to Joseph Smith. Joseph claimed that this was the first event in the restoration of the fulness of the gospel to the earth in this dispensation. Joseph Smith told the world that he both saw and heard God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.⁴⁷ Joseph Smith's followers

⁴⁶See Appendix B.

⁴⁷There are two references in apocryphal literature alluding to the appearance of the Father and the Son. The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is one of the most important discoveries of the second half of the nineteenth century. There are several references in early Christian literature to a book with this or a similar title. As it stands, the Didache may be described as a manual of Church instruction.

In the last chapter of the Didache, the author describes the conditions that will exist in the "last days:"

Then shall the creation of mankind come to the fiery trail and many shall be offended and be lost, but they will endure in their faith shall be saved by the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of truth. First the sign spread out in the Heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet, and thirdly the resurrection of the dead: but not of all the dead, but as it was said, "The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him." Then shall the world see the Lord coming on the clouds of Heaven.

Kirshopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Trans. William Hinemann (London: The Macmillan Co., 1912), p. 333.

Since this apocryphal literature gives a prophecy of the future, and lists the coming attractions in somewhat of an order, I would like to further analyse the sign that the author listed as taking place first in the last days. He states, "the sign spread out in the Heaven," This interpretation agrees with the translation of the Greek word, "Ekpetasis" found in the Greek text. However, when we look at the Greek-English Lexicon we find their interpretation as being "an opening in the heaven." Combining these two renditions of the Greek text, there is enough similarity to the event of the visions of Joseph Smith to merit consideration.

There is another interesting situation reported in the Ethiopic manuscript, *The Galilean Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ*. In this apocryphal writing an interrogation takes place between the apostles and the Savior after His resurrection. Discussion centers about the millennium, and the disciples ask Christ about His second coming. The resurrected

maintained that the knowledge obtained in the First Vision is the most important information man has received from God since the resurrection of the Lord and that it became the foundation of all the ordinances, commandments and blessings of former ages which were subsequently restored in this age. Joseph's account suggests that the certainty he had of the reality of the vision was a main factor in giving him the necessary strength to withstand all obstacles and persecutions which fell his lot during his short life.

Redeemer states that His Father will come during the passover time of the year. Some translators go so far as to state that text reveals that Father and the Son will both come in that season of the year.

Although some precautions have to be taken, there is a relationship here that may very apply. Joseph Smith claimed that he did have a vision of the Father and the Son together; he also claimed that it did occur in the Passover season of the year and it was the next appearance of Deity after the ascension. Wright, Catalogue of the Ethiopic Manuscript in the British Museum, Trans. (London, 1877), p. 270, Antoine Abbadie, Biblioteque Nationale, pp. 60, 100, 199.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VISITATION OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

Joseph's Age

Joseph Smith declared in his story that he was in his fifteenth year when he had his first vision.¹ His story concerning his age remained consistent as seen in a journal entry dated November 14, 1835:

This afternoon, Erastus Holmes, of Newbury, Ohio, called on me to inquire about the establishment of the Church, and to be instructed in doctrine more perfectly.

I gave him a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from six years old up to the time I received my first vision, which was when I was about fourteen years old; also the revelations that I received afterwards concerning the Book of Mormon, and a short account of the rise and progress of the Church up to this date.²

Joseph was born in December of 1805. If the vision occurred in the spring of 1820, he would have been approximately fourteen years and three to five months of age at the time. Orson Pratt confirms Joseph's age in his summary history,³ as does Orson Hyde's account.⁴

The Vision

William Smith, a brother to Joseph Smith, said that Joseph was influenced by a sermon given by Reverend Lane, a Methodist minister.⁵ The minister chose for part of his text the passage in James 1:5, where the reader is informed that if he lacks wisdom, he should ask God. Joseph

¹See Appendix A, p. 5.

²Smith, D.H.C., II, p. 312.

³See Appendix C, p. 2.

⁴See Appendix G, p. 2.

⁵Deseret News, January 20, 1894, p. 11.

did not record having heard Reverend Lane's sermon, but did state that after reading this passage in the Bible, "never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine."⁶

Joseph stated that this stirring impression became the motivating influence which led him to the woods near his home, to seek, in prayer, the answer to his question, "Which church shall I join?" He continued that he chose a morning of a beautiful and clear day, early in the spring of 1820.⁷

After Joseph had knelt and vocally expressed his desires, uttering his first oral prayer, he claimed that his first feeling was that of intense depression, commonly associated with an evil force. Then in his greatest moment of despair he saw a pillar of light descend until it fell upon him.⁸ Orson Pratt enlarged upon this description by writing that the light was more like a fire and seemed capable of burning the tops of the trees:

He beheld that the leaves of the trees were not consumed by it, although its brightness, apparently, was sufficient, as he at first thought, to consume everything before it. But the trees were not consumed by it, and it continued to descend until it rested upon him and enveloped him in its glorious rays.⁹

The next sequence in the vision as recorded by Joseph occurred when he was released from the evil influence, and standing above him, apparently suspended in space, were two personages whose brightness and glory defied all description. One of the personages said, pointing to the

⁶See Appendix A, p. 6.

⁷Bean., op. cit., p. 25. States that the vision probably took place in the middle part of May.

⁸See Appendix A, p. 7.

⁹Journal of Discourses, XII, p. 354.

other, "This is my beloved son, hear him."¹⁰ The other personage then talked to the 14 year old boy and answered his question concerning the existence of the true church. For Joseph's own account of this vision, refer to Appendix A.

One Personage or Two?

It must be remembered that Joseph was alone in the grove when he experienced this visitation. He apparently related his story to some of his close friends, but did not declare it publicly at this time. For this reason there was no story published at that time.

Written accounts by Joseph Smith's associates which were published later, however, seem to help substantiate the story he told.

Some critics have taken exception to certain statements from these secondary sources. One such criticism is that not all accounts agree that there were two personages present besides Joseph. In considering this issue, it must be pointed out that the account of Joseph in his journal, the Wentworth Letter, Daniel Rapp's history, Orson Pratt's account and Orson Hyde's story were all printed, contemporary accounts (i.e. written and published during the life of Joseph Smith) and indicated that two personages appeared in the vision.

In addition to the printed sources which were published during the life of Joseph Smith, other writings and sermons of his close associates prove valuable. Orson Pratt, for example, who knew Joseph Smith many years before he was killed, in a discourse dated February 24, 1869, declared:

When he [Joseph Smith] was thus encircled about with this pillar of fire, his mind was caught away from every object that surrounded him,

¹⁰See Appendix A, p. 8.

and he was filled with the visions of the Almighty, and he saw, in the midst of this glorious pillar of fire, two glorious personages, whose countenances shone with an exceeding great lustre. One of them spoke to him saying, while pointing to the other, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him."¹¹

To further investigate the declaration that there were two personages who appeared to Joseph Smith, some accounts not affiliated with the Mormon church have been consulted. A publication in England, The **Edinburg** Review, 1854, and a reprint in 1863, related this story of the vision and reported two personages appearing.¹² A pamphlet published in 1844 by an anti-Mormon writer outlined the major parts of Joseph's vision and wrote that two personages appeared.¹³ P. W. Forbes, another non-Mormon writer, stated in a pamphlet published in England that two personages appeared.¹⁴

As late as 1843, the year before Joseph Smith's assassination, he was interviewed by the editor of the Pittsburgh Gazette, a non-Mormon. The results of this interview appeared in the New York Spectator, September 23, 1843; Joseph was quoted as follows:

The Lord does reveal Himself to me. I know it. He revealed Himself first to me when I was about fourteen years old, a mere boy. I will tell you about it. There was a reformation among the different religious denominations in the neighborhood where I lived, and I became serious, and was desirous to know what church to join.

While thinking of this matter, I opened the Testament promiscuously on these words in James. . . . I just determined to ask Him. I immediately went to the stump where I had struck my axe when I had quit work, and I kneeled down and prayed, saying, "O Lord, what church shall I join?" Directly I saw a light, and then a glorious personage in the light, and then another personage, and the first personage said

¹¹Journal of Discourses, XII, p. 354.

¹²The Edinburg Review, No. CCII, April, 1854, pp. 7-8. (Located in the L. D. S. Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah).

¹³Religious Imposters (England, 1844), p. 26. (Located in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah).

¹⁴The Mormons of Life in Utah (Birmingham, England, P. W. Forbes, a.d.), p. 3. (Located in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah).

to the second, "Behold my Beloved Son, hear Him." I then addressed this second person saying, "O Lord, what church shall I join?" He replied, "Do not join any of them, they are all corrupt." The vision then vanished.¹⁵

It will be observed that some of the details in this story vary from the standard account by Joseph Smith. Here the young boy prays immediately after reading the biblical passage, while in the earlier account the impression is left that he continued to ponder the problem for some time before he prayed. The standard account, furthermore, does not mention that he had been chopping with an axe just before the vision. Finally, the standard account suggests that both personages appeared together, rather than one following the other. It is not known whether the embellishments in the later account came from Joseph Smith himself, or reflect the editorializing of the reporter. The important point here, however, is that the story is consistent insofar as the number of heavenly personages is concerned.

All those closely associated with Joseph Smith seem to substantiate the story which he told. Edward Stevenson records in his journal that he first saw the controversial leader in 1834 in Pontiac, Michigan. After he became a member of the church, he wrote the following in 1893:

In that same year, 1834, in the midst of many large congregations, the Prophet testified with great power concerning the visit of the Father and the Son, and the conversation he had with them. Never before did I feel such power as was manifested on these occasions, and, although only a small percentage of those who saw and heard him accepted the restored gospel, there was not one who dare dispute it.

On May 27, 1888 Edward Stevenson wrote in his journal:

. . . With uplifted hand he [Joseph Smith] said, "I am a witness that there is a God, for I saw Him in open day, while praying in a silent grove, in the spring of 1820." He further testified that God, the Eternal Father, pointing to a separate personage, in the likeness of Himself, said, "This is my Beloved Son; hear ye Him." O how these

¹⁵ Preston Hibley, Joseph Smith the Prophet (Salt Lake City, Deseret New Press, 1964) p. 31.

words thrilled my entire system and filled me with joy unspeakable—to behold one who, like Paul the Apostle of olden time, could with boldness testify that he had been in the presence of Jesus Christ!¹⁶

John Taylor, who was intimately acquainted with Joseph Smith and was with him when he was killed (Taylor, himself, was critically wounded in the Carthage Jail), delivered a sermon in the 14th Ward, December 7, 1879. The report of the clerk, John Irvine, quotes John Taylor as saying:

I can tell you what he [Joseph Smith] told me about it. He said that he was very ignorant of the ways, designs, and purposes of God, and knew nothing about them; he was a youth unacquainted with religious matters of the systems and theories of the day. He went to the Lord, having read James' statement, He believed that statement and went to the Lord and asked Him, and the Lord revealed himself to him, together with His Son Jesus, and, pointing to the latter said: "This is my Beloved Son, hear Him." He then asked in regard to the various religions with which he was surrounded. He inquired which of them was right, for he wanted to know the right way and to walk in it. He was told that none of them was right, that they had all departed from the right way, that they had forsaken God the fountain of all living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that could hold no water.¹⁷

Here was a report by a reputable man who said that Joseph Smith had told him the story of the first vision. In a sermon delivered at Hooperville, June 27, 1881, and reported by George F. Gibbs. John Taylor further stated:

God has restored the gospel for the purpose of bringing life and immortality to light; and without the knowledge of life and immortality, for men cannot comprehend these principles only as they are made known unto them, and they cannot be revealed only through the medium of the gospel, and through obedience to the laws of salvation associated therewith. . . . Hence when the heavens were opened and the Father and Son appeared and revealed unto Joseph the principles of the gospel, and when the holy priesthood was restored and the Church and kingdom of God established upon this generation which it was possible for man to receive. If they could comprehend it, it was the greatest blessing which God could confer upon humanity. Then he sent his servants forth to proclaim this gospel to the nations of the earth, and he is now sending them forth to preach the gospel of the Son of God, to deliver

¹⁶Joseph Grant Stevenson, "Life of Edward Stevenson" (unpublished Master's dissertation, Brigham Young University Library), 1955, pp. 20-22.

¹⁷Journal of Discourses, XXI, p. 161.

the testimony that he has given unto us. And, speaking for the priesthood, have we done it? We have, and we have done it in the name of Israel's God; and He has been with us and I know it.¹⁸

On October 20th of the same year, John Taylor told the story in Malad, Idaho (reported by George F. Gibbs):

In the commencement of the work, the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith. And when they appeared to him, the Father, pointing to the Son said, "This is my Beloved Son, Hear Him!" As much as to say, "I have not come to teach and instruct you; but I refer you to Him as your Redeemer, your High Priest and Teacher. Hear Him."¹⁹

In a letter dated in 1903, Benjamin F. Johnson, who knew Joseph Smith well, wrote to the Assistant Historian of the church and stated:

Joseph Smith, of lowly birth, was a ~~farm~~ boy of common class, poor, illiterate and without distinction other than being religiously inclined; he attended revivals and was in the ~~anxious~~ circles honestly seeking religion and to learn, which was the right church; and calling upon the Lord in simple faith that he might know. Both the Father and the Son in a pillar of light descended, and in teaching him commanded that he join no religious sect as their deeds were all an abomination in His sight.²⁰

Alexander Neibaur, a teacher who instructed Joseph Smith in German and Hebrew, recorded in his personal journal, dated May 24, 1844, the story of the first vision as related to him by Joseph after a period of instruction:

[Joseph Smith] went into the woods to pray, kneels himself down . . . saw a fire toward heaven come nearer and nearer; saw a personage in the fire; light complexion, blue eyes, a piece of white cloth drawn over his shoulders, his right arm bear [sic]; after a while another person came to the side of the first.²¹

As in the case of other second-hand accounts, there are some

¹⁸Ibid., XXII, p. 218.

¹⁹Ibid., XXVI, p. 106.

²⁰Letter from Benjamin F. Johnson, dated 1903, written to Elder George F. Gibbs, Ass't Church Historian, Church Historians Office, Salt Lake City.

²¹Alexander Neibaur's Journal, Church Historians Office, no page, under date of May 24, year undated.

astonishing embellishments in this diary, but the major point--the appearance of two persons--is still there.

Another interesting note is recorded in the diary of Charles L. Walker, a faithful member of the church, who lived between 1855 and 1902. His statement was made at a fast and testimony meeting February 2, 1893, in Southern Utah.

2nd February, Thursday, 1893, attended Fast meeting. . . . Br. John Alger said while speaking of the Prophet Joseph, that when he, John, was a small boy he heard the Prophet Joseph relate his vision of seeing the Father and the Son, that God touched his eyes with his finger and said, "Joseph this is my beloved Son, hear him." As soon as the Lord had touched his eyes with his finger he immediately saw the Savior. After Meeting a few of us questioned him about the matter and he told us at the bottom of the Meeting house steps that he was in the House of Father Smith in Kirtland when Joseph made this declaration; and that Joseph while speaking of it put his finger to his right eye, suiting the action with the words so as to illustrate and at the same time impress the occurrence on the minds of those unto whom he was speaking. . . .²²

Lorenzo Snow was the fourth President of the church. When he was seventeen years of age he met and listened to Joseph Smith for the first time. Years later, he recorded his feelings in these words:

As I looked upon him and listened, I thought to myself that a man bearing such a wonderful testimony as he did, and having such a countenance as he possessed, could hardly be a false prophet. He certainly could not have been deceived, it seemed to me, and if he was a deceiver, he was deceiving the people knowingly; for when he testified that he had had a conversation with Jesus the Son of God and had talked with Him personally, as Moses talked with God upon Mount Sinai, and that he also heard the Voice of the Father, he was telling something that he either knew to be false or to be positively true.²³

In some of the foregoing secondary accounts, interesting sidelights appeared which embellished the original story as told by Joseph Smith. These additions obviously cannot be verified by reference to

²²Diary of Charles L. Walker of date covering 1855-1902 in possession of Dr. Hyrum L. Andrus, Brigham Young University faculty, Provo, Utah.

²³Improvement Era, article, XL, p. 83.

the writings of the Mormon prophet himself. Nevertheless, all these accounts seem to be consistent with regard to certain basic points. All agree that (1) there were two personages who appeared to Joseph, (2) the Father spoke only a few words, after which the Son instructed Joseph, and (3) the two personages were separate, distinct, with bodies similar to man's.

An Explanation of Some Obscure Statements

In some of the secondary sources, isolated comments or statements give the impression that it is not clear whether it was one or two personages that came to the young boy, and that the identity of his visitor or visitors is uncertain. An analysis of the vision, assuming Joseph's report to be correct, shows that the communication centered on one of the personages more than the other. The Father is reported to have said only seven words, while the Son conversed upon many subjects with the youth.

An example of this confusion surrounding the story of the first vision comes from a discourse by John Taylor, dated March 2, 1879:

. . . just as it was when the Prophet Joseph asked the angel which of the sects was right that he might join it. The answer was that none of them are right. What, none of them? No. We will not stop to argue that question; the angel merely told him to join none of them that none of them were right.²⁴

Yet in December of the same year, John Taylor stated that there were two personages and described the events as Joseph had done many years before.²⁵

A problem of consistency is seen in the fact that John Taylor referred to the heavenly messenger as an angel. Joseph Smith, on the

²⁴Journal of Discourses, XX, p. 166.

²⁵Ibid., XXI, p. 161.

other hand, said that it was the Father and the Son who appeared to him in response to his inquiry concerning which church is right. It is clear from other references, however, that John Taylor believed that the Father and the Son had appeared, and it is therefore safe to assume that he used the word angel to refer to Christ. That such use of the word was not without precedent might be inferred from a sermon by Joseph Smith on a different topic:

Jesus Christ became a ministering spirit (while His body was lying in the sepulchre) to the spirits in prison, to fulfill an important part of His mission, without which He could not have perfected His work, or entered into His rest. After His resurrection He appeared as an angel to His disciples.²⁶

Another possible misunderstanding could be illustrated by the recorded sermon of Heber C. Kimball, an early authority of the church, delivered in 1857:

Do you suppose that God in person called upon Joseph Smith, our Prophet? God called upon him; but God did not come himself and call, but he sent Peter to do it. Do you not see? He sent Peter and sent Moroni to Joseph, and told him that had got the plates, Did God come himself? No. He sent Moroni and told him. . . .²⁷

In this situation the whole sermon must be read in order to understand the full meaning. Heber C. Kimball took for his text on this occasion, "God Acts Through Agents." Analysis of the sermon clearly indicates that he taught that God had designated certain resurrected persons to be responsible for certain aspects of the government of His kingdom. Heber C. Kimball pointed out that God would not come down and do their work since He had designated them to do it; therefore, God will not come down: He will send His messengers. It seems evident that Heber C. Kimball, in this sermon, was speaking of events subsequent to

²⁶D.H.C. IV, p. 425.

²⁷Journal of Discourses, VI, p. 28.

the first vision of Joseph Smith. A sermon by Apostle Orson Hyde in 1854 followed this same line of reasoning:

Some one may say, "If this work of the last days be true, why did not the Savior come himself to communicate the intelligence to the world?" Because of their angels was committed the power of reaping the earth, and it was committed to none else.²⁸

Critics who use part of sermons to refute the story of the first vision must in fairness present these statements in context, relating them with previous and subsequent remarks, and thus learn their true intent. Orson Hyde published, in 1842, a complete account of the first vision, wherein he presented very clearly the story of the visit of the two personages.²⁹ It is clear from the writings and sermons of all these men that they believed in the actual appearance of the Father and the Son. Isolated passages, therefore, must be especially interpreted in the light of what we know about these men and their philosophies.

John Taylor, who became the third President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has provided an insight into the philosophy of the followers of Joseph Smith. Said he on November 23, 1882.

Now, it is the rule of God which is desired to be introduced upon the earth, and this is the reason why the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith, why John the Baptist conferred the Aaronic Priesthood, why Peter, James, and John conferred the Melchizedek priesthood, why Moses came to bestow the dispensation of the gathering, and why other manifestations have been given unto us as a people, his elect, whom He has chosen from among the nations.³⁰

John Taylor taught that it was to introduce the rule and government of God on earth; the order was that after God and His Son had come to usher in a dispensation, the messengers who hold the keys to various aspects of the kingdom were sent to discharge certain responsibilities concerning

²⁸Ibid., VI, p. 335.

²⁹See Appendix G, p. 4.

³⁰Journal of Discourses, XXIII, p. 323.

their part of the government of God.

Orson Pratt emphasized this principle when he said on December 10, 1871:

. . . for when the Lord first revealed to that little boy, he was only between fourteen and fifteen years of age. Now, can we imagine or suppose that a great imposter could be made out of a youth of that age, and one that could reveal the doctrine of Christ as he has revealed it to this generation? Would he stand forth and bear testimony that he had seen with his own eyes a messenger of light and glory, and that he heard the words of His mouth as they dropped from His lips and had received a message from the Most High, at that early age? And then after having declared it, to have the finger of scorn pointed at him with exclamations, "There goes the visionary boy! No visions in our day! Why, he is deluded, he is a fanatic!" And to have this scorn and derision and still continue to testify, in the face and eyes of all this, while hated and derided by his neighbors, that God had sent His angel from heaven. Can you imagine that a youth would do this?³¹

It is evident that Orson Pratt was talking about the visitation of the Lord in the first instance since he named Him. In the second instance he may or may not be referring to the Lord. This is confusing and must be compared with his other statements about the story, on order to ascertain what Pratt really believed. Comparing this quotation with his narrative in the Appendix, it seems that there is no contradiction; however, the sermon could have been more clear.

One can begin to see that in the sermons of these men, certain representations must be read carefully to gain the correct meaning.

Orson Pratt said on December 19, 1869:

By and by an obscure individual, a young man rose up and in the midst of all Christendom, proclaimed the startling news that God had sent an angel to him; that through his faith, prayers and sincere repentance he had beheld a supernatural vision, that he had seen a pillar of fire descend from Heaven, and saw two glorious personages clothed upon with this pillar of fire, whose countenance shone like the sun at noonday; that he heard one of these personages say, pointing to the other, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." This occurred before this young man was fifteen years of age.³²

³¹Ibid., XIV, p. 362.

³²Ibid., XIII, pp. 65-66.

Again on September 22, 1872, Orson Pratt spoke on this same subject and verified the story that Joseph was not yet fifteen years of age when he had his first vision; that two glorious personages appeared to him and identified themselves; and that later an angel appeared to him and showed him, in vision, the gold plates and explained their purpose.³³

In still another discourse, Orson Pratt affirmed the visit of two personages who identified themselves as the Father and the Son.³⁴

The problem of indentifying the personalities involved in the first vision becomes more intriguing in light of some of the statements of George A. Smith, cousin to the prophet and an early apostle. In a sermon delivered in Salt Lake, November 15, 1863, he made the following comments:

. . . the Lord answered his prayer, and revealed to Joseph, by the ministrations of angels, the true condition of the religious world. When the holy angel appeared, Joseph inquired which of all these denominations was right and which he should join, and was told they were all wrong, . . . they had all gone astray, transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances and broken the everlasting covenant, and that the Lord was about to restore the priesthood and establish His Church, which would be the only true and living Church on the face of the whole earth.

Joseph, feeling that to make known such a vision would be to subject himself to the ridicule of all around him, knew not what to do. But the vision was repeated several times, and in these repetitions, he was instructed to communicate that which he had seen to his father. His father was not a member of any church, but was a man of exemplary life. His mother and brother, Hyrum, were members of the Presbyterian church. Joseph communicated what he had seen to his father, who believed his testimony, and told him to observe the instructions that had been given him.

These visits led, in a short time, to the bringing forth of the record known as the Book of Mormon, which contained the fulness of the Gospel as it had been preached by the Savior and His apostles to the inhabitants of this land; also a history of the falling away of the people who dwelt on this continent and the dealings of God with them.³⁵

After a careful reading it seems evident that the phrase, "these

³³Ibid., XV, pp. 180-181.

³⁴Ibid., XIV, pp. 140-141.

³⁵Ibid., XII, p. 334.

visits," refers to the combination of all the visitations of the young boy, Joseph, since he introduced his subject with the phrase, "ministration of angels."

Another example of George A. Smith's unique method of discussing this subject is seen in a sermon delivered on June 20, 1869.

He sought the Lord by day and by night, and was enlightened by the vision of an holy angel. When this personage appeared to him, one of his first inquiries was, "Which of the denominations of Christians in the vicinity was right?" He was told that they had all gone astray, they had wandered into darkness, and that God was about to restore the Gospel in its simplicity and purity to the earth; he was, consequently, directed not to join any one of them, but to be humble and seek the Lord with all heart, and that from time to time he should be taught and instructed in relation to the right way to serve the Lord.

These visions continued from time to time, and 1830 he published to the world the translation of the book known as the Book of Mormon.³⁶

Again George A. Smith used the phrase "these visions" to refer to all the manifestations given to Joseph, up to that time. It should also be observed that he seems to be using the same identification for Christ that Joseph Smith and John Taylor used when he referred to the Savior as an angel.³⁷

From all of the preceding references we might conclude that it is difficult to identify the meaning of spoken words which have been quoted out of context. It might also be remembered that the sermons given in that day were taken down by clerks in longhand and could not be absolutely correct. These things go far in accounting for alleged discrepancies in the oft-repeated story of Joseph Smith's visions.

One critic has complained that Brigham Young never mentioned the

³⁶Ibid., XIII, p. 78.

³⁷D.H.C.C., IV, p. 425. Journal of Discourses, XX, p. 166.

First Vision in his discourses.³⁸ However, Brigham Young once said:

I never saw anyone until I met Joseph Smith, who could tell me anything about the character, personality and dwelling-place of God, or anything satisfactory about angels, or the relationship of man to his Maker.³⁹

In other sermons, Brigham Young said more specifically:

. . . The Lord sent forth His angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith, Jr., who afterwards became a Prophet, Seer and Revelator, and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day, for they were all wrong; that they were following the precepts of men instead of the Lord Jesus; that he had a work for him to perform, inasmuch as he should prove faithful before him.⁴⁰

The Lord chose Joseph Smith, called upon him at fourteen years of age, gave him visions, and led him along, guided and directed him in his obscurity until he brought forth the plates and translated them, and Martin Harris was prevailed upon to sustain the printing of the Book of Mormon.⁴¹

When the Lord called upon Joseph he was but a boy—a child, only about fourteen years of age. He was not filled with traditions; his mind was not made up to this, that, or the other. I very well recollect the reformation which took place in the country among the various denominations of Christians. . . . He did not know what the Lord was going to do with him, although He had informed him that the Christian churches were all wrong, because they had not the Holy Priesthood.⁴²

When the same men who knew the philosophy of Joseph Smith referred to God, Christ, Moroni, or other heavenly personages as angels, they seem to have been following an accepted pattern. This title does not seem to belittle the calling of the Son; it only describes a special mission. As Joseph Smith used the term angel, he suggested that an angel is one who is chosen to be a messenger. In this sense all of the visiting personages could be termed angels. This is admittedly conjecture, but

³⁸Jerald Tanner, *Mormonism* (Salt Lake: Tanner, pamphlet), p. 79.

³⁹Journal of Discourses, XVI, p. 46.

⁴⁰Ibid., II, p. 171.

⁴¹Ibid., VIII, P. 334.

⁴²Ibid., XII, P. 67.

since Joseph Smith did use this title to describe Christ it may be that some of his associates also thought along this line. The close associates of Joseph Smith who used the word "angel" in reference to God, Christ, Moroni, et al., also on other occasions explicitly referred to the Father and Son as separate personages who appeared in the First Vision. This would suggest they were using the term "angel" in the generic sense to identify any heavenly messenger, even God.

William Smith, Joseph Smith's brother, in an interview with E. C. Briggs gave the following account of the vision of the boy Joseph. William was six years younger than Joseph and was 72 years of age at the time of the interview:

"Did you not doubt Joseph's testimony sometimes?" asked Brother Briggs.

"No," was the reply by William Smith. "We all had the most implicit confidence in what he said. He was a truthful boy. Father and mother believed him, why should not the children? I suppose if he had told crooked stories about other things we might have doubted his word about the plates, but Joseph was a truthful boy. That father and mother believed his report and suffered persecution for that belief shows that he was truthful. No, sir, we never doubted his word for one minute."

"Were your folks religiously inclined before Joseph saw the angel?" asked Brother Briggs.

"Yes, we always had family prayers since I can remember. Hyrum, Samuel, Katherine, and mother were members of the Presbyterian church, My father would not join. He did not like it because Reverend Stockton had preached my brother's funeral sermon and intimated very strongly that he had gone to hell, for Alvin was not a church member, but he was a good boy, and my father did not like it."

"What caused Joseph to ask for guidance as to what church he ought to join?" asked Brother Briggs.

"Why, there was a joint revival in the neighborhood between the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, and they had succeeded in stirring up quite a feeling; and after the meeting the question arose which church should have the converts. Reverend Stockton was the president of the meeting and suggested that it was their meeting and under their care, and they had a church there and they ought to join the Presbyterians, but as father did not like Reverend Stockton very

well, our folks hesitated and the next evening a Reverend M. Lane of the Methodists preached a sermon on 'What Church Shall I join?' and the burden of his discourses was to ask God, who giveth to all men liberally, And of course, when Joseph went home and was looking over the text, he was impressed to do just what the preacher had said, and going out to the woods with childlike, simple, trusting faith, believing that God meant just what he said, he kneeled down and prayed; and the time having come for the reorganization of His Church, God was pleased to show him that he should join none of these churches, but, if faithful, he should be chosen to establish the true church.⁴³

Here William gives us insight into the integrity of his brother Joseph. Since Joseph stated he was alone when he witnessed this vision, his veracity becomes a very important factor when considering the authenticity of his report.

Besides considering the veracity of the story under discussion and the correctness of the basic elements of the episodes, the reason for these manifestations would also seem to be of importance.

George Teasdale, one of the apostles of the church that Joseph Smith founded, spoke on the purpose of the first vision in a sermon on January 13, 1884:

Joseph Smith had a vision of the Father and the Son. Who ever conceived of the necessity of such a vision? There was an absence of the knowledge of God. The world by wisdom knew not God. The being that is worshipped by so-called Christianity, is a being without a body, parts or passions. In order that he might have a testator upon the earth, God revealed Himself, so that we might understand a little concerning the personality of God.⁴⁴

The significance of this vision seemed to dawn gradually upon the minds of the many people who heard about it. Hundreds of people requested membership and baptism into this church; new cities were founded and great persecution developed. George Q. Cannon, another apostle of the church, explained this condition on September 2, 1883:

⁴³Deseret News, January 20, 1894, p. 11.

⁴⁴Journal of Discourses, XXV, p. 18.

There was no man, scarcely, upon the earth that had a true conception of God; the densest ignorance prevailed; and even ministers of religion could not conceive of the true idea and there was mystery associated with what is called the Trinity—that is, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But all this was swept away in one moment by the appearance of the Almighty Himself—by the appearance of God, the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, to the boy Joseph, as he knelt in the forest beseeching God for knowledge concerning Him, and concerning the Gospel of salvation. In one moment all this darkness disappeared, and once more there was a man found on the earth, embodied in the flesh, who had seen God, who had seen Jesus, and who could describe the personality of both. Faith was again restored to the earth, the true faith and the true knowledge concerning our Creator, our Father, and Being from whence we derive our origin. This revelation dissipated all misconceptions and all false ideas, and removed the uncertainty that had existed respecting these matters. The Father came accompanied by the Son, thus showing that there were two personages of the Godhead, two presiding personages whom we worship and to whom we look: the one the Father, and the other the Son. Joseph saw that the Father had a form; that He had a head; that He had arms; that He had limbs; that He had feet; that He had a face and a tongue with which to express His thoughts; for He said unto Joseph: "This is my Beloved Son," pointing to the Son, "Hear Him."

Other pertinent statements were made by George Q. Cannon:

Here is the testimony of one who actually saw the Father and the Son. They were as described by all who have seen them—literal personages; personages with tabernacles, the Son being the express image of the Father.⁴⁶

. . . the Son of God Himself condescended to come and minister unto him, the Father having also shown Himself unto Him; and these various angels, the heads of dispensations, having also ministered unto him.⁴⁷

There were two personages appeared unto Joseph Smith, Jun., God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Whatever errors had existed, whatever doubts had prevailed up to that time concerning the being of God were swept away, never to return, from the minds of those who believed in that revelation at that time. God was then understood to be the Being who walked in the Garden of Eden and spoke with a voice—whose finger was to be the Being that He is. This testimony came with power on this occasion. . . .

⁴⁵Ibid., XXIV, pp. 371-372.

⁴⁶Ibid., XXV, p. 157.

⁴⁶Ibid., XXIII, p. 363.

In the very outset of this work the Father and the Son were revealed in ineffable glory, and they were seen by mortal man; by the testimony of others who have since seen the Lord Jesus Christ and who are living witnesses that He lives and that He is indeed the Son of God and one of the two personages that form the Godhead. . . .⁴⁸

The foregoing treatise should represent the beliefs and feelings of those affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during that period of time.

Therefore, those who believed in Joseph Smith's story pointed out that, subsequent to the visit of the Father, the Son and Moroni, there were other occasions when heavenly messengers instructed Joseph in the presence of other witnesses, and we have their testimonies to this effect.⁴⁹ Thus, these additional experiences would, in the eyes of the believer, tend to add credibility to the story of the first vision.

Summary

In the foregoing analysis, an attempt was made to compare Joseph's account with secondary reports from people closely associated with him, who, in all probability, heard this story from his own lips. The problem of semantics was of concern; particularly when accurate recording was not available at that time. An example was cited in the use of the descriptive term "angel," which was defined in relation to the appearance of Christ.

All secondary accounts seemed to concur on two basic points of Joseph's own story. (1) Joseph's age when he claimed his visitation of the Father and the Son was confirmed by most of his associates as being

⁴⁸George Q. Cannon, Gospel Truth, (Salt Lake City: Zion's Book Store, 1957, ed. Jerreld L. Newquist), pp. 130-131. Quoting from Deseret Weekly, April 7, 1889, 38, pp. 675-6.

⁴⁹Joseph Smith, Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1940), p. VII.

in his fifteenth year. (2) Careful study of the various accounts indicated agreement with the idea that two personages were involved in this visitation. Certain additional details were added by some of the secondary sources, though not confirmed by Joseph Smith, since he was not alive when these statements were published.

Quotations were included which cited reasons why believers considered Joseph's story significant. The theological purpose of the vision was pointed out and testimonies recited in order to indicate the sincerity of these individuals.

In the final analysis, it is admitted that unquestioned "proof" of the actuality of this vision could not be provided, since Joseph was alone when he experienced this visitation. On the other hand, it is quite evident that the critics' attempts to disprove its occurrence is also inconclusive. One would not only have to rely upon the character and integrity of Joseph Smith, but also upon the veracity of those who provided additional testimony and secondary accounts of this unusual story. In actuality, the only method by which one might arrive at a decision as to the truth or falsity of this story would seem to be through an inner, spiritual experience; after thorough study, one would have to do exactly as the young boy claimed he did: pray, and receive one's own witness, through the intangible power of God.

CHAPTER THREE

MORONI'S VISITATION

Joseph Smith emphasized in his journal that he knew he had seen a vision and two members of the Godhead had appeared to him. He stated that he could not nor dared not deny this experience. He announced that not only had the Father and the Son appeared to him but that an angel, Moroni, came to him in 1823. He also claimed that subsequent to this, other heavenly personages made visits.

Moroni's Visit

Joseph wrote that on the 21st of September, 1873, he retired to his room, but before going to sleep he prayed fervently that his sins be forgiven him and that he be permitted to learn of his status before God. He stated that during the three years previous he was led into divers kinds of temptations to the gratification of many appetites. This ~~statement~~ statement has led some persons to speculate that his statement indicated serious moral sins. ~~However~~, in a letter to Oliver Cowdery, Joseph explains that sins which concerned him were "a light and too often vain mind, exhibiting a foolish and trifling conversation."¹

Joseph continued that on this particular September evening an angel of the Lord visited him. The details of this visitation are outlined in the Appendix.² Some of the historical problems as well as some unusual aspects of his experience will be considered here.

¹D.H.C., I, p. 10.

²See Appendix A, p. 11.

Joseph declared that the angel, Moroni, appeared three times during the evening of September 21, 1823, and again in the morning and afternoon of the 22nd. Each time Moroni rehearsed to the young boy exactly what he had said previously. Regarding these visits Joseph commented: "He [Moroni] quoted many other passages of scripture and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here."³

Oliver Cowdery, with the help of Joseph Smith, prepared eight letters concerning the appearance of the angel Moroni and the rise of the Church and published them in the Messenger and Advocate, beginning October 1834. In his version, Elder Cowdery explained more completely what he thought Moroni quoted to Joseph Smith.⁴ In analyzing Cowdery's account, we see that Moroni's interpretation of these scriptures brought new light on ancient writings which had heretofore been a mystery to religious scholars.⁵

Moroni-Nephi Issue

One passage in the original manuscript by Joseph Smith reads:

When I first looked upon him, I was afraid, but the fear soon left me. He called me by name and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Nephi Moroni*⁶

It is observed that the name NEPHI was first written by the

³See Appendix A, p. 13.

⁴See Appendix F, pp. 9-15.

⁵In a discourse dated September 22, 1872, Orson Pratt described Moroni's personage as, "a little above the size of common men at the present day, and his arms and feet were partially bare." Journal of Discourses, XV, p. 182. The Messenger and Advocate quoted a letter from Oliver Cowdery which includes the following concerning Moroni: "The stature of this personage was a little above the common size of men in this age; his garment was perfectly white and had the appearance of being without seam." See Appendix F.

⁶See Appendix A, pp. 11-12.

scribe. Nephi was one of the ancient prophets described in the Book of Mormon. Someone later wrote the name MORONI above it. An asterisk was placed also. At the bottom of the sheet of the manuscript was written (after the asterisk):

Evidently a clerical error, see Doc. and Cov. Sec. 50 par. 2; Sec. 106 par. 20, also Elders Journal Vol. 1 page 43. Should be Moroni.⁷

Critics of the story are quick to point out the apparent conflict here and raise doubt that Moroni appeared. They even accuse Joseph Smith of confusion, assuming that the vision of the Father and the Son and the Moroni vision were one and the same.

The apparent error of the use of ~~NEPHI~~ occurred in three published accounts: The Times and Seasons, March 15, 1842, Vol. 3, pp. 749 & 753; The Millennial Star, August, 1842; and the 1851 edition of the Pearl of Great Price.⁸ These publications carried the story of the visit using the name ~~NEPHI~~ instead of MORONI.

Exactly when the correction in the original manuscript was made is difficult to determine. The note at the bottom of the manuscript page is of some help. The Doctrine and Covenants, "Section 50 par. 2" note, refers to the 50th sec. of the 1835 Edition and also some subsequent editions. The section is dated August 1830 and reads:

Behold this is wisdom in me; wherefore marvel not for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth,

⁷See Appendix A, p. 12.

⁸The mother of the Prophet, Lucy Mack Smith, quotes in her writings that Nephi appeared, since she took her account from the Times and Seasons article which contained the error. Lucy Mack Smith, Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, (Liverpool: Orson Pratt & S. W. Richards, 1853), p. 79.

John C. Whitmer, grandson of Mary Whitmer, wife of Peter Whitmer, Sen., stated: "I have heard my grandmother (Mary Whitmer) say on several occasions that she was shown the plates of the Book of Mormon by an holy angel, whom she always called Brother Nephi." The Historical Record (Ed. and Pub. by Andrew Jenson: Salt Lake City, 1888), VII, p. 621.

and With Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel; to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim; and also with Elias, to whom I have committed the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things, or the restorer of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.⁹

On page 52 of the original handwritten manuscript under the date of August, 1830, there appears the revelation just quoted. This section was apparently first written in August 1830 and copied into this manuscript sometime after May 1838. This verse names Moroni not only as the personage that appeared but also as the man who holds the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim. [Book of Mormon] This revelation was evidently copied in the journal sometime after May 24, 1838, the date of the writing of the story of Moroni's appearance, but it could not be too long after, since it is on page 52.

The other reference in this footnote is Doctrine and Covenants Section 106:20. An examination of the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants shows that it goes only to section 102. The 1844 edition goes contain the 106th Section, of which the 20th verse reads as follows:

And again what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven declaring the fulfillment of the prophets - the book to be revealed.¹⁰ (This appears as Section 128:20 in the 1962 Edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.)

This reference shows that the correction as made at the bottom of the manuscript history (and appearing as a footnote) could have been made during the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Continuing the suggestion made by the footnote on the manuscript,

⁹ Smith, et al., Doctrine and Covenants (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams & Co., 1835), Sec. 50:2, p. 180. Also found in Doctrine and Covenants (1962), Sec 27:5.

¹⁰ Ibid., 2nd edition, 1844, Sec. 106:20.

the Elders Journal, published in 1838, records the following:

Question 4th. How, and Where did you obtain the Book of Mormon?
 Answer, Moroni, the person who deposited the plates, from whence the book of Mormon was translated, in a hill in Manchester, Ontario County, New York, being dead, and raised again therefrom, appeared unto me, and told me where they were; and gave the directions how to obtain them. I obtained them, and the Urim and Thummim with them; by the means of which, I translated the plates; and thus came the book of Mormon.¹¹

It should be noted that Joseph Smith, Jr. was the editor and that this statement was published just two months after the original story was written in his own journal. This statement seems to be clear and concise. This report indicates that it was the angel Moroni who appeared to the young prophet and told him about the plates of the Book of Mormon.

Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, who declared that he saw the Angel Moroni, said in a letter printed in the Messenger and Advocate in 1835.

. . . and I believe that the angel Moroni, whose words I have been rehearsing, who communicated the knowledge of the record of the Nephites in this age. . . .

The personage who was designated to show the plates to the three special witnesses is identified by Oliver Cowdery, unquestionably, as Moroni.

In his history of the church, John Corrill, an early member of the church, writes:

Some time in the fall of 1830, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer, and Tiba (sic) Peterson, came through the county of Ashtabula, Ohio, where I then resided, on their way westward. They professed to be special messengers of the living God, sent to preach the Gospel in its purity, as it was anciently preached by the Apostles. They had with them a new revelation, which they said had been translated from certain golden plates that had been

¹¹Elders Journal, Joseph Smith, Editor, (Far West, Mo., July 1838), pp. 42-53.

¹²Messenger and Advocate, Letter VI, 1835, p. 112.

deposited in a hill - anciently called Carmoah (sic) - in the township of Manchester, Ontario county, New York. They were deposited about 1400 years since by one Moroni, under the direction of Heaven, with a promise that in the Lord's own due time, they should be brought forth, for the special benefit of the remnant of his people, the house of Israel, through Joseph, of Egypt, as well as for the salvation of the Gentiles upon this continent.¹³

John Corrill, who later left the Church, wrote the above as a disaffected member in 1839, and associates Moroni with the Book of Mormon record.

John Taylor, a close associate of Joseph Smith, stated on October 20, 1881:

What next? Then came men who had held the priesthood before! Who were they? Moroni, an ancient prophet who had lived upon this continent and who had charge of the records from which the Book of Mormon was translated - a fitting person to introduce the same principles again.¹⁴

Heber C. Kimball, another close friend of Joseph's, stated on November 8, 1857:

Do you suppose that God in person called upon Joseph Smith, our Prophet? God called upon him; but God did not come himself and call, but he sent Peter to do it. Do you not see? He sent Peter and sent Moroni to Joseph, and told him that he had got the plates. Did God come himself? No: he sent Moroni. . . .¹⁵

An additional aspect of Joseph's visions was given by the Mormon prophet's brother, William, who published the following statement in 1883:

Joseph Smith, at the age of 17 years with the moral training he had received from strictly pious and religious parents, could not have conceived the idea in his mind of palming off a fabulous story, such as seeing angels, etc. . . .

There was not a single member of the family of sufficient age to know right from wrong but what had implicit confidence in the

¹³John Corill, A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (St. Louis, John Corrill, 1839), p. 7.

¹⁴Journal of Discourses, XXVI, p. 106.

¹⁵Ibid., VI, p. 291.

statements made by my brother Joseph, concerning his vision and the knowledge he thereby obtained concerning the plates.¹⁶

It must be remembered that the original manuscript history was dictated by Joseph Smith to a scribe. From the evidence presented, it seems that the scribe made the error of writing Nephi instead of Moroni. We do not know who the scribe was, since he did not identify himself in the writings of the journal. Since Joseph had several scribes, we can only speculate as to which one could have recorded this significant story. (Analysis of later historical incidents suggest that George Robinson was most likely the scribe).¹⁷

One would wonder why the name "Nephi" was written in the first place. Why not Lehi or some other name? There may be some further evidence which will shed some light.

At the request of Mr. John Westworth, Editor and Proprietor of the Chicago Democrat, Joseph Smith wrote a brief account of the rise, progress, persecution and faith of the Latter-day Saints. This is referred to in his journal under the date of March 1, 1842, wherein he wrote:

This angel [Moroni] appeared to me three times the same night and unfolded the same things. 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, 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into my hands.¹⁸

The foregoing statement suggests that after the time of Joseph Smith's first vision he was visited by more than one angel. It is true that he could have been referring to the visitation of the Father and the Son, but further analysis does not seem to indicate that this was Joseph's

¹⁶Nibley, op. cit., p. 45. quoting from the Historian's Library, Blue Book 0127- No. 9871.

¹⁷See Appendix A, p. 2.

¹⁸D.H.C., IV, p. 537.

intention.

Orson Pratt, who was associated with Joseph during the recording of these events, said in a discourse on December 19, 1869:

This young man [Joseph Smith], some four years afterwards, was visited again by a holy angel. It was not merely something speaking in the dark; it was not something wrapped up in a mystery, with no glory attending it, but a glorious angel whose countenance shone like a vivid flash of lightning, and who was arrayed in a white robe, and stood before him. This young man saw the countenance of the angel; and he saw his person and his glory and rejoiced therein. This angel revealed to him some great realities; not mysterious or dark sayings, covered up without any particular information, light or knowledge, but certain realities were made manifest to him concerning the ancient inhabitants of this land. This angel told him that they were a branch of the House of Israel; that they kept sacred and holy records; that those records were kept by prophets and inspired men; that they were deposited some fourteen centuries ago, after the nation had fallen into wickedness, by one of their last prophets, and that the time was at hand for this record to be brought forth by the gift and power of God.

Here, then, was a reality, - something great and glorious and after having received from time to time, visits from these glorious personages, and talking with them, as one man would talk with another, face to face, beholding their glory, he was permitted to go and take these plates from the place of their deposit - plates of gold - records, some of which were made nearly six hundred years before Christ. And then to show still further a reality, something tangible, the Urim and Thummim, a glorious instrument, used by ancient seers, was also obtained with the record, through which, by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost and by the commandment of Almighty God, he translated that record into our language, and the book was published in the forepart of the year 1830.¹⁹

Also on two other occasions Orson Pratt emphasized this concept of other angels when on March 19, 1871 he said:

The present day, until the time when the Lord, by the mouth of his holy angels, called Joseph Smith and gave unto him a knowledge by vision of the place where the ancient records of a portion of the Israelitish nation were deposited.²⁰

On September 22, 1872, he declared:

I will state, however, that during these four years he was often ministered to by the angels of God, and received instruction

¹⁹Journal of Discourses, XIII, p. 66.

²⁰Ibid., XIV, p. 140.

concerning the work that was to be performed in the latter days.²¹

Parley P. Pratt in a sermon delivered August 26, 1855, declared:

Joseph Smith, by the gift and power of God, I say, through that young man and the ministration of holy angels to him, that book came forth to the world, and it has since that time been preached and read in our language, and many others, and we rejoice in it, and have borne testimony of it in the world.²²

John Taylor mentioned this subject in a sermon dated April 8, 1875:

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.²³

Again on December 7, 1879, Elder John Taylor confirmed and added stronger testimony by further stating:

I can tell you what he [Joseph Smith] told me about it . . . then follows a description of the visit of the Father and the Son. Afterwards the Angel Moroni came to him and revealed to him the Book of Mormon, with the history of which you are generally familiar, and also with the statements that I am now making pertaining to these things. And then came Nephi, one of the ancient prophets, that had lived upon this continent, who had an interest in the welfare of the people that he had lived amongst in those days.

But how is it in relation to these people and in regard to some of these matters? Why and how should these men that have lived here upon the earth have anything to do with the people that now live upon it?

. ;
Again who more likely than Mormon and Nephi, and some of those prophets who had ministered to the people upon this continent, under the influence of the same Gospel, to operate again as its representatives? Well, now, do I believe that Joseph Smith saw the several angels alleged to have been seen by him as described one after another? Yes, I do. Why do I believe it? Because I obeyed this Gospel.²⁴

It was quite evident to those associated with Joseph Smith that messengers other than Moroni appeared. If Nephi did appear, it does seem a little more logical for the clerk to have made the mistake of

²¹ Ibid., XV, p. 185.

²² Ibid., IX, p. 212.

²³ Ibid., XVII, p. 374.

²⁴ Ibid., XXI, pp. 161-164.

putting the wrong name in the manuscript before it was corrected.

Thomas Bullick, once a scribe to Joseph Smith, recorded in his journals that he understood Joseph to imply that the disciple, Nephi, had appeared to him. In a special interview on May 20, 1964, Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, professor at Brigham Young University, attested to the writer that he saw Thomas Bullock's journal and that the above information was contained in it.

The visitation of heavenly messengers other than Moroni should not be out of order if one accepts the idea that Joseph Smith was a prophet. For with the calling of a prophet, Joseph would be eligible to receive messengers and manifestations from whomever God would direct. Thus, in his capacity as a prophet, it would be logical for Joseph Smith to converse with other angels.

George Q. Cannon adds further testimony in two of his sermons:

Moroni, who held the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim, visited Joseph; he had doubtless, also, visits from Nephi and it may be from Alma and others, but though they came and had authority; holding the authority of the priesthood, we have no account of their ordaining him.²⁵

He [Joseph Smith] was visited constantly by angels; . . . Moroni, in the beginning as you know, to prepare him for his mission came and ministered and talked to him from time to time, and 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.²⁶

Testimonies of the Various Aspects of Moroni's Visit

Details of the visit of Moroni to Joseph Smith have been repeated by various persons in sermon, letter, and journal. The following are some of those who were close to Joseph and could have received from

²⁵Ibid., XIII, p. 47.

²⁶Ibid., XXIII, p. 363.

him personally his story concerning Moroni.

In a sermon on December 10, 1871, Orson Pratt stated:

Let us see whether they [the three witnesses] could be deceived men, and yet their testimony be given as it is here recorded. They have testified to all nations, kindred, tongues and people unto whom this work shall come, that, "we through the grace of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, and we testify with words of soberness that God sent forth an holy angel from heaven, and he showed unto us the plates from which this record was taken, and he commanded us to bear record of the same and to be obedient unto the commandment of God. We bear Testimony of these things, and we do know if we are faithful in Christ we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men," and so forth. I have repeated to you part of the testimony of these three men.

Now is there any chance for deception here? An angel to be sent forth from God, an angel to come down from heaven clothed in glory and brightness! An angel to take these plates and turn them over leaf after leaf and show the engravings thereon! An angel to proclaim to them that they must bear testimony of it to all people, nations and tongues; and at the same time to hear the voice of God out of the heavens proclaming that it had been translated correctly! Any chance for deception here, so far as they are concerned? Were they deceived? If so, you may as well say that Peter was deceived, that Paul was deceived, that James was deceived, that all the writers of the New Testament were deceived, that all the writers of the Old Testament were deceived, when they testify that they saw angels, for one stands on as good and sound a foundation as the other; and if the very nature of the testimony as recorded by the ancient writers shows the impossibility of their being deceived, so does the nature of the testimony revealed in the last days show the impossibility of these individuals being deceived.²⁷

The following letter from Elder Samuel W. Richards, enclosing another letter from Oliver Cowdery, appeared in the Deseret News March 21, 1884. This is believed to be the last letter written by Mr. Cowdery, and for that reason is of considerable importance and significance. It appears to be a plain and pointed testimony concerning the restoration of the Holy Priesthood by heavenly messengers, from one who claimed participation in those manifestations:

Editor, Deseret News :

I take the liberty to hand you the accompanying communication,

²⁷Journal of Discourses, XIV, pp. 262-263.

written by Oliver Cowdery, as a direct testimony of the facts therein set forth by myself personally, at the time indicated by the date affixed. At that time he, with his family, was spending a few days with me at my then residence in Missouri, as he was on his way to visit David Whitmer and family in Richmond, Mo., prior to his contemplated departure for Salt Lake City that coming spring, to spend the remainder of his days with, and in laboring for the Church. As he was about to take his leave, after several days of most interesting and familiar conversation with me, he penned, with his ownhand and in my presence, the testimony and statement therewith, which I deem worthy of record.

Samuel W. Richards

[Oliver Cowdery's letter]

While darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people; long after the authority to administer in holy things had been taken away, the Lord opened the heavens and sent forth His word for the salvation of Israel. In fulfillment of the sacred scripture, the everlasting Gospel was proclaimed by the mighty angel [Moroni], who, clothed with the authority of his mission, gave glory to God in the highest. This Gosepl is the "stone taken from the mountain without hands." John the Baptist, holding the keys to the Aaronic Priesthood, Peter, James and John, holding the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, have also ministered for those who shall be heirs to the same Priesthoods. These Priesthoods, with their authority, are now, and must continue to be, in the body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Blessed is the Elder who has received the same and thrice blessed and holy is he who shall endure to the end. Accept assurances, dear brother, of the unfeigned prayer of him who, in connection with Joseph the Seer, was blessed with the above ministrations, and who earnestly and devoutly hopes to meet you in the celestial glory.

Oliver Cowdery²⁸

Edward Stenenson, another associate of Joseph Smith, gives further testimony in his journal under the dates of May 27, 1883 and August 15, 1894:

The young prophet further said that in 1823, three years after his first vision, while praying in his father's house (I have been so highly favored of the Lord as to have been in the very house where the servant of God said he was vervently praying), when suddenly the house was filled with light brighter than the noon day sun, in the midst of which there stood an angel, who said he was sent from the presence of God, as a messenger to him. The angel instructed him regarding a marvelous work that God was about to bring to pass, and that he, Joseph, was the one who was selected to be God's servant and mouthpiece to bring about and establish the great and

²⁸Deseret News, March 21, 1884.

marvelous work. "Three times," said the young man, "did this angel continue his visits during the same night, each time repeating the same instructions, only extending some a little, and quoting several passages of scripture relating to the great work which was to come forth." In closing the last visit the angel invited the boy to meet him on a neighboring hill, two miles away from his father's house, where he would give him still further instructions and permit him to see a book of gold plates containing a history of two nations who had previously inhabited this great land of America. So plainly was this made known that on the next day Joseph said he was able to find the exact place, and met the angel as requested. . . . Well, he Joseph Smith did know, for an angel from heaven had talked with him and given him promises which he neither doubted nor feared to declare.²⁹

It is important to note that the three visits of the Angel Moroni, made in the night on September 21, 1823, were followed by daytime visits the following day. Those who would classify the night visits as dreams would have to ~~eliminate~~ eliminate this as a possibility with the succeeding daytime visits. The fourth and fifth visits could have given Joseph the assurance that his experiences of the previous night were no dream but in reality, actual visits from a messenger of God.

Moroni's message was summarized by Wilford Woodruff on February 25, 1855, when he said:

That same organization and Gospel that Christ died for, and the Apostles spilled their blood to vindicate, is again established in this generation. How did it come? By the ministering of an holy angel, from God, out of heaven, who held converse with man, and revealed unto him the darkness that enveloped the world, and unfolded unto him the gross darkness that surrounded the nations, those scenes that should take place in this generation and would follow each other in quick succession, even unto the coming of the Messiah. The angel taught Joseph Smith those principles which are necessary for the salvation of the world; and the Lord gave him commandments, and sealed upon him the Priesthood, and gave him power to administer the ordinances of the house of the Lord. He told him the Gospel was not among men, and that there was not a true organization of His kingdom in the world, that the people had turned away from His true order, changed the ordinances, and broken the

²⁹Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 21-22, 24.

everlasting covenant, and inherited lies and things wherein there was no profit. He told him the time had come to lay the foundation for the establishment of the Kingdom of God among men for the last time, preparatory to the winding up scene. Joseph was strengthened by the spirit and power of God, and was enabled to listen to the teachings of the angel. He told him he should be made an instrument in the hands of the Lord, if he kept His commandments, in doing a good work upon the earth, that his name should be held in honor by the honest in heart, and in dishonor throughout the nations by the wicked. He told him he should be an instrument in laying the foundation of a work that should gather tens of thousands of the children of men, in the generation in which he lived from every nation under heaven, who should hear the sound of it through his instrumentality. He told him the nations were wrapt in wickedness and abomination, and that the judgements of God were ready to be poured out upon them in their fulness; that the angels were holding the vials of His wrath in readiness; but the decree is, that they shall not be poured out until the nations are warned, that they may be left without an excuse. This man to whom the angel appeared obeyed the Gospel; he received it in meekness and humility, and bowed down before the Lord and worshipped Him and did the best he could in his illiterate state; he was as it were, but a mere plow-boy. He laid hold of it with all his heart, though he saw he would have to wage war with sin and wickedness and abominations, and the oppositions of the people; he began to trust in the Lord; and what was the consequence? Wherever the words of the Gospel, which the angel revealed to him, were preached among the children of men, it had its effect.³⁰

John Taylor also remarked concerning Moroni's message on September 13, 1857:

It was a proclamation made, declaring that a holy angel from heaven had appeared - that he had revealed himself unto a young man that was born in the backwoods of America - a farmer's son, without any particular educational advantages; that this angel, having appeared unto him, had revealed unto him an ancient record that gave an account of the aboriginal inhabitants of this country; that in this record there was an account of Prophets having existed on this continent in former days, of Jesus having appeared, and of angels having administered unto them - account of their having been in possession of the Gospel, having the same doctrines, the same blessings, the same privileges and powers that were associated with the Gospel on the Asiatic continent; and that this record agreed with the Bible indoctrines, ordinances, teachings and blessings.³¹

Joseph's mother wrote her own version of his experiences. After relating the portion of the story where Joseph had received Moroni's

³⁰Journal of Discourses, II, pp. 196-197.

³¹Ibid., V, p. 239.

visitations the night before and went into the field to work the next day, she wrote how he became ill and started to return to the house but stopped to rest by an apple tree. Mrs. Smith continues as follows:

He was here but a short time, when the messenger whom he saw the previous night, visited him again, and the first thing he said was, "Why did you not tell your father that which I commanded you to tell him?" Joseph replied, "I was afraid my father would not believe me." The angel rejoined, "He will believe every word you say to him."

Joseph then promised the angel that he would do as he had commanded. Upon this, the messenger departed, and Joseph returned to the field, where he had left my husband and Alvin; but when he got there, his father had just gone to the house, as he was somewhat unwell. Joseph then desired Alvin to go straightway and see his father, and inform him that he had something of great importance to communicate to him, and that he wanted him to come out into the field where they were at work. Alvin did as he was requested, and when my husband got there Joseph related to him all that had passed between him and the angel the previous night and that morning. Having heard this account, his father charged him not to fail in attending strictly to the instruction which he had received from this heavenly messenger.

.....
 . . . he [Joseph] proceeded to relate further particulars concerning the work which he was appointed to do, and we received them joyfully, never mentioning them except among ourselves, agreeable to the instructions which we had received from him.

From this time forth, Joseph continued to receive instructions from the Lord, and we continued to get the children together every evening for the purpose of listening while he gave us a relation of the same. I presume our family presented an aspect as singular as any that ever lived upon the face of the earth - all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons and daughters, and giving the most profound attention to a boy, eighteen years of age, who had never read the Bible through in his life; he seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study.

We were now confirmed in the opinion that God was about to bring to light something upon which we could stay our minds, or that would give us a more perfect knowledge of the plan of salvation and the redemption of the human family. This caused us greatly to rejoice, the sweetest union and happiness pervaded our house, and tranquility reigned in our midst.

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, 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 among them.

On the twenty-second of September, 1824, Joseph again visited the place where he found the plates the year previous; and supposing at this time that the only thing required, in order to possess them until the time for their translation, was to be able to keep the commandments of God - and, firmly believing he could keep every commandment which has been given him - he fully expected to carry them home with him. Therefore, having arrived at the place, uncovering the plates he put forth his hand and took them up, but, as he was taking them hence, the unhappy thought darted through his mind that probably there was something else in the box besides the plates, which would be of some pecuniary advantage to him. So, in the moment of excitement, he laid them down very carefully, for the purpose of covering the box, lest some one might happen to pass that way and get whatever there might be remaining in it. After covering it, he turned around to take the record again, but behold it was gone, and where, he knew not, neither did he know the means by which it had been taken from him.

At this, as a natural consequence, he was much alarmed. He knelt down and asked the Lord why the record has been taken from him; upon which the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and told him that he had not done as he had been commanded for in a former revelation he had been commanded not to lay the plates down, or put them for a moment out of his hands, until he got into the house and deposited them in a chest or trunk, having a good lock and key, and, contrary to this, he had laid them down with the view of securing some fancied or imaginary treasure that remained.

In the moment of excitement, Joseph was overcome by the powers of darkness, and forgot the injunction that was laid upon him.

Having further conversations with the angel, on this occasion, Joseph was permitted to raise the stone again, when he beheld the plates as he had done before. He immediately reached forth his hand to take them, but instead of getting them, as he anticipated, he was hurled back upon the ground with great violence. When he recovered, the angel was gone, and he arose and returned to the house, weeping for grief and disappointment.

As he was aware that he would expect him to bring the plates home with him, he was greatly troubled, fearing that we might doubt his having seen them. As soon as he entered the house, my husband asked if he had obtained the plates. The answer was, "No, father, I could not get them."

His father then said, "Did you see them?"

"Yes," replied Joseph, "I saw them, but could not take them."

"I would have take them," rejoined his father, with much earnestness, "if I had been in your plade."

"Why," returned Joseph, in quite a subdued tone, "you do not know what you say. I could not get them for the angel of the Lord would not let me."

Joseph then related the circumstance in full, which gave us much uneasiness, as we were afraid that he might utterly fail of obtaining the record through some neglect on his part.

.....

Presently he [Joseph Smith] smiled and said, "I have taken the severest chastisement that I have ever had in my life."

My husband, supposing that it was from some of the neighbors, was quite angry and observed, "I would like to know what business anybody has to find fault with you!"

"Stop, father, said," said Joseph, "it was the angel of the Lord. As I passed by the hill of Cumorah, where the plates are, the angel met me and said that I had not been engaged enough in the work of the Lord; that the time had come for the record to be brought forth; and that I must be up and doing and set myself about the things which God had commanded me to do. But, father, give yourself no uneasiness concerning the reprimand which I have received, for I now know the course that I am to pursue, so all will be well."

It was also made known to him at this interview that he should make another effort to obtain the plates, on the twenty-second of the following September, but this he did not mention to us at that time.³²

It should be noted here that Joseph's mother brings to light a different aspect of the story than we have received from Joseph. She states that Moroni had told Joseph to tell his father of the night visits and Joseph had failed to do so. Moroni admonished him again to do this when he appeared in his day visit. We only have Mrs. Smith's story to verify this phase; and because Joseph was not alive when her story was published, he could not substantiate it.

Also there is a difference with respect to obtaining the plates. Mrs. Smith implies that Joseph expected to receive the plates when he

³²Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., pp. 79-85, 100-101.

went to the Hill Cumorah a year after the first visit. In Joseph's account he is clear in stating that the angel told him the time for receiving the plates would not be until four years from the time of the first visit.³³ Although the point of difference is not so important, it is an example of how some aspects in a retold story assume characteristics which are unlike the original.

Summary

In analyzing Joseph's account of Moroni's visit we are not without problems. From the testimonies cited it seems possible that: (1) Joseph's story of Moroni was believed by his family and close associates, (2) others (the three witnesses) also testified that they saw an angel who Oliver Cowdery identified as Moroni,³⁴ (3) There exist differences of dates³⁵ and circumstances³⁶ plus problems of proper recording, (4) the Nephi-Moroni issue seemed to be a clerical error substantiated by subsequent writings, (5) several persons confirm that Joseph stated on occasion that other Book of Mormon prophets besides Moroni appeared.

Further thought on these experiences must also confirm the statement made in this thesis concerning the visitation of the Father and the Son, i.e., that an experience such as Joseph claims can be verified only by a spiritual experience on the part of the investigator. With human error existing in the mistakes of memory and a natural tendency to embellish, the retold story is, at best, a confirmation of only the

³³See Appendix A, p. 16.

³⁴Messenger and Advocate, Letter VI, 1835, p. 112.

³⁵See Appendix D, pp. 4-5.

³⁶Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., pp. 79-85, 100-101.

basic points of a story. The basic point of Joseph's story is that the
① angel Moroni appeared to him, ② delivered a message, ③ and gave him a record
of a group of people. All sources seem to have confirmed this point and
Joseph, himself, remained consistent in his referral quotations.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Introduction to the Appendix

The appendix of this thesis is made up of several accounts of the First Vision and of the visits of the angel Moroni. In selecting these accounts, attention was given to their authenticity, the date of publication and the author's proximity to the primary source, Joseph Smith. Included first is the ^①manuscript history as dictated by Joseph Smith to a clerk who wrote in longhand. Next is the story as it appears today in ^②the Pearl of Great Price, an accepted scripture of the church. Next is ^③included the earliest account, which appears to have been dictated by Joseph to a scribe but never finished. Next is listed ^④Orson Pratt's version which was published in England, then the ^⑤Wentworth Letter, Oliver ^⑥Cowdery's account, Orson Hyde's pamphlet and the story by William Smith, ^⑦the prophet's brother. The appendix ends with a comparative chart of the most commonly used published accounts.

Appendix A

As Joseph dictated and the scribe wrote in longhand, several words were not clear and some handwritten corrections appeared. In the typewritten form presented here an effort has been made to show these details and footnotes have been added to explain any additions, changes, or notes that appeared on the manuscript. Only those notes that pertain to this thesis were analyzed and considered.

Appendix B

The Pearl of Great Price version of this story is perhaps the one with which members of the church are most familiar. It contains certain changes from the original document which changes were made by the First Presidency for the sake of clarification. Some of these are shown in the comparative chart of Appendix I.

Appendix C

Orson Pratt published a pamphlet in 1840 which became the first separately published account of the First Vision and Moroni's visit. Because it was the first published account, it was placed next in the Appendix.

Appendix D

In discussing Appendix D, which appears to be the earliest written account of the first vision, there is certain additional information given which is not directly related to the thesis, but is nevertheless historically important. In this particular narrative Joseph's scribe wrote down a number and then wrote over it. To the writer and others, it looks like a 16, indicating the year in which Joseph had the first vision (in his 16th year). As he writes briefly of the vision, he does not mention the Father as being present; however, this does not indicate that He was not present. The date of the appearance of the angel Moroni is given as the 22nd day of September, 1822. This date, of course, could or could not be an error since the vision is later recorded as lasting from the evening of the 21st day of September until the morning of the 22nd, and again in the afternoon of the 22nd. The year does disagree with the account written by Joseph Smith at a later date.

Joseph also related in this early account that the Lord appeared to Martin Harris and gave him instructions. He also wrote that the Lord

appeared to Oliver Cowdery with instructions and a vision.

Another new item of history revealed by this document is that Samuel Smith, Joseph's younger brother, was used as an assistant in the translation of the Book of Mormon.

This account was never published or referred to by any of the authorities of the church as far as the writer has been able to determine. From the lack of recognition and importance given this document, it seems evident that it was a draft which was started but never corrected or finished. Instead of going back over and revising, Joseph Smith evidently dictated the story later as we have it in Appendix A.

Appendix E

This account is commonly called the Wentworth Letter. Explanation of the origin is given in the beginning pages of Appendix itself; however, this account also contained what is known to the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as "The Articles of Faith," a statement of thirteen doctrinal beliefs. The Wentworth Letter became the first published account of the first vision from Joseph Smith

Appendix F

This is Oliver Cowdery's version of Moroni's visitation and is much more detailed than any of the other accounts. That Joseph approved of Oliver's writing this particular story is shown by his offer of assistance and is noted in the Appendix. We are indebted to Oliver Cowdery's recital of these incidents for many details which otherwise would have been lost.

Appendix G

Orson Hyde published a pamphlet in Germany pertaining to the first vision. His source for the pamphlet is unknown, but since he was an

apostle and a close associate of Joseph, he should have heard the story directly from Joseph's lips. It is highly possible that he would have had a copy of the Times and Seasons account of the Wentworth Letter, or the history that was in the same publication on March 15th of 1842. Orson Hyde published his account to be used as a missionary tool among the German people.

Appendix H

William Smith, brother to Joseph, wrote his story when he was 72 years of age and has confused some of the details of the account, but some of his contributions are nevertheless valuable.

Appendix I

This final appendix gives us a comparison of the five most utilized sources of the First Vision. As is the case in most, if not all, publications, there are errors. These may be on the part of the writer, publisher, or printer, or they may be intentional changes. In the chart the writer merely points out some of the differences which appear in these publications. Those who made these changes did not explain their reason.

Conclusion

The story of the visit of the Father and the Son, and the account of the visit of Moroni have caught the interest of many people throughout the world. Certainly a claim of a visit from God to man deserves some attention. The reaction was dramatic; some considered it blasphemous; others treated it as gloriously sacred. Joseph had no witnesses to the original visits; therefore all sources of the story must, of necessity, be traced back to him. It is true that in considering Joseph Smith's experiences with the Father and the Son, and with Moroni, one is obliged either to accept or reject

the story. While it is agreed that the secondary sources add details that may have been related in private and left out of Joseph's published accounts, the story must stand or fall on the basis of Joseph Smith's character and integrity and the validity of the major claims made by him.

Dr. Hugh Nibley, professor of History and Religion at Brigham Young University, compiled a series of articles on the first vision, thoroughly analyzing the anti-Mormon writers' criticism of Joseph's significant claims. These articles were published in The Improvement Era periodically from July to November 1961. In his summary Dr. Nibley states that in every case, without exception, the critic distorted Joseph Smith's account, while professing to follow it.

In appraising the remarks of various people associated with Joseph Smith, it is important that careful analysis be made of the meaning of certain frequently used words. It should be remembered that in presenting discourses as these men did, they did not use forms from which they read their sermons. These men were guided by their feelings and acknowledged their weaknesses as finished speakers. Therefore, if their remarks are to be criticized by skeptics, they should be read carefully and in context with the particular topic of the sermon or publication. Definition of words which were accepted in that time should be considered in determining the true meaning of certain remarks. A case in point is the term "angel" which we have previously discussed. When the men associated with Joseph Smith referred to God, Christ, Moroni or other heavenly personages, it seems that they sometimes had reason to refer to them as angels. This title is not, in any way, belittle their calling; it only describes their mission. Joseph Smith defined the term angel as a ministering personage and, in fact, names Christ as an angel.¹ Using this definition, anyone could have referred to Christ

¹D.H.C., IV, p. 425.

as an Angel. Therefore, the use of any term such as angel cannot be defined by using statements out of context. The reader must know what the writer of speaker means by his use of the word.

In regard to the issue of how many personages appeared and when, we again should use the primary source first, coupled with other reliable sources which substantiate the first. The body of this work has been written in an effort to show that the various accounts of the appearance of the Father and the Son plus the visit of Moroni and others, agree in time, place and number. Even though some accounts present certain inconsistencies, it has hopefully been shown how these may have crept in, and that they may be reconciled with the basic tenets of the story. Joseph Smith, at least, was consistent in the retelling of the essential items of his story, and only minor discrepancies are found in the narratives of his associates.

Environment

Certainly, in most situations, the environment plays an important part in the sequence of events. In analyzing the consistency with which the Lord worked, it seems to be His plan, in most instances, to reveal His will in response to man's request, along with the necessity of man's being ready to receive this revealed word. The message which Joseph Smith claimed was given to him by Jesus Christ could not have been given to the people of the world unless the environment of their day had conditioned their minds to receive these instructions. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claim that Joseph Smith was selected years before his birth to come forth in his particular day and time through his religious parentage, selected to meet God's purposes. In this environment, God gave mankind the opportunity to accept the story of the restoration of His Kingdom on the earth.

Importance of Story

That this story is true and stands as the greatest communication between God and man, may be disputed, but as far as our present history allows, we have no other story to equal this, in all aspects. The story declares that God, the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to a young man. Two personages of the Godhead appeared together, were seen together in their glory and both spoke messages. To the believer there are even some writings telling that such a specific experience was foretold in prophecy² plus other prophecies foretelling the restoration of the gospel in the last days.³

Number of Visitations Claimed

Joseph Smith dictated his story in 1838 - the events having taken place between 1820 and 1836. He was then (1838) in his thirty-third year and was seemingly trusting to his memory. But, being the only witness, this was all he could do. In addition to the Father, the Son, and Moroni, there were more than ten personages involved in the manifestations, according to Joseph Smith; Moses and Elijah were prophets among the Israelites, John the Baptist had the distinction of introducing the Christian dispensation and of baptizing Christ, Peter, James and John were chosen to head that particular dispensations following Christ's resurrection. Moroni and Nephi were great Nephite leaders, and the Father and his Son Jesus Christ are accepted as members of the Godhead by almost all Christians. Joseph Smith claimed to have conversed with all of these heavenly personages listed above plus others. Each had a particular message to deliver and did not appear simply to

²Thesis, Chapter 1, footnote No. 47, p. 21.

³Revelation 14:6,7.

satisfy the curiosity of the recipient. Joseph Smith declared that the Father and the Son appeared to enlighten the world as to the being, character and attributes of God, which knowledge had been lost.⁴ Moroni and his associates bridged the gap existing between the two continents and gave to the world the Book of Mormon, additional scrippure, necessary to man's salvation. The Mormon leader also testified that this work was the beginning of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Time.

Secondary Accounts

The accounts which have been reproduced in the Appendices confirm and enlarge upon the basic aspects of the story as first told by Joseph Smith. Careful analysis of all sources quoted (allowing for human error manifested in certain of the conflicts) shows that the basic quality of the testimonial evidence is sincere, coherent, and consistent.

John Taylor expressed his feelings in this way:

. . . and if God has not spoken, if the angel of God has not appeared to Joseph Smith, and if these things are not true of which we speak, then the whole thing is an imposture from beginning to end. There is no halfway house, no middle path about the matter; it is either one thing or the other.⁵

We have read from the testimonies of Joseph Smith's friends, those who were members of the church and those who were not. Each man who reads these accounts will have to determine for himself whether he will accept the story as true or false. Anyone acquainted with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would have to acknowledge that this story and its related teachings have affected the lives of millions

⁴D.H.C., CI, p. 303.

⁵Journal of Discourses, XXI, p. 165.

Joseph Smith had no witnesses in the sacred grove, yet many thousands have testified that they know his story to be true.. The visit of Moroni and the resultant Book of Mormon were substantiated by witnesses who testified that they saw and felt the evidence.

Teachings of Joseph Smith

As a result of these experiences, the teachings expounded by this Mormon leader regarding man's salvation apparently revolutionized the religious thinking of those who joined his movement. Many of the doctrines were new; many were answers to existing problems and questions (many of these problems developed from partly-known truths then in existence). Most people associated with Joseph never thought that this new doctrine was of his own making, or that he was capable of such invention of and by himself. Joseph seemed to be the first to acknowledge God's part and influence.

When he left the woods and announced that he had a vision of the Father and the Son, describing their personages, he was immediately besieged with persecution, which never ceased until his martyrdom at the age of 38 years.

Testimonies of Joseph Smith's Close Associates

John Taylor, third President of the Church and associate of Joseph Smith, summarizes as follows:

Joseph Smith came forward telling us that an angel had administered to him and had revealed unto him the principles of the gospel as they existed in former days, and that God was going to set his hand to work in these last days to accomplish his purposes and build up his kingdom, to introduce correct principles, to overturn error, evil and corruption, and to establish his church and kingdom upon the earth. I have heard him talk about these things myself. I have heard him tell over and over again, to myself and others the circumstances pertaining to these visions and the various ministrations of angels and the development of the purposes of God towards the human family.

⁶Ibid., XIV, p. 365.

Orson Pratt, another close companion of Joseph Smith, testifies:

. . . that God had again spoken from the heavens, and that by holy angels sent down from heaven, he had again revealed the everlasting Gospel in all its fulness, and for forty years past we have declared this to the world. We have also testified that many of the servants of God have been ordained by holy angels and sent forth to publish these tidings among the inhabitants of the earth, and that others have been ordained by those who received their ordination from heavenly messengers.⁷

In 1853 Parley P. Pratt gave a discourse on the doctrine of revelation, communication with the heavens and the necessity of this contact in the salvation of man. He said:

What is it that first disturbed the world, or any part of it, or called the attention of the people towards it, giving rise to the system now called "Mormonism?" It was the ministration of angels to certain individuals; or in other words, certain individuals in this age enjoyed open visions.

But where can we read, under the government of the Patriarchs, before the flood or after it; before Moses or after him; before Christ or after Christ - where can we read in sacred history of a people of God by whom the doctrine of visions and ministering of angels would be discarded, or be considered erroneous?⁸

Edward Stevenson was present on one occasion when Joseph told the story of his heavenly manifestations. He related that he was so inspired by the experience and received such an emotional impact from it that he never forgot the experience. He writes :

The Prophet [Joseph Smith] stood at a table, for the pulpit, where he began relating his vision, and before he got through, he was in the midst of the congregation with uplifted hand. I do believe that there was not one person present who was not [convinced] of the truth of his vision of an angel [coming] to him. His countenance seemed to me to assume a heavenly whiteness and his voice was so piercing and forcible - for my part, it so impressed me as to become indelibly imprinted on my mind.⁹

We [Edward Stevenson's family] were proud, indeed, to entertain one who had conversed with the Father and the Son, and been under the tuition of an angel from Heaven, and who, under the immediate direction of the

⁷Ibid., XVI, p. 79.

⁸Ibid., I, p. 299.

⁹Stevenson, op. cit., quoting Edward Stevenson's "Autobiography," pp. 18-19.

Almighty, had organized the true Church on the earth after the exact pattern of the organized by God, through Jesus Christ, eighteen hundred years before.¹⁰

We have recited testimonies of men who knew the prophet and heard the story from his own lips. Now in this conclusion let us quote further from Edward Stevenson, who not only testifies concerning the heavenly manifestations but describes so well the character of Joseph Smith. He stated:

I am a living witness that I personally heard this young prophet [Joseph Smith] testify in 1834 that Jesus' words were true and that God had called upon him by heavenly vision to re-establish this same order.¹¹

. . . although I was then only one year old in the church and felt as though we were highly honored by entertaining a Prophet of God who had stood in the presence of God the Father, and Jesus Christ, His only Begotten upon the earth. And while we heard him tell in his plain simple way about this open vision and also of the visit of Moroni, the angel, to him, I had a testimony of the truth, for the spirit of God witnessed and the Holy Ghost sealed upon me his truthful words.

.
I have been with men of God [Joseph Smith & Hyrum Smith] in their mortal life in Michigan, in Missouri and in Illinois and to me it has proved that to know them well, has proven to love them dearly. I have written much concerning Joseph, of his sayings and doings, as I have witnessed them, and in all my intercourse with them I testify that I have not either been taught anything, or heard them publicly teach any principle but what was wholesome, pure and calculated to elevate mortals to a higher degree of excellence and salvation, both in this life and eternal lives in the worlds to come. And I know that they were prophets sent of God, and that they opened up a gospel dispensation of salvation to all who obey and carry out their doctrine which still lives and will continue to spread, and do just as the prophets left the work - gathering the people together, building temples, doing temple work for the living and for the dead - which will increase for at least one thousand years to come until every souls in the prison house shall be saved and redeemed, and thus fulfill the great work of the Redeemer who died for all.¹²

Joseph Smith claimed to have received many spiritual manifestations in addition to those discussed here. Belief in these things were of such

¹⁰Ibid., quoting Edward Stevenson's "Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet," p. 46.

¹¹Ibid., quoting "Liberty Jail," Utah Monthly Magazine, IX, (1893), 168.

¹²Ibid., quoting "Autobiography," pp. 64-65, 258-259.

import to the Church that Orson Pratt relates that as early as 1833 there was at least one instance where rejection of a vision was one of the reasons for an excommunication.¹³

Charles W. Panrose, one of the members of the First Presidency of the church has declared:

Joseph F. Smith, sixth President of the Church in this dispensation spoke in the Assembly Hall, July 8, 1917, in Salt Lake, delivering this testimonial:

The greatest event that has ever occurred in the world since the resurrection of the Son of God from the tomb and His ascension on high, was the coming of the Father and of the Son to that boy Joseph Smith, to prepare the way for the laying ~~of~~ the foundation of His Kingdom - not the kingdom of man - never more to cease nor be overturned. Having accepted this truth, I find it easy to accept of every other truth that he enunciated and declared during his mission of fourteen years in the world. He never taught a doctrine that was not true. He never practiced a doctrine that he was not commanded to practice. He never advocated error. He was not deceived. He saw; he heard; he did as he was commanded to do; and therefore, God is responsible for the work accomplished by Joseph Smith - not Joseph Smith. The Lord is responsible for it and not man.¹⁵

Summary

In the foregoing thesis it has been suggested that the question "Did Joseph Smith have visions where he actually saw the Father and the Son and the Angel Moroni?" can be answered only through individual experience. There is no physical "evidence" that this manifestation took

¹³Orson Pratt's Journal, Church Historians Office, Dec. 29, 1833.

¹⁴General Conference Report, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 91-94, 1921-1923, p. 16.

¹⁵Nibley, op. cit., p. 28.

place. Joseph Smith had no witnesses to the first manifestations, although (as was pointed out) in later experiences he did.

The thesis has been rather detailed in quoting people who were personally acquainted with Joseph Smith. In using these sources and the accounts in the appendix, the main theme involved is whether Joseph was consistent in his story.

If the investigator will analyze all the sources quoted in their contexts and take into consideration the apparent intention of their authors, it would seem that there would be no question as to the consistency of the Joseph Smith Story. It will be noted that most of the statements and accounts used were made during the lifetime of the Mormon Prophet so that he had the opportunity to correct any misconception.

One of the most outstanding tests of his consistency was Joseph's continuous stand on his original story when confronted by persecution. Joseph no doubt had opportunity to deny his stories and save much sorrow. Eventually Joseph was willing to give up his life rather than deny his claims.

Problems of accuracy in retold stories will always exist because of human errors. These are not as serious as the critics would have us believe. An attempt has been made to point these out and show that despite the errors in some of the details, the basic aspect of the story prevailed, i.e. that the Father and the Son appeared as two separate personages and that another appearance of a heavenly messenger, Moroni, did constitute the story as Joseph dictated it. These basic points of Joseph's claim seem to be consistently repeated by those who were more closely associated with him.

Here, then, we have a story by a man who, rather than deny the various aspects of his spiritual manifestation, suffered a mob to kill him. His family believed him; his friends and close associates honored him by

confirming his claims. The authenticity of his story must be traced back to the man himself. Without witness, he made a claim unequalled in all history - a visitation of the Father and the Son, and communication with both of them. The integrity of this Mormon prophet seems to have stood the test. During his lifetime he was persecuted to such an extent that many times, after beatings and abuses, he was left for dead; yet he never refuted his story. Through it all he remained consistent in his declaration that he received heavenly manifestations. Criticism and insults have been heaped upon him, yet his story remains. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bear testimony that they have received a spiritual assurance of the actuality of Joseph Smith's first vision. The principle of revelation from heaven has become the rock upon which the organization has grown. Thus the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the story of Joseph Smith must stand or fail on the authenticity of the First Vision and the appearance of the Angel Moroni.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Joseph Smith's Original Manuscript History

Joseph Smith realized the importance of record keeping. Because he did, we have a series of seven volumes of Church History, the first six of which were taken from his journals which were kept until his death in 1844. One of Joseph's many problems was the unreliability of some of his scribes and those who were appointed to be historians in the early period of the church's history. Record keeping was difficult under these circumstances, but through Joseph's tenacity, most of the details have been preserved.

Joseph Smith started officially to write the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sometime near May 2, 1838. He used a scribe and dictated most of the history. We are also told that the First Presidency assisted in writing the history.¹ What this assistance comprised we are left to conjecture. This handwritten copy of the history is in possession of the Church Historian's Office. A microfilm has been made from the original and from this film the following copy was made.

The manuscript does not indicate the name of the clerk who took the dictation. However, recorded in the minutes of the meeting of the General Conference of the Church, at Far West, Missouri, April 6, 1838, is the following:

. . . John Correll and Elias Higbee, historians. George W. Robinson

¹D.H.C., III, p. 26.

general church recorder and clerk to the First Presidency.²

Under the date of April 27, 1838, Joseph Smith recorded in his journal:

This day I chiefly spent in writing a history of the church from the earliest period of its existence, up to this date.³

Immediately following this entry under date of April 28, 1838, was recorded the minutes of the High Council which were attended by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, the First Presidency. These minutes were signed by George M. Robinsons⁴

Continuing in Joseph's journal we find recorded under date of May 1, 2, 3, and 4, 1838:

The First Presidency were engaged in church history and administering to the sick.⁵

In Joseph's journal dated May 19, 1838, he mentions that he went up the river accompanied by President Rigdon and his clerk, George W. Robinson.⁶

Andrew Jensen, assistant church historian, classified George W. Robinson as general church recorder from 1837 to 1840. He was the son-in-law of Sidney Rigdon. Robinson later denied the faith and was denounced by Joseph Smith, August 29, 1842. He associated with John C. Bennett and left Nauvoo in 1843.⁷

From this data it seems that George W. Robinson was the scribe for the most important document. The following copy is the start of the

²Ibid., III, pp. 13-14.

³Ibid., III, p. 25.

⁴Ibid., III, pp. 25, 26.

⁵Ibid., III, p. 26.

⁶Ibid., III, p. 35.

⁷Andrew Jensen, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jensen Historical Company, 1901), I, p. 253.

history which the Prophet kept, which resulted in seven printed volumes and is called the Documentary History of the Church.

Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil disposed and designing persons in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of ^{Jesus Christ of} Latter day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a church, and its progress in the world I have been induced to write this history so as to disabuse the publick mind, and put all enquirers after truth into possession of the facts as they have transpired in relation both to myself and the Church as far as I have such facts in possession.

In this ~~his~~ history I will present the various events in relation to this Church in truth and righteousness as they have transpired or as they at present exist, being now the eighth year since the organization of said Church. I was born in the year of our Lord One thousand Eight hundred and five, on the twenty-thrid day of December, in the town of Sharon, Widdsor County, State of Vermont. ^{See note E page 2, addenda} My father² My Father Joseph Smith Senior, left the State of Vermont and moved to Palmyra, Ontario, now Wayne) County in the State of New York When I was in my tenth year on about four years after my father's arrival at Palmyra, he moved with his family into Manchester in the same County of Ontario. His family consisting of eleven souls, namely, My Father Joseph Smith, My Mother Lucy Smith whose name previous to her Marriage was Mack, daughter of Solomon Mack, my brothers Alvin (who died Nov 14th 1823 in the 25 year of his age.) Hyrum, Myself, Samuel-Harrison, William, Don Carlos, and my sisters Sophon^ua, Cathrine, and Lucy. Sometime in

¹The words "Jesus Christ of" were written above the line.

²"See note E, page 2, addenda My Father" was written above the line.

the second year after our removal to Manchester, there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that . . . [unclear word] of country, indeed the whole district of country seemed affected by it and . . . [unclear word] multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties which created no small stir and division among the people, some crying, "Lo here" and some Lo there. Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist for not withstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great deal manifested by the respective Clergy who were active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling in order to have every body converted as they were pleased to call it, let them join what sect they please. Yet when the converts began to file off some to one party and some to another it was . . . [unclear word] that the seemingly good feelings of both the Priests and the converts were more pretended than real, for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued, Priest contending against priest, and convert against convert so that all their good feelings one for another (if they ever had any) were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.

I was at this time in my fifteenth year. My Fathers family were proselyted in the Presbyterian faith and four of them joined that Church, Namely, My Mother Lucy, My Brothers Hyrum, Samuel Harrison, and my Sister Sophonia.

During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness, but though my feelings were

deep and often pungent, still I kept myself aloof from all these parties though I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit. But in process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them, but so great was the confusion and strife amongst the different denominations that it was impossible for a person . . . [unclear word] as I was and so unacquainted with men and things to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong. My mind at different times was greatly excited the cry and tumult were so great and in. . . [unclear word]. The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptist and Methodists in their turn were equally Zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others.

In the midst of this war of words, and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself, What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right? or are they all wrong together? and if any one of them be right which is it? And how shall I know it?

While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of their . . . [unclear word] of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, First Chapter and fifth verse which reads: "If any of you lack wisdom, Let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. Never did any passage of scrippure come with more power to the heart of man that this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did for . . . [unclear word] act I did not know and unless I could get more wisdom than I had I could never know for the teachers of religion of the

different sects understood the same passage of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal, to the Bible. At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion or else . . . [unclear word] I must go as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at last came to the determination to ask of God, concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally and not upbraide I might venture. So in accordance with this my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was in the morning of a beautiful clear day early in the spring of Eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

After I had retired into the place where I had ppeviously designed to go, having looked around me and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God, I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was siezed upon by some power which entirely overcame me and had such astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. But exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had siezed upon me and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction, not to an imaginary ruin but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being. Just at this moment of great . . . [unclear word] I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no

sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages (whose brightness and glory defy all description) standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me calling me by name and said (pointing to the other) "This is my beloved Son, hear him; My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner therefore did I get possession of myself so as to be able to speak, than I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right, (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong) and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong, and the Personage who addressed me said that all their Creeds were an abomination in his sight, that their professors were all corrupt, that they draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of Godliness but they deny the power thereof." He again forbade me to join with any of them and many more things did he say unto me which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back looking up into Heaven.³ Some few days after I had this vision I happened to be in company with one of the Methodist Preachers who was . . . [unclear word] active in the beforementioned religious excitement and conversing with him on the subject of religion I took occasion to give him an account of the vision which I had had. I was greatly surprised at his behaviour, he treated my communication not only lightly but with great contempt, saying it was all of the Devil. that there was no such thing as visions or revelations in these days.

³"B Note p. 132" written above the line after Heaven.

Joseph's explanation of the appearance of God created excitement in the region and was the cause of great persecution which continued to increase and though I was an obscure boy only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, or thereabouts and my circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world. Yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me and create a hot persecution and this was common among all the sects: all united to persecute me. It has often caused me serious reflection both then and since, how very strange it was that an obscure boy of a little over fourteen years of age and one to whom was doomed to the necessity of obtaining a scanty maintenance by his daily labor should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects of the day so as to create in them a spirit of the bitterest persecution and reviling. But strange or not so it was, and was often cause of great sorrow to myself. However it was . . .

[unclear word] a fact, that I had had a vision, I have thought since that I felt much like Paul when he made his defence before Agrippa and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light and heard a voice, but still there were but a few who believed him. Some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad, and he was ridiculed and reviled, But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision he knew he had and all the persecution under Heaven could not make it otherwise and though they should persecute him unto death. Yet he knew and would know to his latest breath that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him and all the world could not

make him think or believe otherwise. So it was with me, I had actually seen a light and in the midst of that light I saw two personages, and they did in reality speak unto me, or one of them did, and though I was hated and persecuted for saying me reviling me and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart, why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision, and who am I that I can "withstand God" or why does the world think to make deny what I have actually seen for I had seen a vision, I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dare I do it, at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God and come under condemnation. I had now got my mind satisfied so far as the Sectarian world was concerned, that it was not my duty to join with any of them but continue as I was until further directed. I had found the testimony of James to be true, that a man who lacked wisdom might ask of God, and obtain and not be upbraided. I continued to pursue my common avocations in life until the twenty first of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty three, all the time suffering severe persecutions at the hand of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious because I continued to affirm that I had seen a vision. During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year eighteen hundred and twenty three (having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends, and to have treated me kindly and if they supposed me to be deluded to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me) I was left to all . . . [unclear words] temptations, and mingling with society I frequently fell into

many foolish errors and displayed the weakness of youth and the corruptions of human nature which I am sorry to say led me into divers temptations to the gratification of many appetites offensive in the sight of God.⁴ In consequence of these things I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections; where on the evening of the above mentioned twenty first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me that I might show of my state and standing before him. For I had full confidence in obtaining a devine manifestation as I had previously had one. While I was thus in act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing the room which continued to increase untill the room was lighter than at noonday when immediately, a personage appeared at my bedside standing in the air for his feet did not touch the floor, He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond any earthly I had ever seen, nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant, His hands were naked and his arms also a little above the wrist. So also were his feet naked as were his legs a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe as it was open so that I could see into his bosom. Not only was his robe exceedingly white but his whole person was glorious beyond description. And his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him I was afraid, but the fear soon left me. He called me by name and said unto me that he was

⁴"See Note C p. 123 (133?)" is written above the words "sight of God."

a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Moroni⁵
 Nephi* That God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations kindreds and tongues. or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people. He said there was a book deposited written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it as delivered by the Saviour to the Ancient inhabitants. Also that there was two stones in silver bows and these stones (fastened to a breast plate) constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim deposited with the plates and the possession and use of these stones was what constituted seers in ancient or former times and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book. After telling me these things he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old testament, he first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi and he quoted also the fourth or last chapter of the same prophecy though with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bibles. Instead of quoting the first verse as reads in our books he quoted it thus, For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud yea and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble, for the day that cometh shall burn them saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." And again he quoted the fifty verse thus, "Behold I will reveal unto you the Priesthood by the hand of Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the

⁵"Moroni" is written above the name "Nephi" with an asterisk next to it referring to a note at the bottom of the page: "Evidently a clerical error, see Doc. & Cov., Sec. 50 par. 2; Sec. 106. par 50 [20?]. Also Elders Journal Vol. 1 page 43. Should be Moroni."

Lord." He also quoted the next verse differently, And he shall plant in the hearts of the Children the promise made to the fathers, and the hearts of the Children shall turn to their fathers, if it were not so the whole earth would be utterly waisted at his coming." In addition to these he quoted the Eleventh Chapter of Isaiah saying that it was about to be fulfilled. He quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty second and thwenty third verses precisely as they stand in our new testament. He said that that prophet was Christ, but the day had not yet come when "they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people." but soon would come. He also quoted the second Chapp~~er~~ of Joel from the twenty eighth to the last verse. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled. but was soon to be. And he further stated the fullness of the gentiles was soon to come in. He quoted many other passages of scripture and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here. Again he told me that when I got the plates of which he had spoken (for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled) I should not show them to any persons neither the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them. If I did I should be destroyed, While he was conversing with me about the 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. After this communication I ~~ssw~~ the light ~~in~~ the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so until the room was again left dark except just round him, when instantly I saw as it were a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended up till he entirely disappeared and the room was left as it had been before this

heavenly light had made its appearance.

I lay musing on the singularity of the scene and marveling greatly at what had been told me by this extraordinary messenger, when in the midst of my meditation I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant as it were, the same heavenly messenger was again by my bedside. He commenced and again stated the very same things which he had done at his first visit without the least variation which having done, he informed me of great judgments which were coming upon the earth which great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence, and that these grievous judgements would come on the earth in this generation. Having related these things he again ascended as he had done before.

By this time so deep were the impressions made on my mind that sleep had fled from my eyes and I lay overwhelmed in astonishment at what I had both seen and heard; But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and hear him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family) to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich, This he forbid me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive but that of building his Kingdom, otherwise I could not get them. After this third visit he again ascended up into heaven as before and I was again left to ponder on the strangeness of what I had just experienced, when almost immediately after the heavenly messenger had ascended from me the third time, the cock crowed, and I found that day was approaching so

that our interviews must have occupied the whole of that night. I shortly after arose from my bed, and as usual went to the necessary labors of the day, but in attempting to labor as at other times, I found my strength so exhausted as rendered me entirely unable. My father who was labbiring along with me discovered something to be wrong with me and told me to go home. I started with the intention of going to ~~the~~ house, but in attempting to ~~cross~~ the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me and I fell helpless on the ground and for a time was quite unconscious of any thing. The first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me calling me by name. I looked up and beheld the same messenger ~~standing~~ over my head surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night, and commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received. I obeyed. I returned back to my father in the field and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and to go and do as commanded by the messenger. I left the field and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited, and owing to the distinctness of the vision which I had had concerning it, I knew the place the instant that I arrived there. Under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates deposited in a stone box, This stone was thick and rounding in the middle of the upper side, and thinner towards the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but ~~the~~ edge all round was covered with earth. Having removed the earth and obtained a lever which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up, I looked in and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim and the Breast plate as statedd

by the messenger. The box in which they lay was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement, the bottom of the box were laid two stones cross ways of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them. I made an attempt to take them out but was forbidden by the messenger and was again informed that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived, neither would until four years from that time, but he told me that I should come to that place precisely in one year from that time and that he would there meet with me and that I should continue to do so until the time should come for obtaining the plates. Accordingly as I had been commanded I went at the end of each year and at each time I found the same messenger there and received instruction and intelligence from him at each of our interviews respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days. As my father's worldly circumstances were very limited we were under the necessity of laboring with our hands, hiring by days works and otherwise as we could get opportunity sometimes we were at home and some time abroad and by continued labor were enabled to get a comfortable maintenance. In the year Eighteen hundred and twenty four my father's family met with a . . . [unclear word] affliction by the death of my eldest brother Alvin. In the month of October Eighteen hundred and twenty five I hired with an old gentleman, by the name of Josiah Stoal who lived in Chenango County, State of New York. He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards in Harmony, Susquehanna County State of Pennsylvania, and had previous to my hiring with him been digging in order if possible to discover the mine. After I went to live with him he took me among the rest of his hands to dig for the silver mine, at which I

continued to work for nearly a month without success in our undertaking and finally I prevailed with the gold gentleman to cease digging after it. Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money digger.

During the time that I was thus employed I was put to board with a Mr. Isaac Hale of that place, It was there that I first saw my wife, (his daughter) Emma Hale. On the eighteenth of January Eighteen hundred and twenty seven we were married while yet I was employed in the service of Mr. Stoal. Owing to my still continuing to assert that I had seen a vision, persecution still followed me and my wife's father's family was very much opposed to our being married, I was therefore under the necessity of taking her elsewhere, so we went and were married at the house of Squire Tarbill in South Bainbridge, Chenango County, New York) Immediately after my marriage I left Mr. Stoal, and went to my father's and farmed with him that season. At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim and the breastplate, On the twenty second day of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty seven, having went as usual at the end of another year to the place where they were deposited, the same heavenly messenger delivered them up to me with this charge that I should be responsible for them. That if I should let them go carelessly or through any neglect of mine I should be cut off, but that if I would use all my endeavors to preserve them until he (the messenger) should call for them, they should be protected. I soon found out the reason why I had received such strict charges to keep them safe and why it was that the messenger had said that when I had done what was required at my hand, he would call for them, for no sooner was it known that I had them than the most

strenuous exertions were used to get them from me. Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose. The persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible but by the wisdom of God they remained safe in my hands untill I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand, when according to arrangement the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty eight.

APPENDIX B

Pearl of Great Price Account

The Story of the first vision and the visitation of Moroni was published in the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price in 1851. This story was not voted on by the Church as part of the Standard works until October, 1880. In 1902 James E. Talmage of the Council of Twelve was assigned to make a revision of the Pearl of Great Price including the Story of the First Vision and Moroni's visit. In the October conference of that year it was again voted on by the Church and accepted as scripture. A fourth major edition of the Pearl of Great Price was made in 1921. This was revised by the First Presidency primarily to make it a reference work. In each edition minor errors of punctuation, grammar and mechanics have been corrected and the following copy is made from the 1963 published copy using the format and general editorial changes of the 1921 revision. More information concerning each of these editions and more details concerning the changes made can be found in the source below!¹

¹James Clark, The Story of the Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft Inc., 1955), pp. 186-221.

1. Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a Church and its progress in the world—I have been induced to write this history, to disabuse the public mind, and put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts, as they have transpired, in relation both to myself and the Church so far as I have such facts in my possession.

2. In this history I shall present the various events in relation to this Church, in truth and righteousness, as they have transpired, or as they at present exist, being now the eighth year since the organization of the said church.

3. I was born in the year of our Lord on thousand eight hundred and five, on the twenty-third day of December, in the town of Sharon, Windsor county, State of Vermont . . . My father, Joseph Smith, Sen., left the State of Vermont, and moved to Palmyra, Ontario (now Wayne) county, in the state of New York, when I was in my tenth year, or thereabouts. In about four years after my father's arrival in Palmyra, he moved with his family into Manchester in the same county of Ontario—

4. His family consisting of eleven souls, namely, my father, Joseph Smith; my mother Lucy Smith (whose name, previous to her marriage, was Mack, daughter of Solomon Mack); my brothers, Alvin (who died November 19th, 1824, in the 27th year of his age), Hyrum, myself, Samuel Harrison, William, Don Carlos; and my sisters, Sophronia, Catherine, and Lucy.

5. Some time in the second year after our removal to Manchester,

there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, "Lo, here!" and others, "Lo, there!" Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.

6. For, notwithstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion and the great zeal manifested by the respective clergy, who were active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they were pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the converts began to file off, some to one party and some to another, it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts began more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued—priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.

7. I was at this time in my fifteenth year. My father's family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith, and four of them joined that church, namely, my mother, Lucy; my brothers Hyrum and Samuel Harrison; and my sister Sophronia.

8. During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness; but though my feelings were deep and often poignant, still I kept myself aloof from all these

parties, though I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit. In process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them; but so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.

9. My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all the powers of both reason and sophistry to prove their errors, or, at least, to make the people think they were in error. On the other hand, the Baptists and Methodists in their turn were equally zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others.

10. In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself; What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

11. While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

12. Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God,

I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.

13. At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is ask, of God. I at length came to the determination to "ask of God," concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

14. So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

15. After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desire of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entriely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

16. But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never

before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

17. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!

18. My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of the sects was right that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right—and which I should join.

19. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

20. He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home. And as I leaned up to the fireplace mother inquired what the matter was. I replied, "Never mind, all is well—I am well enough off." I then said to my mother, "I have learned for myself that P_resbyterianism is not true." It seems as though the

adversary was aware, at a very early period of my life, that I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me?? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy?

21. Some few days after I had this vision, I happened to be in company with one of the Methodist preachers, who was very active in the before mentioned religious excitement; and, conversing with him on the subject of religion, I took occasion to give him an account of the vision which I had had. I was greatly surprised at his behavior; he treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil, that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days; that all such things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them.

22. I soon found, however, that my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion and was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase; and though I was an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and my circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world, yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and creat a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects—all united to persecute me.

23. It cause me serious reflection then, and often has since, how very strange it was that an obscure boy, of a little over fourteen years of age, and one, too, who was doomed to the necessity of obtaining a scanty maintenance by his daily labor, should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects of the day, and in a manner to creat in them a spirit

of the most bitter persecution and reviling. But strange or not, so it was, and it was often the cause of the great sorrow to myself.

24. However, it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision. I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise.

25. So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision; yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart, Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation.

26. I had now got my mind satisfied so far as the sectarian world was concerned—that it was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed. I had found the testimony

of James to be true—that a man who lacked wisdom might ask of God, and obtain, and not be upbraided.

27. I continued to pursue my common vocations in life until the twenty-first of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three, all the time suffering severe persecution at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious, because I continued to affirm that I had seen a vision.

28. During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year eighteen hundred and twenty-three—having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly, and if they supposed me to be deluded to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me—I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been. But this will not seem very strange to any one who recollects my youth, and is acquainted with my native cheery temperament.

29. In consequence of these things, I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections; when, on the evening of the above-mentioned twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night,

I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him; for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one.

30. While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.

31. He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom.

32. Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was gloriously beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me.

33. He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.

34. He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants;

25. Also, that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted "seers" in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.

36. After telling me these things, he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. He first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi; and he quoted also the fourth or last chapter of the same prophecy; although with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bibles. Instead of quoting the first verse as it reads in our books, he quoted it thus:

37. For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

38. And again, he quoted the fifth verse thus: Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

39. He also quoted the next verse differently: And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their Fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

40. In addition to these, he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled. He quoted also the thrid chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, precisely as they stand in our New Testament. He said that that prophet ~~was~~ Christ; but the day had not yet come when "they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people," but soon would come.

41. He also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-first eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. And he further stated that the fulness of the Gentiles was soon to come in. He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here.

42. Again, he told me, that when I got those plates of which he had spoken—for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled—I should not show them to any person; neither the breast-plate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the 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.

43. After this communication I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so until the room was again left dark, except just around him; when, instantly I saw, as it were, a condit open right up into heaven, and he ascended till he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance.

44. I lay musing on the singularity of the scene, and marveling

greatly at what had been told to me by this extraordinary messenger; when in the midst of my meditation, I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant, as it were, the same heavenly messenger was again by my bedside.

45. He commenced, and again related the very same things which he had done at his first visit, without the least variation; which having done, he informed me of great judgements which were coming upon the earth with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence; and that these grievous judgements would come on the earth in this generation. Having related these things he again ascended as he had done before.

46. By this time, so deep were the impressions made on my mind, that sleep had fled from my eyes, and I lay overwhelmed in astonishment at what I had both seen and heard. But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before; and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family), to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbade me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building his kingdom; otherwise I could not get them.

47. After this third visit, he again ascended into heaven as before, and I was again left to ponder on the strangeness of what I had just experienced; when almost immediately after the heavenly messenger had ascended from me for the third time, the cock crowed, and I found that day was approaching, so that our interviews must have occupied the whole of that night.

48. I shortly after arose from my bed, and, as usual, went to the necessary labors of the day; but, in attempting to work as at other times, I found my strength so exhausted as to render me entirely unable. My father, who was laboring along with me, discovered something to be wrong with me, and told me to go home. I started with the intention of going to the house; but, in attempting to cross the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me, and I fell helpless on the ground, and for a time was unconscious of anything.

49. The first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night and commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received.

50. I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger. I left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited; and owing to the distinctness of the vision which I had had concerning it, I knew the place the instant that I arrived there.

51. Conveninet to the village of Manchester, Ontario county, New York, stands a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under the stone of considerable size, lay the plates, despoited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner towards the edges, so that the

middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth.

52. Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up. I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate, as stated by the messenger. The box in which they lay was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were laid two stones crossways of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them.

53. I made an attempt to take them out, but was forbidden by the messenger, and was again informed that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived, neither would it, until four years from that time; but he told me that I should come to that place precisely in one year from that time, and that he would there meet with me, and that I should continue to do so until the time should come for obtaining the plates.

54. Accordingly, as I had been commanded, I went at the end of each year, and at each time I found the same messenger there, and received instruction and intelligence from him at each of our interviews, respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days.

55. As my father's worldly circumstances were very limited, we were under the necessity of laboring with our hands, hiring out by day's work and otherwise, as we could get opportunity. Some times we were at home, and sometimes abroad, and by continuous labor were enabled to get a comfortable maintenance.

56. In the year 1824 my father's family met with a great

affliction by the death of my eldest brother, Alvin. In the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman by the name of Josiah Stoal, who lived in Chenango county, State of New York, He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards in Harmon, Susquehanna county, State of Pennsylvania; and had, previous to my hiring to him, been digging, in order, if possible, to discover the mine. After I went to live with him, he took me, with the rest of his hands, to dig for the silver mine, at which I continued to work for nearly a month, without success in our undertaking, and finally I prevailed with the old gentleman to cease digging after it. Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger.

57. During the time that I was thus employed, I was put to board with a Mr. Isaac Hale, of that place, it was there I first saw my wife (his daughter), Emma Hale. On the 18th of January, 1827, we were married, while I was yet employed in the service of Mr. Stoal.

58. Owing to my continuing to assert that I had seen a vision, persecution still followed me, and my wife's father family were very much opposed to our being married. I was, therefore, under the necessity of taking her elsewhere; so we went and were married at the house of Squire Tarbill, in South Bainbridge, Chenango county, New York. Immediately after my marriage, I left Mr. Stoal's, and went to my father's and farmed with him that season.

59. At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate. On the twenty-second day of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, having gone as usual at the end of another year to the place where they were deposited, the same heavenly messenger delivered them up to me with this charge;

that I should be responsible for them; that if I should let them go carelessly, or through any neglect of mine, I should be cut of; ;but that If I would use all my endeavors to preserve them, until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should protected.

60. I soon found out the reason why I had received such strict charges to keep ~~them safe~~, and why it was that the messenger had said that when I had done what was required at my hand, he would call for them. For no sooner was it known that I had them, that most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me. Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose. The persecution became more bitter and severer than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible. But by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight.

APPENDIX C

Orson Pratt's Published Account

Orson Prat was born September 19, 1811, in Hartford, New York. Orson was converted to the restored gospel by his brother, Parley, and was baptized on his nineteenth birthday, 1830. He was later ordained an Elder and went on his first mission to Colusville, New York. He was ordained a High Priest by Sidney Rigdon. He helped to organize Zion's Camp, and was member of the High Council in Missouri. In 1835 he was chosen to be one of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and was ordained by the Three Witnesses. He was called to go on a mission to England and left Far West, Missouri, on April 26, 1839. By assignment he labored in Scotland.

In 1840, while on this mission, Orson Pratt had Ballantyne and Hughes of Edinburg publish his pamphlet entitled, Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records. He compiled this in England and the pamphlet became the first separately published account of the First Vision and Moroni's visit. He returned to America in 1841. Only the section of this pamphlet which deals with the visitations is included here.

Mr. Joseph Smith, jun., who made the following important discovery, was born in the town of Sharon, Windsor county, Vermont, on the 23d of December, .A. D. 1805. When ten years old, his parents, with their family, moved to Palmyra, New York; in the vicinity of which he resided for about eleven years, the latter part in the town of Manchester. Cultivating the earth for a livelihood was his occupation in which he employed the most of his time. His advantages, for acquiring literary knowledge, were exceedingly small; hence his education was limited to a slight acquaintance with two or three of the common branches of learning. He could read without much difficulty, and write a very imperfect hand; and had a very limited understanding of the ground rules of arithmetic. These were his highest and only attainments; while the rest of those branches, so universally taught in the common schools throughout the United States, were entirely unknown to him. When somewhere about fourteen or fifteen years old, he began seriously to reflect upon the necessity of being prepared for a future state of existence; but how, or in what way, to prepare himself, was a question, as yet, undetermined in his own mind; he perceived that it was a question of infinite importance, and that the salvation of his souls depended upon a correct understanding of the same. He saw, that if he understood not the way, it would be impossible to walk in it, except by chance; and the thought of resting his hopes of eternal life upon chance, or uncertainties, was more than he could endure. If he went to the religious denominations to seek information, each one pointed to its particular tenets, saying—"This is the way, walk ye in it;" while, at the same time, the doctrines of each were in many respects, in direct opposition to one another. It, also, occurred to his mind, that God was not the author of but one doctrine,

and therefore could not acknowledge but one denomination as his church; and that such denomination must be a people, who believe, and teach, that one doctrine, (whatever it may be,) and build upon the same. He then reflected upon the immense number of doctrines, now, in the world, which had given rise to many hundreds of different denominations. The great question to be decided in his mind, was—if any one of these denominations be the Church of Christ, which one is it? Until he could become satisfied, in relation to this question, he could not rest contented. To trust to the decisions of fallible man, and build his hopes upon the same, without any certainty, and knowledge, of his own, would not satisfy the anxious desires that pervaded his breast. To decide, without any positive and definite evidence, on which he could reply, upon a subject involving the future welfare of his soul, was revolting to his feelings. The only alternative, that seemed to be left him, was to read the Scriptures, and endeavor to follow their directions. He, accordingly, commenced perusing the sacred pages of the Bible, with sincerity, believing the things that he read. His mind soon caught hold of the following passage:—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."—James I, 5. From this promise he learned, that it was the privilege of all men to ask God for wisdom, with the sure and certain expectation of receiving liberally; without being upbraided for so doing; This was cheering information to him; tidings that gave him great joy. It was like a light shining forth in a dark place to guide him to the path in which he should walk. He, now, saw that if he inquired of God, there, was, not only, a possibility, but a probability; yea, more, a certainty, that he should obtain a knowledge, which, of all

the doctrines, ¹was the doctrine of Christ; and, which, of all the churches, was the church of Christ. He, therefore, retired to a secret place, in a grove, but a short distance from his father's house, and knelt down, and began to call upon the Lord. At first, he was severely tempted by the powers of darkness, which endeavoured to overcome him; but he continued to seek for deliverance, until darkness gave way from his mind; and he was enabled to pray, in fervency of the spirit, and in faith. And, while thus pouring ~~his~~ his soul, anxiously desiring an answer from God, he, at length, saw a very bright and glorious light in the heavens above, which, at first seemed to be at a considerable distance. He continued praying, while the light appeared to be gradually descending towards him; and, as it drew nigh, it increased in brightness, and magnitude, so that, by the time that it reached the tops of the trees, the whole wilderness, for some distance around, was illuminated in a most glorious and brilliant manner. He expected to have seen the leaves and boughs of the trees consumed, as soon as the light came in contact with them; but, perceiving that it did not produce that effect, he was encouraged with the hopes of being able to endure its presence. It continued descending, slowly, until it rested upon the earth, and he was enveloped in the midst of it. When it first came upon him, it produced a peculiar sensation throughout his whole system; and, immediately, his mind was caught away, from the natural objects with which he was surrounded; and he was enwrapped in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages, who exactly resembled each other in their features or likeness. He was informed, that his sins were forgiven. He was also informed upon the subjects, which had for some time previously agitated his mind, viz.—that all the religious denominations were believing in incorrect

doctrines; and consequently, that none of them was acknowledged of God, as his church and kingdom. And he was expressly commanded, to go not after them; and he received a promise that the true doctrine—the fulness of the gospel, should, at some future time, be made known to him; after which, the vision withdrew, leaving his mind in a state of calmness and peace, indescribable. Some time after having received this glorious manifestation, being young, he was again entangled in the vanities of the world, of which he afterwards sincerely and truly repented.

And it pleased God, on the evening of the 21st of September, A. D. 1823, to again hear his prayers. For he had retired to rest, as usual only that his mind was drawn out, in fervent prayer, and his soul was filled with the most earnest desire, "to commune with some kind messenger, who could communicate to him the desired information of his acceptance with God," and also unfold the principles of the doctrine of Christ, according to the promise which he had received in the former vision. While he thus continued to pour out his desires before the Father of all good; endeavouring to exercise faith in his precious promises; "on a sudden, a light like that of day, only of a purer and far more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room. Indeed, the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming fire. This sudden appearance of a light so bright, as must naturally be expected, occasioned a shock or sensation visible to the extremities of the body. It was, however followed with a calmness and serenity of mind, and an overwhelming rapture of joy, that surpassed understanding, and, in a moment, a personage stood before him."

Notwithstanding the brightness of the light which previously

illuminated the room, "yet there seemed to be an additional glory surrounding or accompanying this personage, which shone with an increased degree of brilliancy, of which he was in the midst; and though his countenance was as lightning, yet, it was of a pleasing, innocent, and glorious appearance; so much so that every fear was banished from the heart, and nothing but calmness pervaded the soul."

"The stature of this personage was a little above the common size of men in this age; his garment was perfectly white, and had the appearance of being without seam."

This glorious being declared himself to be an Angel of God, sent forth, by commandment, to communicate to him that his sins were forgiven, and that his prayers, were heard; and also, to bring the joyful tidings, that covenant which God made with ancient Israel, concerning their posterity, was at hand to be fulfilled; that the great preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah, was speedily to commence; that the time was at hand for the gospel, in its fulness, to be preached in power unto all nations; that a people might be prepared with faith and righteousness, for the Millennial reign of universal peace and joy.

He was informed, that he was called and chosen to be an instrument in the hands of God, to bring about some of his marvellous purposes in this glorious dispensation. It was also made manifest to him, that the "American Indians" were a remnant of Israel; that when they first emigrated to America, they were an enlightened people, possessing a knowledge of the true God, enjoying his favour, and peculiar blessings from his hand; that the prophets, and inspired writers among them, were required to keep a sacred history of the most important events transpiring among them; which history was handed down for many generations, till at

length they fell into great wickedness; most part of them were destroyed, and the records, (by commandment of God, to one of the last prophets among them,) were safely deposited, to preserve them from the hands of the wicked, who sought to destroy them. He was informed that these records contained many sacred revelations pertaining to the gospel of the kingdom, as well as prophecies relating to the great events of the last days; and that to fulfil his promises to the ancients, who wrote the records, and to accomplish his purposes, in the restitution of their children, &c., they were to come forth to the knowledge of the people. If faithful, he was to be the instrument, who should be thus highly favoured in bringing these sacred things to light: at the same time, being expressly informed, that it must be done with an eye single to the glory of God, that no one could be entrusted with those sacred writings, who should endeavor to aggrandize himself, by converting sacred things to unrighteous and speculative purposes. After giving him many instructions concerning things past and to come, which would be foreign to our purpose to mention here, he disappeared, and the halo and glory of God withdrew, leaving his mind in perfect peace, while a calmness and serenity indescribable pervaded the soul. But, before morning, the vision was twice renewed, instructing him further, and still further, concerning the great work of God, about to be performed on the earth. In the morning, he went out to his labour as usual; but soon the vision was renewed—the Angel again appeared; and having been informed by the previous visions of the night, concerning the place where those records were deposited, he was instructed to go immediately and view them.

Accordingly, he repaired to the place, a brief description of

which shall be given, in the words of a gentleman, by the name of Oliver Cowdery, who has visited the spot.

"As you pass on the mail-road, from Palmyra, Wayne County, to Canandaigua, Ontario county, New York, before arriving at the little village of Manchester, say from three to four, or about four miles from Palmyra, you pass a large hill on the east side of the road. Why I say large, is because it is as large, perhaps, as any in that country.

"The north end rises quite suddenly until it assumes a level with the more southerly extremity; and I think, I may say, an elevation higher than at the south, a short distance, say half or three-fourths of a mile. As you pass towards Canandaigua, it lessens gradually, until the surface assumes its common level, or is broken by other smaller hills or ridges, water-courses and ravines. I think I am justified in saying, that this is highest hill for the some distance round, and I am certain, that its appearance, as it rises so suddenly from a plain on the north, must attract the notice of the traveller as he passed by."—"The north end," which has been described as rising suddenly from the plain, forms "a promontory without timber, but covered with grass. As you pass to the south, you soon come to scattering timber, the surface having been cleared by art or wind; and a short distance further left, you are surrounded with the common forest of the country. It is necessary to observe, that even the part cleared, was only occupied for pasturage; its steep ascent, and narrow summit not admitting the plough of the husbandman, with any degree of ease or profit. It was at the second mentioned place, where the record was found to be deposited, on the west side of the hill, not far from the top down its side; and when myself visited the place in the year 1830, there were several trees standing—enough to cause a shade in

summer, but not so much as to prevent the surface being covered with grass, which was also the case when the record was first found.

"How far below the surface these records were" anciently "placed I am unable to say; but from the fact, that they had been some fourteen hundred years, buried, and that, too, on the side of a hill so steep, one is ready to conclude, that they were some feet below, as the earth would naturally wear, more or less, in that length of time. But, they, being placed toward the top of the hill, the ground would not remove as much as at two-thirds, perhaps. Another circumstance would prevent a wearing of the earth: in all probability, as soon as timber had time to grow, the hill was covered," "and the roots of the same would hold the surface. However, on this point, I shall leave every man to draw his own conclusion, and form his own speculation." But, suffice to say, "a hole of sufficient depth was dug. At the bottom of this was laid a stone of suitable size, the upper surface being smooth. At each edge, was placed a large quantity of cement, and into this cement, at the four edges of this stone, were placed erect four others; their bottom edges resting in the cement, at the outer edges of the first stone. The four last named, when placed erect, formed a box: the corners, or where the edges of the four came in contact were also cemented so firmly, that the moisture from without was prevented from entering. It is to be observed, also, that the inner surfaces of the four erect or side stones, were smooth. This box was sufficiently large to admit a breastplate, such as was used by the ancients, to defend the chest, &c., from the arrows and weapons of their enemy. From the bottom of the box, or from the breastplate, arose three small pillars, composed of the same description of cement used on the edges; and upon

these three pillars were placed the records."—"This box, containing the records, was covered with another stone, the bottom surface being flat, and the upper crowning." When it was first visited by Mr. Smith, on the morning of the 22nd of September 1823, "a part of the crowning stone was visible above the surface, while the edges were concealed by the soil and grass." From which circumstances, it may be seen, "that however deep the box might have been placed at first, the time had been sufficient to wear the earth, so that it was easily discovered, when once directed, and yet, not enough to make a perceivable difference to the passer-by."—

"After arriving at the repository, a little exertion in removing the soil from the edges of the top of the box, and a light pry, brought the edges of the top of the box, and a light pry, brought to his natural vision its contents." While viewing and contemplating this sacred treasure with wonder and astonishment, behold! the Angel of the Lord, who had previously visited him, again stood in his presence, and his soul was again enlightened as it was the evening before and he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and the heavens were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about and rested upon him. While he thus stood gazing and admiring, the Angel said, "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. Behold, whatsoever enticeth and leadeth to good and to do good, is of God and whatsoever doth not, is of that wicked one. It is he that filleth the hearts of men with evil, to walk in darkness and blaspheme God; and you may learn from henceforth, that his

ways are to destruction, but the way of holiness is peace and rest. You cannot at this time obtain this record, for the commandment of God is strict, and if ever these sacred things are obtained, they must be by prayer and faithfulness in obeying the Lord. They are not deposited here for the sake of accumulating gain and wealth for the glory of this world; they were sealed by the prayer of faith, and because of the knowledge which they contain, they are of no worth among the children of men, only for their knowledge. On them is contained the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it was given to his people on this land; and when it shall be brought forth by the power of God, it shall be carried to the Gentiles, of whom many will receive it, and after will the seed of Israel be brought into the fold of their Redeemer by obeying it also. Those who kept the commandments of the Lord on this land, desired this at his hand, and through the prayer of faith obtained the promise, that if their descendants should transgress and fall away, that a record should be kept, and in the last days come to their children. These things are sacred, and must be kept so, for the promise of the Lord concerning them must be fulfilled. No man can obtain them if his heart is impure, because they contain that which is sacred. . . . "By them will the Lord work a great a marvellous work; the wisdom of the wise shall become as nought, and the understanding of the prudent shall be hid, and because the power of God shall be displayed, those who profess to know the truth, but walk in deceit, shall tremble with anger; but with signs and with wonders, with gifts and with healings, with the manifestations of the power of God, and with the Holy Ghost, shall the hearts of the faithful be comforted. You have now beheld the power of God manifested, and the power of Satan; you see that there is nothing desirable in the works

of darkness; that they cannot bring happiness; that those who are overcome therewith are miserable; while, on the other hand, the righteous are blessed with a place in the kingdom of God, where joy unspeakable surrounds them. There they rest beyond the power of the enemy of truth, where no evil can disturb them. The glory of God crowns them, and they continually feast upon his goodness, and enjoy his smiles. Behold, notwithstanding you have seen this great display of power, by which you may ever be able to detect the evil one, yet I give unto you another sign, and when it comes to pass, then know that the Lord is God, and that he will fulfil his purposes; and that the knowledge which this record contains will go to every nation, and kindred, and tongues, and people under the whole heaven. This is the sign: when these things begin to be known, that is, when it is known that the Lord has shown you these things, the workers of iniquity will seek your overthrow. They will circulate falsehoods to destroy your reputation; and also will seek to take your life; but remember this, if you are faithful, and shall hereafter continue to keep the commandments of the Lord, you shall be preserved to bring these things forth; for in due time he will give you a commandment to come and take them. When they are interpreted, the Lord will give the holy priesthood to some, and they shall begin to proclaim this gospel and baptized by water, and after that, they shall have power to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands. Then will persecution rage more and more; for the iniquities of men shall be revealed, and those who are not built upon the Rock will seek to overthrow the church; but it will increase the more opposed, and spread farther and farther, increasing in knowledge till they shall be sanctified, and receive an inheritance where the glory of God will rest upon them; and when this takes place, and all

with the Lord?

but things are prepared, the ten tribes of Israel will be ~~revealed~~ in the north country, whither they have been for a long season; and when this is fulfilled will be brought to pass that saying of the prophet.--'And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.' But, notwithstanding the workers of iniquity shall seek your destruction, the arm of the Lord will be extended, and you will be borne off conquerer if you keep all his commandments. Your name shall be known among the nations, for the work which the Lord will perform by your hands shall cause the righteous to rejoice and the wicked to rage; with the one it shall be had in honor, and with the other in reprobation; yet, with these it shall be a terror, because of the great and marvellous work which shall follow the coming forth of this fulness of the gospel. Now, go thy way, remembering what the Lord has done for thee, and be diligent in keeping his commandments, and he will deliver thee from temptations and all the arts and devices of the wicked one. Forget not to pray, that thy mind may become strong, that when he shall manifest unto thee, thou mayest have power to escape the evil, and obtain these precious things."

We here remark, that the above quotation is an extract from a letter written by Elder Oliver Cowdery, which was published in one of the numbers of the "Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate."

Although many more instructions were given by the mouth of the angel to Mr. Smith, which we do not write in this book, yet the most important items are contained in the foregoing relation. During the period of the four following years, he frequently received instruction from the mouth of the heavenly messenger. And on the morning of the 22nd of September, A. D. 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into

his hands.

These records were engraved on plates, which had the appearance of gold. Each plate was not far from seven by eight inches in width and length, being not quite as thick as common tin. They were filled on both sides with engravings, in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume, as the leaves of a book, and fastened at one edge with three rings running through the whole. This volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters or letters upon the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction, as well as much skill in the art of engraving. With the records was found "a curious instrument, called by the ancients the Urim and Thummim, which consisted of two transparent stones, clear as crystal, set in the two rims of a bow. This was in use, in ancient times, by persons called seers. It was an instrument, by the use of which, they received revelation of things distant, or of things past or future." . . .

APPENDIX D

Undated Manuscript

This account was found in a journal ledger in the Church Historian's office Salt Lake City. The pages had been cut out but were matched with edge of the journal to prove location. This was done in the presence and with agreement of Earl Olsen and Lauritz Peterson of the Church Historian's office. The first page of this ledger identified Frederick G. Williams as the scribe and bore the date of 1833. Subsequent pages in the journal contained copies of letters of Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, William W. Phelps, Reynolds Cahoon, Jared Clark, Sidney Rigdon, and John Murdock. The earliest letter was dated June 14, 1829; the latest August 4, 1835.

There was not date nor indication of scribe of the account of the manuscript which follows. The information provided in the above statements seem to suggest that this account was written near 1833. Since it is recorded in the first person this would also suggest either that Joseph Smith wrote it or he dictated it. From handwriting comparisons it would appear that the latter supposition is the more likely one.

A History of Joseph Smith Jr. an account of his marvilous experiences and of all the mighty acts which he doeth in the name of Jesus Christ the son of the living God of whom he beareth record and also an account of the rise of the church of Christ in the even of time according as the Lord brought forth and established by his hand firstly he receiving the testimony from on high secondly the ministering of Angels thirdly the reception of . . . [unclear word] the holy Priesthood by the ministering of . . . [unclear word] Angels to administer the letter of the Gospel. . . [unclear word] the Law and commandments as they were given unto him . . . [unclear word] and the ordinances forthly a confirmation and reception of the high Priesthood after the holy order of the son of the living God power and ordinance from on high to preach the gospel in the administrations and demonstrations of the spirit the key of the Kingdom of God confered upon him and the continuation of the blessings of god to him etc. . . . [unclear word] I was born in the town of Sharon in the state of Vermont North America on the twenty third day of December AD 1805 of goodly parents who spared no pains to instructing me in the christian religion at the age of about ten years my father Joseph Smith Senior moved to Palmyra Ontario County in the state of New York and being in indigent circumstances was obliged to labor hard for the support of a large family having nine children and as it required the exertions of all that were able to render any assistance for the support of the Family therefore we were deprived of the bennifit of an education. Suffice it to Say I was nearly instructed in reading and writing and the ground ground rules of Arithmetic which constituted my whole literary acquirements. At about the age of twelve years my mind became Seriously imprest with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal

Soul which led me to Searching the Scriptures believing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God they applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel exceedingly for I discovered that they did not adorn their profession by a holy walk and godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that Sacred depository this was a grief to my souls thus from the age twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situations of the world of mankind the contentions and divisions the wickedness and and abominations and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind my mind become indedingly distressed for I became convicted of my Sins and by Searching the Scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new Testament and I felt to mean for my own sins and for the Sins of the world for I learned in the Scriptures that god was the same yesterday to day and forever that he was no respecter to persons for he was God for I looked upon the sun the glorious luminary of the earth and also the moon rolling in their magesty through the heavens, and also the stars shining in their courses and the earth also upon which I stood and the beast of the field and the fowls of the heaven and the fish of the waters and also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in magesty and in strength of beauty whose power and intilgence in governing the things which are so exeeding great and marvilous even in the likeness of him who created them and when I considered upon these things my heart exclaimed well hath the wise man said it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God my heart exclaimed all all these bear testimony

and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipreasant power a being who maketh laws and decreeth and bindeth all things in their bounds who filleth Eternity who was and is and will be from all Eternity to Eternity and when I considered all these things and that that being seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth therefore I cired unto the Lord for mercy for there was none else to whom I could go and to obtain mercy and the Lord hear my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th year of my age a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the Spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying "Joseph my son Thy sins are forgiven thee, go thy way walk in my Statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world, that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold he won't lieth in Sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commendments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine agger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them acording to their ungoldliness and to bring to pass that which hathtbeen spoken by the mouth of the prophets and apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it was written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my father" and my souls was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great joy and the Lord was with me but could find none that would believe the heavenly vision nevertheless I pondered these things in my heart but after many days I fell into transgression and sinned in many things which brought wound upon my soul and there were many things which transpired that cannot be writen and my fathers

family have suffered many persecutions and afflictions and it came to pass when I was seventeen years of age I called again upon the Lord and he showed unto me a heavenly vision for behold an angel of the Lord came and stood before me and it was by night and he called me by name and He the Lord had forgiven me my sins and he revealed unto that in the Town of Manchester, Ontaior County, N. Y. there was plates of gold upon which there was engravings which was engraved by Moroni and his father the servant of the living God in ancient days and deposited by the commandments of God and kept by the power thereof and that I should go and get them and he revealed unto many things concerning the inhabitants of the earth which since have been revealed in comandments and revila-tions and it was on the 22 day of Sep. AD 1822 and thus he appeared unto me three times in one night and once on the next day and then I immediate-ly went to the place and found where the plates was deposited as the angel of the Lord had commanded me and straightway made three attempts to get them and thus being exceedingly frightened I supposed it had been a dream of vision but when I cohsidered I knew that it was not there-fore I cried unto the Lord in the agony of my souls why can I not obtain them behold the the angel appeared unto me again and said unto me you have not kept the commandments of the Lord which I gave unto you therefore you cannot now obtain them for the time is not yet fulfilled therefore thous wast left unto temptation that thous mightest be made acquainted with the power of the adversary therefore repent and call on the Lord thou shalt be forgiven and in his own due time thou shalt obtain them for now I had been tempted of the advisary and sought the Plates to obtain riches and kept not the commandment that I should have an eye singled to the glory of God therefore I was chastened and sought diligently to

obtain the plates and obtained them not until I was twenty one years of age and in this year I was married to Emma Hale daughter of Isaach Hale who lived in Harmony Susquehana County Pennsylvania on the 18th January AD 1827, on the 22nd day of Sept of this same year I obtained the plates and in December following we moved to Susquehana by the assistance of a man by the name of Martin Harris who became convinced of the vision and gave me fifty dollars to bear my expenses and because of this faith and this righteous deed the Lord appeared unto him in a vision and showed unto him his marvelous work which he was about to do and immediately came to Susquehana and said the Lord had shown him that he must go to New York City with some of the characters so we proceeded to copy some of them and he took his Journey to the eastern City and to the learned saying read this I pray thee and the learned said I cannot but if he would bring the plates they would read it but the Lord had forbid it and he returned to me and gave them to me to translate and I said I cannot for I am not learned but the Lord had prepared spectacles for to read the Book therefore I commenced translating the characters and thus the prophcy of Isiah was fulfilled which is written in the 29 chapter concerning the book. and it came to pass that after we had translated 116 pages that he desired to carry them to read to his friends that peradventure he might convince them of the truth therefore I inquired of the Lord and the Lord unto me that he must not take them and I spake unto him (Martin) the word of the Lord and he said inquire again and I inquired again and also the third time and the Lord said unto me let him go with them only he shall covenants with me that he will not show them to only but four persons and he covenants with the Lord that he would according to the word of the Lord therefore he took them and took his

journey unto his friend to Palmira Wayne county and State of New York and he brake the covenant which he made before the Lord and the Lord suffered the writings to fall into the hands of wicked men and Martin was chastened for my transgression for asking the Lord the third time wherefore the plates was taken from me by the power of God and I was not able to obtain them for a season and it came to pass after much humility and affliction of soul I obtained them again when Lord appeared unto a young man by the name of Oliver Cowdry and showed unto him the plates, a vision, and also the truth of the work and what the Lord was about to do through me his unworthy servant therefore he was desirous to come and write for me to translate now my wife had written some for me to translate and also my Brother Samuel H. Smith but we had become reduced in property and my wives father was about to turn me out of doors I had not whereto go and I cried unto the Lord and he would provide for me to accomplish the work where unto he had commanded me.

APPENDIX E

Wentworth Letter

According to Joseph Smith, Mr. Hohn Wentworth, editor and proprietor of the ~~Chicago~~ Democrat, requested him to write a summary history of the rise, progress, persecution and faith of the Latter-day Saints. Mr. Wentworth was to furnish a Mr. Bastow, his friend, with a copy of this summary to be used in a history of New Hampshire, which Mr. Bastow was to publish. Joseph Smith's summary to Mr. Wentworth has become known in Church History as the Wentworth letter. It is dated March 1, 1842, although there is indication that it did not come off the press until March 2, 1842.¹ The Wentworth Letter was first published in church literature in number 9 of volume III of the Times and Seasons, March 1, 1842. Sometime the same year I. Daniel Rupp of Lanchester, Pennsylvania, gathered information together and compiled "An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States." He published this in 1844 and used the information contained in the Wentworth Letter, which he received from Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith was thirty-seven years old when he wrote this brief history. Only the part of the Wentworth Letter that relates directly to this thesis is presented here.

¹D.H.C., IV, pp. 535-36, 542.

I was born in the town of Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, on the 23d of December, A. D. 1805. When ten years old my parents removed to Palmyra, New York, where we resided about four years, and from thence we removed to the town of Manchester.

My father was a farmer and taught me the art of husbandry. When about fourteen years of age I began to reflect upon the importance of being prepared for a future state, and upon enquiring the plan of salvation I found that there was a great clash in religious sentiment; if I went to one society they referred me to one plan, and another to another; each one pointing to his own particular creed as the summum bonum of perfection: considering that all could not be right, and that God could not be the author of so much confusion I determined to investigate the subject more fully, believing that if God had a church it would not be split up into factions, and that if he taught one society to worship one way, and administer in one set of ordinances, he would not teach another principles which were diametrically opposed. Believing the word of God I had confidence in the declaration of James: "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him." I retired to a secret place in a grove and began to call upon the Lord. While fervently engaged in supplication my mind was taken away from the objects with which I was surrounded, ~~and~~ I was enwrapped in a heavenly vision and saw two glorious personages who exactly resembled each other in features, and likeness, surrounded with a brilliant light which eclipsed the sun at noon-day. They told me that all religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines, and that none of them was acknowledged of God as his church and kingdom. And I was expressly commanded to "go not after them,"

at the same time receiving a promise that the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto me.

On the evening of the 21st of September, A. D. 1823, while I was praying unto God, and endeavoring to exercise faith in the precious promises of scripture, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a far purer and more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room; indeed the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming fire; the appearance produced a shock that affected the whole body; in a moment a personage stood before me surrounded with a glory yet greater than that with which I was already surrounded. This messenger proclaimed himself to be an angel of God sent to bring the joyful tidings, that the covenant which God made with ancient Israel was at hand to be fulfilled, that the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah was speedily to commence; that the time was at hand for the gospel, in all its fulness to be preached in power, unto all nations that a people might be prepared for the millennial reign.

I was informed that I was chosen to be an instrument in the hands of God to bring about some of his purposes in this glorious dispensation.

I was also informed concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of this contry, 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 was made known unto me: I was also told where there was deposited some plates on which were engraven an abridgment of the records of the ancient prophets that had existed on this continent. The angel appeared to be three times the same night and

unfolded the same things. 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 22d of September, A.D. 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into my hands.

These records were engraven on plates which had the appearance of gold, each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long and not quite so thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings, in Egyptian characters and bound together in a volume, as the leaves of a book with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction and much skill in the art of engraving. With the records was found a curious instrument which the ancients called "Urim and Thummim," which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate.

Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God.

In this important and interesting book the history of ancient America is unfolded, from its first settlements by a colony that came from the tower of Babel, at the confusion of languages, to the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian era. We are informed by these records that America in ancient times has been inhabited by two distinct races of people. The first were called Jaredites and came directly from the tower of Babel. The second race came directly from the city of Jerusalem, about six hundred years before Christ. They were principally Israelites, of the descendants of Joseph. The Jaredites were destroyed

about the time that the Israelites came from Jersualem, who succeeded them in the inheritance of the country. The ~~principal~~ nation of the ~~sedond~~ race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century. The remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country. This book also tells us that our Savior made his appearance upon this continent after his resurrection, that he planted the gospel here in all its fulness, and richness, and power, and blessing; that they had apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists; the same order, the same priesthood, the same ordinances, gifts, powers, and blessing, as was enjoyed on the eastern continent, that the people were cut off in consequence of their transgressions, that the last of their prophets who existed among them was commanded to write an abridgement of their prophecies, history &c., and to hide it up in the earth, and that it should come forth and be united with the Bible for the accomplishment of the purposes of God in the last days. For a more particular account I would refer to the Book of Mormon, which can be purchased at Nauvoo, or from any of our traveling elders.

As soon as the news of this discovery was made known, false reports, misrepresentation and ~~slander~~ flew as on the wings of the wind in every direction, the house was frequently beset by mobs and evil designing persons, several times I was shot at, and very narrowly escaped, and every device was made use of to get the plates away from me, but the power and ~~blasing~~ blessing of God attended me, and several began to believe my testimony.

On the 6th of April, 1830, the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints," was first organized in the town of Manchester, Ontario County, state of New York.

APPENDIX F

Oliver Cowdery's Account

Oliver Cowdery had the distinction of being the first to publish in any medium the story of Moroni's appearance. Oliver was probably more intimately acquainted with the prophet than any of his associates. He spent day after day with Joseph when he was translating. He became the second Elder of the Church, an Assistant President and was with Joseph when many heavenly visitors came, including the angel Moroni.

Oliver Cowdery wrote eight letters to W. W. Phelps. Primarily they concerned the angel Moroni and the Book of Mormon. These were originally published in the Messenger and Advocate beginning in October, 1834. The portions of these letters which are pertinent to this study are herewith included. One of the greatest contributions of these letters is that Oliver gives additional scripture quoted by Moroni that does not appear in any other writings. This follows as part of this appendix. As an introduction to his letters, Oliver states:

That our narrative may be correct, and particularly the introduction, it is proper to inform our patrons, that our brother, Joseph Smith, Jun., has offered to assist us. Indeed, there are many items connected with the fore part of this subject that render his labor indispensable. With his labor and with authentic documents now in our possession, we hope to render this a pleasing and agreeable narrative.

Joseph Smith sent a letter to Oliver Cowdery in which he wrote that he was acquainted with his project of writing this history and

¹Messenger and Advocate, October 1834, p. 13.

supplied him with some details.²

²Ibid., November 6, 1834.

LETTER III

(In Part)

MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE

December, 1834

You will recollect that I informed you, in my letter published in the first number of the Messenger and Advocate, in this history would necessarily embrace the life and character of our esteemed friend and brother, Joseph Smith, Jr., one of the presidents of this Church, and for information on that part of the subject, I refer you to his communication of the same, published in this paper. I shall, therefore, pass over that, till I come to the seventeenth year of his life.

It is necessary to premise this account by relating the situation of the public mind relative to religion, at this time: One Mr. Lane, a presiding Elder of the Methodist Church, visited Palmyra, and vicinity. Elder Lane was a talented man possessing a good share of literary endowments and apparent humility. There was a great awakening, or excitement raised on the subject of religion, and much inquiry for the world of life. Large additions were made to the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches. Mr. Lane's manner of communication was peculiarly calculated to awaken the intellect of the hearer, and arouse the sinner to look about him for safety - much good instruction was always drawn from his discourses on the scripture, and in common with other, our brother's mind became awakened. . . .

LETTER IV

(In part)

MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE

February, 1835

You will recollect that I mentioned the time of a religious excitement, in Palmyra and vicinity to have been to the 15th year of our Brother J. Smith's Jr. age that was an error in the type - it should have been in the 17th - You will please remember this correction, as it will be necessary for the full understanding of what will follow in time. This would bring the date down to the year 1823.

I do not deem it to be necessary to write further on the subject of this excitement. It is doubted by many whether any real or essential good ever resulted from such excitements, while others advocate their propriety with warmth.

The mind is easily called up to reflection upon a matter of such deep importance, and it is just that it should be; but there is a regret occupying the heart when we consider the deep anxiety of thousands, who are lead away with a vain imagination or a groundless hope, no better than the idle wind or the spider's web.

But if others were not benefited, our brother was urged forward and strengthened in the determination to know for himself of the certainty and reality of pure and holy religion. . . . And it is only necessary for me to say, that while this excitement continued, he continued to call upon the Lord in secret for a full manifestation of divine approbation, and for, to him, the all important information, if a Supreme Being did exist, to have an assurance that he was accepted of him. This, most assuredly, was correct - it was right. The Lord has said, long since, and his word remains steadfast, that to him who knocks it shall be opened, and whosoever will, may come and partake of the waters of life freely.

On the evening of the 21st of September, 1823, previous to retiring to rest, our brother's mind was unusually wrought up on the subject which had so long agitated his mind - his heart was drawn out in fervent prayer, and his whole soul was so lost to every thing of a temporal nature that earth, to him, had lost its charms, and all he desired was to be prepared in heart to commune with some kind messenger who could communicate to him the desired information of his acceptance with God.

At length the family retired, and he, as usual, bent his way, though in silence, where others might have rested their weary frames "locked fast in sleep's embrace;" but repose had fled, and accustomed slumber had spread her refreshing hand over others beside him - he continued still to pray - his heart, though once hard and obdurate, was softened, and that mind which had often flitted, like the "wild bird of passage," had settled upon a determined basis not to be decoyed or driven from its purpose.

In his situation hours passed, unnumbered - how many or few I know not, neither is he able to inform me; but supposes it must have been eleven or twelve and, perhaps later, as the noise and bustle of the family, in retiring, had long since ceased - While continuing in prayer for a manifestation in some way that his sins were forgiven; endeavoring to exercise faith in the scriptures, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a purer and far more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room, Indeed, to use his own description, the first sight was as though the appearance of a light so bright, as must naturally be expected, occasioned a shock or sensation, visible to the extremities of the body, It was, however, followed with a calmness and serenity of mind, and an overwhelming rapture of joy that surpassed understanding, and in a moment a personage stood before him.

Notwithstanding the room was previously filled with light above the

brightness of the sun, as I have before described, yet there seemed to be an additional glory surrounding or accompanying this personage, which shone with an increased degree of brilliancy, of which he was in the midst; and though his countenance was as lightning, yet it was of a pleasing, innocent and glorious appearance, so much so, that every fear was banished from the heart, and nothing but calmness pervaded the soul.

It is no easy task to describe the appearance of a messenger from the skies - indeed, I doubt there being an individual clothed with perishable clay, who is capable to do this work. To be sure, the Lord appeared to his apostles after his resurrection, and we do not learn as they were in the least diffculted to look upon him; but from John's description upon Patmos, we learn that he is there represented as most glorious in appearance; and from other items in the sacred scriptures we have the fact recorded where angels appeared and conversed with men, and there was no difficulty on the part of the individuals, to endure their presence; and others where their glory was so conspicuous that they could not endure. The last description or appearance is the one to which I refer, when I say it is no easy task to describe their glory.

But it may be well to relate the particulars as far as given - The stature of this personage was a little above the common size of men in this age; his garment was perfectly white, and had the appearance of being without seam.

Though fear was banished from his heart, yet his surprise was no less when he heard him declare himself to be a messenger sent by commandment of the Lord, to deliver a special message, and to witness to him that his sins were forgiven, and that his prayers were heard; and that the scriptures might be fulfilled, which say - "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base

things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen; yea, and things which are not to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Therefore, says the Lord I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and wonder; the wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid; for according to his covenant which he made with his ancient saints, his people, the house of Israel, must come to a knowledge of the gospel, and own that Messiah whom their fathers rejected, and with them the fulness of the Gentiles be gathered in, to rejoice in one fold under one Shepherd."

"This cannot be brought about until first certain preparatory things are accomplished, for so has the Lord purposed in his own mind. He has therefore chosen you as an instrument in his hand to bring to light that which shall perform his act, his strange act, and bring to pass a marvelous work and a wonder. Wherever the sound shall go it shall cause the ears of men to tingle, and wherever it shall be proclaimed, the pure in heart shall rejoice. While those who draw near to God with their mouths, and honor him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him, will seek its overthrow, and the destruction of those by whose hands it is carried. Therefore, marvel not if your name is made a derision, and had as a by-word among such, if you are the instrument in bringing it, by the gift of God, to the knowledge of the people."

He then proceeded and gave a general account of the promises made to the fathers, and also gave a history of the aborigines of this country and said they were literal descendants of Abraham. He represented them as once being an enlightened and intelligent people, possessing a correct knowledge of the gospel, and the plan of restoration and redemption. He said this history was written and deposited not far from that place, and

that it was our brother's privilege, if obedient to the commandments of the Lord, to obtain, and translate the same by the means of the Urim and Thummim, which were deposited for that purpose with the record.

"Yes," said he, "the scripture must be fulfilled before it is translated, which says that the words of a book, which were sealed, were presented to the learned; for thus has God determined to leave men without excuse, and show to the meek that his arm is **not** shortened that it cannot save."

A part of the book was sealed, and was not to be opened yet. The sealed part, said he, contains the same revelation which was given to John upon the ~~isle~~ of Patmos, and when the people of the Lord are prepared, and found worthy, then it will be unfolded unto them.

On the subject of bringing to light the unsealed part of this record, it may be proper to say, that our brother was expressly informed, that it must be done with an eye single to the glory of God; if this consideration did not wholly characterize all his proceedings in relation to it, the adversary of truth would overcome him, or at least prevent his making that proficiency in this glorious work which he otherwise would.

While describing the place where the record was deposited, he gave a minute relation of it, and the vision of his mind ~~being~~ opened at the same time, he was permitted to view it critically; and previously being acquainted with the place, he was able to follow the direction of the vision, afterward, according to the voice of the angel, and obtain the book.

I close for the present by subscribing myself as ever, your brother in Christ.

OLIVER COWDERY

Letter VI

(In Part)

MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE

April, 1835

I gave, in my last, a few words, on the subject of a few items, as spoken by the angel at the time the knowledge of the record of the Nephites was communicated to our brother, and in consequence of the subject of the gospel and that of the gathering of Israel's being so connected, I found it difficult to speak of the one without mentioning the other; and this may not be improper, as it is evident that the Lord has decreed to bring forth the fulness of the gospel in the last days, previous to gathering Jacob, but a preparatory work, and the others is to follow in quick succession.

This being of so much importance, and of so deep interest to the saints, I have thought best to give a farther detail of the heavenly message, and if I do not give it in the precise words, shall strictly confine myself to the facts in substance.

David said, "Ps. C) make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands, that is, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness: Come before his presence with singing. This he said in view of the glorious period for which he often prayed, and was anxious to behold, which he knew could not take place until the knowledge of the glory of God covered all lands, or all the earth. Again he says, [Ps. 107] O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: For his mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands from the east, and from the west; from the north and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary

way they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them in the right way that they might go to the city of habitation.

Most clearly was it shown to the prophet, that the righteous should be gathered from all the earth: He knew that the children of Israel were led from Egypt, by the right hand of the Lord, and permitted to possess the land of Canaan, though they were rebellious in the desert, but he farther knew, that they were not gathered from the east, the west, the north and the south, at that time; for it was clearly mentioned that the Lord himself would prepare a habitation, even as he said, when he would lead them to a city of refuge, in that, David saw a promise for the righteous, [see 144 Ps.] when they should be delivered from those who oppressed them, and from the hand of strange children, or the enemies of the Lord; that their sons should be like plants grown up in their youth, and their daughters like corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a beautiful palace. It is then that the sons and daughters shall prophesy, old men dream dreams, and young men see visions. At that time the garner of the righteous will be full, affording all manner of store. It was while contemplating this time, and viewing this happy state of the righteous, that he further says: The Lord shall reign forever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations * Praise ye the Lord:

Isaiah who was on the earth at the time the ten tribes of Israel were led away captive from the land of Canaan, was show, not only their calamity and affliction, but the time when they were to be delivered. After reproofing them for their corruption and blindness, he prophesies of their dispersion. He says: Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire. Your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it

is thus made desolate, being overthrown by strangers. He further says, while speaking of the iniquity of that people: Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves every one loves gifts, and follows after rewards: They judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore, says the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of my enemies. But after the calamity has befallen Israel, and the Lord has poured upon them his afflicting judgements, as he said by the mouth of Moses - I will keep mischiefs upon them. They shall be afflicted with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction; I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of the earth - he will also fulfill this further prediction uttered by the mouth of Isaiah. I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away counselors as at the beginning; afterward you shall be called, the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Then will be fulfilled, also, the saying of David: And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

Isaiah continues his prophecy concerning Israel, and tells them what would be done for them in the last days; for thus it is written: The word that Isaiah the son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; - and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning

hooks; nations shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. And the Lord will create every dwelling place of his people in Zion, and upon their assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a covering and a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a convert from storm and from rain. And his people shall dwell safely, they shall possess the land forever, even the land which was promised to their fathers, for an everlasting inheritance: for behold, says the Lord by the mouth of the prophet: The day will come that I will sow the house of Israel with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast, And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build and to plant, says the Lord.

For this happy situation and blessed state of Israel, did the prophets look, and obtained a promise, that, though the house of Israel and Judah, should violate the covenant, the Lord, in the last days would make with them a new one; not according to the one which he made with their fathers in the day that he took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; which, said the Lord, my covenant they broke, although I was a husband and a father unto them, but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

For thus says the Lord, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places: and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: - And I will multiply them and they shall not be few;

I will also glorify them and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. Their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them.

At the same time, says the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people; I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth; I will say to the north, give up and to the south, keep not back - bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth. And in those and at that time, says the Lord, though Israel and Judah have been driven and scattered, they shall come together, they shall even come weeping, for with supplications will I lead them; they shall go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, and say Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten; and watchmen upon Mount Ephraim shall say Arise, and let us go up to Zion, unto the holy Mount of the Lord our God; for he will teach us of his ways, and instruct us to walk in his paths. That they way for this to be fully accomplished, may be prepared, the Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with his mighty wind shake his hand over the river and smite it in its seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be a ~~highway for the remnant~~ **highway** of his people, which shall be left from Assyria; like as it was to Israel when they came up out of the land of Egypt.

And thus shall Israel come; not a dark corner of the earth shall remain unexplored, nor an island of the seas be left without being visited; for as the Lord has removed them into all corners of the earth; he will cause his mercy to be as abundantly manifested in their gathering as his wrath in their dispersion, until they are gathered according to

the covenant. He will, as he said by the prophet, send for many fishers and they shall fish them, and after send for many hunters, who shall hunt them; not as their enemies have to afflict, but with gladtidings of great joy, with a message of peace, and a call for their return.

And it will come to pass that though the house of Israel has forsaken the Lord, and bowed down and worship other gods, which were no gods, and been cast out before the face of the world, they will know the voice of the Shepherd when he calls upon them this time; for soon his people will be willing to hearken to his counsel; and even now are they already beginning to be stirred up in their hearts to search for these things, and are daily reading the ancient prophets and are marking the times and seasons of their fulfilment. Thus God is preparing the way for their return.

But it is necessary that you should understand, that what is to be fulfilled in the last days, is not only for the benefit of Israel, but the Gentiles, if they will repent and embrace the gospel, for they are to be remembered also in the same covenant, and are to be fellow heirs with the seed of Abraham, inasmuch as they are so by faith - For God is no respecter of persons. This was shown to Moses, when he wrote - Rejoice, O ye nations with his people!

In consequence of the transgression of the Jews at the coming of the Lord, the Gentiles were called into the kingdom, and for the obedience, are to be favored with the gospel in its fulness first, in the last days; for it is written: the first shall be last, and the last first, Therefore, when the fulness of the gospel, as was preached by the righteous, upon this land, shall come forth, it shall be declared to the Gentiles first, and whoso will repent shall be delivered, for they shall understand the plan of salvation and restoration of Israel, as the Lord manifested

to the ancients. They shall be baptized with water and with the spirit - they shall lift up their hearts with joy and gladness, for the time of their redemption shall also roll on, and for their obedience to the faith they shall see the house of Jacob come with great glory, even with songs of everlasting joy, and with him partake of salvation.

Therefore, as the time draws near when the sun is to be darkened, the moon turn to blood, and the stars fall from heaven, the Lord will bring the knowledge of his people his commandments and statutes, that they may be prepared to stand when the earth reel to and fro as a drunken man, earthquakes cause the nations to tremble, and the destroying angel goes forth to waste the inhabitants at noon-day; for so great are to be the calamities which are to come upon the inhabitants of the earth, before the coming of the Son of Man ~~the second time; that, who is not~~ shall prepared cannot abide; but such as are found faithful, and remain, shall be gathered with his people and caught up to meet the Lord in the cloud, and so shall they inherit eternal life.

I have now given you a rehearsal of what was communicated to our brother, when he was directed to go and obtain the record of the Nephites. I may have missed in arrangement in some instances, but the principle is preserved, and you will be able to bring forward abundance of corroborating scripture upon the subject of the gospel and of the gathering. [You are aware of the fact, [that] to give a minute rehearsal of a lengthy interview with a heavenly messenger, is very difficult, unless one is assisted immediately ~~with~~ the gift of inspiration. There is another item I wish to notice on the subject of visions. The Spirit you know, searches all things, even the deep things of God. When God manifests to his servants those things that are to come, or those which have been, he does it by unfolding them by the power of that Spirit which comprehends

all things, always; and so much may be shown and made perfectly plain to the understanding in a short time, that to the world, who are occupied all their life to learn a little, look at the relation of it, and are disposed to call it false. You will understand then, by this, that while those glorious things were being rehearsed, the vision was also opened, so that our brother was permitted to see and understand much more full and perfect than I am able to communicate in writing. I know much may be conveyed to the understanding in writing, and many marvellous truths set forth with the pen, but after all it is but a shadow compared to an open vision of seeing, hearing and realizing eternal things. And if the facts were known, it would be found, that of all the heavenly communications to the ancients, we have no more in comparison than the alphabet to a quarto vocabulary. It is said, and I believe the account, that the Lord showed the brother of Jared [Moriancumer] all things which were to transpire from that day to the end of the earth, as well as those which had taken place. I believe that Moses was permitted to see the same, as the Lord caused them to pass, in vision before him as he stood upon the mount; I believe that the Lord Jesus told many things to his apostles which are not written and after his ascension unfolded all things unto them; I believe that Nephi, the son of Lehi, whom the Lord brought out of Jerusalem, saw the same; I believe that the twelve upon this continent, whom the Lord chose to preach this gospel, when he came down to manifest to this branch of the house of Israel, that he had other sheep who should hear his voice, were also permitted to behold the same mighty things transpire in vision before their eyes; and I believe that the angel Moroni, whose words I have been rehearsing, who communicated the knowledge of the record of the Nephites, in this ages, saw also, before he hid up the same unto the Lord, great and marvellous things, which were to transpire

when the same should come forth; and I also believe, that God will give line upon line, precept upon precept, to his saints, until all these things will be unfolded to them, and they finally sanctified and brought into the Celestial glory, where tears will be wiped from all faces, and sighing and sorrowing flee away!

Letter VII

(In Part)

MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE

July, 1835

You will remember that in my last I brought my subject down to the evening or night of the 21st of September, 1823, and gave an outline of the conversation of the angel upon the important fact of the blessings, promises and covenants to Israel, and the great manifestations of favor to the world, in the ushering in of the fulness of the gospel, to prepare the way for the second advent of the Messiah, when he comes in the glory of the Father with the holy angels.

A remarkable fact is to be noticed with regard to this vision. In ancient time the Lord warned some of his servants in dreams; for instance, Joseph, the husband of Mary, was warned in a dream to take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt: also, the wise men were warned of the Lord in a dream not to return to Herod; and when "out of Egypt the Son was called," the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to turn aside into the parts of Galilee. Such were the manifestations to Joseph, the favored descendant of the father of the faithful in dreams, and in them the Lord fulfilled his purposes; But the one of which I have been speaking is what would have been called an open vision. And though it was in the night, yet it was not a dream. There is no room for

conjecture in this matter, and to talk of deception would be to sport with the common sense of every man who knows when he is awake, when he sees and when he does not see.

He could not have been deceived in the fact that a being of some kind appeared to him; and that it was a heavenly one, the fulfilment of his words so minutely, up to this time, in addition to the truth and word of salvation which has been developed to this generation; in the book of Mormon, ought to be conclusive evidence to the mind of every man who is privileged to hear of the same. He was awake, and in solemn prayer, as you will bear in mind, when the angel made his appearance; from that glory which surrounded him the room was lit up to a perfect brilliancy, so that darkness wholly disappeared; he heard his words with his ^hearbs, and received a joy and happiness indescribable by hearing that his own sins were forgiven, and his former transgressions to be remembered against him no more, if he ~~then~~ continued to walk before the Lord according to his holy commandments. He also saw him depart, the light and glory withdraw, leaving a calmness and peace of soul past the language of man to paint—
Was he deceived/

Far from this; for the vision was renewed twice before morning, unfolding farther and still farther the mysteries of godliness and those things to come. In the morning he went to his labor as usual, but soon the vision of the heavenly messenger was renewed, instructing him to go immediately and view those things of which he had been informed, with a promise that he should obtain them if he followed the directions and went with an eye single to the glory of God.

Accordingly he repaired to the place which had thus been described. But it is necessary to give you more fully the express instructions of the angel, with regard to the object of this work in which our

brother ~~had~~ now engaged - He was to remember that it was the work of the Lord, to fulfill certain promises previously made to a branch of the house of Israel, of the tribe of Joseph, and when it should be brought forth must be done expressly with an eye, as I said before; single to the glory of God, and the welfare and restoration of the house of Israel.

You will understand, then, that no motive of a pecuniary, or earthly nature, was suffered to take the lead of the heart of the man thus favored. The allurements of vice, the contaminating influence of wealth, without the direct ~~guidance~~ guidance of the Holy Spirit, must have no place in the heart nor be suffered to take from it that warm desire for the glory and kingdom of the Lord, or, instead of obtaining, disappointment and reproof would most assuredly follow. Such was the instruction ~~and~~ this the caution.

APPENDIX C

ORSON HYDE'S ACCOUNT

Orson Hyde was born January 8, 1805, at Oxford, Connecticut. He joined the Methodist faith but becoming dissatisfied joined the Campbellite movement and assumed a position as pastor over three congregations. Later he opposed and then investigated the Book of Mormon and was baptized in October, 1831. He was appointed to be an Apostle in February of 1835. One of his missionary calls was to go to Jerusalem in 1840 to dedicate the land for the return of the Jews. He left on that mission from New York City in February of 1841. After accomplishing the purpose of his mission, he went to Germany where he published an account of the First Vision in the German language. Concerning the publication, Joseph Smith records:

Something this month [August, 1842] Elder Hyde published a pamphlet in the German Language, in Germany, entitled A Cry in the Wilderness, etc. of about 120 pages setting forth the rise, progress and doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹

This pamphlet was published in Frankfurt, German, 1842, and was entitled, A Cry From the Wilderness, A Voice From the Dust of the Earth. The author, Orson Hyde, was also the publisher. The following translation into English was made by Justus Ernst of the Church Historian's office about 1959.

¹.DH.C. V., p. 142.

Joseph Smith, Jr., to whom the angel of the Lord was sent first, was born in the town of Sharon, Windsor county, Vermont, on the 23rd of December, 1805.

When ten years old, his parents with their family, moved to Palmyra, New York, in the vicinity of which he resided for about eleven years, the latter part in the town of Manchester. His only activity was to plow and cultivate the fields, As his parents were poor and had to take care of a large family, his education was very limited. He could read without much difficulty, and write a very imperfect hand, and had a very limited understanding of the elementary rules of arithmetic. These were his highest and only attainments; while the rest of those branches, so universally taught in the common schools throughout the United States, were entirely unknown to him.

When somewhere about fourteen or fifteen years old, he began seriously to reflect upon the necessity of being prepared for a future state of existence; but how, or in what way to prepare himself, was a question, as yet, undetermined in his own mind; he perceived that it was a question of infinite importance. He saw, that if he understood not the way, it would be impossible to walk in it, except by chance; and the thought of resting his hopes of eternal life upon chance or uncertainties, was more than he could endure.

He discovered a religious world working under numerous errors, which through their contradicting nature and principles, gave cause to the organization of so many different sects and parties, and whose feelings against each other were poisoned through hate, envy, malice and rage. He felt that there should be only one truth, and that those who would understand it correctly, would understand it in the same

manner. Nature had gifted him with a strong, discerning mind and so he looked through the glaze of soberness and good sense upon these religious systems which all were so different; but nevertheless all drawn from the scripture of truth.

After he had sufficiently assured himself to his own satisfaction that darkness was covering the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, he gave up hope ever to find a sect or party that was in the possession of the pure and unadulterated truth.

He accordingly commenced perusing the sacred pages of the Bible with sincerity, believing the things that he read. His mind soon caught hold of the following passage - "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." - James 1:5. From this promise he learned that it was the privilege of all men to ask God for wisdom, with the sure and certain expectation of receiving liberally, without being upbraided for so doing. And thus he started to send the burning desires of his soul with a faithful determination. He, therefore, retired to a secret place, in a grove, but a short distance from his father's house, and knelt down and began to call upon the Lord. At first, he was severely tempted by the powers of darkness, which endeavored to overcome him. The adversary benighted his mind with doubts, and brought to his souls all kinds of improper pictures and tried to hinder him in his efforts and the accomplishment of his goal. However, the overflowing mercy of God came to buoy him up, and gave new impulse and momentum to his dwindling strength. Soon the dark clouds disappeared, and light and peace filled his troubled heart. And again he called upon the Lord with renewed faith and spiritual strength.

At this sacred moment his mind was caught away from the natural objects with which he was surrounded, and he was enwrapped in a heavenly vision, and saw two **glorious** personages, who exactly resembled each other in their features or likeness. They said him that his prayers had been answered, and that the Lord had decided to grant him a special blessings

He was told not to join any of the religious sects or any party, as they were all wrong in their doctrines and none of them was recognized by God as His Church and kingdom. He received a promise that the true doctrine - the fulness of the gospel - should, at some future time, be made known to him; after which, the vision withdrew, leaving his mind in a state of calmness and peace indescribable.

Some time after having received the glorious manifestation, being young, he was again entangled in the vanities of the world, of which he afterwards sincerely and truly repented.

And it pleased God on the evening of the 21st of September, ^{3½ years} A.D., 1823, to again hear his prayers. For he had retired to rest as usual, only that his mind was drawn out in fervent prayer, and his soul was filled with the most earnest desire "to commune with some kind messenger who could communicate to him the desired information of his acceptance with God," and also unfold the **pp**inciples of the doctrine of Christ, according to the promise which he had received in the former vision.

While continuing in prayer for a manifestation in some way that his sins were forgiven, endeavouring to exercise faith in the scriptures, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a purer and far more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room; indeed, to use his own description, "the first sight was as though the house

was filled with consuming and unquenchable fire. This sudden appearance of a light so bright, as must naturally be expected, occasioned a shock or sensation, he felt through the extremities of his body. It was, however, followed with a calmness and serenity of mind, and an overwhelming rapture of joy that surpassed understanding, and in a moment a personage stood before him.

Notwithstanding the room was previously filled with light above the brightness of the sun, as I have before described, yet there seemed to be an additional glory surrounding or accompanying this personage, which shone with an increased degree of brilliancy, in the midst of which he was; and though his countenance was as lightning, yet it was of a pleasing, innocent, and glorious appearance, so much so, that every fear was banished from his heart and nothing but calmness pervaded his soul.

The stature of this personage was a little above the common size of men in this age; his garment was perfectly white, and had the appearance of being without seam.

This glorious being declared himself to be an angel of God, sent forth by commandment, to communicate to him that his sins were forgiven, and that his prayers were heard; and also to bring the joyful tidings, that the covenant which God made with ancient Israel, concerning their posterity, was at hand to be fulfilled - that the great preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah was speedily to commence - that the time was at hand for the gospel, in its fulness, to be preached in power unto all nations, that a people might be prepared with faith and righteousness for the Millennial reign of universal peace and joy.

He was informed that he was called and chosen to be an instrument

in the hands of God, to bring about some of his marvellous purposes in this glorious dispensation. It was also made manifest to him, that the "American Indians" were a remnant of Israel; that when they first emigrated to America, they were an enlightened people, possessing a knowledge of the true God, enjoying his favour and peculiar blessings from his hand; that the prophets and inspired writers among them, were required to keep a sacred history of the most important events transpiring among them, which history was handed down for many generations, till at length they fell into great wickedness. The greatest part of them were destroyed, and the records (by commandment of God to one of the last prophets among them.) were safely deposited to preserve them from the hands of the wicked who sought to destroy them. He was informed that those records contained many sacred revelations pertaining to the gospel of the kingdom, as well as prophecies relating to the great events of the last days; and that to fulfill his promises to the ancients, who wrote the records, and to accomplish his purposes, in the restitution of their children, &c.; they were to come forth to the knowledge of the people. If faithful, he was to be the instrument who should be thus highly favored in bringing these sacred things to light; at the same time being expressly informed, that it must be done with an single to the glory of God, that no one could entrusted with these sacred writings, who should endeavor to aggrandize himself, by converting sacred things to unrighteous and speculative purposes. After giving him many instructions concerning things past and to come, which would be foreign to our purpose to mention here, he disappeared, and the light and glory of God withdrew, leaving his mind in perfect peace, while a calmness and serenity indescribable pervaded the soul. But before morning, the vision was twice renewed,

instructing him further and still further concerning the great work of God about to be performed on the earth. In the morning he went out to his work as usual, but soon the vision was renewed - the angel again appeared, and having been informed by the previous visions of the night, concerning the spot where these records were deposited, he was instructed to go immediately and view them. Accordingly he went to the place so indicated, which was located not far from his father's house. This was on September 22, A.D. 1823. After arriving at the repository, a little exertion in removing the soil from the edges of the top of the box, and a light lever brought its contents to his natural sight. While viewing and contemplating his sacred treasure with wonder and astonishment, behold! the angel of the Lord, who previously visited him, again stood in his presence, and his soul was again enlightened as it was the evening before, and he was filled with Holy Spirit, and the heavens were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about and rested upon him. While he thus stood gazing and admiring, the angel said, "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 the impure, the glory of God and power of darkness, that you may know hereafter the two powers and never be influenced or overcome by that wicked one. Behold, whatever entices and leads to good, and to do good, is of God, and whatever does not is of that wicked one. It is he that fills the hearts of men with evil, to walk in darkness and blaspheme God; and you may learn from henceforth, that his ways are to destruction, but the way of holiness is peace and rest. You now see why you could not obtain this record; that the commandment was strict, and that if ever

these sacred things are obtained, they must be by prayer and faithfulness in obeying the Lord. They are not deposited here for the sake of accumulating gain and wealth for the glory of this world; they were sealed by the prayer of faith, and because of the knowledge which they contain, they are of no worth among the children of men, only for their knowledge. In them is contained the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it was given to his people on this land, and when it shall be brought forth by the power of God it shall be carried to the Gentiles, of whom many shall receive it, and after will the seed of Israel be brought into the fold of their Redeemer by obeying it also. Those who kept the commandments of the Lord on this land, desired this at his hand, and through the prayer of faith obtained the promise, that if their descendants should transgress and fall away, that a record might be kept, and in the last days come to their children. These things are sacred, and must be kept so, for the promise of the Lord concerning them must be fulfilled. No man can obtain them if his heart is impure, because they contain that which is sacred; and, besides, should they be entrusted in unholy hands the knowledge would not come to the world, because they cannot be interpreted by the learning of this generation; consequently, they would be considered of no worth, only as precious metal. Therefore, remember, that they are to be translated by the gift and power of God. By them will the Lord work a great and marvellous work; the wisdom of the wise shall become as nought, and the understanding of the prudent shall be his, and because the power of God shall be displayed, those who profess to know the truth, but walk in deceit, shall tremble with anger; but with signs and with wonders, with gifts and with healings, with the manifestations of the power of God, and with the Holy Ghost, shall the hearts of the faithful be

comforted. You have now beheld the power of God manifested and the power of S^{tan}; you that there is nothing that is desirable in the works of darkness; that they cannot bring happiness; that those who are overcome there with are miserable, while, on the other hand, the righteous are blessed with a place in the kingdom of God, where joy unseparable surrounds them. There they rest beyond the power of the enemy of truth, where no evil can disturb them. The glory of God crowns them, and they continually feast upon his goodness and enjoy his smiles. Behold, notwithstanding you have seen this great display of power, by which you may ever be able to detect the evil one, yet I give unto you another sign, and when it comes to pass then know that the Lord is God, and that he will fulfill his purposes, and that the knowledge which this record contains will go to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people under the whole heaven. This is the sign: When these things begin to be known that is when it is known that the Lord has show you these things, the workers of iniquity will seek your overthrow; they will circulate falsehoods to destroy your reputation, and also will seek to take your life; but remember this if you are faithful, and shall hereafter continue to keep the commandments of the Lord, you shall be preserved to bring these things forth; for in due time he will again give you a commandment to come and take them. When they are interpreted, the Lord will give the holy priesthood to some, and they shall begin to proclaim this Gospel and baptize by water, and after that they shall have power to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands. Then will persecution rage more and more; for the iniquities of men shall be revealed, and those who are not built upon the Rock will seek to overthrow this Church; but it will increase the more opposed, and spread further and further, increasing

in knowledge till they shall be sanctified and receive an inheritance where the glory of God will rest upon them; and when this takes place, and all things are prepared, the ten tribes of Israel will be revealed in the north country, whither they have been for a long season; and when this is fulfilled will be brought to pass that saying of the prophet - "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord." But, notwithstanding the workers of iniquity shall seek your destruction the arm of the Lord will be extended and you will be borne off conquerer, if you keep all his commandments. Your name shall be known among the nations, for the work which the Lord will perform by your hands shall cause the righteous to rejoice and the wicked to rage; with the one it shall be had in honor, and with the other in reproach; yet, with these it shall be a terror because of the great and marvellous work which shall follow the coming forth of this fulness of the gospel. Now, go thy way, remembering what the Lord has done for thee, and be diligent in keeping his commandments, and he will deliver thee from temptations and all the arts and devices of the wicked one. Forget not to pray, that thy mind may become strong that when he shall manifest unto thee, thou mayest have power to escape the evil, and obtain these precious things."

During the four following years he frequently received instruction from the mouth of the heavenly messenger. And on the morning of September 22, A. D. 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into his hands. These records were engraved on plates, which had the appearance of gold. Each plate was not far from seven by eight inches in width and length, being not quite as thick as common tin. They were filled on both sides with engravings, in Egyptian characters, and bound

together in a volume, as the leaves of a book, and fastened at one edge with three rings running through the whole. This volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters of letters upon the unsealed part were small and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction, as well as much skill in the art of engraving.

With the records were found two transparent stones, clear as crystal, called by the ancients the Urim and Thummim, which were used in ancient times by persons called seers.

These were used in the following manner: These two stones, called Urim and Thummim, in diameter the size of an English crown (coin) only a little thicker, were placed where all light was excluded. The persons using these offered their prayers to the Lord, and the answer became visible, written in letters of light on the Urim and Thummim, but disappeared again soon after. Thus: "The light in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." In this manner the sacred records were translated into English.

APPENDIX H

WILLIAM SMITH'S ACCOUNT

William Smith was born March 13, 1811, making him six years younger than his brother, Joseph. In 1883, when he was 72 years of age, William published a book on the history of the church. In his preface he states that "revelation is founded upon visions and dreams and angel (sic) visits to man and why should not God send angels to deliver messages to his servants in these latter days as well as in older times."¹ With this premise William proceeds to give his story of the rise of the Church. Even though he confuses the visitations, he contributes to the understainding of the environment of the time and the reaction of the family to the experiences. Since this publication appeared many years after Joseph's death, it does not contain the Prophet's correction of the details. The following part of William's narrative is from pages six through ten of his book¹

¹William Smith, William Smith on Mormonism (Lamoni, Iowa; Herald Steam Book and Job Office, 1883), p. 4.

In 1822, and 1823, the people in our neighborhood were very much stirred up with regard to the religious matters by the preaching of a Mr. Lane, an Elder of the Methodist church and celebrated through the country as a "great revival preachers."

My mother, who was very pious woman and much interested in the welfare of her children, both here and hereafter, made use of every means which her parental love could suggest, to get us engaged in seeking for our souls' salvation, or (as the term then was) "in getting religion." She prevailed on us to attend the meetings, and almost the whole family became interested in the matter, and seekers after truth. I attended the meetings with the rest, but being quite young and inconsiderate, did not take so much interest in the matter as the older ones did. This extraordinary excitement prevailed not only in our neighborhood but throughout the whole country. Great numbers were converted. It extended from the Methodists to the Baptists, from them to the Presbyterians; and so until finally, all the sects became engaged in it; and it became quite the fashion to "get religion." My mother continued her importunities and exertions to interest us in the importance of seeking for the salvation of our immortal souls, until almost all of the family became either converted or seriously inclined.

After the excitement has subsided, in a measure, each sect began to beat up for volunteers; each one saying, "We are right," "Come and join us," "Walk with us and we will do you good," etc. The consequence was that my mother, my brothers Hyrum and Samuel, older than I, joined the Presbyterian Church. Joseph, then about seventeen years of age, had become seriously inclined, though not "brought out," as the phrase was, (and) began to reflect and inquire, which of all these sects

was right. Each one said that ~~it~~ was right; which he knew could not be the case; and the question then was which one of the whole taught the true gospel of Jesus Christ, and made known the plan of salvation. If he went to one he was told they were right, and all otherss were wrong. If to another, the same was heard from them. Each professed to be the true church. This did not satisfy him, as he was aware that there could be but one way of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, and that there was but one "straight and narrow path," etc. All this however was beneficial to him, as it urged him forward, and strengthened him in the determination to know for himself of the certainty and reality of pure and holy religion. He continued in secret to call upon the Lord for a full manifestation of his will, the assurance that he was accepted of him, and that he might have an understanding of the path of obedience.

At length, he determined to call upon the Lord until he should get a manifestation from him. He accordingly went out into the woods and falling upon his knees called for a long time upon the Lord for wisdom and knowledge. While engaged in prayer a light appeared in the heavens, and descended until it rested upon the knees where he was. It appeared like fire. But to his great astonishment, did not burn the trees. An angel then appeared to him and conversed with him upon many things. He told him that none of the sects were right; but that if he was faithful in keeping the commandments he should receive, the true way should be made known to him; that his sins were forgiven. . . .

The next day I was at work in the field together with Joseph and my eldest brother Alvin. Joseph looked pale and unwell, so that Alvin told him if he was sick he need not work he then went and sat down by the fence when the angel again appeared to him, and told him to call

his father's house together and communicate to them the visions he had received, which he had not yet told to ~~say~~ one; and promised him that ^{start} if he would do so they would believe it. He accordingly asked us to come to the house, as he had something to tell us. After we were all gathered, he arose and told us how the angel appeared to him; what he had told him as written above; and that the angel had also given him a short account of the inhabitants who formerly resided upon this continent, a full history of whom he said was engraved on some plates which were hidden, and which the angel promised to show him. He continued talking to us sometime. The whole family were melted to tears, and believed all he said. Knowing that he was very young, that he had not enjoyed the advantages of a common education; and knowing too, his whole character and disposition, they were convinced that he was totally incapable of arising before his aged parents, his brothers and sister, and so solemnly giving utterance to anything but the truth. All of us, therefore, believed him, and anxiously awaited the result of his visit to the hill Cumorah, in search of the plates containing the record of which the angel told him.

APPENDIX I

Comparative Chart

The following chart compares some of the most commonly used published sources of the account of the First Vision and Moroni's visitation as follows:

1. The Pearl of Great Price account which is accepted today by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints as part of its scripture.
2. A missionary pamphlet published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which has been used for many years
3. A new pamphlet published in 1963 which is now used as a missionary tract.
4. Joseph Smith's own account as published in the History of the Church.
5. Joseph Smith's account as published in the Times and Seasons and known as the Wentworth Letter.

1st, 2nd versus	Omitted	Omitted	Same as P. of G. P.	
Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	My father taught me inthe art of hus- bandry
v. 3 Joseph Smith, Sr. Sen.		Sr.	Omitted	
V. 3 Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	genealogy	
v. 4	Omitted	Omitted	Same as P. of G. P.	
v. 5 of country of country	Omitted Omitted	Omitted Omitted	Same as P. of G. P. Same as P. of G. P.	
v. 6 their good feeling	(their) is omit- ted	Same as P. of G. P.	Same as P. of G. P.	
v. 9-2nd sentence 3rd sentence	Omitted Omitted	Omitted Omitted	Same as P. of G. P. Same as P. of G. P.	
v. 13 as of god	ask God	ask of God	ask of God	
v. 16 such marvel- ous power as I--	such an astonish- ing influence over me as to bind my being	Same as P. of G. P.	Same as P. of G. P.	
Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	I saw two glorious personages who ex- actly resembled each other in feature and likeness

- v. 20-3rd sentence. Omitted Same as P. of G. P.
- to end of paragraph
- v. 21 some few days Some few weeks Same as P. of G. P.
- v. 24, voice; but still (but) omitted Same as P. of G. P.
- v. 25 I have actually I had actually Same as P. of G. P.
- v. 27 all the time all of the time Same as P. of G. P.
- v. 28 last 2 sentences Omitted Same as P. of G. P.
- v. 29 to my bed to bed Same as P. of G. P.
- Omitted Omitted As though the house was filled with consuming fire, the appearance Produced a shock that affected the whole body. ...personage stood before me surrounded with a glory yet greater than that with which I was already surrounded.
- v. 31 neck were also bare neck were bare Same as P. of G. P.
- v. 39 promises make Promise made promise made Same as P. of G. P.

- V. 43 ascended till till
- V. 50 and told me and he told me
- V. 50 I had had I had
- V. 53 and the other things and other things
- V. 55 continuous labor Same as P. of N. P.
- V. 56 who lived in Chenango of Chenango Same as P. of O. P.
- V. 56 he had heard Cmitted Same as P. of O. P.
- V. 56 he had heard (3 sentence) Cmitted Same as P. of O. P.
- V. 57 Male, of that place Same as P. of O. P.

P. 707: after receiving many visits from the angels of God, unfolding the majestic and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days on the morning of the 23rd of September, 1027

v. 58	on the 18th of	18th day of	Same as P. of G. P.	Same as P. of G. P.
v. 59	if I would	if I should	would	Same as P. of G. P.
v. 59	all my endeavors	Same as P. of G. P.	all of my endeavors	Same as P. of G. P.
v. 60	arrangements	Arrangement	Same as P. of G. P.	Same as P. of G. P.
v. 61	gave me	gave us	me	
v. 62	was I enabled	I was enabled	I was	Same as P. of G. P.
v. 64	from the Egyptian	from Egyptian	from Egyptian	Same as P. of G. P.
Omitted		Omitted	Omitted	(Martin Harris story of lost 116 pages) pages 20-31
v. 66	on the 5th day of April	5th of April	Same as P. of G. P.	Same as P. of G. P.
v. 66	circumstances	Same as P. of G. P.	Same as P. of G. P.	Circumstance
Omitted		Omitted	Omitted	Pages 33-38
v. 70	and that afterwards	Same as P. of G. P.	Same as P. of G. P.	and afterwards
v. 71	and afterwards	afterwards	afterwards	Same as P. of G. P.
v. 74	of having	of our having	Same as P. of G. P.	Same as P. of G. P.
v. 74	owing	Owing	Same as P. of G. P.	Same as P. of G. P.

V. 75	wife's fa- ther's family Omitted	wife's family Omitted	Same as P. of G. P. Omitted	Same as P. G. P. P 44-51
Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	P 52 pr 1 this work, the book of Mormon
Omitted	Same as History	Same as History recorded in B of Mormon	recorded in B of Mormon	Pg 52 pr 1 recorded, Book of Mormon
Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Pg 52 pr 1 B Morm. pg 58 pr 1
Omitted	Also	Also	also	pg 52 pr 1 and also
Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Pg 52 pr 1 Pg 86
Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	the aforementioned pg 52 pr 1
Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Pg 53 pr 1 who had
Omitted	Omitted Inquiry was made of the Lord and it was revealed that there should be the special wit- nesses pg 18 pr 1	Omitted	Omitted Same as Old Pamph- let	Omitted - different wordage, same story Pg. 53 pr 1
Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Same as Old Pamph- let	Pg 54 pr 1 - the above commandment was given we four viz.
Omitted	Omitted	Omitted	Same as Old Pamph let	pg 54 pr 1 promises given (in the above revelation)...

Omitted	at first trial	Pg 54 pr 2 - at the first trial	Pg. 54 pr 2 at the first trial
Omitted	Omitted	Pg. 54 pr 2 - at the first trial	Which we had been praying for these to have a view of Pg. 54 pr 3
Omitted	rejoicing	rejoicing	Pg. 55 pr 1 rejoiced
Omitted	rejoicing	rejoicing	Pg. 59 pr 1 meantime we continued . . . believed
Omitted	(the prophet de- clared there - after that)	(therefore) omit- ed	Omit all of paragraph in parenthesis
Omitted	as fast as	pg 75 Ch. hist.) same	Pg. 75 pr 1 - as far as
Omitted	as fast as	pg 75 (ch. hist.) same	Pg. 78 - 79 (see D & C S 22)