

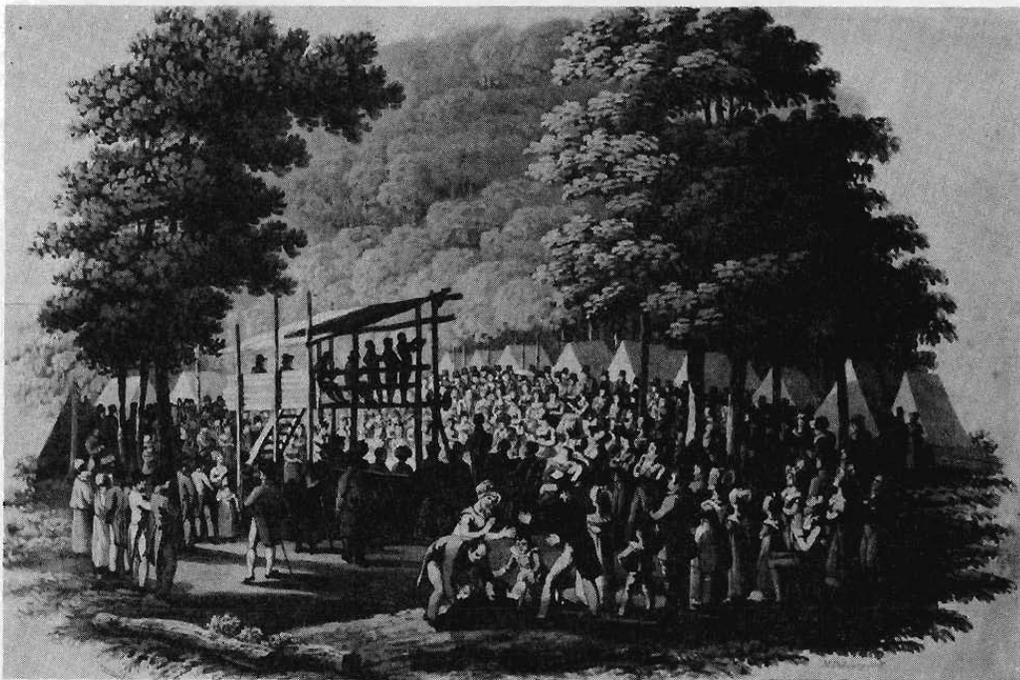
Roundtable

THE QUESTION OF THE PALMYRA REVIVAL

Participants: Rev. Wesley P. Walters,
Richard L. Bushman

The following essay was submitted to DIALOGUE in late 1967 by Reverend Wesley Walters, who is pastor of the United Presbyterian Church in Marissa, Illinois. When scholars at Brigham Young University became aware of the challenge it presents to a chronology of early Mormon history in New York, the essay provided an additional stimulus to their decision to form a special committee of outstanding Mormon historians and scholars under the leadership of Truman G. Madsen, Director of the Institute of Mormon Studies at Brigham Young University, to direct concentrated research in the available records in New York relevant to Mormon history. The committee included Leonard Arrington and Richard Bushman, two members of the DIALOGUE Board of Editors. Under the committee's direction a good deal of original research was done, particularly in the summer of 1968, and a special issue of BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY STUDIES was planned to report the findings. In the meantime DIALOGUE editors decided to hold publication of Reverend Walters' essay until there could be some opportunity for a Mormon scholar to prepare to respond, particularly until he could take advantage of the research directed by Professor Madsen's committee (which had been organized with the title "Mormon History in New York"). Reverend Walters decided to allow his essay to be published as a tract by The Evangelical Theological ("Utah Christian Tract") Society and it was so published in their Fall Bulletin of 1967, Volume 10, Number 4. Normally DIALOGUE does not reprint previously published materials, but this tract had very limited circulation and we felt that the issues Reverend Walters raises should be dealt with directly and in the context of a full statement of his arguments. We therefore present his essay here with a response from Professor Richard L. Bushman, formerly of Brigham Young University and a recent winner of the Bancroft prize in history for his book FROM PURITAN TO YANKEE — now completing a year's historical research at the Charles Warren Center at Harvard where he is Bishop of the University Second Ward. Professor Bushman had available

to him the following articles reporting last year's research: "Prologue" by Truman Madsen; "The Origins of Mormonism: An Introductory Analysis" by James B. Allen and Leonard J. Arrington; "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision" by Dean C. Jessee; "Awakenings in the Burned-over District: New Light on the Historical Setting of the First Vision" by Milton V. Backman, Jr.; "Reverend George Lane — Good 'Gifts,' Much 'Grace,' and Marked 'Usefulness'" by Larry C. Porter; "Circumstantial Confirmation of the First Vision through Reminiscences" by Richard L. Anderson. These articles, together with others which deal with different topics unrelated to the Reverend Walters' essay, will appear in the Spring issue of BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY STUDIES. Anyone interested in the issues raised in this Round Table should obtain a copy in order to get complete reports of the findings in New York. Following Professor Bushman's response is a rejoinder by Reverend Walters.



A western camp meeting in 1819. After lithograph by J. Miller —THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

NEW LIGHT ON MORMON ORIGINS FROM THE PALMYRA REVIVAL

Reverend Wesley P. Walters

Since the year 1838, when Joseph Smith, Jr., set down the official account of his first vision, the story has continued to grow in importance in the eyes of Mormon leaders until it has come to be looked upon as the very foundation

of their church and the greatest event in the world's history since the resurrection of the Son of God.¹

The first vision story states that Joseph Smith, in the year 1820 when he was but a lad of fourteen, was greatly stirred up by a religious revival that broke out in the vicinity of Palmyra, New York. Uncertain as to which church he should join as a result of this excitement, Joseph retired to a nearby grove where in answer to his prayer, "two glorious personages," identified as the Father and the Son, appeared to him, informing him that all the religious denominations were wrong. He was told to await further enlightenment, which came three years later in a second vision on September 21, 1823, when an angelic visitor to his bedroom informed him of the existence of the golden plates of the Book of Mormon.²

This account of Joseph's first vision has recently been given more careful study because of a number of difficulties that have been uncovered: the earliest Mormon and anti-Mormon writers know nothing of such a vision; the text of the present printed version has been altered at several points; the early leaders in Utah repeatedly speak only of angels and not of the Father and Son visiting Smith at age fourteen.³ These and other conflicts have forced Latter-day Saint scholars to write in defense of their Prophet's first vision story. In all their writing they have *assumed* that Joseph Smith's account must be correct wherever it is at variance with the statements of other Mormon or anti-Mormon writings.

However, the point at which one might most conclusively test the accuracy of Smith's story has never been adequately explored. A vision, by its inward, personal nature, does not lend itself to historical investigation. A revival is a different matter — especially one such as Joseph Smith describes — in which "great multitudes" were said to have joined the various churches involved.⁴ Such a revival does not pass from the scene without leaving some traces in the records and publications of the period. In this study we show by the contemporary records that the revival which Smith claimed occurred in 1820 did not really take place until the fall of 1824. We also show that in 1820 there was no revival in any of the churches in Palmyra and its vicinity. In short, our investigation shows that the statement of Joseph Smith, Jr., can not be true when he claims that he was stirred by an 1820 revival to make his inquiry in the grove near his home.

I

In 1834-35, nearly four years before Joseph began to write his "official" first vision story, the Mormon Church published an account of the origin of their movement written by Joseph Smith's right-hand man, Oliver Cowdery. Cowdery claimed to have received his information from the Prophet himself, making it virtually Joseph Smith's own narrative, and Joseph, in a separate column, added some details about his birth and early life.⁵ Like Smith, in his later account, Cowdery begins the story with a description of the revival

Because the footnotes accompanying these articles are so extensive, they will appear at the end of this essay.

that happened in the Palmyra area. However, this early account makes no reference to any vision occurring in 1820 and places the revival in 1823.⁶ According to this version, Joseph was stirred at age seventeen by a revival that broke out under the preaching of a Mr. Lane, a presiding elder of the Methodist church. Retiring to his bedroom, he prayed for forgiveness and enlightenment on which church was right. In response, an angel appeared and informed him about the golden plates and assured him of his forgiveness.

Except for Joseph's moving the revival date back three years and adding the first vision story, both Smith's later account and this earlier Cowdery-Smith account record the same features as connected with the revival. In both accounts the revival began under Methodist preaching, the earlier adding the name of Reverend Lane as the key figure in the Methodist awakening. Both state that soon Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians were sharing unitedly in the effort; both claim that rivalry developed over who should have the converts; both mention that large additions were made to the denominations involved; both note that Smith's mother, sister, and two brothers were led to join the Presbyterian church; in both accounts Joseph refrained from joining any church because he was confused as to which group was right; and finally, in both accounts he sought direct guidance from the Lord about this matter and was answered by a heavenly visitation.

Mormon writers have for some time seen that both the earlier and later "official" accounts had the same revival in view.⁷ This is quite clear not only from the many identical features in both accounts, but also from the fact that some of these features could not have taken place twice. For example, Smith's family could not have joined the Presbyterian Church in 1820 as a result of a revival in the area, and then joined the same church again in 1823 as a result of another revival. Again, Joseph Smith, Jr., could not have been confused about which group was right in 1820, been enlightened that all were wrong, and then have been confused on the same point again in 1823. It is also extremely unlikely that churches which had had a bitter outcome to their united efforts at a revival would have joined forces again just three years later only to end in more bitter contention. In addition, to consider two different revivals would place Joseph in the contradictory position of having, with great certainty (J. S. 2:24-25), seen both the Father and the Son in 1820, and then three years later finding this so ineffectual that he was not even certain "if a Supreme being did exist."⁸

Recognizing that both accounts are describing the same revival, Mormon writers have already credited Cowdery with an error in dating, but have been quite willing to accept the other details given in this earlier account and work them into an 1820 framework. We find Latter-day Saint writers like historians B. H. Roberts and Hyrum L. Andrus, and Apostle John A. Widtsoe speaking of Reverend Lane as participating in an 1820 revival.⁹ An account by William Smith, Joseph's brother, adds the information that it was Reverend Lane who suggested the text from James ("If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God"), to which Joseph refers, as a means of determining which group to join. William also introduces the name of Reverend Stockton, the Presbyterian pas-

tor, as presiding at the meetings.¹⁰ This information, since William does not give it a specific date, is also placed back in the year 1820 and is used to fill out Joseph Smith's official account.¹¹

However, this very account of William Smith, to which Latter-day Saint writers so willingly refer for details, indicates that the revival did not occur in 1820. William states that after the joint revival meeting had closed, Reverend Stockton insisted that the converts ought to join the Presbyterian church since it was their meeting. However, William states, "as father did not like Rev. Stockton very well, our folks hesitated." William had already mentioned the reason for his father's dislike of the Presbyterian minister. Mr. Stockton had preached the funeral sermon of William's brother, Alvin, and had strongly intimated that he had gone to hell because he had never been a member of any church. Since the tombstone on Alvin's grave gives the date of his death as November 19, 1823, it is clear that the revival must have followed that date.¹² William earlier gave the date of the revival as "1822 and 1823" and on another occasion he stated that Joseph Smith was "about eighteen years old at this time," which would place it in 1824.¹³ In order to maintain the integrity of Joseph Smith's first vision story, however, Mormon writers have not only charged the Cowdery narrative with error, but have also dismissed the setting given by William Smith and arbitrarily transported both Lane and Stockton back to an 1820 date.

The records, however, of both the Presbyterian and Methodist churches to which Mr. Stockton and Mr. Lane respectively belonged, make it clear that neither of these men was assigned to the Palmyra area until 1824. Benjamin B. Stockton, from March 4, 1818, until June 30, 1882, was serving as pastor of the church at Skaneateles, New York.¹⁴ While he did visit Palmyra for a speech to the Youth missionary society in October 1822, the Palmyra newspaper still describes him as "Rev. Stockton of Skaneateles."¹⁵ The earliest contemporary reference to his ministering in the Palmyra area is in connection with a wedding November 26, 1823, just a week after Alvin Smith's death. Following this date there are several references to his performing some service there, but he was not installed as pastor of the Presbyterian church until February 18, 1824.¹⁶ It is in this latter year, 1824, that Reverend James Hotchkin, in cataloguing the revivals that occurred in the churches of Geneva Presbytery, writes, under the heading of the Palmyra church that a "copious shower of grace passed over this region in 1824, under the labors of Mr. Stockton, and a large number were gathered into the church, some of whom are now pillars in Christ's house."¹⁷

In the summer of 1819 Mr. Lane, whom Mormon writers have correctly identified as George Lane,¹⁸ was assigned to serve the Susquehanna District in central Pennsylvania, over 150 miles from Palmyra. He served this area for five years and not until July of 1824 did he receive an appointment to serve as Presiding Elder of the Ontario District in which Palmyra is located.¹⁹ This post he held only until January of 1825, when ill health in his family forced him to leave the ministry for a while.²⁰ Except for Elder Lane's brief presence at the 1819 meeting that appointed him to serve in Pennsylvania, there seems

to be no evidence whatever that he even came near the Palmyra area during the 1819–20 period.²¹ Since the assigned fields of labor, for both Lane and Stockton, were so far from Palmyra, any revival in which both of these men shared must fall in the latter half of the year 1824, and not in the year 1820.

An even more surprising confirmation that this revival occurred in 1824 and not in 1820 recently came to light when we stumbled upon Reverend George Lane's own account of the Palmyra revival. It was written not at some years distance from the event — as the Mormon accounts all were — but while the revival was still in progress, and was printed a few months later.²² Lane's account gives us not only the year, 1824, but even the month and day. With the aid of this account, supplemented by numerous additional references which we shortly thereafter uncovered, we are able to give nearly a month-by-month progress report on the spread of the revival through the community and surrounding area, and it was indeed an outstanding revival.

According to George Lane's report, the Lord's gracious work in Palmyra and vicinity "commenced in the spring, and progressed moderately until the time of the quarterly meeting, which was held on the 25th and 26th of September," 1824. A note in the local Palmyra newspaper showed the progress of the work shortly before Lane came upon the scene at the September conference.

A reformation is going on in this town to a great extent. The love of God has been shed abroad in the hearts of many, and the outpouring of the Spirit seems to have taken a strong hold. About twenty-five have recently obtained a hope in the Lord, and joined the Methodist Church, and many more are desirous of becoming members.²³

As yet the revival had not touched the Baptist church, for at the annual meeting of the Ontario Baptist Association held September 22, the church reported only two baptisms.²⁴ The local Presbyterian church, likewise, remained untouched, for the report at the meeting of Presbytery held September 8 stated "there has been no remarkable revival of religion within our bounds."²⁵

About the time of the Methodist Quarterly Conference, September 25 and 26, the revival, Lane tells us, "appeared to break out afresh." About this time the revival fires must have spread through the Presbyterian church, for the Synod which met October 5 acknowledged "with gratitude to the great head of the church four instances of special revival," among which was that "in the church at Palmyra of the Presbytery of Geneva."²⁶

November found fresh encouragement given to the movement through the death of a nineteen-year-old girl who had been converted just five weeks before, following the September Quarterly Conference. She died in great happiness and, as Lane stated, "it greatly strengthened believers, especially young converts."

By December the revival had spread into the area beyond the bounds of the town. When George Lane returned to the circuit for the Quarterly Conference at Ontario on December 11 and 12, he stated: "Here I found that the work, which had for some time been going on in Palmyra, had broken out from the village like a mighty flame, and was spreading in every direction."

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By December 20 reports had reached Avon, some 30 miles distant, that "about 200 . . . are sharers in this great and precious work."²⁷ When Reverend Lane left the area December 22 he noted that "there had, in the village and its vicinity, upwards of one hundred and fifty joined the society, besides a number that had joined other churches, and many that had joined no church." The Baptists were among the "other churches" who shared in the harvest. Many people needed only an invitation in order to respond. On Christmas Day a Baptist preacher wrote to a friend that, "as I came on my journey this way, I tarried a few days, and baptized eight."²⁸

By the end of January the effects of the revival upon the town had become apparent. The whole religious tone of the village was altered by its impact. In glowing terms the committee on the "State of Religion within the bounds of Geneva Presbytery" was able to report:

In the congregation of Palmyra, the Lord has appeared in his glory to build up Zion. More than a hundred have been hopefully brought into the kingdom of the Redeemer The fruits of holiness in this revival even now are conspicuous. The exertions for the promotion of divine knowledge are greater than formerly. Sabbath Schools, Bible classes, Missionary & Tract Societies are receiving unusual attention, & their salutary influence is apparent.²⁹

Meanwhile the revival fires continued to spread in the neighboring towns. By February, revivals were reported to have broken out in the towns of Williamson and Ontario to the north, in Manchester, Sulphur Springs, and Vienna to the southeast, in Lyons to the east, and in Macedon to the west. Even towns at a greater distance from Palmyra began to experience revival fires, with Mendon to the west and Geneva to the southeast sharing in a divine outpouring.³⁰ By March, although the work was subsiding in the village of Palmyra, it continued to spread in the adjacent towns. Gorham, considerably south of Vienna, was soon reported as receiving "a shower of Divine mercy," and shortly thereafter the area of Clyde, farther east beyond Lyons, was touched and not less than 150 harvested in by the first part of May. By this time "no recent cases of conviction" were being reported from Palmyra itself, but the work was "advancing" in the Sulphur Springs area and still continuing at Geneva.³¹ No wonder Joseph could say that the revival occurred not only in the place where he lived, but "became general among all the sects in that region of country" and that "the whole district of country seemed affected by it."

As the "multitudes" of converts began to fill the churches, men began to take stock of their numbers. By January the Methodists estimated that on their Ontario Circuit two hundred had joined their society.³² A Baptist pastor in Bristol, New York, reported to a friend under the date of March 9, 1825, that in Palmyra "Multitudes have abandoned their false hopes, and false schemes About three hundred have united with the Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches; and to each in about equal numbers."³³ The Palmyra newspaper for March 2, 1825, reprinted a report from the *Religious Advocate* of Rochester.

More than two hundred souls have become hopeful subjects of divine grace in Palmyra, Macedon, Manchester, Phelps, Lyons, and Ontario

since the late revival commenced. This is a powerful work; it is among old and young, but mostly among young people. . . . The cry is yet from various parts, "come over and help us." There are large and attentive congregations in every part, who hear as for their lives.

Since the *Religious Advocate* was a Presbyterian-related periodical, the figures probably reflect only the Presbyterian gains. A note in the same issue of the Palmyra paper adds this balancing information: "It may be added, that in Palmyra and Macedon, including Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist Churches, more than 400 have already testified that the Lord is good. The work is still progressing. In the neighboring towns, the number is great and fast increasing."³⁴

By September 1825 the results of the revival for Palmyra had become a matter of record. The Presbyterian church reported 99 admitted on examination and the Baptists had received 94 by baptism, while the Methodist circuit showed an increase of 208.³⁵ Cowdery's claim of "large additions" and Joseph's statement that "great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties" were certainly not overstatements.

When we turn to the year 1820, however, the "great multitudes" are conspicuously missing. The Presbyterian church in Palmyra certainly experienced no awakening that year. Reverend James Hotchkin's history records revivals for that church as occurring in the years 1817, 1824, 1829, etc., but there is nothing for the year 1820.³⁶ The records of Presbytery and Synod give the same picture. Early in February 1820 Presbytery reported revivals at Geneva (summer 1819), and Junius and Cayuga ("lately"), all a considerable distance from Palmyra, with "prospects of a revival" at Canandaigua and Phelps (now Oaks Corners), fifteen and twenty miles distant.³⁷ While the "effects" of these revivals were reported in September 1820 as continuing, the remainder of that year and the next showed "no distinct mention of a revival," "no special revival in any of our congregations," "no general revivals of religion during the year."³⁸ Since these reports always rejoice at any sign of a revival in the churches, it is inconceivable that a great awakening had occurred in their Palmyra congregation and gone completely unnoticed.³⁹

The Baptist church records also show clearly that they had no revival in 1820, for the Palmyra congregation gained only 6 by baptism, while the neighboring Baptist churches of Lyons, Canandaigua, and Farmington showed net losses of 4, 5, and 9, respectively. An examination of the figures for the years preceding and following 1820 yields the same picture of no revival so far as the Baptist church of the area is concerned.⁴⁰

The Methodist figures, through referring to the entire circuit, give the same results, for they show net losses of 23 for 1819, 6 for 1820 and 40 for 1821.⁴¹ This hardly fits Joseph Smith's description of "great multitudes" being added to the churches of the area. In fact, the Mormon Prophet could hardly have picked a poorer year in which to place his revival so far as the Methodists were concerned. For some time prior to 1820 a sharp controversy had existed in the denomination, which in the Genesee Conference had resulted in a decline and a "loss of spirituality" throughout the entire conference.⁴² In addi-

tion, the Presiding Elder of the Ontario District reported July 1, 1824, that: "Four years since, Unitarianism or Arianism, seemed to threaten the entire overthrow of the work of God in some Circuits on this District, and on some others, divisions and wild and ranting fanatics, caused the spirits of the faithful in a degree to sink." Referring to the years just prior to 1823, he added that "for two or three years we saw no great awakenings."⁴³ In the light of such depressing circumstances it is impossible that Palmyra could have experienced a glorious revival and the Presiding Elder of the area have failed to take note of it at all.

Another significant lack of information concerning an 1820 revival lies in the area of the religious press. The denominational magazines of that day were full of reports of revivals, some even devoting separate sections to them. These publications carried more than a dozen glowing reports of the revival that occurred at Palmyra in the winter of 1816-17.⁴⁴ Likewise, the 1824-25 revival is covered in a number of reports.⁴⁵ These magazines, however, while busily engaged in reporting revivals during the 1819 to 1821 period, contain not a single mention of any revival taking place in the Palmyra area during this time. It is unbelievable that every one of the denominations which Joseph Smith depicts as affected by an 1820 revival could have completely overlooked the event.⁴⁶ Even the Palmyra newspaper, while reporting revivals at several places in the state, has no mention whatever of any revival in Palmyra or vicinity either in 1819 or 1820.⁴⁷ The only reasonable explanation for this massive silence is that no revival occurred in the Palmyra area in 1820.

II

In the light of this new historical evidence, what lines of approach are open to the student of Mormon history as he considers Joseph Smith's first vision story? Some may still try to imagine that a great revival occurred in Palmyra and vicinity in spite of the evidence against it. We are convinced, however, that they will meet with no more success than Willard Bean in his attempt to substantiate Smith's story. Bean, a Mormon and one-time sparring partner of Jack Dempsey, has put together an account that Mormon writers are still appealing to.⁴⁸ According to Mr. Bean, a revival did break out in "the spring of 1820," sparked under the ministry of Reverend Jesse Townsend, whom he describes as "a young Yale graduate, but recently set apart for the ministry." "The revival started the latter part of April" and by the first of May was well under way. Bean adds an account from "the Religious Advocate of Rochester" to show how extensive the awakening was. All this sounds very authentic until one begins to examine the story more closely. Jesse Townsend was not a "young Yale graduate" in 1820, since he was fifty-four years old and thirty years had expired since his graduation from Yale. He was not "recently set apart for the ministry" for he had been ordained in 1792.⁴⁹ Instead of sparking a revival in Palmyra in "the spring of 1820," he was in reality on his way west, arriving near Hillsboro, Illinois, May 25, 1820.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the *Religious Advocate* did not begin publication at Rochester until about 1825, and the account which Mr. Bean quotes from that journal is the same one

which appeared in the Palmyra newspaper in March of 1825 in reference to the 1824-25 revival.⁵¹ We do not believe that this avenue of approach will yield any fruitful results.⁵²

A second approach maintains that the revival was at some distance from the area where the Smiths lived, that it caused considerable stir in their immediate neighborhood, but ended "on a negative note." It consequently left no visible traces either in the local or denominational papers of 1820 or in terms of substantial membership gains for the churches of the Palmyra and Manchester area.

In developing this approach, Joseph's words, "region of country," "whole district of country" are understood as though they referred to some kind of statewide revival, without notice of the fact that he is talking about a revival that commenced with the Methodists "in the place where we lived" and then "became general among all the sects in that region of country." Consequently Latter-day Saint writers frequently cite any revival in New York state as supporting Joseph's story and as illustrating the revival's "widespread nature," whether it was a revival spreading "eastward" from Albany, some 200 miles from Joseph; or at Ulysses, 75 miles away; or a list of Presbyterian revivals, regardless of the distance from Palmyra.⁵³ Doubtless, in this manner a list of thirty or more towns of western New York experiencing revivals in 1820 could be compiled in support of Joseph's account, but such an appeal is not sufficient, for this statewide condition prevailed nearly every year during the early nineteenth century.⁵⁴ What it is important to notice is where these revivals were occurring, for the communities experiencing them changed from year to year. The point of the Prophet's story is not that there were revivals occurring throughout the state that year — for this was true every year. His point was that "an *unusual* excitement" was going on right there "in the place where we lived." Multitudes of his neighbors became "converts" and "united" with the various churches of his community, and it was this situation that led him to ask "which I should join."

Some Mormon writers, however, realize that the revival must be centered some place near enough to affect young Joseph, and the trend at the moment is to name Vienna as the place to which "the Prophet undoubtedly had reference."⁵⁵ It is questionable whether Vienna had any serious awakening in 1819 or 1820, but through a series of assumptions a large-scale revival is reconstructed there. First, it is assumed that, because the Methodists' Genesee Annual Conference met at Vienna that July 1-8, 1819, all such conferences "were characterized by revival meetings and this conference was no exception."⁵⁶ While camp meetings at times were held in conjunction with these annual *business* conferences, the conference minutes reveal no such arrangements being made for the 1819 session.⁵⁷ Next, when Reverend Abner Chase speaks of the spiritual decline which existed at the time of the 1819 Conference being "followed by a glorious revival," it is *assumed* that he meant that this revival broke out *at Vienna* immediately following the Conference. When Mr. Chase mentioned this revival, he added that he planned to speak of it "more particularly" further on in his narrative. After carrying his recollections through the years

1820 and 1821, however, his book ends abruptly before coming to the revival period, which from his earlier writings is known to be the 1824-25 period.⁵⁸ Finally, a passing reference to Joseph's "catching a spark of Methodism in the camp meeting away down in the woods on the Vienna road" is assumed to show that he actually attended revival meetings at Vienna, some fifteen miles from his home. The most natural reference of this quotation, however, is to the Methodist camp grounds a mile from Palmyra, in the wooded area adjoining the Methodist chapel *on the Vienna road*.⁵⁹

Although the evidence cited fails to establish a revival at Vienna,⁶⁰ the chief fault of writers lies in their failure to match the description given in Joseph's official account. Even granting a Methodist revival at Vienna,⁶¹ it not only failed to become general among all the sects in that region of country, but apparently even failed to affect the other churches on the circuit, for the circuit reported a substantial loss of members that year. Even if one counts the 38 gained by the Phelps Presbyterian Church in 1820 and the 23 added to the Phelps (Vienna) Baptist congregation in 1821, this hardly matches the "great multitudes" of Joseph's story and leaves nothing happening "in the place where we lived."

Finally, therefore, this approach must manipulate Joseph's words so as to account for the fact that his immediate neighborhood shows no evidence of an 1820 revival. Accordingly it is noted that Joseph Smith speaks not of a "revival," but of an "unusual excitement" in the place where he lived. This, however, overlooks the fact that in the nineteenth century the terms were synonymous.⁶² It further ignores the parallel Cowdery-Smith account which specifically calls it a "reformation," the same term used in the Palmyra paper in reference to the 1824 revival. Joseph himself in 1843 employed the same term, "reformation," in relating his first vision story to a news correspondent.⁶³ In addition, the Cowdery-Smith account makes it abundantly clear that this reformation activity took place "in Palmyra and vicinity,"⁶⁴ while the interview, in an equally clear statement, quotes Smith as saying that the reformation was "in the neighborhood where we lived."

It is further suggested by those who approach the problem by this method that when Joseph spoke of great multitudes "uniting with the different religious parties," he did not necessarily mean that they joined the various churches, but rather that they split up into little cliques which merely took sides in a general controversy.⁶⁵ To put such a construction on the word "parties" is to fail to notice that the Prophet uses this very term to refer to the various denominations. In the "war of words" among Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists, Joseph speaks of the denominations as "endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others" and this leads him to ask, "Who of all *these parties* are right?" Even members of his own family had been "proselyted" to the Presbyterian faith, while "converts" fied off to the different parties. That these converts actually *joined* the churches of Palmyra and vicinity is made clear when the Cowdery-Smith account states that "large additions were made to the Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist churches." To suggest that these multitudes merely aligned themselves with various feuding

groups and that consequently the revival was “abortive” and ended “on a negative note” is to completely miss one of the main points of Joseph’s narrative. The entire thrust of his story is that right there where he lived multitudes were joining the various churches, but with so much conflict in their tenets he was at a loss which one to join himself. The year 1820, however, was not the period when any great multitudes were joining the churches of Palmyra and vicinity. It is not until the revival of 1824–25 that we find a situation that matches the conditions described in this official first vision story.

A third, and perhaps simpler, approach is to assume that Joseph’s first vision story is essentially correct, but that his memory failed him as to the date of its occurrence. If we pursue this line of thought, several major revisions will have to be made in Joseph Smith’s story. Since Joseph presents his vision as occurring in the spring,⁶⁶ the date of the vision would accordingly have to be moved to the spring of 1825, following the revival. This would then also necessitate changing the date of his second vision from September 21, 1823, to not earlier than September of 1825. In turn, this would require another change in his story, for he mentions visiting the hill where the plates were buried in each of the three years that elapsed between 1823 and 1827.⁶⁷ The revised dating would allow for just one visit — in the year 1826. With this much readjustment, Smith’s memory for events becomes somewhat suspect. Furthermore, such a realignment of dates calls for an entire recasting of the context of his story. Instead of being the naïve boy of fourteen, as he presented himself, he would in 1825 have been a young man of nineteen, who in less than two years would find himself eloping with a young woman from Pennsylvania.

Furthermore, this reconstruction would only aggravate the problem of harmonizing Smith’s final and “official” account with another first vision account written earlier by the Mormon leader himself. This narrative, which has been dubbed a “strange account,” had remained locked in the archives of the Latter-day Saints Church until brought to light by Paul R. Cheesman in 1965.⁶⁸ Unlike the official account, which presents Smith as wondering at age fourteen which church was right, the “strange account” presents him as having “from age twelve to fifteen” studied the Scriptures and already concluded that all were wrong. Instead of seeing two glorious personages at age fourteen, he sees at age sixteen only the Lord Jesus Christ, who confirmed his conclusions that all had “turned aside from the gospel.” Finally, in the “strange account” he admits that at the first he “sought the Plates to obtain riches,” while in the official version he receives only a warning to beware of such a temptation. This “strange account” substitutes Joseph’s Bible reading in place of the revival as the predisposing factor for his heavenly inquiry. Cheesman regards this earlier account as a first draft of the first vision story which Joseph laid aside and never completed. If we feel that Smith’s memory was hazy in his official account, a comparison with the “strange account” would lead to the further conclusion that his memory was extremely confused. The matter is far deeper than a mere lapse of memory as to dating, for it enters into the very fabric of the story itself.

III

A final, more realistic, approach is that Joseph began with a substantially different story than the one he put forth later in his career. He altered and expanded the story in several steps as occasion required, arriving at the official version he published in 1842. A sketchy outline of the development, based on all the available accounts known to us, is, we believe, somewhat as follows.

The earliest form of the story which the Smiths circulated was that Joseph, Jr., had discovered the plates through the aid of the seer-stone which he used to locate buried treasures. The united testimony of the inhabitants of Palmyra who knew the Smiths is that Joseph and his father were engaged for some length of time in these money-digging activities.⁶⁹ Just a year after the Book of Mormon appeared in print, the editor of the Palmyra *Reflector*⁷⁰ noted that Joseph Smith, Sr., followed the "popular belief that these treasures were held in charge by some *evil spirit*." "At a time when the money digging ardor was somewhat abated, the elder Smith declared that his son Joe had seen the *spirit* (which he then described as a little old man with a long beard), "who told him he would furnish him with a book containing a record of the ancient inhabitants of this country." At first, the story "had no regular plan or features," and several variations have been preserved by those who knew the Smiths.⁷¹ In October 1827, when Martin Harris first heard that Joseph Smith had unearthed golden plates, he visited the Smith home and interviewed each of the members independently. All, including Joseph Smith, Jr., himself, gave the same story: "He found them by looking in the stone found in the well of Mason Chase."⁷² Harris' narrative makes it clear that Joseph had already determined to produce a book, but needed someone to back it financially. Since Harris was deeply moved by religious ideas, Smith added that an angel had told him to quit the money-digging business, and that he had been shown Martin as the man who would help him with the new project. Harris replied, "If the Lord will show me that it is his work, you can have all the money you want." A "still small voice" told Harris to become financially involved and he ultimately became one of the witnesses for the new publication.

From this point on the story takes on a religious tone, with an angel taking the place of the "spirit" as custodian of the plates. *The Reflector*, however, is careful to point out that, "It is well known that Joe Smith never pretended to have any communion with angels, until a long period after the *pretended* finding of his book."⁷³

Once Joseph had recast his story in a religious framework, he had to explain how it was that one with a questionable reputation, who had never even joined a church, should be favored with such a special visitation from heaven. W. W. Phelps, who lived for a while at the neighboring town of Canandaigua and later joined the Mormons, pointed out that the cry was soon raised that if God were going to reveal anything it would be to some great person in the church.⁷⁴ Smith's answer was to admit his sinfulness, and to have the plates no longer found in his search for treasure as at the beginning, but divinely revealed to him as a result of his search for forgiveness and truth. His

earliest known attempt at this is found in the so-called "strange account," which was probably composed shortly after the organization of the church.

In developing this new approach Joseph followed a familiar pattern of that day. Alexander Campbell complained of a prevalent "enthusiasm" that had one man "regenerated when asleep, by a vision of the night. That man heard a voice in the woods, saying, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.' A third saw his Savior descend to the tops of the trees at noon day."⁷⁵ In this same vein Joseph depicted himself burdened with guilt and receiving a personal visit from the Son of God, who assured him of his pardon and confirmed his conclusion that all the churches were in error.⁷⁶

This claim to personal intercourse with the Lord did not stop here, however, for others soon joined Smith in their claims to have seen the Lord face-to-face.⁷⁷ By February 1831 it was reported that the Mormons claimed not only that "Smith . . . had seen God frequently and personally," but "commissions and papers were exhibited, said to be *signed* by Christ himself."⁷⁸ Yet for all the heavenly encounters enjoyed at this period, no idea is yet introduced that the Father and the Son are two separate flesh and bone Gods. Even as late as 1835, when it is taught that there are *two* personages who constitute the Godhead, the Father is presented as being "a personage of spirit," while only the Son is "a personage of tabernacle."⁷⁹ The "strange account," therefore, is a step forward in developing Smith's official story, but still has some way to go in its alteration and development.

One alteration that occurs by 1834 is a change in the motivating factor which produced Joseph's sense of sin and guilt. In the "strange account" it is his searching of the Scriptures that produces both the certain knowledge that all the churches are wrong and his deep feeling of sinfulness. For some reason this entire approach is set aside, perhaps as being rather out of character for the unlearned boy Joseph was presented as being. In its place a better motivation is found in the revival that swept Palmyra about 1823, as Joseph recalled. Consequently, in 1834, when the first printed article on the origin of the Mormon Church appeared, it spoke of a search for forgiveness that was motivated by the revival and answered by the angel's visit to Smith's bedroom, and it left no room for any earlier heavenly vision.

Late in 1835 he again made alterations in his story. On November 9, 1835, in telling his history to a visitor who called himself Joshua, the Jewish Minister, he related how in a silent grove two personages had appeared to him, adding that one of them had testified "that Jesus Christ is the son of God." Apparently Joseph at this point intended his two personages to be nothing more than angels, for he adds that he "saw many angels in this vision" and continues, "When I was about 17 years I had another vision of angels."⁸⁰ Furthermore, five days later he told Erastus Holmes that "the first visitation of *angels*" occurred when he was about fourteen years old.⁸¹ This would account for the confusion that later developed, even among the church leaders, who often spoke of Smith's first vision as an angel visitation. In telling his story to Joshua, Joseph made no attempts to fit it into the framework of the account his paper had published earlier that year, for apart from two Bible references he men-

tions nothing about a revival or any other motivation that led him to the grove to seek heavenly guidance. This account was also left unpublished when his history was put into print in Utah, and remained largely unheard of until it was recently brought to light from the archives of the Mormon Church by James B. Allen of Brigham Young University.

Three years later, in 1838, when he begins his official history, the Mormon leader tackles the problem of working a first vision story into the setting of the story that had already been released in his own paper. Now far from Palmyra where anyone might be likely to remember the dates, Joseph moves the date of the revival back to 1820 to accommodate his first vision narrative. While he is writing in 1838, he is facing division in his own ranks and strong opposition from the established churches. We are not surprised, therefore, to find the strong note of seeking forgiveness shoved into the background in favor of a condemnation of all the churches by his heavenly visitors. At this point in his career it is not so important that he be sorry for his sins as it is that he be endorsed in his claims. By this time, also, his theology has changed so that he is now advocating a plurality of physical gods. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the two personages have apparently become, for Smith, two separate Gods, the Father and the Son.⁸²

It may be asked why the discrepancy in the revival date was not noticed earlier. The answer lies in the complex course the story has taken. When the revival date was initially published, some ten years after the event, it was off by only one year, which is excusable and would be noticed by few. After nearly twenty years, when Joseph finally published the date as 1820, he was in Illinois, far-removed from the Palmyra area. In addition, the shift from an angel to Christ, then to angels, and finally to two personages introduced such haziness that even the Mormon leaders appeared confused as to the nature of the story itself. Furthermore, when the story of Mormon origins was linked with Rev. 14:6 ("I saw another angel fly . . . having the everlasting gospel"), the focus was placed upon the earliest form of the story, the angel visitation, as best matching this prophecy. With this approach the revival tends to fall into the background as a thing of relative unimportance.⁸³

Finally, it has only been in the last decade that an attempt has been made to harmonize the various accounts. This was our aim when we turned to a consideration of the existing records for help in unscrambling the accounts. This study has been the result of that search. While some will disagree with our reconstruction, all students of Mormon history will be forced to reconsider the reliability of Joseph's first vision story. We believe that the firmness of the revival date as the winter of 1824-25, the features of Smith's story as fitting only that date, and the absence of any revival in the Palmyra area in 1820 are established beyond any reasonable doubt, and will force upon Mormon writers a drastic reevaluation of the foundation of their church.

FOOTNOTES

¹"The appearing of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith is the foundation of this church." David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals* (1953), p. 85; "The greatest event that has ever occurred in the world since the resurrection of the Son of God . . . was the coming of the Father and of the Son to that boy Joseph Smith." Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (1919), p. 627; "This glorious vision of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ . . . is the greatest event that has transpired in this world since the resurrection of our Lord." Ezra Taft Benson, *Deseret News*, Dec. 28, 1967, "Church News," p. 12; "This vision was the most important event that had taken place in all world history from the day of Christ's ministry to the glorious hour when it occurred." Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (1966), p. 285; "Thus the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the story of Joseph Smith must stand or fall on the authenticity of the First Vision and the appearance of the Angel Moroni." Paul R. Cheesman, "An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith's Early Visions," (hereafter referred to as "Joseph Smith's Early Visions"), thesis, Brigham Young University, May 1965, p. 75. Cf. similar statements in Joseph F. Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (1953), p. 46f; LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* (1950), p. 15; David O. McKay, *Deseret News*, Sept. 7, 1968, "Church News," p. 4.

²*Times and Seasons*, III (Mar. 15, Apr. 1, 15, 1842), 726-28, 748f, 753f. Reprinted: *Millennial Star*, III (beginning June 1842), 21ff; also in XIV supplement, and in *The Pearl of Great Price* (Liverpool, 1851; hereafter referred to as PGP), p. 36ff. Reprinted with textual alterations both in Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, I (ed., B. H. Roberts), 1ff, and in present editions of PGP, where it is entitled "Joseph Smith 2" (hereafter J.S. 2) and divided into verses. Cf. Joseph Smith's shorter published accounts of his first vision in *Times and Seasons*, III (Mar. 1, 1842), 706f, and in I. Rupp, *An Original History of Religious Denominations* (1844), p. 404f.

³On silence see: Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (1946), p. 23f; James B. Allen, "The Significance of Joseph Smith's 'First Vision' in Mormon Thought," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, I (Autumn 1966), no. 3, 30ff. On alterations see: Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Changes in the Pearl of Great Price* (1965), p. 36ff; LaMar Petersen, *Problems in Mormon Text* (1957), p. 3f; and cf. the original manuscript at the opening of Book A-1 of "Documentary History of the Church" (hereafter DHC), microfilm copy in LDS Library, Salt Lake City, and in Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis. Cheesman's transcription ("Joseph Smith's Early Visions,") has numerous inaccuracies, making it unsuitable for checking the original text. On leaders' statements see: Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism — Shadow or Reality* (1964), p. 118ff; P. Cheesman, "Joseph Smith's Early Visions," P. 31ff, and cf. the Tanners' critique of this in their *Joseph Smith's Strange Account of the First Vision* (1965), p. 8ff.

⁴J.S. 2:5.

⁵*Messenger and Advocate*, I (Oct., Nov., Dec. 1834, Feb. 1835) 13, 27f, 40ff, 78f. This "full history of the rise of the Church of Latter Day Saints" is a series of letters from Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, the preface to which states: "That our narrative may be correct, and particularly the introduction, it is proper to inform our patrons, that our brother J. Smith, jr. has offered to assist us With his labor and with authentic documents now in our possession, we hope to render this a pleasing and agreeable narrative" (p. 13). Mormon writers have, therefore, rightly concluded: "Joseph Smith's association with Cowdery in the production of these *Letters* make [sic] them, as to the facts involved, practically the personal narrative of Joseph Smith" (B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 1930, I, 78fn); "It should be remembered that these letters which these statements [re: the location of Cumorah] are made were written at the Prophet's request and under his *personal supervision*." (Joseph F. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1956, III, 236); cf. similar statements in: Francis Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, I (1960), 54, 75, 77; and P. Cheesman, "Joseph Smith's Early Visions," pp. 44, 64.

⁶*Messenger and Advocate*, I (hereafter MA), 78.

⁷B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, I, 52f; John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith, Seeker After Truth* (1952), pp. 16, 22fn; Hyrum L. Andrus, *Joseph Smith, the Man and the Seer* (1965), p. 64f.

⁸MA, I, 78. It is interesting that Cowdery originally placed the revival event in Joseph's fifteenth year (p. 42) and then expressly corrected this to the seventeenth year (1823) in the

next installment (p. 78). If at this time Joseph had had in mind an 1820 revival, the change to 1823 would certainly never have been made.

⁹See references in note 7. Mr. Widtsoe even adds (22fn), "Reverend Lane himself confirms the dates of the revival. It was 1820, not 1823." A letter (Dec. 7, 1966) from Mr. Lauritz Petersen, Research Supervisor, L.D.S. Library, states that this "could not be verified." He adds, "I asked Mr. Widtsoe not to insert it in the book, but he did anyway."

¹⁰*Deseret Evening News* XXVII, (Jan. 20, 1894) 11. From an interview of William Smith by E. C. Briggs as reported by J. W. Petersen to *Zion's Ensign* (Independence, Mo.). No copies of the *Ensign* printing seem to have survived. Because this statement was made in William's old age and presents some chronological conflicts with other statements (see below, note 13) made by him, recently a few L.D.S. writers have in private dismissed William as entirely unreliable. The Church, however, still publicly appeals to this interview (*Deseret News*, Mar. 16, 1968, "Church News," 11, 13) and no evidence has yet appeared that William ever contradicted his assertion that both Lane and Stockton shared in the revival.

¹¹B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, I, 52f; Preston Nibley, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1944), p. 23f; H. Andrus, *Joseph Smith*, p. 65. Cf. also the script for the opening section of a recent filmstrip, "The First Vision," Part I of *The Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ in these the Latterdays*.

¹²Inez Davis, *The Story of the Church* (1959), 39fn, and Hyrum L. Andrus, "The Historical Joseph," *Dialogue*, I (Winter 1966) no. 4, 123fn, both report the headstone date as Nov. 19, 1823. A notation above the line in the manuscript of Joseph's history gave the date as Nov. 19 [14], 1823 (see Book A-1, DHC, 1; Cheesman reads 14 and fails to note that the date is written above the crossed out words, "who is now dead"), but J.S. 2:4 now reads Nov. 19, 1824. The latter date is clearly an error, for beginning Sept. 25, 1824, several issues of the *Wayne Sentinel* carried an announcement by Joseph Smith, Sr., that he had disinterred Alvin's body. The error may have crept in from the history written by Joseph Smith, Jr.'s mother since she gives the 1824 date (see Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith* [1853], pp. 40, 87ff).

¹³William Smith, *William Smith on Mormonism* (1883), p. 6; *The Saints' Herald*, XXXI (Oct. 4, 1884), 643.

¹⁴For installation date see: *Evangelical Recorder*, I (Mar. 7, 1819), 111, or *Religious Intelligencer*, II (May 2, 1818), 800. On the terminal date see: James H. Hotchkinn, *History of the Purchase and Settlement of Western New York and . . . of the Presbyterian Church* (1848), p. 341 (and 207-10 for some of Stockton's activities during 1820).

¹⁵*Palmyra Herald*, II (Nov. 6, 1822), 3. Stockton remained a member of Cayuga Presbytery through 1823 (see: Geneva Synod, "Records," I, 211, 238, 258, 374) until he transferred to Geneva Presbytery Feb. 3, 1824 (see Geneva Presbytery, "Records," Vol. C, 252). The Presbytery and Synod records are in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pa.

¹⁶For references see: *Wayne Sentinel*, I, 3 of following issues — Dec. 3, 31, 1823; Jan. 7, 14, 21, 28, 1824. For installation see issues of Feb. 18, 1824, 3, and Feb. 25, 1824, 2; also Geneva Presbytery, "Records," C, 253f, 274, and J. Hotchkinn, *History of . . . the Presbyterian Church*, p. 377.

¹⁷*History of . . . the Presbyterian Church*, p. 378.

¹⁸J. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith . . .*, p. 16; I. Davis, *The Story of the Church*, p. 32fn.

¹⁹For sketches of Lane's life see: *Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1860) VIII, 40f; William Sprague, *Annals of the American Methodist Pulpit* (1861), VII, 810f; Hendrick B. Wright, *Historical Sketches of Plymouth* (1873), pp. 309, 346ff; Oscar Jewell Harvey, *The Harvey Book* (1899), pp. 128-34; George Peck, *The Life and Times of Rev. George Peck, D.D.* (1874), pp. 96f, 104, 108f; George Peck, *Early Methodism* (1860), pp. 492-95, and scattered references 166f, 235-38, 309, 346, 428, 431, 441f, 447-49, 509, and for some of his activities in Pennsylvania in 1819-20 see 313-15, 337. For official confirmation of Lane's assigned field of labor see: *Minutes of the Annual Conferences (1773-1828)* I, 337, 352, 373, 392, 418, 446. Lane's portrait appears in *The Methodist Magazine*, April, 1826, and later in H. Wright, *Historical Sketches of Plymouth*, facing p. 346.

²⁰*Minutes of the Annual Conferences*, VIII, 41; *The Methodist Magazine* (April 1825) VIII, 161.

²¹Mr. Lane went with Rev. George Peck to the 1819 session of the Genesee Annual Conference (G. Peck, *Life and Times*, p. 104). This eight-day annual business meeting met July 1-8 at Vienna (now Phelps), a village some fifteen miles from the Smith home. The

"Journal" of the conference does not indicate whether preaching services were held or who preached, but they certainly touched off no revival either at Palmyra or at Vienna, for the Ontario Circuit (on which Palmyra was located) showed a net loss of 6, and the Lyons Circuit (on which Vienna was located) a net loss of 299 for the period between the 1819 and 1820 conferences (see *Minutes of the Annual Conferences*, I, 345f, 330 — figures for 1820 compared with 1819). It can be established that Lane was also present at the 1820 conference beginning July 20 in Canada. There is no evidence, however, that he passed through Palmyra either traveling to or from this conference. He can be definitely located in central Pennsylvania at the end of June (G. Peck, *Early Methodism*, p. 337), and a July date is too late to give any support to a "spring of eighteen hundred and twenty" story. Cf. "Journal of the Genesee Conference" (1810–1828, 2 vols in 1) I, 76–84 for 1819 session; 85, 101f for Lane at 1820 session. The original "Journal" was most likely lost in the 1933 fire that destroyed a number of Genesee Conference records at Rochester. Citations (hereafter JGC) are to the duplicate copy made for the Wyoming Conference and stored in a dormitory basement of Wyoming Seminary, Kingston, Pa.

²²*The Methodist Magazine* (April 1825) VIII, 158ff.

²³*Wayne Sentinel* (Sept. 15, 1824) I, 3.

²⁴*Minutes of the Ontario Baptist Association* (Convened at Gorham, September 22 and 23, 1824), p. 4. The *Minutes* are in the American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester, N. Y.

²⁵Geneva Presbytery, "Records" (Sept. 8, 1824), D, 16.

²⁶Geneva Synod, "Records" (Oct. 5, 1824), I, 404f.

²⁷*American Baptist Magazine* (Feb. 1825), V, 61f.

²⁸*Latter-day Luminary* (Feb. 1825), VI, 61.

²⁹Geneva Presbytery, "Records" (Feb. 2, 1825), D, 27f.

³⁰*Gospel Luminary* (Feb. 1825) I, 42; (Mar. 1825), I, 65f; *American Baptist Magazine* (Apr. 1825), V, 125; *The Methodist Magazine* (Apr. 1825), VIII, 161.

³¹*American Baptist Magazine* (Apr. 1825), V, 125; *Boston Recorder* (May 6, 1825), X, 74; *Western Recorder* (May 10, 1825), II, 74.

³²*The Methodist Magazine* (Apr. 1825), VIII, 161.

³³*American Baptist Magazine* (Apr. 1825), V, 124f; also in *Boston Recorder* (Apr. 29, 1825), X, 70; *New-York Observer* (May 7, 1825), III, 74; *Religious Intelligencer* (May 7, 1825), IX, 778.

³⁴*Wayne Sentinel* (Mar. 2, 1825), II, 3, 4.

³⁵Geneva Presbytery, "Records" (Sept. 21, 1825), D, 40, and Geneva Synod, "Records" (Oct. 6, 1825), I, 431; *Minutes of the Ontario Baptist Association* (Sept. 28, 1825), p. 5; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences*, I, 471 compared with previous year, 447.

³⁶J. Hotchkin, *History of . . . the Presbyterian Church*, p. 378.

³⁷Geneva Presbytery, "Records" (Feb. 2, 1820), C, 37. At this meeting the Phelps congregation was reported as having received only 10 on examination and 6 by letter (p. 38). By the end of 1820 the total had reached 38 (Oaks Corners Session Records for 1820), and by some time in 1821 the number for the two-year period totaled 62 members (J. Hotchkin, *History of the . . . Presbyterian Church*, p. 380). Canandaigua had to wait until a later date before their "prospects" materialized (Hotchkin, p. 400). No Presbyterian church within any reasonable distance of Joseph's home can be found adding the great multitudes Joseph attributed to them in 1820. The Farmington area to the south and west was predominantly Quaker and not, therefore, fruitful soil for Presbyterianism (Hotchkin, p. 378f), and an attempt to start a Presbyterian work in Manchester in 1823 had to be abandoned the following year (*New-York Religious Chronicle* [Oct. 2, 1824], II, 126). The fact that the names of Joseph's mother and brothers appear as members of the Palmyra Presbyterian Church is further evidence that Smith's revival story had in view the local Palmyra church, and not some other Presbyterian congregation in another town (see Western Presbyterian Church of Palmyra, "Session Records," II, 11f; Vol. I, which would have shown the exact date the Smiths joined, has been missing since at least 1932).

³⁸Geneva Presbytery, "Records" (Sept. 5, 1820), C, 64; Geneva Synod, "Records" (Oct. 4, 1820), I, 221 (also printed in *Evangelical Recorder*, Nov. 18, 1820, II, 151); Geneva Presbytery, "Records" (Feb. 8, 1821), C, 86; Geneva Synod, "Records" (Oct. 4, 1821), I, 253.

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³⁰Since the 1820 meetings of Presbytery were held at Phelps (Feb. 2) and Canandaigua (Sept. 5), that Presbytery should have been ignorant of a great awakening at Palmyra is completely beyond possibility.

⁴⁰The records of the Palmyra Baptist Church are preserved in the American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester. They are regarded as the records of the Macedon Baptist Church since part of the original congregation moved into the village of Palmyra about 1835 and the parent body moved to Macedon. The records show a total of 11 members received between September 18, 1819, and September 23, 1820, 6 of these being by baptism (pages unnumbered, see p. headed "Added" for years 1817-1820). The printed *Minutes* of the Ontario Baptist Association for the year 1820 are lost, but from the *Minutes* for 1819 and 1821 the net gain or loss can be computed. These *Minutes* show receptions by baptism for 1819: Palmyra 5, Lyons 3, Canandaigua 0, Farmington 22; for 1821: Palmyra 1, Lyons 8, Canandaigua 0, Farmington 0 (See *Minutes*, Sept. 22, 1819, p. 2ff; Sept. 26, 1821, p. 2ff). The only bright note in this drab picture seems to be in the Church of Farmington, located in the village of Manchester, during the spring of 1819. By the end of May, 14 had been received on profession of faith (see the pastor's letter in *Western New York Baptist Magazine* [Aug. 1819], II, 342; and cf. their Record Book for 1819 at the American Baptist Historical Society), and by September 8 more were added totaling the 22 reported above. This could hardly be called "great multitudes" and it was followed by a net loss of 9 in 1820. In fact, the total number received by baptism from Sept. 1804 to May 1828 was only 94, as many as the Palmyra church added in just a few months during the 1824-25 revival (cf. *Minutes of the Ontario Baptist Association* [1871], p. 14). Even if we couple the 22 of Farmington with the 38 gained in 1820 by the Phelps Presbyterian 13 miles to the east, and assume that the Methodists had some success following their 1819 conference at Vienna, this still falls short of the revival Joseph describes, and his narrative would have to be changed to read, "it commenced with the Baptists."

⁴¹*Minutes of the Annual Conferences*, I, show white and Negro membership for the Ontario Circuit as follows: 1818-700, 3; 1819-674, 3; 1820-670, 1; 1821-621, 1 (see pp. 312, 330, 346, 366). The work at Palmyra was still only a "class meeting" on the circuit in 1820. It wasn't until the summer of 1821 that it was organized into a church and still another year before they were able to begin construction of a meeting house (see Ontario County, "Miscellaneous Records," Book C, 385f; *Palmyra Herald* [June 19, 1822], II, 2).

⁴²Abner Chase, *Recollections of the Past* (1846), p. 125f. Chase says that the period of "declension was followed by a glorious revival of the work of God among both preachers and people, which I design more particularly to notice hereafter." He carried his recollections only through the year 1821, however, and never did speak more particularly of the revival period, which is most certainly the 1824-25 revival dealt with in an earlier report (see following note). Mr. Chase served as Presiding Elder of the Ontario District from July 1820 until he was replaced by George Lane in July of 1824.

⁴³*The Methodist Magazine* (Nov. 1824), VII, 435f. He states that "Though for two or three years he saw no great awakenings . . . last year [1823] the Catherine Circuit was peculiarly favored" and "the present year we have had some glorious revivals."

⁴⁴Reports of the 1816 revival can be found in: *The Christian Herald and Seaman's Magazine* (Sept. 28, 1816; May 10, June 7, 1817), II, 16; III, 103f, 164; *Religious Remembrancer* (Oct. 5, Nov. 2, 1816; May 17, 1817), 4th Series, pp. 24, 39, 151f; *Religious Intelligencer* (Apr. 19, June 7, Nov. 1, 1817), I, 750 (misnumbered 760); II, 23, 363-65; *American Baptist Magazine* (July 1817), I, 153; *Boston Recorder* (Sept. 17, 1816; May 13, Oct. 21, 1817), I, 151; II, 88, 180. See also Joshua Bradley, *Accounts of Religious Revivals . . . from 1815 to 1818* (1819), p. 223.

⁴⁵In addition to references cited above, the 1824 revival is reported in: *New-York Religious Chronicle* (Nov. 20, 1824; Apr. 9, 1825), II, 154; III, 58; *Western New York Baptist Magazine* (Feb. 1825), IV, 284; *Western Recorder* (Nov. 9, 1824; Mar. 29, 1825), I, 90; II, 50; *Boston Recorder* (May 20, 1825), X, 82; *The Christian Herald* (Portsmouth, Mar. 1825), VIII, 7 (this last publication is the organ of the Christian-Connection church and should not be confused with *The Christian Herald* of Presbyterian affiliation).

⁴⁶We examined all the issues of the following without finding a single reference to a Palmyra revival: Baptist: *American Baptist Magazine* (Jan. 1819-Nov. 1821), *Latter-day Luminary* (Feb. 1818-Nov. 1821), *Western New York Baptist Magazine* (Feb. 1819-Nov. 1821); Presbyterian: *Religious Remembrancer* (Jan. 1818-Aug. 18, 1821), *The Christian Herald and*

Seaman's Magazine (Jan. 2, 1819–Jan. 6, 1821), *Evangelical Recorder* (June 5, 1819–Sept. 8, 1821); Methodist: *The Methodist Magazine* (Jan. 1818–Dec. 1821); Congregational: *Religious Intelligencer* (Jan. 1819–May 1821); Christian-Connection: *The Christian Herald* (May 1818–May 25, 1821); Other: *Boston Recorder* (Jan. 1818–Dec. 1821); *Palmyra Register* (Jan. 13, 1819–Dec. 27, 1820).

⁴⁷*The Palmyra Register*, III, has revivals reported in the state under the dates of June 7, Aug. 16, Sept. 13, Oct. 4, 1820 (pp. 1, 1, 3, 4, respectively). Even the Methodist camp meeting being held in the vicinity of the village has nothing more significant reported about it than that a man had gotten drunk at the grog shops while there and died the next morning (issues of June 28 and July 5, 1820, p. 2).

⁴⁸Willard Bean, *A. B. C. History of Palmyra and the Beginning of "Mormonism"* (1938), p. 21f. Utilized in P. Nibley, *Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 21ff; P. Cheesman, "Joseph Smith's Early Visions," p. 12; Pearson H. Corbett, *Hyrum Smith, Patriarch* (1963), p. 18f. On Mr. Bean, including his pugilistic prowess, see Morris Bishop, "In the Footsteps of Mormon" in *New York State Historical Association Proceedings* (1941), XXXIX, printed as *New York History* (1941), XXII, 161–63; also cf. Thomas Cook, *Palmyra and Vicinity* (1930), pp. 220, 256.

⁴⁹For Townsend's life see: Franklin B. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College . . . July, 1778–June, 1792* (1907), IV, 695f. Cf. also *Religious Intelligencer* (Apr. 12, 1817), I, 730, and his obituary in the *New-York Observer* (Sept. 1, 1838), XVI, 140.

⁵⁰*Palmyra Register* (Sept. 20, Dec. 20, 1820), III, 2f; IV, 3; *Palmyra Herald* (Dec. 25, 1822), II, 2; and on the date of his arrival near Hillsboro, (Palmyra) *Western Farmer* (Mar. 21, 1821), I, 1. For examples of traveling time to Illinois about 1820 see: A. T. Norton, *History of the Presbyterian Church in . . . Illinois* (1879), I, 14f, 52f, 78, 133, 147f.

⁵¹*The Religious Advocate* began publication in 1822 at Saratoga Springs, N. Y., moving to Rochester about October 1824. See Gaylord P. Albaugh, "American Presbyterian Periodicals and Newspapers, 1752–1830 with Library Locations," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (Mar. 1964), XLII, 62, and cf. advertisements for this periodical as "now established at Rochester," dated Oct. 1, 1824, in *Supplement to the Ontario Repository* (Nov. 10, Dec. 1, 1824) p. 2 (On file at the Ontario County Historical Society, Canandaigua, N. Y.).

⁵²Joseph Smith's mother creates two revivals by quoting her son's 1820 account and giving her own account of an excitement following Alvin's death (1824). She even includes Joseph's statement about the family joining the Presbyterian Church following the 1820 revival (L. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 74), but her own account of the 1824 revival contradicts this. According to her narrative, while contemplating church membership following the 1824 revival, Joseph informed them that it would do "no injury to join them," but he cited "Deacon Jessup" as an example of the wickedness of heart they would find among them (p. 90f). That this story has reference to their intention of joining the Presbyterian church is obvious from the fact that "Deacon Jessup" was an officer in that church and was frequently referred to as "Deacon Henry Jessup" and "Deacon Jessup." See (Palmyra) *Western Farmer* (Dec. 12, 1821) I, 4; T. Cook, *op. cit.*, pp. 16, 18; *Western Presbyterian Church of Palmyra*, "Session Records" II, *passim*, where his name appears as an elder; and "History of the Rise and Growth of Western Presbyterian Church," a news clipping in the files of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁵³Hyrum L. Andrus, *God, Man and the Universe* (1968), I, 93f. When appeal was twice made to the L.D.S. Library for help in establishing an 1820 revival at Palmyra, letters (Dec. 7 and 15, 1966) made reference to: Rev. R. Smith, *Recollections of Nettleton and the Great Revival of 1820* (1848); *A Narrative of the Revival of Religion within the bounds of the Presbytery of Albany in the year 1820* (1821) (both dealing with the revivals in the Albany area and moving "eastward" — R. Smith, p. 104); *History of Wayne County, New York* (1877), p. 150 (which states only that "revivals occurred" and gives no date); Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District* (1950) (a learned study of revivalism in western New York, but throwing no light on an 1820 revival at Palmyra); and William G. McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism* (1959) (a work on revivals beginning with Charles Finney, who didn't begin preaching until 1821—p. 11— and did not come to the Palmyra area until 1831).

⁵⁴Cf. the list of Presbyterian revivals for various years in J. Hotchkiss, *History of the Presbyterian Church*, 134ff. In a similar manner, by considering only the total national picture A. G. Meacham (*A Compendious History of . . . the Methodist Church* [1835], p. 415ff) can write as though every year was a year of great revival for the Methodist Church.

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A careful reading of both these works, however, shows that the areas affected changed from time to time.

⁵⁵H. Andrus, *God, Man and the Universe*, I, 39. Some might shift the setting to Victor, 15 miles southwest of Joseph's home, since it is credited with 100 Methodist converts in "a revival in the winter of 1820-21, conducted by Reverends Philo Woodworth, Daniel Anderson, and Thomas Carlton" (*History of Ontario County, N. Y.* [1876], p. 203). The date, however, should read 1830-31 — first since this was the only year all three ministers were assigned to the "Victor and Mendon" circuit, and the membership reported as 277 in 1830 increased to 600 by the summer of 1831 (*Minutes of the Annual Conferences*, II, 72, 73, 111). Secondly, P. Woodworth was not received into the Genesee Conference on trial until 1826, while Anderson and Carlton were not admitted until 1829 (*Minutes*, I, 501; II, 30). Finally, Mr. Carlton was only twelve in 1820 and did not even become a member of the Methodist Church until 1825 (Matthew Simpson, *Cyclopaedia of Methodism* [1878], p. 167). Except for a Daniel Anderson received in 1825 by the Illinois Conference, these are the only early Methodist ministers bearing these names (see "Alphabetical List of Preachers' Names" in the back of Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* [1853], IV, 2, 3, 8-10, 42).

⁵⁶Andrus, I, 39.

⁵⁷J. M'Clintock and J. Strong, *Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Cyclopaedia*, VI, 171; cf. JGC, I, 76-84.

⁵⁸H. Andrus, *God, Man and the Universe*, I, 39, quotes Chase's words from F. W. Conable's book (*History of the Genesee Annual Conference* [1885], p. 159) where the full context is not given and consequently he misunderstands Chase as though he were saying that the revival followed the 1819 Conference. For the full statement Chase's own work should be consulted (see notes 42 and 43).

⁵⁹The "spark of Methodism" quote is from O. Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase* [1851], p. 214. On the location of the Palmyra Chapel and campgrounds see: *History of Wayne County*, p. 148f; T. Cook, p. 252; *The Methodist Magazine* (Aug. 1826), IX, 313.

⁶⁰H. Andrus (*God, Man and the Universe*, I, 41) finds evidence that the Methodist Church "was giving considerable attention to Ontario County where the Smith family lived" in the newly-formed Ontario District, created at the 1819 conference. The only new thing about the district, however, was the name, for it had been formed by dividing the Genesee District in half. This undoubtedly grew mainly out of a desire to reduce traveling distances involved, as had been the case in forming the Genesee Conference itself (JGC, I, 9), and even at this reduced size the district extended considerably beyond the limits of Ontario County, embracing at least two other counties. The remark of Bishop George about the ability of the Genesee Conference preachers to get people converted likewise proves nothing about a revival near Palmyra since the Genesee Conference took in all of western New York, part of Canada, and the whole of central Pennsylvania.

⁶¹There is a possibility that a revival took place on the Lyons Circuit between the summers of 1820 and 1821, for the membership figures show an increase of 280 over those of the previous conference year. However, since the amount gained nearly matches the number lost the previous year, it may merely indicate that the previous year's figures were incorrectly printed. There is also an 1876 reminiscence which speaks of a revival at Vienna sometime following the 1819 conference (*History of Ontario County, New York* [1876], p. 170), but this reminiscence is mistaken in placing Bishop George at the 1819 conference and in placing the 1826 conference at Vienna (cf. JGC, I, 76, 84; II, 20, 23) and therefore should be used with caution. Since the Presiding Elder specifically said "we saw no great awakenings" during those years, it seems better to reserve any revival period at Vienna for the 1824-25 period as does C. L. Vannorman's study (*Phelps Methodism* [1931], p. 12f).

⁶²William B. Sprague, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 1959 (reprint). Cf. especially the Appendix where letters from the early nineteenth century are reproduced. For example: Of the Kentucky revival of 1800-1801 "This excitement began in Logan county . . ." (p. 32); New York, 1822 "The history of the great excitement in the time of Davenport . . ." (p. 109); of an 1831 revival under a Mr. Tomb "A great excitement was produced in almost every part of the town, which has resulted in the addition of a large number in our churches" (p. 82). Cf. also how Brigham Young interchanges the words "revival," "reformation" and "excitement" (*Journal of Discourses*, XII, 67) and how H. Andrus substitutes "revival" for "excitement" when retelling Joseph's story (*Joseph Smith, the Man and the Seer*, p. 67).

⁶³New York Spectator (Sept. 23, 1843), XLVI, 4.

⁶⁴MA, I, 42. Although the Smiths lived just across the county line in Manchester township, they really were a part of the Palmyra vicinity, living only two miles from the center of that village, while they were over five miles from the village of Manchester. A contemporary understanding of the limits of the "vicinity" can be seen from a correspondent who reported that the 1824 revival was progressing "with power in the vicinity of Palmyra" and continues "several hundred have already become hopeful converts within six or seven miles of that village" (*Western Recorder* [Mar. 29, 1825], II, 50).

⁶⁵When Rev. Abner Chase speaks of a "state of agitation" within the Methodist Church being followed by a glorious revival, Mr. Andrus (*God, Man and the Universe*, I, 42) selects only Mr. Chase's remarks about the agitation and uses them to support Smith's story that the revival was followed by a state of agitation. Furthermore, when Rev. Chase speaks of the conflict that took place at the *General Conference*, Mr. Andrus erroneously states that Mr. Chase is "writing of the conference at Vienna." Apparently, Mr. Andrus is unaware that a *General Conference* (the nationwide meeting) and an *Annual Conference* (like that at Vienna) are two entirely different affairs. While the Annual Conference compromised on the "presiding elder question," the General Conference (held at Baltimore in 1820) made many fear for the Church's unity and some seceded (1828-30) to organize the Methodist Protestant Church (see *The History of American Methodism*, I, 640ff).

⁶⁶J. S. 2:14.

⁶⁷J. S. 2:53-54.

⁶⁸P. Cheesman, "Joseph Smith's Early Visions," pp. 126-32; published by Jerald and Sandra Tanner in *Joseph Smith's Strange Account of the First Vision* (1965) and extracted in *Dialogue*, I, (Autumn 1966) no. 3, 39f. The manuscript itself is unbound in the front of the "Kirtland Letter Book," which Mr. Andrus speaks of as "History of Joseph Smith, Jr., by himself" in "Joseph Smith's Letter Book at Kirtland, November 27, 1832 to August 4, 1835" (*God, Man and the Universe*, I, 36fn). The book this writer saw, however, has copies of letters by Smith and others that go back to 1829. The suggestion of one Mormon that this account is not authentic because it is not in the Prophet's own handwriting would make the official history unauthentic as well, since this also is not in his own handwriting.

⁶⁹See the ten statements collected in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (1834), 232-66; also, Rev. John Clark, "Gleanings by the Way," *Episcopal Recorder* (Sept. 5, 1840), XVIII, 94, or his book *Gleanings by the Way* (1842), p. 225; O. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 214; Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise and Progress of Mormonism* (1867), p. 19ff; *History of Wayne County*, p. 150; Statement of Daniel Hendrix, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (Feb. 21, 1897), XXII, 34.

⁷⁰Files of the Palmyra *Reflector* are at Yale (first 16 issues) and the New York Historical Society (remaining issues). Excerpts of main portions in F. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 407-410.

⁷¹"In the commencement, the imposture . . . had no regular plan or features." (*The Reflector* [Feb. 14, 1831], II, 101). Note also the testimony of Parley Chase, "In regard to their Gold Bible speculation, they scarcely ever told two stories alike" (in E. Howe, *op. cit.*, p. 248); and the letter of Rev. Jesse Townsend, "questioned on the subject from time to time, his story assumed a more uniform statement" (in P. Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 289, and cf. 33 for Tucker's statement that the claim of Smith to have "received a revelation of the existence of the records in 1823" was an "after-avertment" and a "secondary invention"). For the testimony of those who heard the story from the Smiths themselves, see the statements of Willard Chase, Henry Harris, and Abigail Harris in Howe, *op. cit.*, 242f, 252f; and the statement of Fayette Lapham in *Historical Magazine* (May 1870), VII (2nd series), 305ff.

⁷²*Tiffany's Monthly* (August? 1859), V, 169, and cf. 163, 167. Joel Tiffany, editor of this spiritualist monthly, in the April 1859 issue (IV, 568), promised to print an interview with Martin Harris, together with some other material on the Mormons. The other material appeared in the May and July issues (V, 46-51, 119-21) and the interview was printed in the same volume pp. 163-70, which presumably was the August issue. For a photomechanical reprint made from the copy in the Berrian Collection of the New York Public Library, see Jerald Tanner, *Revealing Statements by the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon*. The interview is also reprinted in Francis Kirkham, *op. cit.*, II, 376ff, and excerpts are in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, *Among the Mormons* (1958), pp. 30-32. For other references to Smith finding the plates by means of the seer-stone, see the diary of Hosea Stout

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edited by Juanita Brooks, *On the Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout 1844-1861* (1964), II, 593; and O. Turner, *op cit.*, p. 216.

⁷³*The Reflector* (Feb. 28, 1831), II, 109; Cf. also (Feb. 1, 1831), II, 92, "it appears quite certain that the prophet himself never made any serious pretensions to religion until his late pretended revelation"; (Feb. 14, 1831), II, 101, "It will be bourne in mind that no divine interposition had been dreamed of at this period." For accounts of the early religious story see: Rev. John Clark, *op cit.*, pp. 222-28; O. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 215f; Lucious Fenn letter of Feb. 12, 1830, in Mulder and Mortensen, *op. cit.*, p. 28; two Rochester newspaper reports in F. Kirkham, *op. cit.*, I, 150ff; *The Reflector* (Feb. 14, 1831), II, 103; and an 1831 letter of Lucy Smith to her brother in *The Elders' Journal*, IV, 59-62 (also printed in Ben E. Rich, *Scrapbook of Mormon Literature*, I, 543-45); cf. also John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints* (1839), p. 12.

⁷⁴MA (Apr. 1835), I, 97.

⁷⁵*The Christian Baptist*, I, 149, quoted from Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Case Against Mormonism* (1967), I, 108. See 108-10 for other examples.

⁷⁶Asa Wild (*Wayne Sentinel*, Oct. 22, 1823) had a similar encounter with the Lord who told him all the churches were corrupt. Joseph's reference (*The Evening and the Morning Star* [June 1832], I, 1) to it being "manifested" "that he had received a remission of his sins," then sinning, repenting and then "God ministered unto him by an holy angel" may be a reference to the story set forth in the "strange account," but it could also represent a preliminary stage in the development of that account (now printed as Doctrine and Covenants 20:5-6).

⁷⁷See diary citations in Max H. Parkin, *Conflict at Kirtland* (1966), pp. 50, 80, 84f; and newspaper citations in John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* (1960), p. 337; Hugh Nibley, "Censoring the Joseph Smith Story," *Improvement Era* (Nov. 1961), LXIV, 812; H. Andrus, *Joseph Smith, the Man and the Seer*, p. 68fn.

⁷⁸*The Reflector* (Feb. 14, 1831), II, 102.

⁷⁹Doctrine and Covenants (1835), pp. 52f, 55.

⁸⁰DHC, at the back of Book A-1, 120-21. Published in *Dialogue*, I (Autumn 1966) no. 3, 40-41.

⁸¹*Deseret News* (May 29, 1852), II, 1; also in *Millennial Star* (July 2, 1853) XV, 424. "I received the first visitation of angels, which was when I was about fourteen" has been altered in B. H. Roberts' edition of Smith history to read, "I received my first vision, which . . ." (II, 312). The manuscript reads "visitation of angels" (DHC, back of Book A-1, 129).

⁸²Although Mormon calls Moroni "my beloved son" (Moroni 8:2) and the reference could be to an appearance of these two, the context of the story favors taking the personages as the Father and the Son. Furthermore, at the same time Joseph was writing his story, Joseph's paper was reporting that Thomas B. Marsh's son at age nine and "a remarkable vision, in which he talked with the Father and many of the ancient prophets face to face, and beheld the Son of God coming in his glory" (*Elders' Journal* [July 1838], I, 48). It is not likely that the Mormon Prophet will let himself be outdone by a nine-year-old boy.

⁸³Cf. this recurring theme in *Journal of Discourses*, XIII, 324; XIV, 365; XVI, 46, 79; and a similar use of Rev. 14:18f and Matthew 13:38ff in VI, 335. See also Orson Spencer's amplification of the theme in his *Letters* (1874), 79ff.