

# The Encounter of the Young Joseph Smith with Presbyterianism

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Of the Protestant denominations vying for converts in western New York during the early nineteenth century, Methodism is rightly regarded as having made the greatest religious impress on the young Joseph Smith. Oliver Cowdery claimed that Smith had been “awakened” during a sermon by the Methodist minister George Lane. Smith himself said that his “mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect” and that he even “felt some desire to be united with them.”<sup>1</sup> At some point between 1821 and 1829, Smith served as “a very passable exhorter” at Methodist camp meetings “away down in the woods, on the Vienna Road.”<sup>2</sup> His wife, Emma Hale, was a Methodist, and shortly after her first pregnancy ended in a stillbirth (and Martin Harris lost Smith’s earliest dictations), Smith briefly joined a Methodist class meeting that convened at the home of Emma’s uncle, the Reverend Nathaniel Lewis.<sup>3</sup> Two years later, when Smith organized his new church, both its conferences of elders and its commissioning of minimally trained missionaries had a Methodist flavor.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, if Methodism served as the most significant Protestant influence on the young Joseph Smith, Presbyterianism and its characteristic Calvinist theology played an important, if more negative, role in his religious development. When Joseph reported his earliest vision to his mother, he did not tell her that all Christian sects were equally erroneous. He said that “Presbyterianism [was] not true.”<sup>5</sup>

In early nineteenth-century America, Presbyterians differed from most other Protestant denominations in that—at least in theory—they held to an elaborately refined theological system that stretched back to the Ref-

ormation. Like other branches of the Calvinist or “Reformed” tradition, Presbyterianism emphasized the sovereignty of God in the salvation of souls rather than the agency of man. Presbyterians insisted on the total inability of man to contribute to his own salvation, God’s predestination of the elect to everlasting life, the limitation of Christ’s atonement only to those who would be saved, the irresistible nature of God’s call to the elect, and the impossibility that any soul sanctified by God’s Spirit could fall from the state of grace. In other words, Calvinists insisted that salvation sprang from the immutable decree of God’s election rather than from an individual’s ability to achieve salvation through his or her own efforts.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Calvinism was in decline, especially beyond the older coastal settlements where religion of every sort seemed to wane. Pioneers traveled faster than preachers, and easterners feared that the frontier might degenerate into a haunt of lawlessness as well as religious indifference. Then a wave of revivals convulsed the Trans-Appalachian west, beginning with a spectacular outpouring of religious emotion at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in 1801.<sup>6</sup>

During this period of revival fervor, Presbyterian insistence on an educated ministry put that denomination at a disadvantage compared with Methodists, Baptists, and Disciples, whose more numerous and less educated clergy preached with primitive zeal to less sophisticated audiences. These less staid denominations outstripped Presbyterians in the competition for western converts; and because of the nature of their plea to the unconverted, even committed Calvinists were virtually forced to accommodate to an informal “Arminianism”—roughly, the belief that human free will *does* play some role in salvation. Some “New School” Presbyterians (most notably, Charles Finney) eventually abandoned Calvinism entirely; and in 1838, American Presbyterians rancorously divided into “Old School” and “New School” factions.<sup>7</sup>

Still, it would be unwise to underestimate the continuing influence of Presbyterianism during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1854, the German Reformed Church historian Philip Schaff argued that Presbyterians were “without question one of the most numerous, respectable, worthy, intelligent, and influential denominations,” and one that had a “particularly strong hold on the solid middle class.”<sup>8</sup> By the Plan of Union of 1801, Presbyterians and Congregationalists united their efforts to evangelize the West, and this joint effort worked largely to the benefit of the Presbyterians. Congregationalists, even in Connecticut, began call-

ing themselves “Presbyterians,” and the upshot was that membership in the Presbyterian Church continued to grow, not only through conversions but also through the addition of many New Englanders.<sup>9</sup>

The Joseph Smith family, like many others from New England, emigrated to western New York in the early nineteenth century bringing their sometimes-conflicted religious traditions with them. Lucy Mack Smith had been reared by a devout Congregationalist mother through a childhood that can truly be described as “a series of losses.” Thus, not surprisingly, when Lucy reached Palmyra, she developed a connection with the Presbyterian church, even though she held aloof from membership.<sup>10</sup>

Presbyterians first established a church in the Palmyra area in 1797, but it was not until after a religious revival gripped the area in 1816 that the Western Presbyterian Church was organized. Although the land for this first meetinghouse in the village—the only church building that existed in Palmyra during Joseph Smith’s childhood—was donated for a union church, the building was constructed almost entirely by Presbyterians. The white, rectangular structure, built in the New England tradition, featured green blinds and a steeple with a gilded weather vane, although there was no bell. In the interior, a gallery reached by stairways on either side faced “a high pulpit . . . of primitive fashion.”<sup>11</sup>

Sunday sermons, delivered both morning and afternoon, were long and doctrinal. Pews were rented, and Church discipline was rigorously enforced. Members were excommunicated not only for “intemperate use of spirituous liquors,” “having intercourse with females of bad character,” and renegeing on bad debts, but also for having “denied the Bible” by declaring that “all men would be saved.” Furthermore, the elders and deacons who enforced this Church order were sturdy representatives of the local political and economic elite.<sup>12</sup> How often Joseph Smith attended Palmyra’s Western Presbyterian Church is unknown; but late in life, a childhood acquaintance, Lorenzo Saunders, recalled that the first time he ever attended Sabbath School he went with “young Joe Smith at the old Presbyterian Church.”<sup>13</sup>

A souring in the relationship between Joseph Smith and the Presbyterians seems to have occurred after the sudden and still mysterious death of his eldest brother, Alvin, on November 19, 1823. In old age, Joseph’s younger brother, William, claimed that, at Alvin’s funeral, the Rev. Benjamin B. Stockton, a Presbyterian minister, had “intimated very strongly” that Alvin had gone to hell.<sup>14</sup>

It is often assumed that Stockton's remarks offended the Smith family and drove them from conventional religion. More likely, Stockton simply made a religious appeal, unexceptional for the period. The subsequent Palmyra revival of 1824–25 followed hard on Alvin's death, and Benjamin Stockton served as a leader in that religious resurgence before becoming pastor of Western Presbyterian Church. Lucy Smith later reflected that "the whole neighborhood was very much aroused" and that the Smith family "flocked to the meeting house to see if there was a word of comfort for us." Rather than being repelled by Stockton's preaching, sometime before 1828 Lucy and three of her children—Hyrum, Samuel, and Sophronia—joined the Presbyterian church where Stockton was the pastor.<sup>15</sup>

Doubtless, the fact that the Presbyterians were the most prestigious denomination in the neighborhood and the only ones with a meeting-house was no deterrent to this decision, but it is unlikely that the religious-minded Lucy Mack Smith would have made such a momentous decision primarily for reasons of social class. More than twenty years earlier when the Smiths had lived in Randolph, Vermont, Lucy had sought spiritual comfort from a noted Presbyterian minister there, but characterized his message as "emptiness, vanity, vexation of spirit" that "palled upon my heart like the chill night air. . . . It did not fill the aching void within nor satisfy the craving hunger of the soul."<sup>16</sup>

Although Joseph later wrote that his "Father's family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith,"—rather than emphasizing his *mother's* membership—the death of Alvin and the arrival of Stockton seem to have driven both Smith and his father (who glided easily between religious skepticism and folk mysticism) farther from the Presbyterian church and its Calvinistic doctrine.<sup>17</sup> It was probably during this period that Joseph "became partial to the Methodist sect," whose opposition to Reformed doctrine was notorious. Later Smith wrote that the "Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all their powers of either reason or 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."<sup>18</sup>

A possible implication of this phrasing is that to Joseph, Presbyterians stood on one side of a theological divide, Baptists and Methodists on the other.<sup>19</sup> After all, Presbyterians gloried in the Protestant Reformation, whereas Francis Asbury, the effective founder of American Meth-

odism, argued that the apostolic order had been lost during the first century and was only then about to be restored.<sup>20</sup>

According to Lucy Smith, Joseph warned her that, although it would do the family “no injury” to join the Presbyterians, he believed her unaware of “the wickedness of their hearts.” As proof, he predicted that “Deacon Jessup” of the Presbyterian Church would “not scruple to take the last cow” from a widow with eight little children in order to satisfy a debt; and so, she said, it turned out.<sup>21</sup>

Joseph Smith began dictating the Book of Mormon at about the same time that Benjamin Stockton left the pastorate of Western Presbyterian Church. Concurrently, Lucy and her children became inactive members. On March 10, 1830, after eighteen months of procedural delay, the communicants of the Smith family were formally disfellowshipped after a visit from three Church officials. Lucy later claimed that the three Presbyterians had conspired to destroy the Book of Mormon, although Church records note only that the Smiths “did not wish to unite with us any more.”<sup>22</sup>

The Presbyterians more than had their revenge. In 1833, when D. P. Hurlbut busied himself collecting anti-Smith affidavits from Palmyra residents, at least ten Presbyterians, all members of the local elite—including Henry Jessup—swore that “Joseph Smith, Senior, and his son Joseph in particular,” were “entirely destitute of moral character, and addicted to vicious habits.”<sup>23</sup>

Once the nature of Smith’s “golden Bible” became known, Joseph’s uncle, Jesse Smith, a staunch Calvinist with whom Joseph had lived for some months as a child, assailed the book as “a work of deception.” Joseph had made “use of the holy name of Jehovah!” Jesse remonstrated.<sup>24</sup> The *Rochester Observer*, a Presbyterian newspaper, introduced the Book of Mormon below the title “*Blasphemy!*” And the *New York Evangelist* of New York City, another Presbyterian periodical, scorned the new scripture as a plagiarism of the Bible and its followers as persons carried away by a “strange delusion.”<sup>25</sup>

In 1830, when Smith tried to organize his new converts in Colesville Township, southern New York, he came to believe—with some reason—that Presbyterians had engaged in a conspiracy against him. On the day before a June baptismal service, Rev. John Sherer, a local Presbyterian pastor, attempted what the twenty-first century might call a “cult rescue.” One of his parishioners, Emily Coburn, the sister-in-law of Mormon stal-

wart Newel Knight, had expressed interest in becoming a Mormon. Through a ruse, Sherer met Coburn in a nearby grove and not only expostulated with her but, taking her firmly by the hand, tried to lead her away. A knot of Mormons materialized, and Sherer was forced to retreat. Nevertheless, the next day Coburn was returned to her family through a power of attorney signed by her father. Emily Coburn soon made her peace with the Presbyterian Church that had disciplined her, but later that year she rejoined the Knights and was baptized a Mormon.<sup>26</sup>

Joseph Smith's troubles in Colesville had only begun. Presbyterians Abram W. Benton, Nathan Boynton, and Cyrus McMaster had Joseph arrested as a "disorderly person" and, when he was acquitted the following day, had him rearrested. After being acquitted a second time, he was forced to flee when local residents threatened mob violence.<sup>27</sup> No wonder Smith later avowed in Nauvoo that he had been "ground" in "a Presbyterian smut machine."<sup>28</sup>

Given Smith's early chafing against Presbyterianism, one might have expected more explicit antagonism toward its distinctive doctrines in the Book of Mormon. Certainly the Book of Mormon seems to contradict all five points of Calvinism (often abbreviated with the acronym TULIP): Total depravity (an inherited sin nature),<sup>29</sup> Unconditional election (God's choice and not the human being's),<sup>30</sup> Limited atonement (only some are saved),<sup>31</sup> Irresistible grace (humankind cannot resist the call of God),<sup>32</sup> and the Perseverance of the saints (salvation cannot be lost).<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, it has also been argued that the Book of Mormon incorporates Calvinist doctrine as well.<sup>34</sup> For instance, Fawn Brodie—who was literarily gifted but religiously tone-deaf—claimed that in the Book of Mormon "Calvinism and Arminianism had equal status."<sup>35</sup>

Only one chapter of the Book of Mormon makes what seems to be a specific attack on Presbyterians and their upper-middle-class leaders. In Alma 31 (the only chapter in the Book of Mormon in which the Calvinist term "elected" is used<sup>36</sup>), the prophet Alma heads a mission to the heretical Zoramites, who have "a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a place for standing . . . high above the head" that "would only admit one person." This description suggests the elevated pulpit at Western Presbyterian Church, which represents the ascendancy of the preacher, his prayers, and his sermons.<sup>37</sup> These Zoramites give repeated thanks to God that they are a "chosen and a holy people" and not like all others who are "elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell." Furthermore, the Zoramites

are “a wicked and a perverse people” whose “hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods” (Alma 31:13, 17, 18, 24)—like the hypocritical Deacon Jessup of Western Presbyterian Church.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, with deference to the importance of Church architecture and social class, such superficialities are of lesser importance to Joseph Smith’s religious development than what he may have heard preached at Western Presbyterian Church between the family’s arrival in 1816–17 and the death of Alvin Smith in 1823.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, two of the three clergymen who served the Church during that period are now little more than names. Like countless other country parsons of past generations, their shadowy memories survive only through Church lists and genealogies.<sup>40</sup>

Only the Reverend Jesse Townsend (1766–1838), pastor of Western Presbyterian Church from August 1817 to 1820 (or 1821), has left suggestions about the sort of Presbyterianism that might have intersected with the imagination of the adolescent Joseph Smith. Townsend was born in Andover, Connecticut, ten years before the American Revolution and graduated from Yale College in 1790 at the mature age of twenty-five. He married the widow of another clergyman, a woman eleven years his senior, with whom he had four children, all of whom survived their parents. Townsend was first settled as pastor of the Congregational Church in Shelburne, Massachusetts (1792), and then was called to the Congregational Church in Durham, New York (1798). He preached for some years in Madison, New York, and took charge of a Utica academy for a year. After leaving Palmyra, Townsend served with the American Home Missionary Society in Illinois and Missouri, becoming perhaps the first Presbyterian clergyman resident in those states—and curiously anticipating the later moves of Joseph Smith. Returning to Palmyra in 1826, Townsend preached in the neighboring town of Sodus and supplied vacant pulpits in the area while preparing young men for college.<sup>41</sup>

Virtually nothing remains of Townsend’s considerable literary efforts beyond a one-volume abridgment of a five-volume Church history, two published letters about New York revivals (1802–3), two published letters about the “Mormonites,” four unpublished private letters, and a dedication sermon preached at the Western Presbyterian Church in 1819.<sup>42</sup> Intriguingly, even though he died two months after the denominational

split of 1838, the man revealed in these documents does not fit the stereotype of either an Old School or a New School Presbyterian.

Townsend was a staunch Calvinist, yet fervently evangelistic. In the preface to his Church history abridgment, Townsend emphasizes that Church history demonstrates the “progress of truth and its salutary influence on a world ruined by sin,” certainly not the restorationist conviction that gospel truth had been hidden since the first century.<sup>43</sup> Yet Townsend gladly worked under the auspices of the interdenominational American Home Missionary Society, which thoroughly offended Old School notions of denominational propriety.

In his report of a revival in the Catskills that occurred in a frontier community without “one framed building in the whole settlement,” Townsend claimed to have spoken with nearly every resident “about the state of their souls,” eventually sparking a revival that led to the organization of a new church. Yet he also rejoiced that this backwoods congregation was “well united in Calvinistic sentiments,” ascribing the change in their condition to “the sovereign grace of God.” In the more settled parish of Durham, New York, Townsend registered “great rejoicing with Zion’s friends” over converts young and old who had come to the Savior. But he also gave thanks that “God has most mercifully preserved us from all appearances of enthusiasm. Though the word has been like the hammer and the fire to break in pieces the rock, yet the work has not been with noise and tumult.”<sup>44</sup>

It is therefore all the more striking to read Townsend’s account of a dream that he had during a religious awakening in Homer, New York. In a letter to a fellow pastor, Townsend elliptically notes his successful mediation of disharmony that had threatened “the interests of that church & the welfare of Zion at large.” He recalled that, while his mind was troubled, he fell asleep and dreamed that he saw the church members “dressed in deep mourning.” After the presiding clergyman publicly confessed his sins to God and the congregation, the Church members did likewise “in the most solemn & impressive manner,” after which the “whole assembly burst into a flood of tears.” Although portions of this letter have been lost, the implication is that the events in the dream were replicated in the actual congregation. And yet it is unlikely that Townsend ever described this dream to his Palmyra congregation because he closes his account to his friend with the words, “I write this dream, brother, inter nos [between us].”<sup>45</sup> Townsend’s obituary writer seems to have hit the mark when he de-



scribed the clergyman as belonging to “the *old school* of New England divines” yet favoring whatever “measures of the day, whether *new* or *old*, as were instrumental in the salvation of souls.”<sup>46</sup>

The sermon that Townsend preached at the dedication of the first Western Presbyterian Church in Palmyra is, on its surface, neither Calvinistic nor evangelistic in emphasis, although both themes are present on a deeper level. Rather Townsend’s sermon is a discourse in the grand style, appropriate for the most formal sort of ceremony at that time and place. Townsend understood what was expected of him and provided it. The *Palmyra Register* described the dedication as “solemn and interesting to every rational and sober mind,” with Townsend’s message and prayer being followed by the singing of an “elegant” dedicatory ode written for the occasion.<sup>47</sup>

Townsend took as his text Luke 2:14, the message of the Christmas angels. He noted that Christ’s incarnation was “preparatory for the enlargement of his church” and further argued that buildings erected for the worship of God allowed men to “unite in the angelic song” sung at Christ’s birth. Townsend then launched into a long dedicatory prayer (during which the congregation remained standing) that concluded with a plea for his listeners to “truly become as individuals, a habitation of God, through the Spirit. See to it that you do this and you will be able to with the most animated delight to unite in the angelic song. ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ May you all do this and with one accord devoutly subjoin your sincere and cordial Amen.”<sup>48</sup>

If Joseph Smith was present that day, one month shy of his fourteenth birthday, this sermon had much to engage his imagination, tuned as it was to sonorous religious language. And he might well have attended, because the dedication of the Presbyterian Church was as much community event as religious service. If so, it would have been the only dedication of a religious structure that Joseph witnessed before the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836.<sup>49</sup>

It is easy enough to spin webs of speculation. There are a limited number of ways in which religious buildings can be dedicated. The traditional Protestant orthodoxy of Townsend’s sermon is self-evident, as are the unconventional aspects of Joseph Smith’s Kirtland prayer. An imprecatory quality at Kirtland stands in contrast to a plea for brotherly unity in Palmyra.

Still, one cannot help but note some at least superficial similarities between Palmyra and Kirtland. For instance, the text of the Palmyra sermon refers to an angelic visitation. The preacher calls the church a “temple,” asks God to fill the house with his glory, and requests that the ceremony be “a Pentecost to our souls.” Townsend refers to the church as “Zion” (as well as “the Israel of God”) and asks congregation members to “feel their hearts burn within them.”<sup>50</sup> At Kirtland, Joseph Smith concluded his prayer with two sentences that might nearly have been exchanged with those of Townsend’s at Palmyra:

And help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne, with acclamations of praise, singing Hosanna to God and the Lamb!

And let these, thine anointed ones, be clothed with salvation, and thy saints shout aloud for joy. Amen, and Amen. (D&C 109:79–80)

Like the Palmyra dedication sermon, the Kirtland prayer was followed by a specially commissioned hymn.<sup>51</sup> All coincidence perhaps. Nevertheless, it is comfortable to imagine that in 1819, a thirteen-year-old with rare aural gifts was deeply impressed by the most stylish ceremony western New York could have offered him, the dedication of a Presbyterian church.

Yet the most influential element of Presbyterianism for Joseph Smith’s religious development was neither the early hostility of its members nor Smith’s possible later reflection of its formal sermonizing. Calvinism’s most important contribution to the Restoration was as a fully developed theological system against which Smith could react. To such a creative intellect, Methodism could serve only as a temporizing way station, not even intermediate to the emphasis Smith began to place on the exaltation of humankind.

Calvinists worshipped a God who received the powerless inheritors of Adam’s sin through His grace alone. Joseph Smith gloried rather in agency, the ability of an individual to choose good or evil untrammelled by any predestinating power. Unlike the Presbyterians who emphasized God’s sovereignty, Smith declared that God had cast down Satan precisely because he had “sought to destroy the agency of man.” The Messiah had redeemed humanity from the fall so that men could “become free forever, knowing good from evil,” free “to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (Moses 4:3; 2 Ne. 2:26).<sup>52</sup> Without his exposure to Presbyterianism in half-settled but “burned-over” western New

York, it is doubtful that Joseph Smith could have so expeditiously conceived such a sophisticated counter-system. Calvinism, rather than Methodism, provided an elaborate theological structure that Smith found worthy of his mettle. To him, it was indeed Presbyterianism that was most importantly “not true.”

### Notes

1. Oliver Cowdery, “Letter III” to W. W. Phelps, December 1834, *LDS Messenger and Advocate* 1 (December 1834): 42, in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2003), 2:424; Joseph Smith, “Manuscript History,” 2, *ibid.*, 1:59.

2. Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham’s Purchase, and Morris’ Reserve* (Rochester, N.Y.: William Alling, 1851), 214, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:50. Since the Methodists did not acquire property on the Vienna Road until July 1821, the camp meetings were almost certainly held after that date. Wesley Walters, “A Reply to Dr. Bushman,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 99. D. Michael Quinn argues that, on the contrary, a Methodist camp meeting of 1820 can be fairly interpreted as the religious revival to which Joseph Smith refers and that Methodists typically only asked permission to use property for camp meetings rather than purchase the land. D. Michael Quinn, “Joseph Smith’s Experience of a Methodist ‘Camp Meeting’ in 1820,” *Dialogue Paperless*, E-Paper #3, expanded version (“definitive”), December 20, 2006, <http://www.dialoguejournal.com/excerpts/e4.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2007).

3. Joseph and Hiel Lewis, “Mormon History: A New Chapter about to Be Published,” *Amboy [Illinois] Journal*, April 30, 1879, 1, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:305–6.

4. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); Richard Lyman Bushman with the assistance of Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 153, 251–52, 254.

5. “Joseph Smith History, 1839,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:143.

6. George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970), 9; Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America’s Pentecost* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

7. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), 432–39, 444–45, 461; Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, 59–87.

8. Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character*, 1855; rpt., editor Perry Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 118.

9. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, 10–11.

10. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 11–13. Solomon Mack, Lucy's father, was a Universalist during her childhood but converted to orthodox Christianity in 1810.

11. "Miscellaneous Church Files of Palmyra," microfilm, 900 no. 61, Microforms Room, Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; Woman's Society of the Western Presbyterian Church, comp., *Palmyra, Wayne County, New York* (Rochester, N.Y.: Herald Press, 1907), microfilm, 900 no. 241, Microforms Room, Lee Library. This church building also served Palmyra as a town hall.

12. *One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of the Western Presbyterian Church* (Palmyra, N.Y.: N.pub., 1942), n.p., in "Miscellaneous Church Files on Palmyra"; *Wayne Sentinel*, January 28, 1824, 4; "Records of the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra," microfilm, 900 no. 61, Microform Room, Lee Library; Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 77.

13. Lorenzo Saunders, interviewed by William H. Kelley, September 17, 1884, 1–18, E. L. Kelley Papers, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:127.

14. Dan Vogel, "Introduction to Palmyra and Manchester, New York, Documents," *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:5; William Smith, interviewed by E. C. Briggs, 1893, *Deseret News*, January 20, 1894, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:512–13.

15. Lucy Mack Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript" (1845), LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:306. For notice of the 1824–25 revival, see *Wayne Sentinel*, March 2, 1825. No membership records of the Western Presbyterian Church survive for this period, and the date of their membership remains controversial, but Lucy Smith strongly implied that she joined the Presbyterian Church after Alvin's death. Stockton served as pastor of Western Presbyterian Church from February 1824 until October 1827, the mostly likely period of the Smiths' church membership.

16. Lucy Mack Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:241–42.

17. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92) 1:270. Smith said that he attended meetings of vari-

ous denominations—including presumably Presbyterian—“as often as occasion would permit.”

18. *Ibid.*, 1:271.

19. It is also perhaps noteworthy that Smith accused the Presbyterians of using “all their powers of either reason or sophistry” to prove the errors of the Baptists and Methodists, but then he used only the word “Zealous” to describe the arguments of the latter. *Ibid.*

20. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 167.0

21. A Lucy Smith History, 1845,” *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:308. Henry Jessup was actually an elder rather than a deacon. A good candidate for this orphaned family is that of Enoch Saunders, who died October 10, 1825, and who had seven children at the 1820 census. Lorenzo Saunders, who recalled attending the Presbyterian Sunday school with Joseph, also remembered the Smiths as Akind neighbors in sickness.” Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, 61; Saunders, Interview, 1884, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:156. The date of Enoch Saunders’s death lends further weight to a later date for Smith family membership in Western Presbyterian Church.

22. “Records of the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra,” 11; records relating to the Smith family have been transcribed in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:496–501. By this date, daughter Sophronia had married and had probably transferred her church membership, so she was not included in the notice of church discipline.

23. Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painsville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), 261–62, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:48–55. As Vogel notes, the “vicious habits” referred to likely included drinking (49 note 2). Later, Alexander McIntyre (1792–1859), another pew-holder at Western Presbyterian Church, asserted that Joseph Smith Sr. was a drunkard, a liar, and a thief, and “his house a perfect brothel.” *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:172.

24. Jesse Smith, Letter to Hyrum Smith, June 17, 1829, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:551–52; see also 1:633; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 114.

25. W. W. Phelps, Letter to Oliver Cowdery, February 21, 1835, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:32; *New York Evangelist* (1832) quoted in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:297–98.

26. Emily M. Austin, *Mormonism: or, Life among the Mormons* (Madison, Wisc.: M. J. Cantwell, 1882), 30–52, 56–58, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:174–76; see also “Newel Knight Journal,” in *Scraps of Biography: Tenth Book of the Faith-Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), 46–69, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:45–65. According to Knight, Sherer

himself returned with the power of attorney. During the Nauvoo period, Emily Coburn Austin became disillusioned with Mormonism and left the Church.

27. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 116–18. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:94, notes that in “Smith’s zeal to place blame for his early persecutions on the Presbyterians,” he may have mistaken the religious affiliation of Abram Benton because Benton seems to have been a Universalist.

28. Joseph Smith, Journal, February 21, 1843, 210–11 in Scott H. Faulring, ed., *The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith: An American Prophet’s Record* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 311. The full quotation is more cryptic and less specifically directed against Presbyterians than the above excerpt suggests: “The pagans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, and Baptists shall have peace in Nauvoo only they must be ground in Joe Smith’s mill. I have been in their mill. I was ground in Ohio and [New] York States—a Presbyterian smut machine—and [the] last machine was in Missouri and last of all I have through [the] Illinois smut machine. Those who come here must go through my smut machine and this is my tongue.” On December 29, 1835, Smith discovered that there had been some Presbyterians at one of his meetings and rejoiced in his journal that he had “exposed their abominations in the language of the scriptures.” *Ibid.*, 93. But thereafter, Smith seemed to lump Presbyterians indifferently with Methodists, Baptists, and other Protestant denominations, perhaps because farther west, Presbyterians were a limited threat to the LDS Church.

29. “Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God” (Alma 26:22); “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Ne. 2:25).

30. “Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself” (2 Ne. 2:16); “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Ne. 2:27).

31. “Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men” (2 Ne. 26:27).

32. “I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith” (2 Ne. 27:23); “Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call

you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd” (Alma 5:38).

33. “Continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26); “And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts” (Mosiah 5:11).

34. “Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer” (1 Ne. 10:6); “Remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved” (2 Ne. 10:24); “Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God” (Alma 5:7); “Now we see that Adam did fall by the partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God; and thus we see, that by his fall, all mankind became a lost and fallen people” (Alma 12:22); “Because of the fall our natures have become evil continually” (Eth. 3:2).

35. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, rev. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 70. Brodie herself noted that she was able to handle “the political narrative much better than the theological matter, most of which bores me.” Brodie, Letter to Dale L. Morgan, July 13, 1944, quoted in Newell G. Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer’s Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 94.

36. The Doctrine & Covenants uses the term “elect” and “election” seven times—most memorably in referring to Emma Smith as “an elect lady” (D&C 25:3), but in all the LDS scriptures only the Zoramites are “elected.”

37. Joseph might also have seen such an elevated pulpit as a boy of seven or eight during the time he spent living with his uncle, the Congregationalist Jesse Smith, in Salem, Massachusetts.

38. Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), 105.

39. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 28–30, 263.

40. The three pastors of Western Presbyterian Church, 1817–23, and the date of their entering that office, are Stephen M. Wheelock (April 1817), Jesse Townsend (August 1817), Daniel C. Hopkins, temporary officiator (January 1822). Benjamin B. Stockton became the pastor in February 1824. “Miscellaneous Church Files of Palmyra.”

41. Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1912), 4:695–96, largely assembled from an obituary in the *New York Observer*, September 1, 1838, 140. Although Dexter says that Townsend’s wife was “two or three years his senior,” they both died in 1838, he at seventy-two and she at eighty-three.

42. Jesse Townsend, *The History of the Church of Christ from the Days of the Apostles to the Year 1551 Abridged from the Five First Volumes of Milner’s Church History* (Utica, [N.Y.]: Camp, Merrell & Camp, 1816); “An account of a work of divine grace in a revival of religion in Durham settlement, town of Freehold, county of Greene, state of New-York, communicated to the Editors by the Rev. Jesse Townsend, pastor of the church in that place,” April 12, 1802, *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* 2 (June 1802): 469–71; “A Letter to the Editors, from the Rev. Jesse Townsend of New-Durham, State of New-York,” June 1, 1803, *ibid.*, 4 (August 1803): 65–67; Townsend, Letter to Phineas Stiles, December 24, 1833, and Townsend, Letter to Elisha Camp, August 16, 1834, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:21–27; Townsend, Letters to David Selden, November [19?], 1792; February 23, 1808; September 11, 1811; January 2, 1813, David Selden Correspondence, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Conn.; Townsend, Sermon, November 28, 1819, “Miscellaneous Church Files of Palmyra.”

43. Townsend, *The History of the Church of Christ*, vii.

44. “A Letter to the Editors, from the Rev. Jesse Townsend,” *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, 4 (August 1803): 65–67; “An account of a work . . .,” 2 (June 1802): 470–71.

45. Townsend, Letter to David Selden, January 2, 1813.

46. “Rev. Jesse Townsend,” *New-York Observer*, September 1, 1838, 140.

47. *Palmyra Register*, December 1, 1819, 3.

48. Townsend, Sermon, November 28, 1819, in “Miscellaneous Church Files of Palmyra”; the original is owned by Western Presbyterian Church, Palmyra, New York.

49. As an argument against Smith’s presence at the Palmyra dedication, Townsend’s later denunciation of Joseph as a man of “questionable character” and “low cunning” implies that the preacher knew the prophet only by reputation. Townsend, Letter to Phineas Stiles, December 24, 1833, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:20. In 1833, Townsend says that he has known of Smith for “ten years.” If not a rounded figure, 1823 would put Townsend’s knowledge later than his Palmyra pastorate.

50. Compare Doctrine and Covenants 109. Also curious is the fact that three phrases in this sermon, “execute vengeance,” “fallen state,” and “eternal



father” do not appear in the King James Version of the Bible but are in the Book of Mormon. “Delightsome” also appears once in this sermon, once in the KJV, and eight times in the Book of Mormon.

51. The nine stanzas of Palmyra’s “Dedicatory Ode” include the following:

In Temples sacred to his name,  
His Saints assemble round his board;  
Raise their hosannahs to the Lamb,  
And taste the supper of the Lord.

Their songs seraphic shall they raise,  
And Gabriel’s Lyre the notes resound;  
Heaven’s full toned organ join the praise,  
And world to world repeat the sound.

*Palmyra Register*, December 1, 1819, 3.

52. Douglas J. Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 89, 17.