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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 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.

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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 so on 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

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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 pastor, 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

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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, 1822, 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 Hotchkiss, 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

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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.

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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."

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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." 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

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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.

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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.

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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

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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 addition, 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.

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An other 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

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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 Ullyses, 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."

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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

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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."

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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" flocked 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.

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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 naive 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.

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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 Reflector⁷⁰ 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

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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.

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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 mentions 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.

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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.

The First Vision Story Revived

Richard L. Bushman

The Reverend Mr. Walters' article on the first vision raised quite a stir among Mormon scholars when an early version circulated about a year and a half ago. The essay was clearly another piece of anti-Mormon writing, a genre familiar enough to Mormon scholars. Mr. Walters' purpose, like that of many of his predecessors, was to discredit Joseph Smith's account of the first vision and all that depended on it. But the style of his attack was both refreshing and disconcerting. In the first place, it was free of the obvious rancor characteristic of anti-Mormon writers from E. D. Howe to Fawn Brodie. However fervent their claims to objectivity and mere scholarly curiosity, sooner or later anti-Mormon authors disclose their antipathy. They cannot resist twisting the knife. Mr. Walters, by contrast, sticks to his facts. He foregoes the attacks on Joseph's character and the credibility or veracity of his followers. He candidly presents his argument and bluntly tells Mormons to reevaluate the foundations of their church. That kind of frankness is far more disarming than the more pretentious variety.

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The article also set us back because Mr. Walters took an entirely new track and followed it with admirable care. Instead of hauling out the tiresome affidavits and reviving the money-digger stories, for the most part he passed over these and concentrated on a brand-new question: Were there revivals in 1819-20 in the vicinity of Palmyra as Joseph said? Every one up until now had assumed that of course there were. Walters said no, and the sources of his answer were impressive. They stood apart from the biased materials on which most anti-Mormon work is based. They were contemporaneous with the event, and they were right to the point. Our consternation was a genuine compliment to the quality of Mr. Walters' work.

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While Mr. Walters has put us on the spot for the moment, in the long run Mormon scholarship will benefit from his attack. Not only was there an immediate effort to answer the question of an 1819 revival, but Mormon historians asked themselves how many other questions about our early history remain unasked as well as unanswered. Not long after we saw his essay, a committee on "Mormon History in New York" sent a group of scholars east for special research. The results of the first year's efforts will soon be published in Brigham Young University Studies, and presumably like investigations will continue.¹ Without wholly intending it, Mr. Walters may have done as much to advance the cause of Mormon history within the Church as anyone in recent years.

Meanwhile, of course, we have to assess the damage he has done to Joseph's story of the first vision. Is it now impossible to hold that a revival occurred near Palmyra in 1819 or 1820 as Mr. Walters would have us believe? In attempting to answer that question, it is wise to remember the difficulties in recovering a true account of past events, especially when the witnesses tell their stories many times, over many years. Behind the simplest event are complex motives and many factual threads conjoining that will receive varying emphasis in different retellings. In all accounts of his early religious experiences, for example, Joseph mentions the search for the true church and a desire for forgiveness. In some accounts he emphasizes one, in some the other. Similarly, in the earliest record of the first vision he attributes his question about the churches to personal study; in the familiar story written in 1838 or 1839 he credits the revival and the consequent disputes as raising the issue for him.² The reasons for reshaping the story usually have to do with changes in immediate circumstances. We know that Joseph suffered from attacks on his character around 1834. As he told Oliver Cowdery when the letters on Joseph's early experiences were about to be published, enemies had blown up his honest confession of guilt into an admission of outrageous crimes.³ Small wonder that afterward he played down his prayer for forgiveness in accounts of the vision. Such changes do not evidence an uncertainty about the events, as Mr. Walters thinks, as if Joseph were manufacturing new parts year by year. It is folly to try to explain every change as the result of Joseph's calculated efforts to fabricate a convincing account. One would expect variations in the simplest and truest story.

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The audacity of Joseph's story complicates his narrative and our recovery of the truth. As a more mature and worldly-wise person would have expected, Joseph's boyish report of his vision met skepticism and reproof. The appearance of the Father and the Son to a fourteen-year-old was beyond the bounds of credibility and blasphemous as well. In the lexicon of the revivalists, it was an egregious form of

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- 1 For a brief summary of the composition and work of the committee see the article by James B. Allen and Leonard Arrington in the Spring 1969 issue of Brigham Young University Studies.
 - 2 One of the articles in the special issue of Brigham Young University Studies, Dean Jesse's "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," reprints three narrations by Joseph.
 - 3 See his letter to Oliver Cowdery in the Messenger and Advocate, November 6, 1834, reprinted in Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America: The Book of Mormon* (3rd ed.; Independence, Missouri: Press of Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1951), I, 78-79.

enthusiasm, the belief that the divine visited you in special vision or with extraordinary power. Enthusiasm had been the bane of revivalists and other equivalents for centuries. Every camp meeting preacher was prepared to denounce it when it raised its ugly head. Not knowing what hit him, so to speak, Joseph marveled at the anger he aroused.

As his protracted meditations on the incident attest, the rebuff scarred him;⁴ his reticence to tell the details of the story for some time afterward is perfectly understandable. The revelation received just prior to the organization of the Church in 1830 merely made passing reference to a manifestation of forgiveness before the visit of Moroni.⁵ Until 1838, in accounts for non-Church members he called the beings in the first vision personages or angels, covering the fact that he claimed to see the Father and the Son. Only in the private narrations for his history written in 1831 and 1838 did he frankly say the Lord had come to him.⁶ As Mr. Walters rightly points out, some Church members in the early years may have been unaware of the actual identity of the heavenly visitors.

With that much said by way of preface, what evidence does Mr. Walters present to discredit Joseph's story? The gist of his argument, as I understand it, is that Joseph held two events in his mind which he tried to bring together in his 1838 account. One was an actual event, the revival of 1824 when an unusual excitement occurred in Palmyra, and great multitudes, among them members of the Smith family, joined the churches. The other was a fictitious event, the first vision, which was gradually forming in his imagination after 1830. In the process of combining his manufactured story with historical reality, Joseph found it convenient to set the vision in the time of the revival to help explain why he prayed. But it was necessary to move the story back to 1820 to leave room for the coming of Moroni and the reception of the plates. The falsity of the account shows up when we uncover the discrepancy in dates. The revival Joseph remembered occurred in 1824, not 1819 or 1820. Had the vision actually occurred in 1820 Joseph would not have put it in the wrong context. He would have told the story without contradiction. With that structure in mind, Mr. Walters sets out to prove that the revival Joseph had in mind must have been the revival of 1824, which fits his description exactly, while in 1819 and 1820 nothing came close.

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The first evidence he offers is not Joseph's account but Oliver Cowdery's. In the first extended attempt to draw together the events of the early years, Oliver wrote a series of letters to the Church newspaper published in Kirtland, the *Messenger and Advocate*. The letters began in October 1834 and continued more or less regularly for a year. In December 1834, Oliver told of a revival during which Joseph had been awakened and in which Mr. Lane, a Methodist preacher, had played a part. Oliver connected this revival with the conversion of the Smith family and other events similar to the ones Joseph associated with the unusual excitement of his own, later account. Mr. Walters concludes Joseph's revival and Oliver's were one and the same. The connection is important because the Lane who figures so prominently in Oliver's story was not assigned to the Palmyra area until 1824 and is known to have visited the region only briefly in 1819. Therefore, Oliver was not thinking of a revival in 1819. The one revival he had in mind was the 1824 awakening when Lane was more likely to have made an impression. And Joseph presumably had the same episode in mind when he remembered a revival.

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The argument falters in two spots. The first is in Oliver's trustworthiness as a witness to these events. He did not experience them himself. All of his evidence is hearsay, and the consequent flaws are evident. Mormons can object that Oliver mixes up the first vision and the visit of Moroni because in his narrative the revival and Joseph's question about the churches led not to the grove but to his bedroom and the visit of Moroni. The first vision itself is skipped entirely. Oliver seems to have scrambled the two events, putting together parts of two stories to make one. Even Mr. Walters must agree that Oliver errs on the dates. In one letter he says these events occurred in Joseph's fifteenth year. In the next, claiming a typographical error, Oliver places them in the seventeenth year which would be from December 1821 to December 1822—at least two years before the 1824 revival which Mr. Walters claims Oliver meant to describe. Neither Mormons nor Mr. Walters can accept the validity of the account uncritically. Not that Oliver's veracity is in doubt. But remember that he is the first to prepare an account of the early years. He has bits of information from various sources: stories picked up at the Smith's while living there, tales from the neighbors in Palmyra, and, as Oliver emphasizes, the assistance of Joseph. Probably the individual details are accurate enough; the whole narrative need not be discarded because of a few obvious flaws. But he misses on the chronology, sticking together pieces that do not belong. Mr. Lane did indeed leave his mark on Palmyra as Oliver could have learned from the residents, but he was not necessarily the revival preacher who affected Joseph. Joseph himself never mentions Lane. Oliver was the one to insert the name in the story.⁷

4 Joseph Smith 2:21-25.

5 Doctrine and Covenants 20:5, 6.

6 See the accounts in the Jessee article cited in note 2.

7 William Smith's account is as suspect as Oliver's. William was only nine when Joseph had the first vision and would have had to rely on others to supplement his own memory. Furthermore, the interview with William took place in 1893 when

The possibility remains that Lane did take part in an awakening near Palmyra, and that Oliver did not confuse the story quite as much as Mr. Walters thinks. In the summer of 1819, Lane was at a Methodist Conference next door to Palmyra in Phelps (Vienna village). It is at least conceivable that his preaching started an "unusual excitement" and did touch Joseph in some way. Oliver only says that Mr. Lane "visited Palmyra and vicinity," which might have meant the quick visit of a minister attending the conference.⁸ We must not exclude Mr. Lane entirely while the evidence is still so inconclusive.

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The second flaw in the argument is Mr. Walters' belief that Oliver's confusion, however serious, was no greater than Joseph's—that Oliver's account is "virtually Joseph's own personal narrative." That is a large assumption to make when the only evidence is Oliver's claim that "Joseph Smith, Jr., has offered to assist us."⁹ Oliver began the letters while he was in Missouri and Joseph in Kirtland, and close cooperation was impossible. Joseph said that he first learned that the narrative was to include his life as well as the rise of the Church from the Messenger and Advocate.¹⁰ After he moved to Ohio, Oliver lived in Norton, in another county from Joseph. They could not have worked together very closely. Indeed, on one point in the story they were quite at odds: Oliver said Joseph's interest in religious questions began in his seventeenth year. In his 1831-32 narrative, Joseph said his interest began when he was between twelve and fifteen. In 1835, a year after the Cowdery letters were printed, Joseph said on two occasions that his first vision took place when he was about fourteen. Had Joseph carefully edited Oliver's account, the error would not have passed.¹¹ The account was Oliver's, not Joseph's, and chronological discrepancies, such as the appearance of Lane, must be credited where they are due.

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Rather than rely on Oliver's dubious report as the foundation of his case, Mr. Walters stresses that Joseph's own description in the official 1838 account does not fit the events of 1819 and 1820 while they accord perfectly with the revival of 1824. Joseph said that "there was in the place where he lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties...."¹² Walters concentrates on two points: the location of the revivals and their size. He admits there were revivals in 1819 and 1820, but they were not in Palmyra or nearby. And what activity did occur close to the Smith farm did not bring "great multitudes" into the churches. Only the 1824 revival fills the bill.

Reduction of the argument to essentials reveals the difficulties of the case. In effect Mr. Walters has to say how near is near and how big is big. When Joseph spoke of "the place where we lived" did he mean his own neighborhood, the village of Palmyra just two miles away, Manchester village about five miles from the Smith farm, the ring of surrounding villages whose news neighbors would bring to the Smith house, or the western New York region? And of what did "great multitudes" consist for a young boy? Ten or twenty converts in three or four churches, fifty or sixty in ten, or hundreds in twenty or thirty? The uncertainty should be obvious. One cannot "conclusively test" Joseph's story as easily as might be thought.

It must be recalled that when Joseph spoke of "the place where we lived" he wrote in Illinois hundreds of miles from Palmyra, he may have referred only generally to a section of western New York, just as southern Californians from scores of little towns claim Los Angeles and its happenings as their own when at a distance. All the historian can do under the circumstances is to line up the places where revivals were reported in 1819 and 1820 and let the reader judge whether religious excitement occurred near enough to Joseph's house to meet the description.

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I have not searched any of the records myself, but Mr. Walters names a number of places and Professor Milton Backman of Brigham Young University, in an article shortly to appear in Brigham Young University Studies, locates others.¹³ First, by way of comparison, notice the number of towns Mr. Walters mentions as having revivals in 1824 when the excitement was close enough in his judgment to fit Joseph's description. In addition to Palmyra, he lists Williamson, Ontario, Manchester, Sulphur Springs, Vienna,

he was eighty-two. As Mr. Walters notes, William, like Oliver, was foggy about the date of the revival.

8 Kirkham, A New Witness, I, 84.

9 Kirkham, A New Witness, I, 78.

10 Kirkham, A New Witness, I, 78.

11 It may be that Joseph corrected Oliver only after the letters appeared. One reading of the letters, a conjectural one like Mr. Walters' reconstruction at the end of his essay, would hold that Joseph stopped Oliver after he read in print the December letter telling of the revival in Joseph's fifteenth year. It sounded like Oliver was going on to relate the story of the vision which Joseph still held back for fear of misunderstandings. Joseph may also have seen other flaws in the account. At any rate, in the next letter Oliver changed the time of the story from Joseph's fifteenth to his seventeenth year and hurried on to the visit of Moroni.

12 Joseph Smith 2:5.

13 "An Awakening in the Burned-Over District: New Light on the Historical Setting of the First Vision."

Lyons, and Macedon as nearby towns, a total of eight, and Mendon, Geneva, Gorham, and Clyde, another four, at a somewhat greater distance. For 1819 and 1820 Professor Backman and Mr. Walters together name Farmington, Penfield, Rochester, Lima, West Bloomfield, Junius, and Oaks Corners, a total of seven within twenty-five miles, and within forty-five miles, Cayuga, Geneva, Auburn, Aurora, Trumansburg, Ogden, East Riga, West Riga, Bergen, and LeRoy, with prospects of an awakening in Canandaigua and Waterloo, a total of twelve. That comes to eight nearby in 1824 and seven in 1819-20; and four more distant in 1824 and twelve in 1819-20. The 1819-20 season was really not so dull religiously as Mr. Walters says.

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Mr. Walters' main argument is that no revival occurred in Palmyra itself. But even that fact cannot be established absolutely. It is a negative claim and depends on negative evidence, which is always tenuous. Mr. Walters relies on the absence of revival reports, but just because someone failed to write a report of an event does not mean it did not occur. In this case we even lack some of the records that would contain important traces. The Palmyra Presbyterian Church records are missing and Methodist figures take in an entire circuit and fail to note changes in smaller locales. Furthermore, lots of things happen that are never recorded. "An unusual excitement on the subject of religion," all that Joseph claims for the place where he lived (the "great multitudes" were joining the churches in "the whole district of country"), might have been passed over in the national religious press covering as it did countless small towns. The news included in the Palmyra paper depended on the taste and inclinations of the editor. We know that he failed to report a Methodist camp meeting in June 1820 because a report of the death of a local citizen incidentally mentioned his attendance at a camp meeting the day before his death.¹⁴ The point is that although we think a revival should have been recorded, there are many reasons why it could have been missed. We cannot know for sure that an event did not occur unless reliable witnesses on the scene say no, and thus far Mr. Walters has found none such to testify.

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But apart from the possibility that some awakenings occurred right next door, as it were, the major question is whether or not seven revivals within twenty-five miles is enough to justify a statement eighteen years later and hundreds of miles away that there was an unusual excitement in the place where Joseph Smith lived. Perhaps the heart of the matter is the effective horizon of the Smith household. Was everything beyond Palmyra village alien territory, news of which they did not associate with their own place? Or did their psychological environs extend farther? Remember that they sold cakes and beer at gatherings of various sorts and that the boys had to range about for work to supplement their scanty farm income. Joseph went to Pennsylvania for employment when he was in his early twenties. If the older sons followed a similar pattern, the Smith family would keep up with events over a rather broad territory. Fifteen or twenty miles would not take them into foreign parts. All this must be taken into account when judging dimensions of the district they called their own.

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In assessing Mr. Walters' second line of reasoning, the inferior size of the 1819-20 revivals, two considerations must be kept in mind. The first is that the revivals of 1824 were not the standard for people in 1819. In his article, Mr. Walters tells us first of the hundreds converted in the later years and then goes back to 1819 to show how insipid by comparison. After reading about the carnage of the Civil War, we may think the War of 1812 no war at all. The important question, of course, is how it looked to the participants, and in this case to a boy of fourteen. Without knowing anything greater, did the excitement of 1819 strike him as unusual? Did the reports of conversions in the surrounding area sound like great multitudes joining the churches? Remember that he was just developing personal religious concerns and, judging by the 1831-32 narrative of the first vision, was sensitive to religious sincerity and hypocrisy. Would reports of awakenings and conversions, however modest by comparison to later revivals, have registered with this sensitized young man as unusual and great?

The second consideration is that admissions to membership do not necessarily measure the intensity of a revival. The first stage in the conversion process was awakening or conviction, when the preacher aroused fears in the prospective convert. At this point, he began to realize his danger and to worry about pleasing God. This was the most violent period. An awakened person was filled with anguish and might faint under moving preaching. The intense concern could continue for a few days or a few years. Sometimes it simply faded away and never reached a climax in conversion. In Calvinist churches, which would include the Presbyterians and most Baptists, the person remained outside the church until he received grace and with it assurance of salvation. Some converts would pass through periods of awakening two or three times before they knew grace and joined a church. There might be an unusual excitement about a religion and only a few people actually qualify for admission. High admissions are a good sign of a revival; absence of admissions does not necessarily mean no religious excitement. Without being at the scene, one cannot accurately measure the intensity of religious excitement.

The point is important in the interpretation of Joseph's narrative, for all that he says went on in "the

14 Palmyra Register, June 28, July 5, 1820. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 19.

place where we lived" as "an unusual excitement on the subject of religion." The "great multitudes" joining churches occurred in "the whole district of country." The excitement may have been an awakening or a prospect of a revival, not a shower of grace itself with the resulting increase in memberships and reports in the national religious press.

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But to get down to the facts, what indications are there of the size of the revivals in 1819 and 1820? Methodist figures are most elusive because, as mentioned before, they summed up membership for an entire circuit, and activity in one area could be lost. What we do know is that perhaps a hundred Methodist ministers met in the village of Vienna next door to Palmyra during the first week in July in 1819. It is likely that either during the conference or as it broke up these ministers preached in nearby towns. An historian of Methodism in Phelps, where the village of Vienna was located, says that in the following year a "flaming spiritual advance" occurred in the area. A convert during this revival series spoke late in life of "a religious cyclone which swept over the whole region round about" at this time, when "the kingdom of darkness was terribly shaken."¹⁵ As Mr. Walters says, the Ontario Methodist circuit shows no growth in these years, but there is evidence that the next circuit, which came very close to the Smith house, did. The figures may be a little uncertain, but the Lyons circuit minutes nonetheless show jump from 374 to 654 in 1820, fully as many as Mr. Walters mentions in 1824 for Ontario Methodists.¹⁶ Mr. Walters also cites a local Methodist who wrote about the years before 1823 that "for two or three years we saw no great awakenings." That certainly implies that two or three years earlier, right around 1820, there was an awakening. The significance of the comment is heightened when it is noted that the Methodists first advanced from a class meeting to a church the next year and the following year began chapel construction.¹⁷ Orasmus Turner, a newspaperman in Palmyra who knew the Smiths personally, recalls that Joseph caught "a spark of Methodism in the camp meeting" somewhere along the road to Vienna, the place where the big Methodist conference was held. Since Turner left Palmyra in 1822, we can presume that the camp meeting and Joseph's awakening occurred before that date.¹⁸ All told, there can be little doubt that the Methodists were up to something in 1819 and 1820.

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The absence of the minutes of the Ontario Baptist Association for 1820, the Association that included the area around Joseph's home, handicaps work on the Baptists. Mr. Walters gives loss and gain figures which are deceptive because in a transient community the numbers moving out might outweigh a considerable number of converts. He does tell us in a footnote that six people were baptized in the Palmyra church between September 18, 1819, and September 23, 1820.¹⁹ The Baptist church in Farmington (Manchester), just five miles away, baptized twenty-two in 1819, a sizable number in a congregation consisting of eighty-seven members in 1818.²⁰ Walters himself admits that must have been a revival. The Freewill Baptists in Junius, a town just east of Vienna, also reported a revival and added fifteen members in 1820.²¹ Whether or not that counts as unusual depends, of course, on the standard one sets. But for these people the additions were not commonplace. Palmyra's six converts in the year following September 1819 compared to one in 1821; Farmington's twenty-two in 1819, to none in 1821.²²

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Presbyterian figures for the Palmyra congregation itself are also missing for 1819 and 1820. The local church's own records are lost, and the congregation failed to report at the February 1820 meeting of the Presbytery. Mr. Walters relies on the absence of reports in newspapers and general histories to reach his conclusion of no revivals. We do know that there was a substantial awakening at Geneva, within the same presbytery as Palmyra. From 1812 to 1819 the average increase in membership was nine; from July, 1819, to July, 1820, eighty joined, most of them in the fall of 1819.²³ Next door to Palmyra in Oaks Corners (located in the town of Phelps), the place where the Methodist Conference had met, the average

15 M. P. Blakelee, "Notes for a History of Methodism in Phelps, 1886," pp. 7-8, copy located in the Brigham Young University Library. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 16.

16 Minutes Taken at the Several Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church (New York, 1820), p. 27 (referred to hereafter as Methodist Minutes); Methodist Minutes (1821), p. 27. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 26.

17 Walters, note 43.

18 For the full story on Turner, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Circumstantial Confirmation of the First Vision Through Reminiscences," in the special issue of Brigham Young University Studies.

19 Note 40.

20 Minutes of the Ontario Baptist Association (Canadaigua, 1818), p. 3; Minutes of the Ontario Baptist Association (New York, 1819), p. 2. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 27.

21 Marilla Marks (ed.), *Memoirs of the Life of David Marks* (Dover, N. H., 1846), p. 26. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 28.

22 Walters, note 40.

23 "Records of the Church of Christ in Geneva, State of New York," pp. 146-56, 158-59, 136-38, located in the First Presbyterian Church, Geneva, New York; "Minutes of the Session, 1819-1826," pp. 260-86, located in the First Presbyterian Church, Geneva, New York. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 22.

admissions between 1806 and 1819 was five, with nine as the previous high. Thirty were admitted in 1820, the bulk of them in the winter and spring. The Presbyterians also reported "in gatherings" at five other churches within twenty-five miles of Palmyra.²⁴ When the Presbytery of Geneva, which included Palmyra, met in February, 1820, sixteen churches reported two hundred new members. However we may judge the magnitude of the revival, the representatives felt that "during the past year more have been received into the communion of the Churches than perhaps in any former year."²⁵

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The question for us is whether or not the Smiths would have agreed with the judgment of the Geneva Presbytery. Did 1819 and 1820 seem like big years with "great multitudes" joining the churches in the "whole district of country"? Doubtless this was an important year for religion in New York as a whole and upstate particularly. All of the major denominations reported large increases. Methodist membership for 1820 in western New York increased by 2,256 members, the largest annual increase ever reported for the region to that time.²⁶ Presbyterian and Baptist growth was comparable. The Presbyterian annual report for 1819 said "the past has been a year of signal and almost unprecedented mercy" as far as "genuine religious revivals" went, and six of the eight areas of special grace were in New York.²⁷ Baptists in western New York grew by more than 1,500 in 1819.²⁸ Some of this news filtered through to the Smiths via the Palmyra Register which was publishing accounts with such extravagant statements as "the face of the country has been wonderfully changed of late" with reckonings of church admissions to back up the excitement.²⁹ Believing for a moment that four members of the Smith family had joined a church themselves that year as Joseph said, we can understand how reports like these would have registered and very possibly left the impression that great multitudes were uniting with various religious parties.

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Doubtless the accounting will vary in succeeding years as some reports prove unfounded and evidence of additional revivals is discovered. The details of the picture are bound to change. As it now stands, however, I am satisfied my self that enough was going on in 1819 and 1820 to have impressed a religiously oriented young boy. Putting aside the possibility of revivals in Palmyra itself for the moment, there is hard evidence to prove activity in nearby Farmington and Phelps (Oaks Corners), both close to the Smith farm, and substantial revivals in the next circle of villages. Beyond that western New York was very lively indeed. At best, critics of Joseph's story can claim that there was not enough excitement close enough to Palmyra to satisfy them. But again that all depends on how near is near and big is big. I doubt very much that historical inquiry will ever settle that question to the satisfaction of all.

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The weakest portion of Mr. Walters' essay is the attempt in the last pages to explain the various narratives of the first vision and if Joseph was making up the story as he went. As I suggested at the first, there are bound to be variations in the reports of any event, simply because the narrator emphasizes one portion or another of the story. Simple slips may account for other differences. In the 1831 story, for example, Joseph places the first vision in his sixteenth year instead of his fifteenth, a mistake I for one can easily excuse considering how I always have to stop to calculate just how old one is in his fifteenth year. Perhaps the only fundamental conflict in the facts is between the money-digging Joseph of the years before 1827 and the religious Joseph afterward who must have pious motives for everything he does. That conflict, of course, also coincides with the anti-Mormon accounts of Joseph's early life and the Prophet's own story. Mr. Walters assumes an impossible task when he tries to reconcile the stories of those who hated Joseph and wished to discredit him and the more sympathetic accounts. I think the evidence from the enemies of the Church and the evidence from Joseph's own mouth will always be contradictory. Bringing the two together as Walters does results in hopeless difficulties. He has Joseph concerned only with buried treasure and bearded spirits until 1827 when suddenly the need to mulct Martin Harris leads Joseph to introduce a religious note. From there on the money-digging precipitously disappears and all we have is religion. The Book of Mormon, finished just two years later in 1829, is over five hundred pages of substantial religious narrative with only a few references that could be connected by any stretch of the imagination to the money-digging enterprises that presumably obsessed Joseph in 1827. That assumes a

24 "Session Book of the First Presbyterian Church in Phelps," Book II, 11-19, located in the Presbyterian Church, Oaks Corners, New York. Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America (Philadelphia, 1821), p. 22; "Records of the Synod of Geneva (1812-1835)," pp. 220-21, copy located in the Brigham Young University Library; "Records of the Presbytery of Geneva," Book C, p. 37, copy located in the Brigham Young University Library; J. Jemain Porter, History of the Presbytery of Geneva, 1805-1889 (Geneva, 1889), p. 25. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," notes 23 and 24.

25 "Records of the Presbytery of Geneva," Book C, pp. 37-38. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 25.

26 Methodist Minutes (1821), pp. 27-28. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 38.

27 Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly (1820), pp. 321-22. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 35.

28 Proceedings of the Baptist General Convention in the United States, at their Second Triennial Meeting, and the Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Managers (Philadelphia, 1820), pp. 308-309. The figure of 1,500 was the total from only five associations. There were others which failed to report.

29 Palmyra Register, June 7, September 3, 1820. Cited in Backman, "An Awakening," note 33.

more drastic change in character than anything the revivals produced. It seems much easier to believe that Joseph had always been religious as everything he and his mother say leads us to think. The money-digging side of his character was almost wholly the invidious creation of the neighbors, based on his employment for an individual or two who were seeking treasure. If we exclude this embittered gossip from the picture, the first vision story, rather than being a late concoction, fits perfectly with the deep religious interests which Joseph says preoccupied him from age twelve, and which show through in virtually everything we have from his own mouth from 1829 on.

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If Mr. Walters has not undercut the first vision story as he meant to, Mormons might profit nevertheless by inquiring what would happen to our faith if he had succeeded. Or what would we do if six eminent anthropologists presented "conclusive proof" that the Book of Mormon were fraudulent. The question I have in mind is how much does our faith depend on supporting historical evidence. On the one hand, we make a great deal of it. Mormons delight in Hugh Nibley's arguments in behalf of the Book of Mormon. We all hope he will be equally successful in proving the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. On the other hand, we are prone to dismiss all this as irrelevant. I have heard Professor Nibley himself summarize a long argument for the Book of Mormon, to which his Mormon audience had listened raptly, by saying that, of course, none of this really matters. The important point for him was that God had revealed the truth to Joseph by the Holy Spirit; the historical case was mere trimmings, the game played for the sheer fun of it.

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Looking on from the outside, an observer might think Mormons are hopelessly mixed up. If testimony is all that really matters, why worry about the historical evidence? Since an airtight case would fail to convince believing Mormons, they should forget about proofs for the Book of Mormon and replying to the Reverend Mr. Walters and concentrate on their religious experiences and the satisfactions of their group life.

Granted that negative historical evidence would not destroy the faith of the faithful. For those blessed with it, spiritual experience is the most compelling data. Honesty requires that one remain true to it even in the face of other evidence to the contrary. Were a case made against the Book of Mormon, our sense of balance and personal integrity would compel Mormons to hold on to their beliefs. But I wager that we would search heaven and earth to break the case and prove the book true historically. Mormons are determined to have both material and spiritual evidence for their faith. The spiritual is the more important, but the material must have its place.

There is good reason for this combination. Mormons are committed to a God who acts in history. He led ancient Israel; He came to earth to redeem the world; he guides prophets in our time; and He helps individuals day by day with mundane problems. Our most basic commitment is to the power of God acting concretely in the lives of men. He comes and leaves footprints. To give up on historical proofs would be to relinquish in part our faith that God enters the here and now to lead and help and illumine. Mormons feel divine power mainly in their spiritual experiences, but they believe traces of it can also be detected in the history of His people and His prophets. So long as we embrace that faith, we will, I think, search for proofs and evidences and reply to the likes of Mr. Walters when they try to confute us.

A Reply to Dr. Bushman

Reverend Wesley P. Walters

I appreciate the magnanimous spirit of Dialogue in printing my essay and this reply. Dr. Bushman's courteous and able polemic is regrettably marred by some historical inaccuracies and by a tendency to set aside historical data in favor of unsupported conjectures.

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First Dr. Bushman tries to harmonize Joseph Smith's differing vision accounts by some suggestions that themselves do not agree with the details of Joseph's official 1838 version. While reference to his sinfulness and forgiveness is markedly absent from the first vision portion of this official version, Smith's acknowledgment of "the gratification of many appetites" prior to the Moroni vision is really a much bolder admission than ever before. This invalidates the attempt to explain the absence as a playing down due to attacks upon his character around 1834. Furthermore, while persecution and rebuff may have "scarred him," Joseph shows no intention of deliberately "covering" his first vision claim by reference to "personages or angels." In fact, he says, "I could not deny it, neither dare I do it." It is also incorrect to call a narrative written, as the Prophet says, "to disabuse the public mind" a "private" narration, and it is hardly proper to maintain that in the 1838 account Joseph did "frankly say the Lord had come to him" when this must be inferred from the wording and even some of the Mormon leaders did not grasp it, as Dr. Bushman acknowledges.

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Dr. Bushman turns next to the task of relieving Joseph of the responsibility for the conflicting account written by Oliver Cowdery in 1834-35. Cowdery represents himself as merely a journalist who writes this account with the assistance of brother Joseph's "labor" and aided by "authentic documents," a role familiar to him during those years from his service as Clerk of Conference. Oliver, therefore, parenthetically adds at this point, "neither is he [Smith] able to inform me," and further along introduces Joseph's description of Moroni with the words, "to use his own description." Dr. Bushman, on the other hand, wishes to place Cowdery in the role of a collector of hearsay, "sticking together pieces that do not belong," and erroneously states that "close cooperation was impossible" at the time the articles were being produced because Smith and Cowdery were widely separated geographically. From Joseph Smith's own History it can be shown that the two were together on several occasions in the latter part of 1834, including a leisurely boat trip to Michigan, prior to the appearance of the article in December 1834 dating the revival to Joseph's 15th year (HC ii, 162, 165f, 168, 172f, 174f, 176). Again, they were together for a conference Feb. 14, 1835 (ii, 186f) while the issue containing the correction of the date to 1823 did not go to press until the end of the month (cf. obituary dated 19th; ad dated Feb. 27, 1835 --MA, I, 74, 80). Stanley Gunn's biography of Cowdery speaks of the two during this "Kirtland Period" of Cowdery's life as "constant companions" (p. 121). Dr. Bushman in a later footnote (no. 11) considers the possibility that the Prophet himself may have caused the confusion by editing out ("held back") a reference to the first vision which Cowdery had started to make, which implies that the two conferred together.

Dr. Bushman places all of Joseph Smith's accounts in opposition to Cowdery's accounts on the point of when Joseph's interest in religious questions began. The point of importance, however, is when it culminated, not when it began, for even Cowdery remarks that the subject "had so long agitated his mind." If we accept Dr. Bushman's plea for age 16 (although Cowdery probably meant age 17 but wrote 17th), then Cowdery's 1834-35 account stands in agreement with Smith's own Strange (1831-32) Account and in opposition to all the later (1835 and 1838) accounts which move the culmination date back to age 14.

Recognizing how impossible it is to find large numbers joining the churches when the Mormon leader was 14, and that "for these people additions were not commonplace," Dr. Bushman tries to help his cause by making that which was small seem large and that which was far seem near. Here he appears torn between two opposing viewpoints. On the one hand he tries to show that the revival only seemed large in the eyes of young Joseph and it is therefore compatible with the smallness indicated by the data. On the other hand, he tries to show that the revival was really much larger than the data would indicate and therefore fits the largeness of Joseph's description.

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In support of the first of these propositions he mistakenly suggests that "the revivals of 1824 were not the standard for the people in 1819." Actually, the Palmyra Presbyterian Church received more converts in their 1817 revival ("126 have been hopefully born again, and 106 added") than they did in the 1824 revival (99 added). Most of the people who lived through this 1817 revival were still living in 1819 and in 1824, Joseph's own family to name just one example. In addition, Dr. Bushman cites a revival near Albany in 1820 in which "the face of the country" (200 miles from the Smith home) had been "wonderfully changed," which the Palmyra paper reported as having produced 1,200 converts. It would appear that the

people in 1819 were quite capable of recognizing a great revival when they saw one.

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In developing his second proposition, Dr. Bushman offers three explanations that relate to one another in a manner reminiscent of the Arab who was accused of having broken a jug he had borrowed. The Arab explained that he hadn't borrowed it in the first place; it was broken when he got it; and there was nothing wrong with it when he returned it. Dr. Bushman suggests that Joseph did not mean there was an unusual excitement in Palmyra, but only somewhere within 25 miles or so of it; that the revival really was at Palmyra but was never recorded; and that Palmyra experienced only an unusual excitement while the great multitudes all joined somewhere else.

In regard to the first of these suggestions, Dr. Bushman seeks by mere conjecture to enlarge the "effective horizon of the Smith household" by speculating that they ranged far and wide in their beer and cake sales. Here, however, he undercuts his point about Joseph's naïveté, for any young man who got around that much would surely know a great multitude from a small one. Conversely, any boy who thought that ten or twenty converts constituted "large additions" would not be likely to call a town 15 miles away "the place where we lived."

To help enlarge Smith's "psychological environs" Dr. Bushman tries psychologically reducing the distances involved, speaking of Oaks Corners (18 miles from the Smith home) and Vienna (15 mi.) as "next door," Junius (25 mi.) as "just east of Vienna," and the Lyons circuit, the closest point of which was about 10 miles away, as "very close to the Smith house." In a day when most travel was by foot or by horse and wagon, when experiments with canal transportation carried 100 persons 4 miles an hour, equal to a stage in bad weather (Palmyra Register, Nov. 5, 1819, II, 3), it is certainly not accurate to speak of towns 15 miles or farther away as "next door." Even today a town which takes two hours to reach by car is not considered "next door." Dr. Bushman labels as "nearby," towns which I had listed as fitting the description of "the whole district of country": Williamson (15 miles from the Smiths), Ontario (15 mi.), Manchester (5 mi.), Sulphur Springs (10 mi.), Vienna (15 mi.), Lyons (15 mi.) and Macedon (5 mi.). Even after drawing this 15 mile radius of "nearby" towns, he still cannot find any revival there in 1819-20, with the possible exception of Farmington (Manchester), which I did not "admit" was a revival. He consequently has to extend his "nearby" radius 10 miles farther before he can find a few isolated signs of revival, and we are told that this nearly 2,000 square mile area was what Joseph meant by "the place where we lived."

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It is true that someone out of state could refer to an entire area as "the place where we lived" when speaking of generalities, but not when the reference is to specific events directly affecting the individual. For example, if someone said, "There was a bank failure in the place where we lived and I lost all my money," who would conclude he was talking about a bank in a town 25 miles away, especially if there was a bank in the very town where he lived? This is the character of Joseph's story. The excitement was near enough to his home for him to feel the pressure to join the local Methodist Church, just as members of his family had joined the local Presbyterian Church. It was local enough that Smith could observe the Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians scrambling for converts, take note of the "great love" the converts "expressed at the time of their conversion," and see them "file off, some to one party, and some to another." It was close enough to observe that "a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued" and to conclude that "the seeming good feelings . . . were more pretended than real." It was so near that his "mind at different times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult was so great and incessant." It was local enough that he could claim to have personally told his vision story to the same minister who had shared in the awakening. It was right there "among the different religious denominations in the neighborhood where I lived," as he says elsewhere. That's how near "near" is in Joseph's story. How by any stretch of the imagination can all this activity be transferred to a location 15 to 25 miles or more from the Smith home?

This same local atmosphere is present in the Cowdery-Smith account. The "religious excitement" was "in Palmyra and vicinity" where under Rev. Lane's preaching, "calculated to awaken the intellect, . . . in common with others, our brother's [Joseph's] mind became awakened." This "great awakening, or excitement" was more than a mere state of anxiety, for the anxious "professed a belief in the pardoning influence . . . of the Savior." But then "a general struggle . . . for proselytes" followed and "in this general strife for followers" members of Joseph's family joined the Presbyterian Church, thus becoming themselves a part of the "large additions" made to the churches of Palmyra and vicinity. Joseph himself received "strong solicitations to unite with one of these different societies" while others were seen to manifest "equal warmth" in proselytizing.

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This type of local coloring is strikingly present in the 1824-25 revival. After progressing moderately through Sept. 26, 1824, the revival "appeared to break out afresh" when on Monday, Sept. 27 four were converted and the next day seven made profession at a prayer meeting at the home of Dr. Durfee Chase, son of the active Methodist family whose farm adjoined the Smith homestead. Among the seven converted was 19-year-old Lucy Stoddard, relative of the [Russell?] Stoddard who had been the principal workman in building the Smith home. Lucy had apparently been a Baptist until her conversion to the Methodists, and her zeal for "persuading others to embrace that religion in which she had found such solid happiness"

and her dramatic death five weeks later (to which Rev. Lane devotes nearly a page of his three page report) greatly impressed the whole community and especially the young people. The following spring Lucy's cousin, Calvin Stoddard (the future brother-in-law of Joseph Smith) along with his parents and sister were converted and joined the Baptist Church, while his future wife, Sophronia Smith, along with other members of the Smith family, had joined the Presbyterian Church. Knowing how zealous such young people in their late teens and early twenties can become in seeking converts, and how this particular 1824 revival, as the Palmyra newspaper noted, was "mostly among young people," we cannot doubt that the unconverted Joseph at this time received many solicitations to join the various churches which the neighboring young people of his own age had recently entered.

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There are signs of Dr. Bushman's longing for evidence of such a revival at Palmyra in 1819-20. Else why suggest that the revival may have gone unrecorded; or that they had an unusual excitement, but the multitudes joined beyond this area, or why minimize any evidence which might preclude an 1820 revival at Palmyra? Dr. Bushman dismisses the Methodist membership figures because they take in an entire circuit, involving at most a dozen small Methodist groups, clustered so as to be served by one circuit-riding preacher. However, he does not hesitate to appeal to the nationwide report of the Presbyterian Church which speaks of a year of "unprecedented mercy" with six of the areas of special grace being in New York--yet not one of the six is in western New York or anywhere near Palmyra. Again, he dismisses William Smith's statements because it is a late reminiscence of a boy of 9 (although he would have been about 14 if the revival occurred in 1824-25), while he appeals to an equally late reminiscence by a Mr. Sarsnett reporting a camp meeting near Vienna. This reminiscence, unlike that of William Smith, does not even give the date of the occurrence, but it is dated by the writer, Mr. Blakeslee, to the year 1820.

At another point Dr. Bushman infers from Rev. Abner Chase's statement ("for two or three years we saw no great awakenings") that prior to 1820 there was a great awakening, yet he objects to deducing anything from loss and gain figures for the Baptists in 1820 because such figures "are deceptive." While one might logically deduce an 1819 revival from Rev. Chase's report, actually this is ruled out by the fact that Mr. Chase was not even in that area prior to 1820 and he is merely making his concluding report of his own four-year term of office (1820-24). What Mr. Chase's report does imply is that the membership figures for the Ontario Circuit do correctly reflect a situation where no revival was occurring during the 1820-23 period, and these same figures show this situation prevailed also in 1819.

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The Baptist figures, on the other hand, do provide a legitimate basis for meaningful deductions. The Ontario Baptist Association Minutes are extant for the entire period, except for the years 1820 and 1827. The 1821 report shows the Farmington (6 mi. s. of the Smiths) Congregation with no gains and 4 losses (2 by letter, 1 excluded, 1 death) and a total membership (as of Sept.) of 93. This means the membership stood at 97 in Sept. 1820, and compared to the Sept. 1819 total of 106 shows a net loss of 9 for the year 1820. No matter how great the gain may have been, the loss must exceed it by 9. Since the total number of losses in any year between 1816 and 1825 never exceeds 16, it seems most improbable that any "large additions" were made there in 1820. Furthermore, from the church's own records, extant through June 1819, we learn they added by baptism 20 (1 in Feb., 3-Mar, 3-Apr., 7-May, 6-June) of the 22 reported in the Sept. 1819 Minutes. This means that between July and September they added only 2 by profession and approached the year 1820 with no significant signs of a revival.

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For the Palmyra Baptist Church (3 mi. n.w.) the local records are extant from 1813 on, and show 5 received by baptism (2-Dec., 1-Feb., 1-Apr., 1-July) from Sept. 1818 to Sept. 1819, and 6 received (1-Mar., 1-June, 4-Aug.) from Sept. 1819 to Sept. 1820. In fact, between June 1819 and June 1820, where one might expect the greatest increase if a revival had really occurred that touched Joseph in the spring of 1820, we find the Palmyra congregation with only 3 professions.

With regard to the Presbyterians, Dr. Bushman passes by the monumental history of Rev. James Hotchkiss, whom Dr. Whitney Cross described as "a close and accurate observer" (The Burned-Over District, p. 13). Mr. Hotchkiss lists no revival for the Palmyra church in 1819 or 1820; he wrote backed by Synod's official order for all churches to open their records to him and he carefully notes when such materials were unavailable. Instead Dr. Bushman only comments that the local records are now missing and the congregation failed to report to Presbytery in Feb. 1820. This is true but it does not mean Presbytery was ignorant of what was happening, for Canandaigua also failed to report yet Presbytery specifically noted it as a place with "prospects" of a revival. In addition, Lyons reported more professions (14) than did Phelps (10), yet Presbytery credited only Phelps with "prospects." This is because 10 of Lyons' 14 were received in May (with 3-July, 1-Aug.) and all prospects had clearly disappeared by Feb. 1820. Phelps, on the other hand, was just beginning to show hopeful signs (1-Aug., 7-Jan., 16-Apr.), but by the summer of 1820 the prospects here also diminished (5-Aug., 2-Nov.) and no further mention is made in the September Presbytery meeting. Presbytery was certainly keenly aware of the spiritual condition of all of its churches.

Dr. Bushman does contribute a most useful observation when he notes that Mr. Turner's testimony must have reference to the period prior to 1822. For one thing, it will establish that the Smiths' money-digging activities, of which Mr. Turner speaks in the same context, date considerably prior to his working for Josiah Stool and certainly cannot be attributed to anti-Mormon sentiment following 1827. It also shows that as late as 1822 Joseph was still associated with the Methodist Church, since this is the image Mr. Turner, "who knew the Smiths personally," carries away with him. Since the Methodists did not acquire their property in Palmyra "on the Vienna road" until July 7, 1821 (Deeds of Ontario Co., Bk G, 345) we may even be able to fix the lower limits of this camp meeting experience. This may have provided the one core of truth around which he later wove his various vision stories. Furthermore, any telling of his story over the extended period in which he "continued" to affirm his vision, and any subsequent "great persecution which continued to increase . . . at the hands of all classes of men" must date after Turner has left Palmyra. In his position in the office of the local newspaper he could not have missed an item of this magnitude and interest. Unless we also attribute this to the over-activity of a 14-year-old's mind, or to "reshaping" done later to meet changing circumstances, any period of persecution must be moved to a time following 1822.

Even in his failures Dr. Bushman has helped to clarify the picture. We can see how extremely difficult it is to make Joseph's story fit an 1820 setting. It involves a reshaping that ignores the natural sense of his words, dismisses much of the evidence, minimizes distances between towns and injects conjectures in place of facts. Instead of a period of intense religious activity, one finds only less than two dozen joining the Manchester Baptist Church in the spring of 1819; a July 1-8, 1819 Methodist annual business meeting 15 miles away with conjectural week-end preaching; two dozen becoming Presbyterians 18 miles away in the winter and spring of 1820; and a possible Methodist camp meeting at Vienna in the latter half of 1820 or the first part of 1821 (the 654 figure was reported in the July 1821 Conference, the church year running from summer conference to summer conference). Beyond this one must look a considerable distance before anything religiously significant can be located. One need not present such a strained interpretation with the revival of 1824. All the factors are there, and there in just the magnitude in which both Smith and the Cowdery-Smith account describe them. I tried myself for a considerable length of time to establish an 1820 revival, but it was the stubbornness of the facts themselves that led me ultimately to abandon this position.

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. 23, 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 POP), 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.
3. On 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.
4. J.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 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.
 7. B. 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.
 8. MA, 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.
 9. See 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 any way."
 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.
 11. B. 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 Latter days.
 12. Inez 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 [p. 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).
 13. William Smith, William Smith on Mormonism (1883), p. 6; The Saints' Herald, XXXI (Oct. 4, 1884), 643.
 14. For 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. Hotchkiss, 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.
 16. For 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. Hotchkiss, History of . . . the Presbyterian Church, p. 377.
 17. History of . . . the Presbyterian Church, p. 378.
 18. J. Widtsoe, Joseph Smith . . . , p. 16; I. Davis, The Story of the Church, p. 32fn.
 19. For 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.
 21. Mr. 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 on 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.
 25. Geneva Presbytery, "Records" (Sept. 8, 1824), D. 16.
 26. Geneva Synod, "Records" (Oct. 5, 1824), I, 404f.
 27. American Baptist Magazine (Feb. 1825), V, 61f.
 28. Latter-day Luminary (Feb. 1825), VI, 61.

29. Geneva 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.
35. Geneva 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.
36. J. Hotchkiss, History of . . . the Presbyterian Church, p. 378.
37. Geneva 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. Hotchkiss, History of the . . . Presbyterian Church, p. 380). Canandaigua had to wait until a later date before their "prospects" materialized (Hotchkiss, 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 (Hotchkiss, 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, llf; Vol. I, which would have shown the exact date the Smiths joined, has been missing since at least 1932).
38. Geneva 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.
39. Since 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.
40. The 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).
42. Abner 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."
44. Reports 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 (miscellaneous 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.
45. In 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).
46. We 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).
 48. Willard 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.
 49. For 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.).
 52. Joseph 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.
 53. Hyrum 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).
 54. Cf. 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. A careful reading of both these works, however, shows that the areas affected changed from time to time.
 55. H. 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).
 56. Andrus, I, 39.
 57. J. McClintock and J. Strong, Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Cyclopaedia, VI, 171; cf. JGC, I, 76-84.
 58. H. 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).
 59. The "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.
 60. H. 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.

61. There 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).
62. William 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).
63. New York Spectator (Sept. 23, 1843), XLVI, 4.
64. MA, 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).
65. When 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).
66. J. S. 2:14.
67. J. S. 2:53-54
68. P. 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.
69. See 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.
70. Files 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-avowment" 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 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 borne 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; Lucius 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.

74. MA (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.
76. Asa 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).
77. See 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.
79. Doctrine and Covenants (1835), pp. 52f, 55.
80. DHC, 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 four teen" 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).
82. Although 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.
83. Cf. 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.