History, circa Summer 1832

Document Transcript

A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr. an account of his marvilous experience and of all the mighty acts which he doeth in the name of Jesus Ch[r]ist the son of the living God of whom he beareth record and also an account of the rise of the church of Christ in the eve of time according as the Lord brought forth and established by his hand strictly he receiving the testamony from on high secondly the minimal istering of Angels thirdly the reception of the holy Priesthood by the ministring of Angels to adminster the letter of the Law solution and commandments as they were given unto him—> and in 2 sthese ordinence, forthly a confirmation and reception of the high Priesthood after the holy order of the son of the living God power and ordinence from on high to preach the Gospel in the administration and demonstration of the spirit the Kees of the Kingdom of God confered upon him 3 and the continuation of the blessings of God to him &c

I was born in the town of Charon [Sharon] in the «State» of Vermont North America on the twenty third day of December AD 1805 of goodly Parents & who spared no pains to instruct ing me in the christian religion at the age of about ten years my Father Joseph Smith Seignior moved to Palmyra Ontario County 5 in the State of New York and being in indigent circumstances were obliged to labour hard for the support of a large Family having nine chilldren and as it required their exertions of all that were able to render any assistance for the support of the Family therefore we were deprived of the bennifit of an education suffice it to say I was mearly instruct tid in reading and writing and the ground <rules> of Arithmatic which const[it]uted my whole lite rary acquirements. † At about the age of twelve years my mind become seriously imprest [p. 1] with regard to the all importent concerns of for the well fare of my immortal Soul which led me to search ing the scriptures believeing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God thus applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel excedingly for I discovered that <they did not adorn> instead of adorning their profession by a holy walk and God ly conversation agreeable to what I found contain ed in that sacred depository this was a grief to my Soul thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the sittuation of the world of mankind the contentions and divi[si]ons the wicke[d]ness and abominations and the darkness which pervaded the of the minds of mankind my mind become excedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that mand <mankind> did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and liveing faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament of and I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world in I learned in the scriptures that God was the same yesterday to day and forever 11 that he was no respecter to persons 12 for he was God for I looked upon the sun the glorious luminary of the earth and also the moon rolling in their magesty through the heavens and also the stars shining in their courses and the earth also upon which I stood and the beast of the field and the fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters and also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in magesty and in the strength of beauty whose power and intiligence in governing the things which are so exceding great and [p. 2] marvilous even in the likeness of him who created him < them > | and when I considered upon these things my heart exclai med well hath the wise man said the <it is a> fool <that> saith in his heart there is no God 13 my heart exclaimed all all these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotant and omnipreasant power a being who makith Laws and decreeeth and bindeth all things in their bounds who filleth Eternity who was and is and will be from all Eternity to Eternity and when <I> considered all these things and that <that> being seeketh such to worshep him as wors hip him in spirit and in truth 15 therefore I cried unto the Lord for mercy for there was none else to whom I could go and to obtain mercy and the Lord heard my cry in the wilderne ss and while in <the> attitude of calling upon the Lord <in the 16th year of my age> a piller of fire light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the <Lord> opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord 16 and he spake unto me saying Joseph <my son> thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy <way> walk in my | statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the | Lord of glory I was crucifyed for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life <behold> the world lieth in sin and at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned asside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them acording to thir ungodliness and to bring to pass that which thath> been spoken by the mouth of the prophe ts and Apjoistles behold and lo I come quickly as it is: wr itten of me in the cloud <clothed> in the glory of my Father 18 and my soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great Joy and the Lord was with me but could find none that would believe the hevnly vision nevertheless I pondered these things in my heart 19 about that time my mother and 20 but after many days [p. 3] Lifell into transgressions and sinned in many things which brought a wound upon my soul and there were many things which transpired that cannot be writen and my Fathers | family have suffered many persicutions and afflictions and it | came to pass when I was seventeen years of age I called

again upon the Lord and he shewed unto me a heavenly vision; for behold an angel of the Lord 21 came and stood before me; and it was by night and he called me by name and he said; the Lord had forgiven me my sins and he revealed unto; me that in the Town of Manchester Ontario County N.Y. there was plates of gold upon which there was engravings which was engraven by Maroni & his fathers the servants; of the living God in ancient days and deposited by th[e]; commandments of God and kept by the power thereof and that I should go and get them and he revealed; unto me many things concerning the inhabitents of; of the earth which since have been revealed in com mandments & revelations and it was on the 22d day of Sept. AD $\frac{1000}{1000}$ 1822 22 and thus he appeared unto me three times in one night and once on the next day and then I immediately went to the place and found where the plates was deposited as the angel of the Lord had commanded me and straightway made three attempts to get them and then being excedingly frightened I supposed it had been a dreem of Vision but when I considred I knew that it was not therefore I cried unto the Lord in the agony of my soul why can I not obtain them 23 behold the angel appeared unto me again and said unto me you have not kept the commandments of the Lord which I gave unto you therefore you cannot now obtain them for the time is not yet fulfilled therefore thou wast left unto temptation that thou mightest be made accquainted of with the power of the advisary therefore repent and call on the Lord thou shalt be forgiven; and in his own due time thou shalt obtain them [p. 4] for now I had been tempted of the advisary and saught; the Plates to obtain riches and kept not the commandme[n]t; that I should have an eye single to the Glory of God 24 therefore I was chastened and saught diligently to obtain the plates and obtained them not untill I was twenty one years of age and in this year I was married to Emma; Hale Daughtr of Isaach [Isaac] Hale who lived in Harmony; Susquehan[n]a County Pensylvania on the 18th January AD, 1827, on the 22^d day of Sept of this same year I ob; tained the plat[e]s—and the following we mooved to Susquehana by the assistence of a man by the name of Martin Har[r]is who became convinced of th[e] vision and gave me fifty Dollars to bare my expences; and because of his faith and this rightheous deed the Lord appeared unto him in a vision and shewed unto him his marvilous work which he was about to do and heep imediately came to Suguehannah and said the Lord had shown him that he must go to new York City < with some of the characters so we proceeded to coppy some of them and he took his Journy to the Eastern | Cittys and to the Learned 25 < saying > read this I pray thee | and the learned said I cannot but if he wo uld bring the blates [plates] they would read it but the Lord had forbid it and he returned to me and gave them to <me> <to> translate and I said I said cannot for I am not learned but the Lord had prepared spectticke spectacles 26 for to read the Book therefore I commenced translating the chart acters and thus the Propicy [prophecy] of Isiaah was fulfilled which is writen in the 29 chaptr concerning the book 27 and it came to pass that after we had translated 116 pages 28 that he desired to carry them to read to his friends that peradventur he might convince them of the truth therefore I inquired of the Lord and the Lord said unto me that he must not take them and I spake unto him (Martin) the word of the Lord [p. 5] and he said inquire again and I inquired again; and also the third time and the Lord said unto; me let him go with them only he shall covenant; with me that he will not shew them to only but; four persons and he covenented withe Lord that he would do according to the word of the Lord 29 therefore; he took them and took his journey unto his friends; to Palmire [Palmyra] Wayne County & State of N York and he brake the covenent which he made before the Lord and the Lord suffered the writings to fall into the hands of wicked men 30 and Martin was Chastened for his transgression and I also was chastened also for my transgression for asking the Lord the third time wherefore the Plates was taken from me by the power of God and I was not able to obtain them for a season; and it came to pass afte[r] much humility and affliction of Soul I obtained them again 31 when Lord

appeared unto a young man by the name of Oliver Cowd[e]ry and shewed unto him the plates in a vision and also the truth of the work and what the Lord was about to do through me his unworthy Servant 32 therefore he was desiorous to come and write for me and to translate now my wife had writen some for me to translate and also my Brothr Samuel H Smith 33 but we had become reduced in property and my wives father was about to turn me out of doores # & I had not where to go and I cried unto the Lord that he would provide for me to accome plish the work whereunto he had command ded me 34 [4 lines blank] [p. [6]]

Footnotes



Krederick G. Williams handwriting begins.

[1] In contemporaneous religious writing, "experience" often denoted personal enlightenment through divine communication. ("Experience," in Oxford English Dictionary, 3:430.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

The Oxford English Dictionary. Edited by James A. H. Murray, Henry Bradley, W. A. Craigie, and C. T. Onions. 12 vols. 1933. Reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

- [2] TEXT: "it" changed to "in" and then "in" canceled.
- Frederick G. Williams handwriting ends; JS begins.
- [3] See Matthew 16:19; Revelation, 30 Oct. 1831 [D&C 65:2]; and Revelation, 15 Mar. 1832 [D&C 81:2].
- [4] Compare Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., 5 [1 Nephi 1:1].
- [5] Palmyra was part of Ontario County until April 1823, when it became part of newly created Wayne County. (An Act to Erect a New County, from Parts of the Counties of Ontario and Seneca, by the Name of Wayne, and For Other Purposes [11 Apr. 1823], Laws of the State of New-York [1823], chap. 138, pp. 158–162.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Laws of the State of New-York, Passed at the Forty-Sixth Session of the Legislation. Begun at the City of Albany the First Day of January, and Continued Till April 24, 1823. Albany: Leake and Croswell, 1823.

- [6] When the Smith family moved to Palmyra there were only eight children (two children had died in infancy). Lucy, the ninth child, was born 18 July 1821, when JS was fifteen.
- [7] The Smith family embarked on a new effort to clear land and establish a family farm in New York after years of financial misfortune in Vermont and New Hampshire. JS and his siblings did, however, receive some formal schooling in their youth and probably received some rudimentary education at home. (See Palmyra, NY, Attendance record, first school district, Sept.-Nov. 1817, Macedon Historical Society, Macedon, NY; see also Marquardt, Rise of Mormonism, 33–34.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

School Records, First School District, Palmyra, NY. Macedon Historical Society, Macedon, NY. Marquardt, H. Michael. *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816–1844*. Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005.

[8] See 1 Peter 1:15; 2 Peter 3:11; and Articles and Covenants, ca. Apr. 1830 [D&C 20:69].

[9] Like the Disciples of Christ and other primitivists, JS believed that the mainline churches of his day had strayed from the order and teachings of the New Testament church. (See Hughes and Allen, *Illusions of Innocence*, chap. 6.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Hughes, Richard T., and C. Leonard Allen. *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America*, 1630–1875. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

- [10] See, for example, 1 John 2:2; and Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., 518 [4 Nephi 1:44].
- [11] See Hebrews 13:8; and Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., 111, 116 [2 Nephi 27:23; 29:9].
- [12] See Acts 10:34-35; Revelation, 1 Nov. 1831-B [D&C 1:35]; and Revelation, 2 Jan. 1831 [D&C 38:16].
- [13] See Psalms 14:1; 53:1.
- [14] The teleological argument for the existence of God, the "argument from design," was standard in the Christian tradition of the philosophy of religion. ("Design Argument," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, 1:670–677; Cosslett, *Science and Religion in the Nineteenth Century*, 25; see also Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., 308 [Alma 30:44]; and Revelation, 27–28 Dec. 1832 [D&C 88:36–47].)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas. Edited by Philip Paul Weiner. 4 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973.

Cosslett, Tess, ed. *Science and Religion in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

[15] See John 4:24; and Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., 321 [Alma 34:38].

Insertion in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams. JS later recounted that this vision occurred in early spring 1820, when he was fourteen years old. (JS History, vol. A-1, 3; compare JS, Journal, 9–11 Nov. 1835; JS, "Church History," *Times and Seasons*, 1 Mar. 1842, 3:706; and JS, "Latter Day Saints," in Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 404–405.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Times and Seasons. Commerce/Nauvoo, IL. Nov. 1839-Feb. 1846.

Rupp, Israel Daniel, ed. He Pasa Ekklesia [The Whole Church]: An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States, Contains Authentic Accounts of Their Rise, Progress, Statistics and Doctrines. Written Expressly for the Work by Eminent Theological Professors, Ministers, and Lay-Members, of the Respective Denominations. Projected, Compiled and Arranged by I. Daniel Rupp, of Lancaster, Pa. Philadelphia: J. Y. Humphreys; Harrisburg: Clyde and Williams, 1844.

- [16] JS later recounted that he saw two "personages," that one appeared after the other, and that "they did in reality speak unto me, or one of them did." Other accounts identify the two personages as God the Father and Jesus Christ. (JS History, vol. A-1, 3; JS, Journal, 9–11 Nov. 1835.)
- [17] The importance of the biblical prophecies appears as a persistent theme in JS's religious thought. Pomeroy Tucker, who was acquainted with JS during their adolescence, affirmed JS's claim to have studied the Bible and reminisced that the "Prophecies and Revelations were his special forte." Whereas the prophets of the Old Testament promised the restoration of Israel and a Messianic reign, Jesus and John proclaimed a future apocalypse and a millennium of peace. JS's

earliest revelations conveyed the message of both an end-time restoration and an imminent apocalypse. (Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism,* 17.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Tucker, Pomeroy. *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism: Biography of Its Founders and History of Its Church*. New York: D. Appleton, 1867.

[18] Christ's declaration is saturated with scriptural allusions and phraseology from both the Bible and JS's revelatory texts. See, for example, Leviticus 26:3; Vision, 16 Feb. 1832 [D&C 76:41]; Revelation, ca. 7 Mar. 1831 [D&C 45:8]; Revelation, 22–23 Sept. 1832 [D&C 84:49]; Psalm 14:3; Isaiah 29:13; Deuteronomy 29:27; and Matthew 24:30.

[19] Compare Luke 2:19.

[20] This canceled fragment may refer to the Presbyterian affiliation of JS's mother and three of his siblings. In 1838, JS recounted that they "were proselyted to the Presbyterian faith" in connection with the revivalism preceding his vision. ("Records of the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra," 10, 24, and 29 Mar. 1830; JS History, vol. A-1, 2.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

"Records of the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra, New York." 1830. CHL. MS 858.

La JS handwriting ends; Frederick G. Williams begins.

[21] JS identified this angel as Moroni, the last ancient American prophet to write in the Book of Mormon. ([JS], Editorial, *Elders' Journal*, July 1838, 42–44; see also Oliver Cowdery, "Letter VI," *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, Apr. 1835, 1:112; and Revelation, ca. Aug. 1830 [D&C 27:5]. For JS's other accounts of this experience, see JS, Journal, 9–11 Nov. 1835; JS History, vol. A-1, 4–7; JS, "Church History," *Times and Seasons*, 1 Mar. 1842, 3:706–707; and JS, "Latter Day Saints," in Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 405.)

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Elders' Journal of the Church of Latter Day Saints. Kirtland, OH, Oct.-Nov. 1837; Far West, MO, July-Aug. 1838.

Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate. Kirtland, OH. Oct. 1834-Sept. 1837.

Times and Seasons. Commerce/Nauvoo, IL. Nov. 1839-Feb. 1846.

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[22] Later accounts clarify that Moroni first appeared late in the night of 21–22 September 1823. (JS History, vol. A-1, 5; Oliver Cowdery, "Letter IV," *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, Feb. 1835, 1:78–79.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate. Kirtland, OH. Oct. 1834-Sept. 1837.

[23] In 1835, Oliver Cowdery wrote that JS was "sensibly shocked" each time he attempted to remove the plates from their repository. (Oliver Cowdery, "Letter VIII," LDS Messenger and Advocate, Oct. 1835, 2:197–198; see also Knight, Reminiscences, 1; and Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, bk. 5, [5].)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate. Kirtland, OH. Oct. 1834-Sept. 1837. Knight, Joseph, Sr. Reminiscences, no date. CHL. MS 3470.

[24] See Matthew 6:22; and Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., 533 [Mormon 8:15].



Krederick G. Williams handwriting ends; JS begins.

[25] In early 1828, Harris visited Luther Bradish in Albany, New York, and Charles Anthon and Samuel Mitchill in New York City. An extant document bearing the title "Caractors," which contains several rows of copied characters, appears to be related to the document Harris carried with him. (JS History, vol. A-1, 9; "Caractors," [ca. 1829-1830], CCLA.)

[26] JS recounted that he found these spectacles with the plates. (JS History, vol. A-1, 7; JS, "Church History," Times and Seasons, 1 Mar. 1842, 3:707; see also "Urim and Thummim," in Glossary.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Times and Seasons. Commerce/Nauvoo, IL. Nov. 1839–Feb. 1846.



IS handwriting ends; Frederick G. Williams begins.

[27] See Isaiah 29:11–14.

[28] This page count may be a retrospective approximation based on the later manuscript copy of the Book of Mormon used by the printer. The top of page 117 in that copy marks the beginning of the book of Mosiah, which corresponds to the end of the period covered in the pages lost by Harris. (See Skousen, Printer's Manuscript, 284.)

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Skousen, Royal, ed. The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts. Part 1, Copyright, 1830 Preface, 1 Nephi 1:0-Alma 17:26. Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2001.

[29] Martin Harris was permitted to show the translation manuscript to five members of his extended family: his wife, Lucy Harris; his brother Preserved Harris; his father, Nathan Harris, his mother, Rhoda Lapham Harris; and his wife's sister Polly Harris Cobb. (JS History, vol. A-1, 9; Pilkington, Autobiography and statements, 15-16; "Married," Geneva [NY] Gazette, 3 June 1812, 3; Tuckett and Wilson, Martin Harris Story, 176–179; see also Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, bk. 6, [10]–[12]; bk. 7, [1].)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Pilkington, William. Autobiography and Statements, 1934–1939. CHL. MS 1041.

Geneva Gazette. Geneva, NY. June 1809-Sept. 1825.

Tuckett, Madge Harris, and Belle Harris Wilson. The Martin Harris Story, with Biographies of Emer Harris and Dennison Lott Harris. Provo, UT: Vintage Books, 1983.

[30] Sometime after Harris read or showed the manuscript to other acquaintances, it was lost or stolen.^a Martin Harris and several others believed that his wife, Lucy Harris Harris, stole the manuscript. Conflicting accounts claim she burned it or gave it to others.^b

Comprehensive Works Cited

Howe, Eber D. Mormonism Unvailed: Or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time. With Sketches of the Characters of Its Propagators, and a Full Detail of the Manner in Which the Famous Golden Bible Was Brought before the World. To Which Are Added, Inquiries into the Probability That the Historical Part of the Said Bible Was Written by One Solomon Spalding, More Than Twenty Years Ago, and by Him Intended to Have Been Published as a Romance. Painesville, OH: By the author, 1834.

Clark, John A. Gleanings by the Way. New York: Robert Carter, 1842.

(aPreface to Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., iii; JS History, vol. A-1, inserted page 1.bHowe, Mormonism Unvailed, 22; Clark, Gleanings by the Way, 247–248; Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, bk. 7, [5]–[8].)

[31] JS later recounted that he again received the plates from the angel "in a few days." (JS History, vol. A-1, inserted page 1; compare Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, bk. 7, [9]; see also Revelation, July 1828 [D&C 3:6–13].)

[32] Cowdery heard about JS and the gold plates while residing in Wayne County, New York, and then boarded with JS's parents. (Morris, "Conversion of Oliver Cowdery," 7–8.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Morris, Larry E. "The Conversion of Oliver Cowdery." In *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 4–17. "Reviews of Recent Theological Literature." *Presbyterian Review* 10, no. 37 (Jan. 1889): 125–176.

[33] Emma and Samuel Smith wrote down the words of the Book of Mormon as JS spoke them. (Joseph Smith III, "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *Saints' Herald*, 1 Oct. 1879, 289–290; see also Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 26–37.)

Comprehensive Works Cited

Saints' Herald. Independence, MO. 1860-.

Givens, Terryl L. *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

[34] JS and Emma Smith were living in a house on the property of her father, Isaac Hale. On 6 April 1829, the day after Oliver Cowdery arrived at his home, JS entered into an agreement with Hale to buy the home and thirteen acres of surrounding land and he made a down payment on the purchase. Cowdery most likely supplied money for this payment, and he then began work as the principal scribe for JS's translation of the Book of Mormon. (Agreement with Isaac Hale, 6 Apr. 1829; Oliver Cowdery, Norton, OH, to William W. Phelps, 7 Sept. 1834, LDS Messenger and Advocate, Oct. 1834, 1:14; Oliver Cowdery, Far West, MO, to Warren Cowdery, [Kirtland, OH], 21 Jan. 1838, in Cowdery, Letterbook, 81; see also Revelation, Mar. 1829 [D&C 5:34].)

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Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate. Kirtland, OH. Oct. 1834–Sept. 1837.

Cowdery, Oliver. Letterbook, 1833–1838. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.