

**Joseph’s Marvelous Experience:
Lessons Learned from the First Vision¹**

Restoration Conference 2020²

“Inviting all the branches of the Restoration to commemorate Joseph Smith’s First Vision”

Meridian, Idaho

June 20, 2020

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“...[W]hen man was created he stood in the presence of God...and had a most perfect knowledge of His existence.”⁴ Upon Adam and Eve’s rebellion, but before they were cast out of the Garden of Eden, God taught them the law of sacrifice and obedience.⁵ Once driven out of Eden to wander in a lone and dreary world, commonly referred to as the Fall of Adam, our first parents were separated from the presence of God by a veil. Though “*separated...[Adam and Eve] still retained a knowledge of his existence, and that sufficiently to move them to call upon him...*”⁶ Even though Adam and Eve had rebelled, they were not deprived of their previous knowledge of the existence of God and “...no sooner was the plan of redemption revealed to man and he began to call upon God, than the holy spirit was given, bearing record of the Father and Son...notwithstanding they were separated from his immediate presence that they could not see his face, they continued to hear his voice.”⁷ After years of obedience, sacrifice, repentance, and calling upon the name of the Lord, Adam entered back into His presence and was redeemed from the Fall.⁸

We learn from the account of Adam and Eve that “*Adam...being made acquainted with God, communicated the knowledge which he had unto his posterity; and it was through this means that the thought was first suggested to their minds that there was a God, which laid the*

¹ Today’s talk is a compilation of the various first-hand accounts of Joseph’s First Vision. The scriptures referenced are from the KJV (King James Version of the Bible), LDS (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), and/or RE (Restoration Edition Scriptures found at scriptures.info).

² Restorationconference.org

³ I am a 7th generation Mormon, a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints based in Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁴ *Lectures on Faith* 2:62-66 (RE); see also Genesis 1:27-28 (KJV); Genesis 2:9 (RE).

⁵ See Genesis 3 (KJV); Moses 4 (LDS *Pearl of Great Price*); Genesis 2:15-20 (RE).

⁶ See *Lectures on Faith* 2:25 (RE).

⁷ *Lectures on Faith* 2:30 (RE); see also Moses 5:4 (LDS *PofGP*); and Genesis 3:2 (RE).

⁸ See Moses 5:1-12; 6:1-9, 64-68 (LDS *Pearl of Great Price*); Genesis 3:1-4, 14; Genesis 4:10 (RE).

foundation for the exercise of their faith, through which they could obtain a knowledge of his character and also of his glory...[It was by this means] that God became an object of faith among men after the fall...[which thing did stir] up the faith of multitudes to feel after him, to search after a knowledge of his character, perfections, and attributes until they became extensively acquainted with him; and not only commune with him and behold his glory, but be partakers of his power and stand in his presence...the whole faith of the world, from that time down to the present, is in a certain degree dependent on the knowledge first communicated to them by their common progenitor, [Father Adam]; and it has been handed down to the day and generation in which we live... ” through the sacred records we call scripture.⁹ Adam and Eve were taught the gospel of Jesus Christ in a pure and unadulterated form by God, Himself. This entailed seeking for the fullness of the Gospel,¹⁰ or in other words, being redeemed from the Fall by entering back into the presence of the Lord.¹¹ This, they plainly taught to their children,¹² calling upon them to repent.¹³ But, Satan came among them, tempting them, and they loved Satan more than God and began to corrupt the pure religion of their father.¹⁴ The conditions of this world are such that we are constantly involved in either restoring truth or apostatizing from it. Thus, ever since the days of Adam, mankind has experienced numerous cycles of apostasy

⁹ *Lectures on Faith* 2:30-36 (RE).

¹⁰ See T&C “A Glossary of Gospel Terms: Fullness of the Gospel” (RE): This is used a number of ways in scripture: First, it is an explanation of what the Book of Mormon contains (see, e.g., JSH 3:3; T&C 26:7 (RE)). In that sense, the term refers to a collection of prophetic testimonies about Jesus Christ as their Redeemer and guide to salvation and, in turn, Christ’s role as universal Savior and Redeemer of mankind. Second, it is a way to identify Christ revealing Himself to mankind, thereby redeeming mortals from the fall. It is in this sense that the term is used in T&C 69:3 (RE): The ascent to God is the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It shows up very early in the first chapter by Lehi. Then it is repeated by Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Mosiah, and Alma, describing their ascent experiences. It continues throughout. Third, the Lord has used it to describe an everlasting covenant: “...the fullness of my gospel which I have sent forth in these last days, the covenant which I have sent forth to recover my people which are of the house of Israel (T&C 23:3; 31:3; 52:1; 1 Nephi 3:4 (RE)). Joseph Smith used the term in his writings and teachings at different times with different meanings. “Learning these ‘mysteries [of God]’ is the fullness of Christ’s Gospel.” The fullness of the Gospel consists of asking God, receiving answers, revelations, knowledge, and finally, in the Second Comforter.

¹¹ Ether 3:13-16 (LDS); or Ether 1:13 (RE) “When he had said these words, behold, the Lord shewed himself unto him and said, Because thou knowest these things, ye are redeemed from the Fall. Therefore, ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I shew myself unto you.” See also A Glossary of Gospel Terms (RE).

¹² Because all restorations of the gospel necessarily begin with a redemption experience, it can be assumed that if Moses plainly taught this to the children of Israel, then so Adam did likewise to his. See D&C 84:23-24 (LDS); or T&C 82:13 (RE).

¹³ See Genesis 4:25-26, 5:1-2 (KJV); Moses 6:1-9 (LDS *PofGP*); and Genesis 3:14 (RE).

¹⁴ See Moses 5:13-16 (LDS *PofGP*); Genesis 3:5 (RE). The exceptions to this were Adam and Eve’s sons, Cain, Abel, and Seth who rose up and entered back into God’s presence.

from the correct knowledge of God. Whenever sufficient faith is found upon the earth, a restoration back to the truth becomes possible.

We can learn through Joseph's various first-hand accounts of his First Vision important, eternal truths about the nature of God. Joseph's "...*marvelous experience and...all the mighty acts which he [did] in the name of Jesus Christ...*"¹⁵ began a little over 200 years ago. When "...*at about the age of twelve years [his] mind became seriously impressed with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of [his] immortal soul...*"¹⁶ During this time, there was in the area in which his family resided, "...*unusual excitement on the subject of religion...It commenced with the Methodists, but soon...the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division among the people.*"¹⁷ Joseph had been born of "...*goodly parents who spared no pains to instructing [him] in the Christian religion.*" They taught him to honor God and value the scriptures. His parents gave him the freedom to search truth out for himself and make his own decisions; even at a tender age. While the family did not belong to any particular church when Joseph was young, they taught their children what a true Christian should be. This great religious revival stirred up a profound concern regarding his personal salvation. Joseph's anxiety led him to search the scriptures believing that they would help him identify which church to join. Joseph "[*b*]eliev[*e*d] the Bible to say what it means and mean what it says."¹⁸ The Lord sent the scriptures forth "...*to be [His] warning to the world, [His] comfort to the faithful, [His] counsel to the meek, [His] reproof to the proud, [His] rebuke to the contentious, and [His] condemnation of the wicked. They are [His] invitation to all mankind to flee from corruption, repent and be baptized in [His] name, and prepare for the coming judgment.*"¹⁹

Joseph "...*concocter[ed] it of the first importance that [he] should be right, in matters that involved eternal consequences.*"²⁰ Thus, for about two years, his "*mind was called up to*

¹⁵ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The a Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ At this time, the Smith family was living in Manchester, Ontario, New York. See History of Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (March 15, 1842), p. 727; T&C 1:11 (RE).

¹⁸ "'Latter Day Saints," 1844," p. 404, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 13, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/latter-day-saints-1844/6>

¹⁹ T&C 177:3 (RE).

²⁰ "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 23-24, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/23>; spelling as in original.

serious reflection and great uneasiness” regarding the subject of religion. God patiently waited for Joseph to sort through conflicting information, prompting him here and there to help guide him. Never forcing. Always inviting. Ultimately allowing him the freedom to choose for himself. As Joseph pondered the truths contained within the Bible, consulted various religious leaders, and observed his fellowman, he became more confused. He compared what the scriptures taught with how the people, who claimed to be God’s servants and disciples, behaved. Joseph noticed that, “*when the converts began to file off, some to one party and some to another, it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real. For a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued, priest contending against priest and convert against convert, so that all their good feelings one for another (if they ever had any) were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.*”²¹ Joseph felt that their actions were in direct contrast to how a person who was truly converted to Christ should behave, for Christ taught that we can know people by their fruits and His disciples “*have love, one to another.*”²² The Apostle Paul encouraged the “*...elect of God...[to put on] hearts of mercies, kindness, humility...meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another and forgiving one another...and above all these things put on charity...let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*”²³ Joseph lamented that “*[the church leaders] did not adorn their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation agreeable to what [he] found contained in that sacred depository.*”²⁴

As Joseph labored under the extreme difficulties caused by the competing churches, he eventually began to feel “*somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and...felt some desire to be united with them.*”²⁵ Yet, he remained confused and perplexed in mind, unable to come to “*...any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong...*”²⁶ or, if all of them were wrong how

²¹ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph’s First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE).

²² See John 13:33-35 (KJV); Testimony of St. John 10:7; and John 9:5 (RE).

²³ Colossians 3:12-17 (KJV); or Colossians 1:13 (RE).

²⁴ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>.

²⁵ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph’s First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; and T&C Joseph Smith History Part 2:2 (RE).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

would he be able to know? As he studied the Bible, he recognized that mankind continually apostatized from the true and living faith. He perceived that contentions, divisions, wickedness, abominations, and darkness pervaded the minds of mankind²⁷ and gross darkness covered the earth.²⁸ This caused him to mourn for not only his own sins, but for those of the world. Though his “*feelings were deep and often pungent,*”²⁹ still [he] kept himself aloof from all [the different] parties...”³⁰

Joseph “...looked upon the sun...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 [he] stood...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 intilgence...even in the likeness of him who created them and when [he] considered upon these things [his] heart exclaimed well hath the wise man said it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God my heart exclaimed all all these bear testimony and bespeak an 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.” Joseph trusted “...that God was the same yesterday to day and forever that he was no respecter to persons for he was God.”³¹ When he considered all these things, Joseph sought to worship such a being and to “worship him in spirit and in truth.”³²

God promises that if we ask, we shall receive.³³ The Lord is the master teacher and desires to teach us, yet He patiently waits for us to come to Him. He gives us room to try to

²⁷ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>

²⁸ "Orson Hyde, *Ein Ruf aus der Wüste* (A Cry out of the Wilderness), 1842, extract, English translation," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/orson-hyde-ein-ruf-aus-der-wste-a-cry-out-of-the-wilderness-1842-extract-english-translation/1>

²⁹ Pungent=piercing or sharp, acrimonious, biting.

³⁰ It is commendable, and something worth consideration, that his parents gave Joseph the time, space, and freedom to make this choice for himself. "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph's First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; and T&C Joseph Smith History Part 2:2 (RE).

³¹ See Isaiah 9:4 (RE); Hebrews 13:7-9 (KJV); and Hebrews 1:59 (RE).

³² "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/2>. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation as in original.

³³ See Matthew 7:6-8 (KJV); or Matthew 3:42 (RE).

figure it out on our own and never encroaches upon our agency. He allows us to “*taste the bitter that [we] may know to prize the good.*”³⁴ He has given us the light of Christ and the ability to know good from evil. We have the freedom to choose to either accept or reject Him. As we study things out in our minds,³⁵ learning to discern between truth and error, our faith grows.³⁶ Eventually, Joseph came to the conclusion that “*...the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passage so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.*”³⁷ No matter who we are, the Spirit of the Lord can influence us in our minds and in our hearts.³⁸ Through the words of God’s own servant, the spirit gave Joseph a nudge in the right direction as he read James 1:5—“*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him.*”³⁹ Joseph marveled that in all his years of searching never had “*...any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did, for how to act I did not know and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had would never know...At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion or else I must do as James directs, that is, Ask of God...concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally and not upbraid, I might venture.*”⁴⁰

After years of searching the scriptures, pondering on the many choices before him, learning and growing in knowledge and discernment, Joseph had done all he could to figure out his dilemma. He now knew exactly what the desire of his heart was, he knew exactly what he wanted from God—salvation, and he hoped that if he joined the right church, he might receive it.

³⁴ See Moses 6:53-56 (LDS *PofGP*); or Genesis 4:8 (RE).

³⁵ See D&C 9:7-9 (LDS); or T&C Joseph Smith History 13:26 (RE).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph’s First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE).

³⁸ See D&C 8:1-5 (LDS); or T&C Joseph Smith History 13:21 (RE).

³⁹ James 1:5 (KJV); or The Epistle of Jacob 1:2 (RE).

⁴⁰ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph’s First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE)..

Therefore, on a beautiful spring morning in 1820, Joseph chose to act on God's promise and the feelings working in his heart. He retired to a previously chosen secret spot in a grove of trees. Looking around and finding himself alone he knelt down and began to offer up the desires of his heart, crying unto the Lord for mercy for he knew that there was none else to whom he could go to obtain mercy.⁴¹ Almost immediately he was seized by some power which bound his tongue so that he could not speak. The Shouting Methodists had a tradition that a person shouting praises to God in hopes of obtaining some kind of spiritual manifestation would be seized upon by some marvelous, unseen power, and bound up to the point that they were unable to move. Joseph, having never prayed vocally before was having the exact experience the Shouting Methodists described. To Joseph, though, it did not seem like the type of heavenly manifestation that was from God. Rather, he felt thick darkness gather around him and felt as if he was doomed to destruction.

Joseph's marvelous experience parallels those found in scripture and demonstrates that a major component of this earthly existence is to learn to discern between truth and error. It is an eternal law that whenever light is poured out upon this earth God allows darkness in equal measure in order that mankind may always have the freedom to choose between good and evil.⁴² The false spirits of this world are manifested in part as traditions which fool the faithful into thinking they are obedient to God when they are merely misled. False traditions are as destructive to our souls as outright disobedience, holding us captive and leading us into darkness rather than into Christ's light.⁴³ The false traditions of our fathers cause us to fear and doubt, blinding us to the truth, and keeping us from accepting the greater light that is yet to be revealed.⁴⁴ The scriptures teach that as we seek for Truth the Lord can set us free from everything that blinds us and binds us down.⁴⁵ In Joseph's battle with Satan in that grove, Joseph did not give up on God. He did not give in to the false traditions which would have kept him

⁴¹ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>

⁴² Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in the cool of the Garden and then Satan came as a serpent, tempting them. Moses vision at the burning bush; after the Lord had left him, Satan appeared which thing gave Moses an opportunity to choose between truth and deception. When Christ's 40 day fast was completed, Satan came tempting him. See Moses 1:1-26; 3:15-25; 4:1-13 (LDS *PofGP*); Genesis 2:15-25; 3:1-7 (KJV); Genesis 1:1-5; 2:13-16 (RE); Matthew 3:13-17; 4:1-4; and Matthew 2:4-5 (RE).

⁴³ See D&C 93:39 (LDS); T&C 93:11 (RE).

⁴⁴ See Matthew 15:14; John 8:12; 9:5; 12:36, 46 (KJV); Luke 2:32 (KJV); 2 Corinthians 4:4 (KJV); or Matthew 8:9; John 6:11-12, 17; 8:3, 6; (RE); Testimony of St. John 7:1; 9:4, 7 (RE); Luke 2:5 (RE); and 2 Corinthians 1:12 (RE).

⁴⁵ See John 8:32; 14:6 (KJV); John 6:14; 9:7 (RE); and Testimony of St. John 6:18; 10:9 (RE).

blinded and bound down. He persevered and exerted all of his powers to call upon God to deliver him from his unseen enemy. After all Joseph could do, at the very moment when he was ready to sink into despair, God rescued him from that awful pit.⁴⁶ This appears to be the way God works in each of our lives. You're barely hanging on, you're completely exhausted and just when you are about to give in to total despair, that is when the answer comes.⁴⁷ And God allows it. He allowed Satan to have his way with Joseph because how else could Joseph learn the difference between God's glory and Satan? How else could Joseph prove his intent?

At the very moment when Joseph was ready to abandon himself to destruction,⁴⁸ "*the Lord heard [his] cry in the wilderness*"⁴⁹ and a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day came down from above and rested upon him, filling him with the spirit of God⁵⁰ and unspeakable joy.⁵¹ As Joseph looked up into the fiery conduit, the Lord opened the heavens upon him⁵² and he was "...enrapt in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages, who exactly resembled each other in features and likeness, surrounded with a brilliant light."⁵³ Joseph's faith had led him to receive a correct knowledge of God. As he looked upon Them, his soul rejoiced to know that God does indeed live! Years later, in the *Lectures on Faith*, Joseph expounded, "*There are two personages who constitute the great matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things — by whom all things were created and made...they are the Father and the Son: the Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power: possessing all perfection and fullness; the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man...or rather, man was formed after his likeness and in his image — he is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father, possessing all the fullness of the Father, or*

⁴⁶ See T&C The Testimony of St. John 3:4; 4:9; 5:18; 9:4 (RE).

⁴⁷ My husband and I refer to this as "Star Trek timing."

⁴⁸ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph's First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE).

⁴⁹ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 23-24, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/23>

⁵² "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>

⁵³ "Latter Day Saints," 1844," p. 404, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 13, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/latter-day-saints-1844/1>

*the same fullness with the Father, being begotten of him, and was ordained from before the foundation of the world to be a propitiation for the sins of all those who should believe on his name, and is called the Son because of the flesh.”*⁵⁴

Joseph’s vision included a view into heaven where he “...saw many angels...”⁵⁵ Whenever God the Father is on display it always includes the Heavenly Host.⁵⁶ Men and women may see Christ in vision or in an appearance as a solitary personage, but no person has ever seen God the Father without also seeing a host of others.⁵⁷ Throughout scripture, the Father is described as a God of Hosts, this is because God has a family, including a spouse. The image of God is male and female: “*And I God, created man in my own image, in the image of my Only Begotten created I him. Male and female created I them.*”⁵⁸ “*That is the image of God. That is what God...should look like. He appears with the heavenly host because our God...is **this** image, male and female. They two are together.*”⁵⁹ God knows each of us intimately “*even the very hairs on [our] head are...numbered*” by Him.⁶⁰ God desires to have a relationship with each of us. When He comes to you, He will call you by the name which your closest family and friends use. Joseph recorded that, “*One of [the personages] spake unto me calling me by name...*”⁶¹ The familiar use of Joseph’s name brought comfort and peace to the young boy as he was welcomed into Their presence.

One of the personages pointed to the other one, saying, “*This is my beloved Son, Hear him.*”⁶² This seemingly simple act of directing Joseph’s attention to the Savior, Jesus Christ,

⁵⁴ T&C *Lectures on Faith* 5:2 (RE).

⁵⁵ "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 23-24, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/23>

⁵⁶ Snuffer, D. (2012) *The Temple*. p. 2. Retrieved from https://www.dropbox.com/s/36vz6l2m7k3dnag/2012.10.28%20The%20Temple_transcript.pdf?dl=0

⁵⁷ See T&C “A Glossary of Gospel Terms: Heavenly Host.” The scriptures also refer to them as numerous angels or concourses of angels. See Luke 2:2 (RE). The Lord is called the “Lord of Hosts” throughout scripture.

⁵⁸ Genesis 1:24-28 (KJV); Moses 2:24-28 (LDS *PofGP*); or Genesis 2:8 (RE)

⁵⁹ Snuffer, D. (2014) *40 Years in Mormonism: Marriage and Family*, p. 2. Retrieved from <http://denversnuffer.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/09-St.-George-Transcript-Marriage-and-Family.pdf>

⁶⁰ Luke 12:7 (KJV); or Luke 8:19 (RE).

⁶¹ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph’s First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE).

⁶² "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph’s First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE).

emphasized in startling clarity that “...*there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Jesus Christ.*”⁶³ Living in a fallen state, we need to be rescued by a Savior. That Savior is Jesus Christ. He died for each of us. His “*atonement sacrifice is the means ordained by God to...rescue us from sin and death. Our salvation depends on knowing, confessing and worshiping Christ. Anything that distracts us from that can become an impediment to salvation.*”⁶⁴ During that first vision, Joseph received the “testimony of Jesus” from Jesus, “...*behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life.*”⁶⁵ Jesus Christ testifies of who He is and what He has done for each and every one of us. “*He is the one Moses prophesied would come and all Israel must give him heed or be cut off. God the Father loves and acknowledges Jesus as His Son, and has made him the steward over all creation. We are required to acknowledge God’s Son to be rescued by him, for only the Son can rescue us from the Fall of Adam.*”⁶⁶ Because he believed that his salvation was dependent upon choosing the correct church, until that moment, Joseph’s main objective “...*in going to enquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that [he] might know which to join.*”⁶⁷ As the veil was drawn back and the Heavens were opened Joseph was brought back into the presence of the Lord and received the salvation and redemption which he had so desperately desired. Truly Joseph learned that there is “*no other name given, nor any other way nor means, whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ the Lord.*”⁶⁸

⁶³ See Alma 38:8-9 (LDS); or Alma 18:3 (RE).

⁶⁴ Snuffer, D. (2018) *Our Divine Parents*, p. 27. Retrieved from <http://denversnuffer.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Our-Divine-Parents-FINAL.pdf>.

⁶⁵ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>. In 1843 Joseph taught, “Now if any man has the testimony of Jesus, has he not the spirit of prophecy? And if he has the spirit of prophecy, I ask, is he not a prophet? And if a prophet will, he can receive revelation. And any man that does not receive revelation for himself must be damned, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy for Christ says ask and you shall receive.” Ehat & Cook (1980) *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 230, (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft); spelling corrected; Smith, J. F. (1976) *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 312 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company); emphasis added.

⁶⁶ T&C The Testimony of St. John 3:4 (RE).

⁶⁷ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph’s First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE).

⁶⁸ See Mosiah 3:14-19 (LDS); or Mosiah 1:16 (RE).

Then Jesus Christ “*spake...saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee go thy way walk in my statutes and keep my commandments.*”⁶⁹ The first thing the Lord does when a person enters back into His presence is to **immediately** forgive them of their sins. This gave Joseph the confidence to stand before Him.⁷⁰ Most of us believe that our sins and errors are too serious an impediment to find acceptance from God. One of the greatest truths we learn from scripture, as well as Joseph’s First Vision, is that “[The Lord] doesn’t want to judge [us]; He wants to heal [us]. He wants to give [us] what [we] lack, teach [us] to be better, and to bless [us]. He doesn’t want to belittle, demean, or punish [us]. When [we] ask Him to forgive, He forgives. Even very serious sins. He does not want [us] burdened with sin...His willingness to leave [our] errors in the past and remember them no more is greater than [we] can imagine. It is a guiding principle for the atonement. Asking for forgiveness is almost all that is required to be forgiven. What alienates [us] from Him is not [our] sins — He will forgive those. What [we] lack is the confidence to ask in faith, nothing doubting, for His help.”⁷¹ Joseph’s eyes were now opened. He now knew, nothing doubting, that there is a God who died to set us free, for “[i]f the Son sets you free from sin, you are free indeed.”⁷²

While Joseph at first approached the Lord with a simple enough question: which church should he join, the Lord knew that what was truly in Joseph’s heart was a desire for salvation and redemption. God is willing to meet us where we are at. No doubt there were others in Joseph’s community who had asked the same question in prayer and received a simple answer of which church they should join. How much more the Lord gives us is entirely dependent upon us. People don’t get answers like Joseph’s because at the core they don’t actually know what it is they really want, or they stop short just before the breakthrough would have come. God knows every minute

⁶⁹ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>

⁷⁰ “God wants us to be comfortable in His presence. So much so, that it is a matter of course, that God invariably forgives your sins.” Snuffer, D. (2013), *40 Years in Mormonism: Be of Good Cheer, Be of Good Courage*, p. 9. Retrieved from <http://denversnuffer.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/40-Years-in-Mormonism.pdf>. Another example of this is the prophet, Isaiah. When Isaiah saw the Lord, he lamented, “Woe is me, for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips...” A seraphim immediately brought a live coal from off the altar and touched it to Isaiah’s lips, symbolically cleansing him. See Isaiah 6:5 (KJV); or Isaiah 2:2 (RE).

⁷¹ T&C “A Glossary of Gospel Terms, Forgiveness” (RE). Our Savior is willing to come and redeem us from the Fall. It is His work, His glory, and His success which culminates in our redemption. See also Snuffer, D. (2014) *40 Years in Mormonism: Christ, the Prototype of the Saved Man*. Retrieved from <http://denversnuffer.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/07-Ephraim-Transcript-Christ.pdf>.

⁷² T&C The Testimony of St. John 6:19 (RE).

detail about each and every one of us, including the desires of our hearts. We think we know what we want, but we are not always willing to put in the time, effort, and sacrifice to receive what it is that would actually be good for us. If you really want what the Lord offers, if you really want what Joseph received, then you've got to ask yourself if you want it badly enough to reorient yourself, in every possible way, to make the necessary sacrifice to obtain it. Asking for it isn't a whim or today's wish; you have to be deadly serious about it.⁷³ And then you have to go and live your life in faith that you will receive it because it is an eternal truth that no one receives a witness until after the trial of their faith: "*For it was by faith that Christ shewed himself unto our fathers after he had risen from the dead, and he shewed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him...*"⁷⁴

The Lord told Joseph, "*the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments.*"⁷⁵ Mankind not only struggles with violating commandments through addictions, compulsions, errors, weaknesses, and foolishness, but we also sin by our lack of knowledge and our willingness to put men and churches between us and a personal relationship with the Lord. The Greek word hamartia⁷⁶ defines sin "*as missing the mark; not hitting the target; a mistake.*"⁷⁷ LDS Scholar, Hugh Nibley defined sin as "*...doing one thing when you should be doing other and better things for which you have the capacity. Hence, there are no innocent idle thoughts. That is why even the righteous must repent, constantly and progressively, since all fall short of their capacity and calling.*"⁷⁸ Modern revelation defines commandments as communications that are sent by God: "*If you love me, stand ready, watching for every communication I will send to you.... He that treasures my teaching, and stands ready, watching for every communication I send him, is he who shows love for me....*"⁷⁹ Light and truth come to us from above as we keep the commandments in our lives,

⁷³ Excerpts and ideas taken from Peterson, J. B. (2020, May 24) *Biblical Series: Walking with God Noah and the Flood*. Retrieved from <https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/biblical-series-walking-with-god-noah-and-the-flood/id1184022695?i=1000475561528>.

⁷⁴ See Ether 12:6-12 (LDS); or Ether 5:2 (RE).

⁷⁵ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>

⁷⁶ Greek spelling: ἁμαρτία

⁷⁷ Strong, James, *Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), G266.

⁷⁸ Nibley, H. (1989) *Approaching Zion*, p. 66-67 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book).

⁷⁹ T&C The Testimony of St. John 10:11–12 (RE). We are commanded not to partake of some things out of season. Then we are commanded to partake of within season. Joseph Smith Jr. taught, "*That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another...This is the principle on which the government of Heaven is*

especially those communications from the Lord. By keeping the commandments, we obtain from God light and truth as a by-product of obedience to them. The commandments reveal to us, in a very personal way, what the mind of God is for our life. It is intensely personal because it is all internal.⁸⁰ These truths were personified in the life of Joseph Smith.

The Lord told Joseph that “none doeth good.” The Lord defined “good” as “*they that are ready to receive the fullness of my gospel.*”⁸¹ The “fullness of the gospel,” as used in scripture, is defined: “*First...[as] a collection of prophetic testimonies about Jesus Christ as...Redeemer and guide to salvation...and...Christ’s role as universal Savior and Redeemer of mankind. Second, it is a way to identify Christ revealing Himself to mankind, thereby redeeming mortals from the fall...The ascent to God is the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ...*”⁸² Joseph, while working on the inspired translation of the Bible, corrected the 14th Psalm to read, “*The fool has said in his heart, There is no man that has seen God because he shows himself not unto us, therefore there is no God. Behold, they are corrupt. They have done abominable works and none of them does good.*”⁸³

The Lord further instructed Joseph that he “*must join none of [the churches], for they [are] all wrong...all their creeds [are] an abomination in [My] sight...*”⁸⁴ A creed is: “*A brief summary of the articles of Christian faith...which are believed or professed...*”⁸⁵ The creeds of Christianity have been drawn up at times of conflict about doctrine. Their purpose is to provide a doctrinal statement of orthodoxy that has been voted on and accepted by the leaders of the churches.⁸⁶ (In modern LDS vernacular, we would call that a Correlation Department.) An

conducted — by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire.” Smith, J. F. (1976) *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 256 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company).

⁸⁰ T&C “A Glossary of Gospel Terms: Commandment” (RE).

⁸¹ D&C 35:12 (LDS); or T&C 18:4 (RE).

⁸² See T&C “A Glossary of Gospel Terms: Fullness of the Gospel” (RE); D&C 42:30-32; 76:11-17; 39:7-11; 45:9-14; 66:1-2 (LDS); 1 Nephi 10:11-16 (LDS); or T&C 26:7; 69:3; 23:3; 31:3; 52:1 (RE); and 1 Nephi 3:4 (RE).

⁸³ Psalm 14:1 (RE).

⁸⁴ “History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2],” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph’s First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE).

⁸⁵ <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/creed>.

⁸⁶ The original Christian creed was adopted in 325 AD by a council of Christian bishops at Nicaea to solve conflicts about the divine nature of God the Son and His relationship with God the Father. In modern terms, the Council of Nicaea was the first Christian Correlation Department.

abomination is “[t]he use of religion to suppress truth or impose a false form of truth [and] involves the religious justification of wrongdoing...[s]omething becomes abominable when it is motivated out of a false form of religious observance or is justified because of religious error.”⁸⁷ When the Bible first “proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew, it contained the fullness of the gospel of the Lamb...” and went forth to the gentiles in purity. When the “great and abominable” church was formed, “they [took] away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord...And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men...[After these] plain and precious things were taken away, [the Bible was sent] forth unto all the nations of the gentiles...[and] because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.”⁸⁸

The Lord continued to awaken Joseph to the awful state of mankind, “...they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.” The Lord again forbade Joseph to join with any of them.⁸⁹ None of them knew the Lord. They sermonized and pontificated yet they lacked the keys of knowledge sufficient to plainly teach Christ’s doctrine. They took power unto themselves, adding to and taking away from the Lord’s commandments. They replaced an audience with the living Lord with rites and ordinances which they claimed were all that was necessary for salvation. All were wrong. All were in error. All were corrupt. They were blind leaders of the blind. They were ignorant guides, devoted to false traditions, claiming that their earthly institutions had the power to save them.

The Lord did not leave Joseph without hope. Many more things were revealed to him which he was commanded not to write at that time.⁹⁰ After this heavenly vision Joseph’s “...soul was filled with love and for many days [he] could rejoice with great Joy and the Lord was with

⁸⁷ See T&C “A Glossary of Gospel Terms: Abomination” (RE).

⁸⁸ 1 Nephi 13:20-33 (LDS); or 1 Nephi 3:21-22 (RE).

⁸⁹ “History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2],” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph’s First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

[him]... ”⁹¹ **God is Love**. But, many of us ask “If He loves us, then why did He send us down here to a world that is full of chaos and confusion? Why does He allow bad things to happen, especially to the pure and the innocent?” Clinical psychologist, Jordan Peterson had a vision that he went to Heaven and was put in a roman amphitheater with Satan. It was rather a shock because he thought, “that’s a hell of a thing to happen in Heaven.” Well, he had his battle and won. At the end, he came up to God and said: “You know, what’s with the whole Roman Amphitheater thing,” because he thought it was a little over the top, he said, “why would you put me in a ring with something like that?” God said, “Because I knew you could win.”⁹² As he has pondered on this vision, this is what he thinks it means: “*[I]f you want to make something strong you test it and maybe if you want to make something ultimately strong you test it ultimately...[Because of the Fall of Adam and Eve] we know good and evil now which allows us to be tested ultimately...Do you protect the people you love, or do you try to make them strong? It seems...that God [put us down here to be tested and that He] gave us Satan in order to make us strong. There is something about...consciousness through tragedy, clarity through suffering...that perfection that lurks as a potential in the future is something that has to be earned rather than given, maybe it has no value without free choice. Maybe we have to distinguish between good and evil now that we have the capacity to actually apprehend them. Maybe that’s what life is about. Maybe that’s the separating of the wheat from the chaff.*”⁹³

Well, here we are today,⁹⁴ celebrating and honoring the bicentennial of the First Vision. What lessons have we learned about God through Joseph’s first of many visions? What have we learned about God through our own grappling with Satan? What have we learned through the joys and sorrows of our own lives? Are we coming to know the Lord? If there was a young boy, or even a man, today who had the faith of Joseph and received a similar heavenly vision, would the Lord say much the same about us as He did about the people in Joseph’s day? The gospel of Jesus Christ has always been meant to teach mankind the correct character, perfections, and

⁹¹ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>; “You pray each time you partake of the sacrament to always have my spirit to be with you. And what is my spirit? It is to love one another as I have loved you.” T&C 157:51 (RE).

⁹² Peterson, J. B. (2020, May 3) *Biblical Series: Adam and Eve/ Self-Consciousness, Evil, and Death*. Apple Podcasts. Retrieved from <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/biblical-series-adam-eve-self-consciousness-evil-and-death/id1184022695?i=1000473415047>

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ June 20, 2020.

attributes of God in order that they might have the faith necessary to part the veil for themselves and enter back into His presence. Restoring ascension theology was Joseph's greatest gift to mankind. In order to make the fiery ascent back into the presence of the Lord, we must seek further light and knowledge from those who are sent from the presence of God to teach us.

*“There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus...who was in darkness and came to visit with Jesus. He sought wisdom from Jesus and said, Enlightened heavenly guide, some of us know you have descended from the High Council of Heaven because signs confirm you have authority from God. Jesus answered... I tell you, if you want to ascend to the Heavenly Council, you must first acknowledge and give heed to the messengers sent by them.”*⁹⁵ Joseph was such a messenger. He was sent forth to declare the truth to the whole world.⁹⁶ Joseph's work must be remembered and preserved. The Lord revealed much through Joseph and we will be held accountable for the light and truth taught by him. Jesus Christ has declared that “...**every soul** who forsakes their sins, and comes unto me, and calls on my name, and obeys my voice, and keeps all my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am⁹⁷ ...for everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.”⁹⁸ 200 years ago, on a beautiful spring morning, the Lord proved to the world that He does indeed keep His promises.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ T&C The Testimony of St. John 2:1-3 (RE).

⁹⁶ T&C The Testimony of St. John 3:4 (RE).

⁹⁷ D&C 93:1 (LDS); or T&C 93:1 (RE); emphasis added.

⁹⁸ Matthew 7:6-8 (KJV); or Matthew 3:42 (RE).

⁹⁹ The Lord is no respecter of persons. Consider that He appeared to Adam who had previously rebelled and been cast out of His presence. He appeared to Moses, who had been a prince of Egypt and had committed murder to defend an innocent man. He appeared to Lehi who was a rich merchant in Jerusalem. He appeared to Alma the Elder who had been a wicked and corrupt priest. He appeared to Alma the Younger who had fought against the Lord's work. Each of these men repented and sought to be reunited with the Lord and received salvation and redemption. None of us are too far gone to have a relationship with Christ.

The Various Accounts of Joseph's First Vision

One of the things you may notice while analyzing the various accounts of Joseph's Smith's First Vision is that those who copied Joseph's account, took notes while listening to him recount it, or wrote it from their own memory, generally altered it as they put it into their own words, or embellished the account, adding flowery language to describe those things which Joseph stated much more plainly and simply. Joseph was an understater, while others around him seemed to feel a need to exaggerate his story, as if the exaggeration would make it more miraculous and more believable. Perhaps some were simply taking artistic license and maybe some did not truly understand the significant nuances of the event. What we don't have is Joseph Smith's own words explaining why he even altered his own account, whether adapting it to the audience, or honing it for publication. Following are the various accounts along with citations in order for you to be able to access it today. (*spelling as in original for all accounts)

1. JS History, ca. Summer 1832, pp. 1–4. This is the earliest and most personal account, and the only one that includes Joseph Smith's own handwriting.

“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 Christ the son of the living God of whom he beareth record and also an account of the rise of the church of Christ in the eve of time according as the Lord brought forth and established by his hand firstly he receiving the testamony from on high secondly the ministering of Angels thirdly the reception of the holy Priesthood by the ministring of Angels to adminster the letter of the Gospel the Law and commandments as they were given unto him and the ordinencs, forthly a confirmation and reception of the high Priesthood after the holy order of the son of the living God power and ordinance from on high to preach the Gospel in the administration and demonstration of the spirit the Key of the Kingdom of God confered upon him 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 instructing me in the christian religion at the age of about ten years my Father Joseph Smith Singnior moved to Palmyra Ontario County 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 children 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 benefit of an education suffice it to say I was nearly unacquainted in reading and writing and the ground rules of Arithmetic which constituted my whole literary acquirements. At about the age of twelve years my mind became seriously impressed with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures believing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God thus applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel exceedingly for I discovered that they did not adorn their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that sacred depository this was a grief to my Soul thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world of mankind the contentions and divisions the wickedness and abominations and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind my mind became exceedingly distressed for I became convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament and I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world for I learned in the scriptures that God was the same yesterday to day and forever that he was no respecter to persons for he was God for I looked upon the sun the glorious luminary of the earth and also the moon rolling in their majesty 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 majesty and in the strength of beauty whose power and intelligence in governing the things which are so exceeding great and marvellous even in the likeness of him who created them and when I considered upon these things my heart exclaimed well hath the wise man said it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God my heart exclaimed all these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipresent power a being who maketh Laws and decreeth and bindeth all things in their bounds who filleth Eternity who was and is and will be from all Eternity to Eternity and when I considered all these things and that that being seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth therefore I 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 wilderness and

while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th year of my age¹⁰⁰ a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy way walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold the world lieth in sin 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 according to their ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Ap[osto]les behold and lo I come quickly as it was written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father 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 heavenly vision nevertheless I pondered these things in my heart...”¹⁰¹

2. Joseph Smith Journal, 9-11 Nov. 1835, pp. 23-24. Joseph Smith described his early visionary experiences to a visitor at his home in Kirtland, Ohio, in November 1835. His description was written down, and Warren Parrish later copied it into Joseph Smith’s journal.

“...we soon commenced talking upon the subject of religion and after I had made some remarks concerning the bible I commenced giving him a relation of the circumstances connected with the coming forth of the book of mormon, as follows— being wrought up in my mind, respecting the subject of religion and looking at the different systems taught the children of men, I knew not who was right or who was wrong and I consider it of the first importance that I should be right, in matters that involve eternal consequences; being thus perplexed in mind I retired to the silent grove and bowed down before the Lord, under a realising sense that he had said (if the bible be true) ask and you shall receive knock and it shall be opened seek and you shall find and again, if any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not;

¹⁰⁰ 16th year means he was 15 years old.

¹⁰¹ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>

information was what I most desired at this time, and with a fixed determination to obtain it, I called upon the Lord for the first time, in the place above stated or in other words I made a fruitless attempt to pray, my tongue seemed to be swollen in my mouth, so that I could not utter, I heard a noise behind me like some person walking towards me, I strove again to pray, but could not, the noise of walking seemed to draw nearer, I sprung up on my feet, and looked around, but saw no person or thing that was calculated to produce the noise of walking, I kneeled again my mouth was opened and my tongue liberated, and I called on the Lord in mighty prayer, a pillar of fire appeared above my head, it presently rested down upon me, and filled me with joy unspeakable, a personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of flame which was spread all around, and yet nothing consumed, another personage soon appeared like unto the first, he said unto me thy sins are forgiven thee, he testified unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God; and I saw many angels in this vision I was about 14 years old when I received this first communication...”¹⁰²

3. JS History, begun by Joseph in 1838, the 1st draft is a twenty-five page manuscript written in the handwriting of Joseph’s scribe, James Mulholland, in 1839 and begins at the baptism of Joseph and Oliver in May of 1829. The 2nd draft of Joseph’s history was scribed by James Mulholland and Robert B. Thompson from 1839-1842 and consists of the first sixty-one pages of what became the manuscript history. The 2nd draft is the best-known account of Joseph Smith’s First Vision. It was canonized by the LDS Church in their Pearl of Great Price in 1880 and is proclaimed to be Joseph’s “official” version.

The First Vision account reads,

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

¹⁰² "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 23-24, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/23>; William Parrish later repurposed Joseph Smith’s 1835–1836 journal for inclusion in a history, and he included a lightly edited copy of this same account: JS History, 1834–1836, entry for 9 Nov. 1835, pp. 120–121.

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

I was at this time in my fifteenth year.¹⁰³ My father's family were proselyted to the Presbyterian faith and four of them joined that church, namely, my mother Lucy, my brothers Hyrum, Samuel Harrison, and my sister Sophronia.

During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness, but though my feelings were deep and often pungent, still I kept myself aloof from all these parties though I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit. But in process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them, but so great was the confusion and strife amongst the different denominations that it was impossible for a person young as I was and so unacquainted with men and things to come to any certain conclusion who was right, and who was wrong.

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

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

While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which

¹⁰³ 14 years old.

reads, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him.["] Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did, for how to act I did not know and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had would never know, for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passage so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible. At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion or else I must do as James directs, that is, Ask of God. I at last came to the determination to ask of God, concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally and not upbraid, I might venture. So, in accordance with this my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful clear day early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt; for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

After I had retired into the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God, I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcome me and had such astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. But exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction, not to any imaginary ruin but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world who had such a marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being. Just at this moment of great alarm I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages (whose brightness and glory defy all description) standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me calling me by name and said (pointing to the other) "This is my beloved Son, Hear him."

My object in going to enquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner therefore did I get possession of myself so as to be able to speak, than I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right, (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong,) and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong, and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt, that they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." He again forbade me to join with any of them and many other things did he say unto me which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again I found myself laying on my back, looking up into heaven..."¹⁰⁴

4. In March 1842, History of Joseph Smith began being printed in the *Times and Seasons* under the direction of Joseph Smith. The account is almost identical, with very few words, grammar, or punctuation changes to what is known as Draft 2 of his history.

5. An updated version of Joseph's history was prepared for a collection of essays about religions in the United States, published in 1844 by Israel Daniel Rupp and titled *He Pasa Ekklesia* [The Whole Church], p. 404-405. The essay, titled "Latter Day Saints," was written by Joseph Smith in 1844 (on p. 404):

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, was founded upon direct revelation, as the true church of God has ever been, according to the scriptures (Amos, iii. 7, and Acts i. 2.) And

¹⁰⁴ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/1> See also Joseph's First Vision account found under History of Joseph Smith, printed in the *Times and Seasons*, Volume 3, Numbers 10 and 11 (March 15 & April 1, 1842), pp. 727-728, and 748; T&C Joseph Smith History Part 1-2 (RE). In the early 1840's Howard Coray began making an edited copy of the history begun in 1838. His copy was discontinued after a hundred pages. Many portions of this copy vary from the original, with embellishments added by Coray to the account of Joseph Smith's first vision: see "History, circa 1841, draft [Draft 3]," p. 1-4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-1841-draft-draft-3/1>. Around the same time, Coray made a fair copy which more closely matches Joseph's own words although it still contains Coray's liberties, this copy can be accessed here: "History, circa 1841, fair copy," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-1841-fair-copy/1>.

through the will and blessings of God, I have been an instrument in his hands, thus far, to move forward the cause of Zion. Therefore, in order to fulfil the solicitation of your letter of July last, I shall commence with my life.” On pages 404-405, Joseph briefly recounts his First Vision: “When about fourteen years of age, I began to reflect upon the importance of being prepared for a future state; and upon inquiring the place of salvation, I found that there was a great clash in religious sentiment; if I went to one society they referred me to one place, and another to another; each one pointing to his own particular creed as the “summum bonum” of perfection. Considering that all could not be right, and that God could not be the author of so much confusion, I determined to investigate the subject more fully, believing that if God had a church, it would not be split up into factions, and that if he taught one society to worship one way, and administer in one set of ordinances, he would not teach another principles which were diametrically opposed. Believing the word of God, I had confidence in the declaration of James, ‘If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.’

I retired to a secret place in a grove, and began to call upon the Lord. While fervently engaged in supplication, my mind was taken away from the objects with which I was surrounded, and I was enrapt in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages, who exactly resembled each other in features and likeness, surrounded with a brilliant light, which eclipsed the sun at noonday. They told me that all the religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines, and that none of them was acknowledged of God as his church and kingdom. And I was expressly commanded to “go not after them,” at the same time receiving a promise that the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto me.”

On p. 405 Joseph mentions the visit of an angel of the Lord on the evening of Sept. 21, 1823 then makes this statement, “After having received many visits from the angels of God, unfolding the majesty and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days, on the morning of the 22d of September, A. D. 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into my hands.” And on page 409, he stated, “Believing the Bible to say what it means and mean what it says; and guided by revelation according to the ancient order of the fathers to whom came what little light we enjoy; and circumscribed only by the eternal limits of truth: this church must continue the even tenor of her way, and “spread undivided, and operate unspent.”

One of the Articles of faith: “We believe in the literal gathering of Israel, and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes. That Zion will be built upon this continent...”¹⁰⁵

First Vision accounts written and published by others:

1. Orson Pratt’s *An Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, 1840* was written and published by Orson Pratt, Minister of the Gospel (written when Pratt was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve):

“...When somewhere about fourteen or fifteen years old, he began seriously to reflect upon the necessity of being prepared for a future state of existence: but how, or in what way, to prepare himself, was a question, as yet, undetermined in his own mind: he perceived that it was a question of infinite importance, and that the salvation of his soul depended upon a correct understanding of the same. He saw, that if he understood not the way, it would be impossible to walk in it, except by chance; and the thought of resting his hopes of eternal life upon chance, or uncertainties, was more than he could endure. If he went to the religious denominations to seek information, each one pointed to its particular tenets, saying—“This is the way, walk ye in it;” while, at the same time, the doctrines of each were, in many respects, in direct opposition to one another. It, also, occurred to his mind, that God was not the author of but one doctrine, and therefore could not acknowledge but one denomination as his church; and that such denomination must be a people, who believe, and teach, that one doctrine, (whatever it may be,) and build upon the same. He then reflected upon the immense number of doctrines, now, in the world, which had given rise to many hundreds of different denominations. The great question to be decided in his mind, was—if any one of these denominations be the Church of Christ, which one is it? Until he could become satisfied, in relation to this question, he could not rest contented. To trust to the decisions of fallible man, and build his hopes upon the same, without any certainty, and knowledge, of his own, would not satisfy the anxious desires that pervaded his breast. To decide, without any positive and definite evidence, on which he could rely, upon a subject involving the future welfare of his soul, was revolting to his feelings. The only alternative, that seemed to be left him, was to read the Scriptures, and endeavour to follow their

¹⁰⁵ "Latter Day Saints," 1844," p. 404, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 13, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/latter-day-saints-1844/1>

directions. He, accordingly, commenced perusing the sacred pages of the Bible, with sincerity, believing the things that he read. His mind soon caught hold of the following passage:—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."—James i. 5. From this promise he learned, that it was the privilege of all men to ask God for wisdom, with the sure and certain expectation of receiving, liberally; without being upbraided for so doing. This was cheering information to him: tidings that gave him great joy. It was like a light shining forth in a dark place, to guide him to the path in which he should walk. He, now, saw that if he inquired of God, there was, not only, a possibility, but a probability; yea, more, a certainty, that he should obtain a knowledge, which, of all the doctrines, was the doctrine of Christ; and, which, of all the churches, was the church of Christ. He, therefore, retired to a secret place, in a grove, but a short distance from his father's house, and knelt down, and began to call upon the Lord. At first, he was severely tempted by the powers of darkness, which endeavoured to overcome him; but he continued to seek for deliverance, until darkness gave way from his mind; and he was enabled to pray, in fervency of the spirit, and in faith. And, while thus pouring out his soul, anxiously desiring an answer from God, he, at length, saw a very bright and glorious light in the heavens above; which, at first, seemed to be at a considerable distance. He continued praying, while the light appeared to be gradually descending towards him; and, as it drew nearer, it increased in brightness, and magnitude, so that, by the time that it reached the tops of the trees, the whole wilderness, for some distance around, was illuminated in a most glorious and brilliant manner. He expected to have seen the leaves and boughs of the trees consumed, as soon as the light came in contact with them; but, perceiving that it did not produce that effect, he was encouraged with the hopes of being able to endure its presence. It continued descending, slowly, until it rested upon the earth, and he was enveloped in the midst of it. When it first came upon him, it produced a peculiar sensation throughout his whole system; and, immediately, his mind was caught away, from the natural objects with which he was surrounded; and he was enwrapped in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages, who exactly resembled each other in their features or likeness. He was informed, that his sins were forgiven. He was also informed upon the subjects, which had for some time previously agitated his mind, viz.—that all the religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines; and, consequently, that none of them was acknowledged of God, as his church and kingdom. And he was expressly commanded, to go not after them; and he received a

promise that the true doctrine—the fulness of the gospel, should, at some future time, be made known to him; after which, the vision withdrew, leaving his mind in a state of calmness and peace, indescribable...”¹⁰⁶

2. Orson Hyde, another member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, wrote an account of Joseph’s earliest visions while in Frankfurt, Germany. He wrote the text in English and then translated it into German for publication, titling it *Ein Ruf aus der Wüste (A Cry out of the Wilderness)* in 1842:

“When [Joseph Smith] had reached his fifteenth year, he began to think seriously about the importance of preparing for a future [existence]; but it was very difficult for him to decide how he should go about such an important undertaking. He recognized clearly that it would be impossible for him to walk the proper path without being acquainted with it beforehand; and to base his hopes for eternal life on chance or blind uncertainty would have been more than he had ever been inclined to do.

He discovered the world of religion working under a flood of errors which by virtue of their contradictory opinions and principles laid the foundation for the rise of such different sects and denominations whose feelings toward each other all too often were poisoned by hate, contention, resentment and anger. He felt that there was only one truth and that those who understood it correctly, all understood it in the same way. Nature had endowed him with a keen critical intellect and so he looked through the lens of reason and common sense and with pity and contempt upon those systems of religion, which were so opposed to each other and yet were all obviously based on the scriptures.[p.14]

After he had sufficiently convinced himself to his own satisfaction that darkness covered the earth and gross darkness [covered] the nations, the hope of ever finding a sect or denomination that was in possession of unadulterated truth left him.

Consequently he began in an attitude of faith his own investigation of the word of God [feeling that it was] the best way to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. He had not proceeded very far in this laudable endeavor when his eyes fell upon the following verse of St. James [1:5]: “If any of

¹⁰⁶ "Appendix: Orson Pratt, A[n] Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, 1840," p. [3-], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-orson-pratt-an-interesting-account-of-several-remarkable-visions-1840/3>

you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” He considered this scripture an authorization for him to solemnly call upon his creator to present his needs before him with the certain expectation of some success. And so he began to pour out to the Lord with fervent determination the earnest desires of his soul. On one occasion, he went to a small grove of trees near his father’s home and knelt down before God in solemn prayer. The adversary then made several strenuous efforts to cool his ardent soul. He filled his mind with doubts [p. 15] and brought to mind all manner of inappropriate images to prevent him from obtaining the object of his endeavors; but the overflowing mercy of God came to buoy him up and gave new impetus to his failing strength. However, the dark cloud soon parted and light and peace filled his frightened heart. Once again he called upon the Lord with faith and fervency of spirit.

At this sacred moment, the natural world around him was excluded from his view, so that he would be open to the presentation of heavenly and spiritual things. Two glorious heavenly personages stood before him, resembling each other exactly in features and stature. They told him that his prayers had been answered and that the Lord had decided to grant him a special blessing. He was also told that he should not join any of the religious sects or denominations, because all of them erred in doctrine and none was recognized by God as his church and kingdom. He was further commanded, to wait patiently until some future time, when the true doctrine of Christ and the complete truth of the gospel would be revealed to him. The vision closed and peace and calm filled his mind.”¹⁰⁷

3. Levi Richards, journal, 11 June 1843. Following an 11 June 1843 public meeting at which Joseph Smith spoke of his earliest vision, Levi Richards included an account of it in his diary:

“Pres. J. Smith bore testimony to the same— saying that when he was a youth he began to think about these these things but could not find out which of all the sects were right— he went into the grove & enquired of the Lord which of all the sects were right— re received for answer that none of them were right, that they were all wrong, & that the Everlasting cove[n]t was

¹⁰⁷ "Orson Hyde, Ein Ruf aus der Wüste (A Cry out of the Wilderness), 1842, extract, English translation," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/orson-hyde-ein-ruf-aus-der-wste-a-cry-out-of-the-wilderness-1842-extract-english-translation/1>

broken= he said he understood the fulness of the Gospel from beginning to end— & could Teach it & also the order of the priesthood in all its ramifications= Earth & hell had opposed him & tryed to destroy him— but they had not done it= & they <never would>”¹⁰⁸

4. Interview, JS by David Nye White, Nauvoo, IL, 21 Aug. 1843; in David Nye White, “The Prairies, Joe Smith, the Temple, the Mormons, &c.,” *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette*, 15 Sept. 1843, [3]. In August 1843, David Nye White, editor of the *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette*, interviewed Joseph Smith in his home as part of a two-day stop in Nauvoo, Illinois. His news article included an account of Joseph Smith’s first vision.

“[...] The Lord does reveal himself to me. I know it. He revealed himself to me first when I was about fourteen years old, a mere boy. I will tell you about it. There was a reformation among the different religious denominations in the neighborhood where I lived, and I became serious, and was desirous to know what Church to join. While thinking of this matter, I opened the Testament promiscuously on these words, in James, ‘Ask of the Lord who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not.’ I just determined I’d ask him. I immediately went out into the woods where my father had a clearing, and went to the stump where I had stuck my axe when I had quit work, and I kneeled down, and prayed, saying, ‘O Lord, what Church shall I join.’ Directly I saw a light, and then a glorious personage in the light, and then another personage, and the first personage said to the second, “Behold my beloved Son, hear him.” I then, addressed this second person, saying, “O Lord, what Church shall I join.” He replied, “don’t join any of them, they are all corrupt.” The vision then vanished, and when I come to myself, I was sprawling on my back; and it was sometime before my strength returned. When I went home and told the people that I had a revelation, and that all the churches were corrupt, they persecuted me, and they have persecuted me ever since. They thought to put me down, but they hav’nt succeeded, and they can’t do it. When I have proved that I am right, and get all the world subdued under me, I think I shall deserve something. [...]”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ "Levi Richards, Journal, 11 June 1843, extract," p. [16], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/levi-richards-journal-11-june-1843-extract/2>

¹⁰⁹ "Interview, 21 August 1843, extract," p. [3], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/interview-21-august-1843-extract/1>

5. Alexander Neibaur, Journal, 24 May 1844. On 24 May 1844, German immigrant and church member Alexander Neibaur visited Joseph Smith in his home and heard him relate the circumstances of his earliest visionary experience.

“24 called at Br J. S met Mr Bonnie= Br Joseph tolt us the first call he had a Revival Meeting his Mother & Br & Sister got Religion, he wanted to get Religion too wanted to feel & shout like the Rest but could feel nothing, opened his Bible at the first Passage that struck him was if any man lack Wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all Men liberallity & upbraidet not went into the Wood to pray kneels himself down his tongue was closed cleaved to his roof— could utter not a word, felt easier after a while= saw a fire towards heaven came near & nearer saw a personage in the fire light complexion blue eyes a piece of white cloth drawn over his shoulders his right arm bear after a w[h]ile a other person came to the side of the first Mr Smith then asked must I join the Methodist Church= No= they are not my People, have gone astray there is none that doeth good no not one, but this is my Beloved son harken ye him, the fire drew nigher Rested upon the tree enveloped him [illegible] comforted Indeavoured to arise but felt uncomen feeble= got into the house told the Methodist priest, said this was not a age for God to Reveal himself in Vision Revelation has ◇ ceased with the New Testament.”¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ "Alexander Neibaur, Journal, 24 May 1844, extract," p. [23], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/alexander-neibaur-journal-24-may-1844-extract/1>