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1805–19

The Early Years

*H*istorians often divide human history into periods such as prehistory, antiquity, late antiquity, Middle Ages, Renaissance, and so forth. These distinctions are, of course, artificial and somewhat problematic because no one woke up one morning and said, “Great! Today is the first day of the Renaissance!” Nevertheless, such categories help scholars organize and collect data about the past in smaller units of time, facilitating very astute interpretations of the facts available. Historians also divide human history into two separate worlds: premodern and modern periods. These designations account for the tremendous technological, political, and economic advances that have been made in recent history. Referring to the premodern and modern

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periods also helps us deal with the significant and fundamental psychological changes humans experienced between those periods. Indeed, those living in the modern world are fundamentally and psychologically different than the people who lived in the premodern world.

The Prophet's World

Joseph Smith lived in the period of transition between the end of the premodern world and the beginning of the modern world. In some places and among some people, as in the urban centers of Europe, the premodern world had already basically ended, whereas people in other places still had a premodern worldview. In some ways Joseph Smith had one foot in the premodern world and another foot in the modern world. The premodern world can be identified as having an abundance of three commodities that are rather scarce today.

First, the premodern world had an abundance of natural darkness. Certainly there were bonfires, oil lamps, and later candles, but often people living in the premodern world experienced natural darkness in its totality. Today humans, particularly those living in a Western industrial nation, can hardly escape artificial light; for most people, traveling long distances is required to witness a natural, dark sky as it was seen in antiquity. Street lights, headlamps, TVs, and even night lights in hallways have fundamentally changed the way we see the world at night. We simply do not observe the heavens as Abraham and Sarah, Jesus, Mary, Lazarus, and Joseph and Emma saw them. Additionally, we may not appreciate the fears of natural darkness that existed for those who lived in the past. One might fall into a ditch. Wild animals might attack. It was a dark and frightening world.

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The second commodity is natural sounds and silence. There was human activity in the premodern world that created sound—saws, chisels, and so on—but people often experienced the natural sound of their environment in ways most modern people never have. Today it is difficult to escape the noise of the modern world because of the prevalence of automobile traffic, sounds from various media outlets such as the radio, sounds of electrical currents in our homes, the ubiquitous iPod, and a variety of other sources. Even in some of the quietest places in America such as natural parks, airplanes can disturb both humans and animals.

The third commodity is personal solitude. We live in a world that frowns on someone wanting to be alone. We are generally concerned when a friend or a family member seeks solitude, wondering if we should call the suicide hotline in his or her behalf. Because the patriarchs and matriarchs, the apostles and prophets experienced natural darkness, natural silence and sounds, and personal solitude, the visions of heaven may have opened to them more readily. Today, we are often distracted by the voices, the sounds, and the lights of a busy, noisy, modern world.

The world of Joseph Smith was different from our own in other ways. For example, he did not have modern products such as shampoo or deodorant. The ability to shower and change into clean clothes every day did not exist for most people living during the premodern period. Most people living in the premodern world had no regular dental care, no orthodontics. Life expectancy was less than twenty years of age in the early nineteenth century, and the infant mortality rate was remarkably high. In a day before antibiotics, this is not surprising. Today, few parents expect to bury a child; in the past, few parents escaped this terrible duty. By the

end of the nineteenth century, these numbers had shifted dramatically with the advances of technology that provided clean water, medicine, and better nutrition.

Joseph Smith's world was often open to public view. Despite moments of personal solitude, family life was rather transparent, especially for the Smith family. They lived in small, crowded homes most of their lives, and during several years of their married life, Joseph and Emma lived with other people, sharing a home with a number of people. Joseph's neighbors saw him walk to the outhouse in the backyard. Today halls, bedrooms, and locked doors create modern privacy largely unknown in the premodern world. People in Joseph Smith's time witnessed the natural rhythms of life in a way most people today have likely not experienced. They watched children being born and people dying in their homes. Friends and family of the Prophet saw him sick, tired, irritated, even angry. They also saw him happy, playful, joyful, enthusiastic, solemn, and prayerful. They saw him dressed in his Sunday best, but also sometimes in tattered clothes.¹

Three prominent visitors—Josiah Quincy, future mayor of Boston; Charles Francis Adams, the son and grandson of two former presidents of the United States (John Quincy Adams and John Adams); and Dr. William G. Goforth, representative of the national Whig Party who had come to Nauvoo seeking votes for presidential candidate Henry Clay—stopped in Nauvoo just before the Prophet died in 1844.² After their visit to Nauvoo, Quincy told their story about visiting the Mormon Prophet:

Pre-eminent among the stragglers by the door stood a man of commanding appearance, clad in the costume of a journeyman carpenter when about his work. He was a

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hearty, athletic fellow, with blue eyes standing prominently out upon his light complexion, a long nose, and a retreating forehead. He wore striped pantaloons, a linen jacket, which had not lately seen the washtub, and a beard of some three days' growth. This was the founder of the religion which had been preached in every quarter of the earth. As Dr. Goforth introduced us to the prophet, he mentioned the parentage of my companion. "God bless you, to begin with!" said Joseph Smith, raising his hands in the air and letting them descend upon the shoulders of Mr. Adams.³

Joseph did not appear as one might expect of a prophet. Some Latter-day Saints who arrived in Nauvoo were also surprised to see the young prophet dressed in rough clothes greeting them at the dock.⁴ Such was the world in which Joseph Smith lived.

Also surprising to many people today is how young the Prophet was when the transcendent events of the Restoration took place; he was only fourteen years old when he saw the Father and the Son in 1820; he was only seventeen years old when Moroni visited him in 1823; he was only twenty-one years old when he received the ancient record in 1827; and he was only twenty-four years old when he became the president of the Church of Jesus Christ in 1830. It is probable that in order to accomplish the rigorous tasks ahead of him, the Lord called a young, energetic prophet.

Joseph lived during a remarkable time in U.S. history.⁵ The country was expanding not only in geographic size but also in population. In 1800 there were a little over five million Americans. By 1810, there were more than seven million and within another twenty years, that number would double. Additionally, the American frontier was constantly moving

westward. Joseph lived on this frontier—a rough, tough, and sometimes dangerous environment.

It is important to note that the premodern world was not a static period, though certain aspects of it had long and substantial continuity.⁶

Joseph's Early Years

Sources concerning Joseph's earliest years (1805–19) are fragmentary. The main source of information about Joseph's early years is Lucy Mack Smith's history.⁷ Additionally, the Prophet prepared some brief histories that provide some personal insights.⁸ Nevertheless, Lucy Mack's reminiscences remain one of the important sources to reconstructing these early years. She began to dictate her story shortly after the Prophet's death in 1844. Lucy's history provides clues to scholars, guiding them to look for tax records and other documents to expand on the hints she provides in this important reminiscence. Without Lucy Mack Smith's remarkable history of her family, we would know almost nothing about Joseph Smith's earliest years. This chapter is a review of the Prophet's early life with references to American and world history events to provide historical context.

From Lucy's history we learn that the Prophet's parents (Joseph and Lucy Smith) were married in 1796 in Tunbridge, Orange County, Vermont.⁹ The Smith family moved to Randolph, Orange County, Vermont, in the wake of a failed investment that caused them to sell their farm "to avoid the embarrassment of debt" in 1802.¹⁰ Over the next few years, they moved numerous times.¹¹ Nevertheless, these moves were all within a rather small geographical area, keeping them within a network of family and friends.

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The Smith family moved back to Tunbridge in 1803.¹² They moved again in 1804; this time to Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, onto the land owned by Lucy Mack Smith's parents, Lydia Gates and Solomon Mack.¹³ Lucy Mack Smith recalled, "Here it was that my son Joseph was born, December 23, 1805, one who will act a more conscious part in this work than any other individual."¹⁴ Joseph Smith was born on Monday, December 23. Named after his father, he was known as Joseph Smith Jr. until his father's death in 1840. Thereafter, the Prophet was simply known as Joseph Smith. Also during 1805, Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific Ocean.

The Smith family moved back to Tunbridge in 1807, the same year Thomas Jefferson signed the Embargo Act and Robert Fulton invented the steamboat.¹⁵

In 1808 the United States finally banned the importing of slaves from Africa and the Caribbean. On Sunday, March 13, Samuel Harrison Smith was born.¹⁶ On Thursday, December 22, Beethoven premiered his newly completed Fifth Symphony. Sometime before the end of the year, the Smith family moved to Royalton, Windsor County, Vermont.¹⁷

Ephraim Smith was born on Monday, March 13, 1810, in Royalton. He died a few days later on Saturday, March 24. He was the second child of Lucy Mack and Joseph Smith to die in infancy.¹⁸ Another son, William Smith, was born on Wednesday, March 13, 1811. The first steamboat to sail down the Mississippi River reached New Orleans that year.¹⁹

The Smith family left Vermont for the first time when they moved across the Connecticut River to Lebanon, Grafton County, New Hampshire in 1811. This move was some twenty miles away, beginning a process that would allow them to break free from their New England moorings.²⁰ At this time,

Joseph Smith Sr. had the first of seven religiously focused dreams. They continued over the next few years, revealing the spiritual struggles and challenges he was experiencing at the time.²¹

A typhoid epidemic spread through the Connecticut River Valley in 1812, killing at least 6,400 people during a five-month period.²² Also that year, U.S. president James Madison declared war against Britain.

On Wednesday, July 23, 1813, Catherine Smith was born at Lebanon.²³ Typhoid hit the Smith family. No one died, but Joseph Smith Jr. experienced severe pain even after the fever left him. Eventually, an infection settled in his leg.²⁴ Dr. Nathan Smith of Dartmouth Medical School, located near the Smith home in Lebanon, operated on Joseph using a unique procedure, thereby saving the seven-year-old's leg.²⁵

This episode provides an important insight into the Smith family dynamics. Joseph's parents each demonstrated different strengths during this crisis. Luck Mack, for example, was strong willed. Instead of amputating it (the standard procedure at the time), she demanded that doctors attempt to save the young boy's leg.²⁶ Nevertheless, before the doctors began to operate, Lucy Mack left the room, apparently unable to deal with the situation. Joseph Smith Sr. stepped in and remained in the room to hold his son during the painful procedure.²⁷ Both Joseph and Lucy Mack played a different but significant role in this medical crisis. After the procedure, Joseph went to stay with his uncle Jesse Smith in Salem, on the Atlantic coast of Massachusetts, in the hope that the fresh sea air would aid his recovery.²⁸ He gradually improved, but it took three years before he was able to walk without crutches.

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The British defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, and the War of 1812 ended in 1815. In mid-April of that year, Mount Tambora, a volcano in modern Indonesia, erupted and ejected some twelve cubic miles of gases and twenty-five cubic miles of debris into the atmosphere, blocking the sun and altering weather patterns across the globe for a long time afterward.

Making one final stand in New England, the family moved back across the Connecticut River and rented a farm in Norwich, Windsor County, Vermont. Don Carlos Smith was born at Norwich in 1816.²⁹

According to Richard L. Bushman, during the period between 1814 and 1816, the Smith family came closer to destitution than they would at any other point in their lives.³⁰ In the modern technological society in which we now live, a person can live a productive and fulfilling life without owning any land. But in the premodern agricultural world, farmland ownership was necessary for family survival. For most people, there were no other safety nets such as tax-sheltered annuities, social security, and life insurance. The family farm was often the sole economic resource to sustain parents entering into the last years of life. Additionally, the family farm provided children a head start when parents gave them a section of land to begin their married life. Therefore, without farmland, the Smith family's future appeared bleak.

The year 1816 later came to be known as the "year without a summer."³¹ Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith most likely did not know that the eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815 was the cause of the crop failure in the region. Lucy Mack recalled, "The first year our crops failed, and we bought our bread with the proceeds of the orchard and our own industry. The second year they failed again. In the ensuing

spring, Mr. Smith said that we would plant once more on this farm, and if he did not succeed better, we would go to New York.”³²

The Smiths had been in New England for five generations, but this final bad year forced them to leave.³³ Lucy Mack Smith recalled, “This was enough. My husband was altogether decided upon going to New York.”³⁴ The reasons for their departure to western New York seemed clear: “For over a decade, weather, crop failures, creditors, illness, and business failures had battered the Smith household economy.”³⁵ It was time to start over—a new beginning, and New York seemed the best place to do so.

Other Smith family members had already separated themselves from their New England roots by moving to New York, and as a result, the safety net of family and friends was already unraveling in Vermont.

Theologically, Latter-day Saints would not necessarily argue that God caused Mount Tambora to erupt. However, God may have used the natural consequences of the catastrophic event to bring about his divine purposes, in this case, to bring the Smith family to western New York.

New York

Joseph Smith Sr. left Vermont in the summer of 1816 for Palmyra, Ontario (modern Wayne County), New York. His family came later in the year. Joseph Smith Sr. decided not to follow his extended family to St. Lawrence on the northern edge of the state. His decision to relocate in western New York was providential.

The Lord had prepared western New York as a fertile field to bring about his divine purposes—the Restoration. Imagine a triangle consisting of three *p*'s. The first two *p*'s

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were the plates (Book of Mormon) and the printer (E. B. Grandin), which were in place by 1816. The final *p* was the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Lord brought the Smith family to western New York to complete the triangle.

At the same time, western New York was the location of a series of evangelical rivals, known today as the Second Great Awakening.³⁶ Identified as the “burned-over district” by historians because of the religious excitement that spread across the western New York landscape from 1816 through 1826.³⁷ These revivals sparked in young Joseph Smith a spiritual flame that could not be extinguished, leading him on a journey that lasted a lifetime.

One American historian noted, referring to the publication of the Book of Mormon and the organization of the Church at this time:

It appeared at precisely the right moment in American history—much earlier or later and the Church might not have taken hold. The Book of Mormon would probably not have been published in the eighteenth century, in that still largely oral world of folk beliefs prior to the great democratic revolution that underlay the religious tumult of the early republic. In the eighteenth century, Mormonism might have been too easily stifled and dismissed by the dominant enlightened gentry culture as just another enthusiastic folk superstition. Yet if Mormonism had emerged later, after the consolidation of authority and the spread of science in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, it might have had problems verifying its texts and revelations. But during the early decades of the nineteenth century, the time was ideally suited for the establishment of the new faith. The democratic revolution was at its height, all traditional authorities were in disarray, and visions and prophesying still had a powerful

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appeal for large numbers of people. A generation or so later, it might have been necessary for Smith and his followers to get some university professors to authenticate the characters on the golden plates. But Martin Harris's failure to get such "professional" and "scientific" verification in the 1820s did not matter. After all, ordinary plowmen had as much insight into such things as did college professors.³⁸

While the move to New York was providential, it was not without its challenges. Lucy Mack had to take care of various obligations, including the payment of several debts, before leading her family to join Joseph Smith Sr. some three hundred miles away. Additionally, Joseph Smith Jr., still recovering from his leg surgery, was forced to walk much of the way by an abusive driver who had been hired to take the family to New York. The family finally arrived in Palmyra. Lucy Mack recalled: "In a short time I arrived in Palmyra with a small portion of my effects, my babes, and two cents in money, but perfectly happy in the society of my family. The joy I felt in throwing myself and my children upon the care and affection of a tender husband and father doubly paid me for all I had suffered. The children surrounded their father, clinging to his neck, covering his face with tears and kisses that were heartily reciprocated by him."³⁹

The first years in New York were challenging, Joseph remembered that his father, "being in indigent circumstances [was] obliged to labor hard for the support of a large family, having nine children; and as it required the 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 merely instructed in reading and writing and the ground rules of arithmetic, which constituted my whole literary acquirements."⁴⁰

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Eventually, by 1819, Joseph Smith Sr., Alvin (his oldest son), and Hyrum (his next oldest), had earned enough money for a down payment on a hundred-acre farm near Palmyra in Farmington Township (known today as Manchester Township).⁴¹

From this period we have one of the earliest word pictures of Joseph Smith by someone outside the family. A Mrs. Palmer remembered: “My father loved young Joseph Smith and often hired him to work with his boys. I was about six years old when he first came to our home. I remember going into the field on an afternoon to play in the corn rows while my brothers worked. When evening came, I was too tired to walk home and cried because my brothers refused to carry me. Joseph lifted me to his shoulder, and with his arm thrown across my feet to steady me, and my arm about his neck, he carried me to our home.”⁴²

This account reveals something about the Smith family: they were day laborers, not farmers. This distinction is important in any effort to reconstruct the social and economic setting of Joseph Smith’s earliest years.

The Second Great Awakening

Many Americans found God during the Second Great Awakening. The series of revivals helped to create a uniquely modern religious western industrial nation in America. From about 1800, faith became more and more important in many people’s lives. Joseph noted that his parents “spared no pains in instructing me in the Christian religion.”⁴³ Contemporary illustrations and descriptions of camp meetings show that in many cases the events were large gatherings; people often assembled for long weekends to hear exhortations by circuit preachers. Naturally, these religious revivals were evangelical

in nature, attempting to convict people of their sins and then convince them that only through the grace of Jesus could they be saved. It is important to note that instead of being a single event, the Second Great Awakening consisted of a series of revivals spread over time and geographical space. The Smith family was inevitably drawn into this evangelical fervor during a series of revivals during this period in western New York.⁴⁴

Joseph's personal religious quest apparently began sometime around 1818, in the wake of the revivals of 1816 and 1817. He remembered:

At about the age of twelve years, my mind [had] become 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 [because of] 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 the sacred depository [of the Bible—] this was a grief to my Soul—thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart.”⁴⁵

A contemporary source highlights a camp meeting held in Palmyra in June 1818. Reverend Aurora Seager noted in his diary:

I received on the 18th of June, a letter from Brother [Billy] Hibbard, informing me that I had been received the [eastern] New York Conference, and, at my request, had been transferred to the Genesee Conference. On [Friday] the 19th [of June 1818] I attended a camp-meeting at Palmyra

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[nearly fourteen miles from Phelps]. The arrival of Bishop Roberts, who seems to be a man of God, and is apostolic in his appearance, gave a deeper interest to the meeting until it closed. On Monday [at the Palmyra camp meeting], the sacrament was administered, about twenty were baptized; forty united with the [Methodist] Church, and the meeting closed.⁴⁶

No one could have predicted how these revivals would have affected Joseph Smith Jr., including members of the Smith family themselves. Neither Joseph nor Lucy Mack had any premonitions about their son's religious future. Lucy recalled that Joseph was a "remarkably quiet" and "well disposed child." Still, he was "much less inclined to the perusal of books than" the other Smith children. However, Joseph recalled that he did read the scriptures, "believing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God."⁴⁷ He was, however, "given to meditation and deep study."⁴⁸

Fortunately, we have several brief accounts of this period. The best known is Joseph's official history, now found in the Pearl of Great Price (Joseph Smith—History). Using a traditional nineteenth-century narrative convention, Joseph conflated the events of 1816–26 when he provided this formal official history.⁴⁹ In this history, Joseph recalled that there was interdenominational strife among the various parties and sects, most likely referring to the 1816–17 and the 1824–26 revivals:⁵⁰

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 everybody converted,

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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. (Joseph Smith—History 1:6)

This account reveals that people of the day were serious about salvation, though they were divided about the best means of salvation, including the interpretation of key biblical passages. The general state of division reflected to a small degree what was happening in the Smith family itself.

Milton V. Backman, for example, found that seven towns within a twenty-mile radius of the Smith farm near Palmyra reported “‘unusual religious excitement’ and/or increase in church membership” between 1819 and 1820 and at least two others reported “prospects of revivals.”⁵¹

Young Joseph refrained from joining any church, although he attended several of them and was particularly inclined to the Methodist faith. Two acquaintances at the *Palmyra Register* recalled Joseph “catching the spark of Methodism in a camp meeting” and that he joined a probationary class of the Palmyra Methodist Church.⁵² Joseph himself claimed some desire to be united with the Methodists. His mother and several siblings eventually joined the Presbyterian Church.⁵³ His father had been involved in the local Universalist association in Tunbridge, Vermont, but in New York was not attached to any denomination. He was decidedly unchurched, though religiously inclined.⁵⁴ The young children struggled for religious identity. Joseph himself recalled, that he wanted to “get Religion too wanted to feel & shout like the Rest but could feel nothing.”⁵⁵

Joseph Smith added that his mind was often called up to “serious reflection and great uneasiness” (Joseph Smith—History 1:8). First and foremost, he worried about his personal salvation, and said, “My mind became exceedingly distressed for I became convicted of my sins. . . . And I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world. . . . Therefore I cried unto the Lord for mercy for there was none else to whom I could go and obtain mercy.”⁵⁶

At this time of religious uncertainty, the Smith family built a log home just north of Farmington (modern Manchester Township line) in Palmyra Township in 1819.⁵⁷ The family began clearing the land on their one-hundred-acre farm.

It is important to note that Joseph Smith had not attracted much notice between 1805 and 1819. He lived a rather simple life on the American frontier, an “obscure boy” as he recalled (Joseph Smith—History 1:23). However, in 1820, his world, and the religious world in which he lived, changed forever.

An Instrument in the Lord’s Hands

Just before his death, Joseph Smith said that he had been foreordained “to be one of the Instruments of setting up the Kingdom of Daniel, by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world—I once offered my life to the Missouri Mob as a sacrifice for my people—and here I am—it will not be by Sword or Gun that this Kingdom will roll on—the power of truth is such that—all nations will be under the necessity of obeying the Gospel.”⁵⁸

From 1820 until his death in 1844, Joseph Smith was engaged in this religious mission. However, despite all his accomplishments as part of the Restoration, the Prophet Joseph Smith was only an instrument in the Lord’s hands.

President Gordon B. Hinckley placed the Prophet's ministry in perspective for contemporary Latter-day Saints when he wrote: "I worship the God of heaven, who is my Eternal Father. I worship the Lord Jesus Christ, who is my Savior and Redeemer. I do not worship the Prophet Joseph Smith, but I reverence and love this great seer through whom the miracle of this gospel has been restored. I am now growing old, and I know that in the natural course of events, before many years, I will step across the threshold to stand before my Maker and my Lord and give an accounting of my life. And I hope that I shall have the opportunity of embracing the Prophet Joseph Smith and of thanking him and of speaking of my love for him."⁵⁹

When we reflect on the Prophet Joseph Smith's humble beginnings in Vermont and his journey to the Sacred Grove in New York, we are filled with love and appreciation for the one "blessed to open the last dispensation," and we rejoice that "Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer."⁶⁰

Notes

1. See Hyrum Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999); and Mark L. McConkie, *Remembering Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003).

2. See Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 3.

3. Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 380–81.

4. Andrus and Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet*, 191–92.

5. For more on the immediate context of Joseph Smith's life in the United States, see Chad M. Orton and William W. Slaughter, *Joseph Smith's America: His Life and Times* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005).

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6. For a survey history of how these various issues played out in the early nineteenth-century United States, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

7. Lucy Mack Smith, *The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), xxxvii; and Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 67–68.

8. See, for example, Joseph Smith's 1832 history; *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 9–20.

9. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 42.

10. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 51–53.

11. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 45; and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, “The Church on the Early 19th-Century Frontier,” in *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, ed. S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 6–7.

12. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 53.

13. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 62.

14. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 62.

15. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 62.

16. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 62; for an overview of Samuel Harrison Smith's life see Kyle R. Walker, ed., *United by Faith: The Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2005), 204–307.

17. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 62.

18. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 62.

19. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 62; for an overview of William B. Smith's life, see Walker, *United by Faith*, 247–307.

20. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 64.

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21. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 63–64.
22. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 20.
23. Walker, *United by Faith*, 308–52.
24. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 69–76.
25. LeRoy S. Wirthlin, “Joseph Smith’s Boyhood Operation: An 1813 Surgical Success,” *BYU Studies* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 131–54.
26. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 73–74.
27. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 75; see also Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 21–22.
28. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 76; for an overview of Don Carlos Smith’s life, see Walker, *United by Faith*, 354–97.
29. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 76.
30. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 27–29.
31. See Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 30–31; and John D. Post, *The Last Great Subsistence Crisis in the Western World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 1–27.
32. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 81.
33. For more information on the history of the Smith family, refer to Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s New England Heritage* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and BYU Press, 2003).
34. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 81–82.
35. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 28.
36. See Milton V. Backman, “Awakenings in the Burned-over District: New Light on the Historical Setting of the First Vision,” *BYU Studies* 9, no. 3 (1969): 301–15.
37. See Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800–1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950).
38. Gordon S. Wood, “Evangelical America and Early Mormonism,” in Dean L. May and Reid L. Neilson, *The Mormon History Association Tanner Lectures: The First Twenty Years* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 22.

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39. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 84–86.
40. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 10; spelling, punctuation, and grammar modernized.
41. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 86.
42. Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet*, 1.
43. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 10; spelling, punctuation, and grammar modernized.
44. For an overview of the religious culture during this period, see Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); and Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). For statistical analyses of church growth during this period, see Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005); and Edwin Gaustad and Philip Barlow, *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
45. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 10; spelling, punctuation, and grammar modernized.
46. E. Latimer, *Three Brothers: Sketches of the Lives of Rev. Aurora Seager, Rev. Micah Seager, Rev. Schuyler Seager, D.D.* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1880), 12.
47. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 10.
48. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 111.
49. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 226–39.
50. D. Michael Quinn has persuasively argued this point elsewhere (“Joseph Smith’s Experience at a Methodist ‘Camp-Meeting’ in 1820,” Expanded Version [Definitive], *Dialogue Paperless* 3 [December 2006]: 1–110, available online at <http://www.dialoguejournal.com/excerpts/e3.pdf>).
51. Backman, “Awakenings in the Burned-over District,” 312–13.

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52. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Circumstantial Confirmation of the First Vision Through Reminiscences," *BYU Studies* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1969): 379–84.

53. See *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 229.

54. Asael Smith, Joseph Smith's grandfather, organized a Universalist society in Tunbridge, Vermont, in 1797, with Joseph Smith Sr. listed among the sixteen members. His oldest sons reportedly attended meetings with him. See LaMar C. Berrett and others, eds., *Sacred Places*, vol. 1: *New England and Eastern Canada* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999), 1:121–22.

55. Alexander Neibaur Journal, May 24, 1844, in *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Volume 1, Autobiographical and Historical Writings*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 461.

56. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 11; spelling modernized.

57. Researchers recently discovered court evidence showing Joseph as a credible witness in a legal case (evidence that the Smith family was living in Palmyra in 1819). See "A Chronology of the Life of Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 4 (2007): 7.

58. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 367.

59. Gordon B. Hinckley, "As One Who Loves the Prophet," in *The Prophet and His Work: Essays from General Authorities on Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 13.

60. W. W. Phelps, "Praise to the Man," *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 27.