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## The First Vision/"Fourteen is Young"

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## The First Vision



The early 1800s brought great religious excitement to upstate New York. Joseph Smith, Jr. was confused by the claims of the various ministers of religion. He earnestly studied the Bible to find the truth, but was unable to conclude who was right and who was wrong. Recognizing his lack of wisdom, he decided to ask God which of all the churches he should join. He was fourteen years old when he went into the woods near his father's farm to pray.

The most well-known account of his prayer and the ensuing vision is found in Joseph Smith—History 1:14–20. Other versions give additional details. Of particular interest is Joseph's 1835 recital of the first vision to a visitor in Kirtland. Warren Cowdery recorded that Joseph related the following:

After I had retired to 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 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 sprang up on my feet and looked around, but saw no person or thing that was calculated to produce the noise of walking. I kneeled down again. Immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame 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 which I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an 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, and I was filled with the spirit of God.<sup>10</sup>

Joseph learned that God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ are two distinct personages with glorified bodies, that we are literally created in the image of God, and that He will answer the sincere prayers of those who ask in faith.

## Fourteen Is Young

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Fourteen is young  
to yearn for wisdom,  
to study, ponder,  
and ask for answers  
that will change a world.  
But early in greening grove  
of a Palmyra spring,  
youthful limbs  
in outgrown homespun  
bend among fresh ferns  
unfolding on the forest floor.  
A voice speaks fervently,  
*Father.*

Evil, slithering  
through confusion  
of decaying leaves,  
strikes suddenly,  
binds the tongue,  
strangles the inquiry—  
*Which one... ?*  
Struggling against  
impending doom,  
the sinking supplicant  
prays more earnestly,  
*Father!*

Eternity opens.  
Descending light  
dispels the gloom.  
Believing eyes behold  
both the Father  
and the Son.

Fourteen is young  
to disturb the powers  
of darkness,  
to learn who God is,  
who we are, and  
what we may become.

*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 (JS—H 1:13).*