

Anti-Anti-Mormons

The End of Modern Microfilm Company May Only Be the Beginning

Over twenty years ago we began publishing material relating to the Mormon Church. During this period we brought forth many important documents which were suppressed by the Mormon Church leaders. As early as 1968 Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, who later served as editor of *Christianity Today*, commented concerning our work:

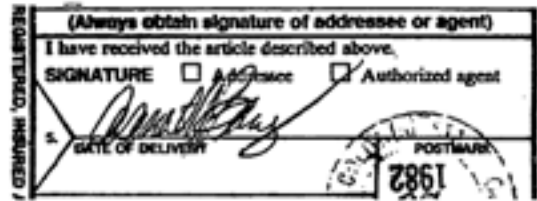
... These books represent no ordinary polemic against Mormonism. This is the definitive, fully-documented, utterly devastating case against the divine authority and truthfulness of the foundational documents upon which the Mormon religion is based. Every evangelical pastor should have these books in his library . . . (*Evangelical Beacon*, Minneapolis, Minn., vol. 42, no. 1, October 8, 1968, page 7)

Since our work is entirely related to religion, we should have set up a non-profit corporation. Instead of this, however, we began operations as Modern Microfilm Company. We continued the work under this name until the end of 1982, when Modern Microfilm went out of business. On January 1, 1983, we began operations as a non-profit corporation—UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY, INC.

There are a number of reasons for setting up this non-profit organization: 1. It will provide more finances which should greatly increase the effectiveness and outreach of the work. 2. It will give our supporters a chance to make tax-deductible donations. 3. It will help us to counteract the anti-Tanner movement—a growing attempt to derail our work which is being carried on to some extent by clandestine operations. 4. It will help us in our endeavor to provide support for Rescue Mission work. We have been interested in this work for many years, and at the present time our organization is able to provide 20 hours a week to this important ministry. We hope to increase this many times in the future. (Rescue Missions preach the Gospel to the unfortunate, the alcoholic and the drug addict. They are also involved with feeding, clothing and sleeping the poor.)

We have been approved by the State of Utah as a non-profit corporation and are awaiting final clearance from the Federal Government. Assuming that this is approved,

Asenath Barry



A comparison of two signatures supposed to have been penned by "Asenath Barry." The one below is found on a return slip for "Restricted Delivery" mail. The reader will notice that there is no resemblance between the two. This was part of a plot to discredit the Tanners.

all gifts given any time in 1983 will be tax-deductible. We are very optimistic that our application will be accepted. A lawyer who looked at the papers we prepared felt that there would probably be no major problem. If the Government has not made a determination within 270 days from the date we filed our application, we can ask for a "declaratory judgment." Because our papers were filed in December 1982, we should have a ruling before the end of the year, and, as we indicated before, if we pass, any gifts given since the time we began operation will be tax-deductible. Our readers should be sure, however, that all checks are made out directly to Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

Since we are helping thousands of Mormons to come to a knowledge of the truth, we feel that our ministry is worthy of support. We hope, in fact, that many will support it on a regular monthly basis.

THE ANTI-TANNER MOVEMENT

During the time we operated as Modern Microfilm Company, we published our most important work, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* This book was later condensed and published by Moody Press under the title, *The Changing World of Mormonism*. As sales on these two books have continued to mount to over 50,000 copies, some members of the Church have become very concerned that the Church itself has not published a rebuttal. They fear that we are going to win the battle by default.

Extra Copies Sent Free Upon Request

Many people are leaving the Church, and others are beginning to wonder if the Church has any real answers to the serious charges we have printed. The Mormon leaders seem to feel that it is best to ignore our accusations. As a spokesman for the Church's Deseret Bookstore wrote: "We do not have a specific written response to the Tanner book. Perhaps it does not deserve the dignity of a response" (Letter written January 19, 1977). In an article written in *Utah Holiday*, February 1978, David Merrill stated: "The official attitude of the Mormon hierarchy toward the Tanners has been **one of silence** and apparent unconcern. They have, however, **actively discouraged LDS scholars and intellectuals from jousting with the Tanners . . .**"

In 1982 Sandra Tanner appeared with Marvin Cowan on the John Ankerberg Show—a television show which is broadcast on the CBN and PTL networks as well as on other stations in different parts of the country. The series of four programs brought many complaints from Mormons throughout the United States. The Church's public relations representative in Tennessee asked for equal time. The main public relations department in Salt Lake City, however, would not send out anyone to debate the issues—they only offered a pre-taped LDS presentation. (Ankerberg had offered to pay airfare and hotel costs for anyone they would send.) The local public relations man tried very hard to get someone to come. He contacted a professor at the Church's Brigham Young University who agreed to come and bring another professor with him. Sandra Tanner and Wesley P. Walters consented to meet these two professors. The debate was scheduled for filming on April 19, but the professor later called back to say that he had just remembered that he had a trip to Europe scheduled for that date. No future date was offered, and thus it appears that the great debate is off.

On September 17, 1982, Sandra and Dick Baer were interviewed by Mary Jane Pop for her television show on Channel 3 in Sacramento, California. A Mormon public relations representative and other Mormons were able to see a video tape of the show, and so much pressure was exerted that the station decided not to run the program. The television program was completely suppressed in spite of the fact that Mary Jane Pop had previously announced it on her radio program.

We understand that at one time the Church set up a committee to evaluate our research, but that President Spencer W. Kimball ordered the project discontinued. It seems, however, that there are a growing number of Mormons who feel they know more than the man they claim to accept as a "Prophet." They believe they have the ability to answer the objections and vindicate the Church. The first scholar who attempted to write a rebuttal to our

work ended up losing his faith and was excommunicated from the Church. In December 1977 another prominent Mormon scholar put out a rebuttal which was published anonymously. The whole project, however, turned into a nightmare for him when we discovered his identity. At first he strongly denied any connection with the booklet, but when more evidence was marshaled against him, he said he would "neither affirm nor deny" authorship of the pamphlet. The whole incident turned out to be very embarrassing to the Mormon Church, and the pamphlet fell into disrepute after we wrote a rebuttal entitled, *Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian*.

Robert L. and Rosemary Brown were the first to put their names to anything that could be called a rebuttal. Although they dealt mainly with Dee Jay Nelson in *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, they claimed that "Jerald and Sandra Tanner . . . will be dealt with in depth in a future book; . . ." Because the Browns seem to be ungrounded in the critical issues of Mormonism and attack people rather than deal with the real issues, some Church scholars feel that they are going to cause the Church embarrassment if they continue to publish (see our answer to their book in *Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith?*).

According to the *Arizona Republic*, July 3, 1982, the Browns and others "have formed the Religious Research Association with the purpose of identifying and publicizing what they believe are false ideas, misconceptions and outright lies about the church.

The association, which disavows any official connection with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, examines the credentials, statements and literature of various anti-Mormon groups and individuals with the intent of making these findings public through the media.

The same paper informs us that the Religious Research Association is a "Non-profit organization." Robert L. Brown is "president" and Dr. Hugh Nibley (one of the best known Mormon scholars) serves on the board. While Mr. Brown is anxious to discredit "anti-Mormon groups," he says that his organization will "not get into doctrinal debates." We feel that this is a smoke screen to keep from facing the real issues. In *Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith* we pointed out that Mr. Brown would not debate the authenticity of the Book of Abraham with us, although he was willing to debate Dee Jay Nelson's credentials. We feel that this is an attempt to side-step the real issues. In any case, it would appear that Mr. Brown is doing his best to find some type of scandalous material about his adversaries. He has even been in contact with the notorious Mormon spy Steven Mayfield. The reader will remember that Mr. Mayfield was at one time "employed

by the FBI in a clerical capacity.” On October 11, 1976, he sent us a letter from California in which he assumed the alias “Stan Fields.” He claimed to be a fellow “Ex-Mormon for Jesus.” Mr. Mayfield not only assumed an alias, but he opened up a post office box in Pleasant Hill, California (P.O. Box 23114) to carry on his deception. He later moved to Utah, and under the same alias, carried on an extensive spying operation through the mail and through personal contacts. (It is a common practice, of course, for those who are engaged in spying operations to cover their tracks by assuming an alias and renting a post office box.) In any case, Mr. “Fields,” who professed to be our Christian brother, spied on our operations for about four years and also penetrated a number of groups of Ex-Mormons For Jesus. By dishonest means he obtained the names of many Mormons who have questions about their religion. He diligently worked to obtain photographs of critics of the Mormon Church and gathered large files of information.

In his zeal to provide a good cover for himself, Mr. “Fields” went so far as to claim that his own Church was “Satan inspired” (Letter dated July 22, 1978), and even pretended to pass out material critical of the Church around Temple Square. (He claims now that he actually destroyed most of this material.) Mr. “Fields” nefarious career, however, came to a sudden end in July, 1980, when we discovered his true identity. We also found that he was employed at the Mormon Church Office Building in the Genealogical Department. When we directly confronted him in the Church Office Building with the evidence of his spying activities, he made no attempt to deny the basic charges. Although he claimed that he “was not spying for the Church,” he acknowledged he had used Church equipment to carry out his duplicity. (For a complete account of this matter see our publication *Unmasking a Mormon Spy. The Story of Stan Fields.*)

Although Mr. Mayfield remained out of the public eye for some time, in 1982 he attended meetings of the Mormon History Association. On May 6, 1982, Mayfield appeared on the KBBX radio program *Mormon Miscellaneous* and told of his contacts with Robert Brown:

. . . its been my hope to organize us in some way as kind of a counter to say ex-Mormons, . . . I guess we have to go on the same policy as they go on . . . that we all have to be independent . . . I’ve been in contact with a couple down in the Phoenix, Arizona area called the Browns—Robert and Rosemary Brown. Well, I don’t approve of everything they do, but I have been in contact with them. . . . maybe someday we can be as productive as the ex-Mormons’ group . . .

Mr. Mayfield went on to say that Robert Brown “contacted me after my leaving Utah in March of 1981, in fact, I think it was probably April.” When Mayfield was asked if he was still in contact with Robert Brown, he replied: “That’s what I said.”

Although Mr. Mayfield admitted that he has been secretly tape-recording some telephone conversations since “mid-April of this year (1982)” (Letter dated May 9, 1982), he insists that he has not been engaged in any illegal activities. In our book *Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith*, pages 20-21, we printed some evidence which shows that some of the information in the Browns’ book was obtained by the recording of telephone conversations without permission. In his radio interview, Steven Mayfield defended the Browns’ right to secretly record telephone conversations. However this may be, we cannot really blame Mr. Brown for seeking out Mr. Mayfield. Most reporters would have probably done the same thing. After all, if there is anything of bad report about critics of the Church, Mr. Mayfield is probably the man who knows about it.

A NEW SPYING OPERATION

While one would think that the exposure of Mr. Mayfield’s activities would completely discourage Mormons from entering into spying activities, recent developments prove just the opposite to be the case. In fact, in 1982 we discovered that there were a number of people using an alias who were trying to destroy our work. For instance, a spying operation involving two post office boxes was set up in Sacramento, California. Valerie Kuhn, a resident of that city, appears to be deeply involved in this operation. Valerie became very angry at us because of the number of people who have left the Mormon Church after reading our books. She was also extremely upset with Walter Martin, who has a radio program which is broadcast in Sacramento. She felt that the Church should answer our accusations and was puzzled as to why there was no official response. When the Browns made their discovery about Dee Jay Nelson’s credentials (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, April 1980), Valerie was elated. We do not know when she first made contact with the Browns, but we have definite proof that she spoke with them on December 4, 1981, (Robert Brown was in Sacramento about that time for a debate with Walter Martin). In any case, the Browns confided in her and told her they were gathering a great deal of material on Walter Martin. In fact, they shared with her some of their most important information. Valerie apparently wanted to help the cause and decided to obtain information which would discredit the Tanners, Walter Martin and the three researchers who worked on the Spalding theory. Although we have

no evidence that the Browns directed Valerie Kuhn's subsequent activities, it seems rather obvious that she was gathering material for some kind of a rebuttal. On May 18, 1982, Valerie sent us a letter in which she asked leading questions about our exposure of Dee Jay Nelson and also concerning Walter Martin's relationship with the three Spalding researchers. Since the Browns were working on these same things, we suspected that Valerie might be helping them. In our response to her letter, we indicated that we felt there might be a relationship between her and the Browns and asked if she could provide a tape-recording of the debate between Robert Brown and Walter Martin which took place in her city. There was no response to this letter, but on June 22, 1982, we received a letter written by "Asenath Barry." It was also mailed from Sacramento and was similar to the letter we had received from Valerie. For instance, Valerie's letter stated: "I have read with great fascination *Did Spaulding Really Write the Book of Mormon*. I think you have done an outstanding job . . ." Asenath Barry's letter opened with this statement: "I have been reading your book *Did Spaulding Really Write the Book of Mormon* and have enjoyed it very much."

The letter from Asenath Barry also dealt with Walter Martin and the three Spalding researchers. It drew all kinds of strange inferences. For instance, it suggested that we met with Martin before he made his statements about the Spalding matter and gave him "just enough rope to hang himself!" It was plain to us that this letter was written by someone who was trying to obtain information for a rebuttal.

The name "Asenath Barry" also seemed very strange. The name "Asenath" comes from Genesis 41:45 and is the name of Joseph's wife. It is also found in Walter Martin's discussion of blacks and the priesthood (see *The Maze of Mormonism*, page 188). Although we know of one Mormon who had this name, it must be rather rare. In any case, since the letter came from a post office box (Box 20668) we began to suspect someone was pulling the same type of thing that Steven Mayfield did. When we looked at the zip code, we became even more suspicious; it was exactly the same as Valerie Kuhn's zip code (95820). Valerie Kuhn's address is given as 4719 Baker Avenue. Since Sacramento has over 60 zip codes, we found this to be an unusual coincidence.

Asenath Barry's letter asked for a number of photocopies which would be important for someone writing a book dealing with the Spalding controversy. We did not believe that "Asenath Barry" was a real person, and therefore we decided to test the matter by sending the photocopies "RESTRICTED DELIVERY." Under this method only the "Addressee" or an "Authorized agent"

is allowed to sign for the mail. When we received the signed slip back from the Sacramento Post Office, we were startled at the dissimilarity between the signature that appeared on it and the one on the letter we had received. On the first page the reader will find a comparison of the two signatures. We called the Salt Lake City Post Office and informed them that the two signatures for "Asenath Barry" were entirely different. We were told that if the name were forged, it would be a violation of Federal mail laws and that an investigation would be made if we turned the documents over to the San Francisco Post Office. Since we were more interested in finding out the truth about the matter than getting the perpetrators of the deed into trouble, we decided not to ask for an investigation. We were able to learn, however, that the Post Office Box had been rented by "Valerie L. Kuhn." Three names were listed to receive mail at the box: Barry, Nixon and Kuhn. A publication entitled, "Foolsgold & Quicksand" was also mentioned in connection with this box. We do not know whether this is an actual publication or part of a cover for getting the box. We also do not know whether "Nixon" is a real name or just another alias. The signature which appears on the "RESTRICTED DELIVERY" slip differs from both the signature on the "Asenath Barry" letter and the signature of Valerie Kuhn. To complicate the matter further, two of the signatures we have on letters purporting to be from Valerie Kuhn appear to have some dissimilarities. We do not know, however, whether the differences are striking enough to demand two separate writers. In any case, it is evident that the person who signed for the package addressed to "Asenath Barry" was not the same person who wrote the letter. The signature is clearly a forgery. It would appear from this that two or more people were involved in this scheme.

Our research on this matter led us to reexamine another letter we had received from Sacramento in 1982. It was written by a woman who claimed to be on our side. In this letter we find the following:

I am having a rather heated discussion with two Mormon friends of mine regarding Dee Jay Nelson. Can you help me out with some information:

According to my friends, Dee Jay Nelson has been proved to be a phony—he bought his so-called degrees from a fictitious college in Washington state. Is that true? When did you first become aware that he was a fraud? What were the exact circumstances of your discovery? Exactly when did you find all this out?

It is almost impossible to talk to a Mormon about Jesus, especially when they keep throwing questions like these at you! They love to divide and conquer, as it were. . . . They keep playing one group against another to ruin each others credibility!

The letter was signed, “S. Leone Todd,” and the return address was listed as “P.O. Box 2186.” In our research concerning Valerie Kuhn we learned that her middle name was also “LEONA.” While this appeared to be very suspicious, the fact that Valerie Leone Kuhn’s typewriter had the same peculiarities as S. Leone Todd’s led us to conclude that they were the same person. We later learned that Valerie Kuhn’s name was also listed to receive mail at “P.O. Box 2186.”

THE TOP SECRET TANNER PROJECT

In a letter dated August 3, 1981, “Elder Michael Griffith” wrote a promising young scholar a letter in which he stated:

_____ gave me your address, so I thought I’d drop you a brief line and inquire about the possibility of you contributing to a work designed to rebut Mormonism—S or R?

As _____ may or may not have passed on to you, there is a group of “us” who feel that M—SR? has for far too long gone unanswered. Oh, there was the brief analysis of ‘77’, but that treatment, as well done and telling as it is, is far too incomplete. Something more is needed.

My question is simply this: Would you be interested in writing a chapter for the response to M—SR?

_____ tells me that your speciality is the Book of Abraham and that you are in the process of doing a report on the subject, i.e. you are doing a report on the Tanners distorted approach to the Book of Abraham. Please let me know if you would be interested on this long over-due project.

In the September-October 1981 issue of *The Sunstone Review* the following advertisement appeared:

FOR SOME time there has been concern about the impact of Sandra and Jerald Tanner’s *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality* (and its recent Moody Press version, *The Changing World of Mormonism*). No thorough, formal, direct response has been published, though a number of articles have been written dealing with specific aspects of their criticism. A project is now being organized to formulate an answer to the Tanners and to other prominent critics of Mormonism, such as Walter Martin and Wesley Walters. Anyone interested in contributing to this effort should outline his or her speciality and send the information to: The Tanner Project, P.O. Box 191, Calabasas, Cal. 91302-0191.

The reader will notice that only a number for a P.O. Box was given for “The Tanner Project.” Like the anonymous rebuttal, this move to destroy our work has been carried on with great secrecy. In fact, the “Elder”

whose letter was cited above denied all connection with the project when we confronted him about the matter. The evidence seems to show that he was deeply involved. In any case, at first we could not learn from the Post Office who had rented the box, but we were told that a “pen name” was apparently being used. Shortly after the ad appeared in *The Sunstone Review*, we were told that a man by the name of Scott S. Smith was involved. Mr. Smith lives in Thousand Oaks, California, which seems to be within 10 miles of Calabasas where the P.O. Box was set up. Scott Smith is also involved in publishing. In fact, in the same issue of *The Sunstone Review* which mentions “The Tanner Project” we find the following advertisement:

ANIMALS AND THE GOSPEL. By Gerald Jones and Scott Smith. \$2.00 at LDS bookstores or postpaid from Millennial Productions, 2455 Calle Roble, Thousand Oaks, Calif. 91360.

The address given for Millennial Productions is the same one that appears on Scott Smith’s stationary.

That Scott Smith has been opposed to our work is evident from a letter which is found in the Reader’s Forum of *Sunstone*, November/December 1980, page 3: “. . . the best critiques of Book of Mormon archaeology, by Frazer and the Tanners, are **laughingstocks** scientifically.” At any rate, sometime during 1982 we were told that Scott S. Smith was using the alias “Stephen Scott” to carry on his activities. This was very interesting to us because someone else had sent us a letter written by “Steven Scott” who was representing “The Tanner Project.” This letter spoke of our work on Book of Mormon archeology as follows: “To a professional knowledgeable about both this field and the Book of Mormon this chapter is **a laugh**” (Letter dated April 9, [1982]). This, of course, reminded us of Scott S. Smith’s statement that the works of “Frazer and Tanner” on Book of Mormon archeology “are **laughingstocks scientifically**.”

Later we were able to compare the signatures of “Steven Scott” and Scott S. Smith and concluded that they were written by the same person. The typewriter used by “Steven Scott” also appears to be the same as that used by Scott Smith. The only conclusion we could draw from all this was that Scott Smith was using the alias “Steven Scott.” When we told a man who had previously corresponded with Scott Smith that we believed Smith was using an alias, he decided to do some investigating on his own. He called Smith and told him of our accusation. Smith probably realized that we were gathering evidence against him and he did not try to deny the charge. In a letter reporting the conversation we find the following:

This night (Aug. 1, 1982) I personally talked to Scott Smith on the telephone about the Tanner project. . . . He says he was part of the first working group of people who started the project and opened the P.O. Box.

Smith told me he did not want to say who was the main coordinator of the project, but Kirk Vestal may have been the main motivator in the beginning. Smith says he knows Vestal has a lot of the material in his files. Smith says there are **about three dozen people who have access to the P.O. Box.** . . . He also said Griffith had some stuff but had not heard from him for some time. Smith was clear about one thing though, he said he personally did not have very much time to devote to the project, adding that many of the others like Sorenson didn't either and that it would be best if some young person headed the project like Vestal, Griffith, or perhaps Barber.

When asked if he used the name Steven Scott, he said: "I used the name, but so did others." . . . He says there is a lot of switching and harrowing of names, and admits to using other peoples' names. He says others have used his name. The reason for all this? To confuse the Tanners: He says they want to make the Tanners go off on wild goose chases trying to figure out who is who and who is doing what. Smith says the major reason for the name-switching is to keep the writers from being pestered by Anti-Mormons. I asked him if another reason could be because they feared the Mormon leaders could object, to which he replied that there was no reason to fear the leadership on this matter. (Letter dated August 1, 1982)

On August 19, 1982, we had a very interesting conversation with Scott Smith concerning "The Tanner Project." Mr. Smith confirmed the admissions he had made on August 1, 1982. He said that he used the alias "Steven Scott," and that this was not the only alias he had used during his lifetime. He went on to reveal that he had written an article published in *Seventh East Press* under the name Steven Scott (see the issue for February 7, 1982, page 2).

In the letter which Scott Smith wrote under the alias Steven Scott on April 9, 1982, he said that "Kirk Vestal . . . has taken over the editing of this project." Kirk Vestal and Arthur Wallace wrote the book, *The Firm Foundation of Mormonism* (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 368-69, for a few comments about this book). Scott Smith was apparently involved in the production of *The Firm Foundation of Mormonism*. In a letter dated September 30, Smith wrote: "We have been editing Vestal's book this week and guarantee you will be impressed. *Shadow or Reality* looks pretty weak in comparison. . . . This book is going to stun everyone." In another letter Smith told

of "a book I am assisting the writing of, which we hope to have out by the end of the year. You will find ample archaeological and scientific support for the B of M therein . . ." In the Acknowledgements on page iv of *The Firm Foundation of Mormonism*, we find the following: "Special thanks are also extended to Jennifer Garrison and Scott and Vicki Smith who typed and helped edit the manuscript in its various stages, . . ."

When *The Firm Foundation of Mormonism* finally appeared, it did not have the effect that Scott Smith had anticipated. Instead of running a favorable review, *The Sunstone Review*, March 1982, published a very critical assessment by the Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment. Scott Smith was incensed over the review, and, in a letter to the editor, April 1982, he referred to it as "essentially a hatchet job." Smith went on to say that "Ashment's attitude is exactly what critics want us to have and this will continue to give them the field with the resulting damage." Not satisfied with having just one letter critical of Ashment published in *The Sunstone Review*, Scott Smith, or one of his friends in "The Tanner Project," wrote a second letter under the assumed name of "Steven Scott" (*The Sunstone Review*, June 1982, page 33). The address is given as Calabasas, California, which is of course the city where the box for "The Tanner Project" is located. *Sunstone* magazine and *The Sunstone Review* have carried many letters from Scott Smith and other members of the Tanner Project. It has been suggested that Scott Smith may have used another alias in these publications. There is one name which we are very suspicious of, but we can only say at this time that a letter from this individual in behalf of the "Tanner Project" appears to have been written on the same typewriter as the letters from Scott Smith and "Steven Scott." There are also similarities in style. In any case, Scott Smith and members of the Tanner Project have really tried to use their influence in those publications. In one issue of *Sunstone*, (July-August 1981) there are eight letters in the Reader's Forum. Three of these letters are written by people who are now identified as participants in the Tanner Project, and slightly over half of the space in this issue is given to these individuals. In the issue for July-August 1980 (page 4), a letter from Scott Smith's wife, Vicki, appears with the address given as "Thousand Oaks, CA." In the same issue (page 2) we find a letter from "Scott S. Smith Calle Roble, California." Calle Roble, of course, is the street which Smith lives on, not the city. As we have already shown, Smith lives at 2455 Calle Roble in Thousand Oaks.

Since the Tanner Project seems to have been working on the same matters as Robert and Rosemary Brown, it has been speculated that the Browns may be involved. At the present time, we have no real evidence to prove that this is the case. We do know that Scott Smith, Michael Griffith and Kirk Vestal have all been in communication with the Browns at different times, but this does not prove that the Browns had anything to do with setting up the Tanner Project. Although he acknowledges contacts with the Browns, Scott Smith seems to feel that they are more interested in finding scandals than dealing with the real issues. We know that Michael Griffith had been in contact with the Browns, but they became disturbed with him when he told us they had secretly tape-recorded a telephone conversation with us (see a letter by Griffith cited in *Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith*, page 20). Kirk Vestal has probably spent the most time with the Browns. According to an undated letter we received in February 1981, Vestal had prepared a manuscript for the Browns' book, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*:

. . . There is a man in Mesa, Az. . . . His name is Robert L. Brown. He claims to know you and Jerold and is absolutely vicious in his denunciations of you and your work . . . he assured me that answers would shortly be forthcoming through the efforts of himself, his wife . . . and this young man Kirk Vestal. I never had an opportunity to examine any of the material he claimed he and Vestal were preparing to publish at that time, but I requested that he supply me with a copy of Vestal's "Approach to the Book of Abraham" which he said would comprise the last chapter of their joint publication. Bob refused to supply me a copy claiming he wanted to keep it under wraps until the book was published. . . .

About two weeks ago my brother called and said that another man he knew in Mesa, a Richard Finlenson . . . had Kirk Vestal as a house guest and if I would call Kirk would be glad to talk to me. I spent subsequently about 60 to 70 minutes on the Phone with Mr. Vestal . . . He told me that Mr. Finlenson had a copy of his Book of Abraham material and would be glad to send me a copy. I called back to the Finlenson home today and spoke with LaVonne [Lavon], Richard's wife. She apologized for not calling me back but explained that she had spoken with Bob Brown and had been instructed not to send me a copy of the material, that I could wait until the book he was working on was published to read it.

We were able to obtain a copy of Vestal's "Approaching the Book of Abraham" (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 368-69), but it was not published in the Browns' book, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*. They

did, however, highly recommend the book *The Firm Foundation of Mormonism* by Vestal and Wallace (see page 171). We understand that the Browns sent Vestal's manuscript to an Egyptologist for evaluation and that the Egyptologist recommended against publication. Scott Smith suggests that there was another reason why the Browns dropped Vestal's work from their book, but we will not go into that matter here. In any case, in a letter dated April 9, [1982], "Steven Scott" said that "Kirk Vestal" has "taken over the editing of this project. You can reach him by writing c/o Helen Schlie at Temple-view Books, 409 E. 1st Av, Mesa, AZ 85204." Since Robert Brown lives in Mesa, we suspected that the two probably were in contact with each other. It did not take us long to discover that an advertisement mentioning the Browns' book said it could be obtained at the "Mesa Temple View Book & Supply Inc." As it turns out, Helen Schlie was commended for "her encouragement" on page ii of the Browns' book. Scott Smith told us that Kirk Vestal had originally planned to go to Mesa and stay with the Browns, but by the time he arrived they no longer had the room. He worked for Mrs. Schlie for a time and then left for South America. Mr. Scott felt Vestal's trip to South America was probably financed by someone in Mesa. In any case, even if the Browns had nothing to do with setting up the Tanner Project, they seem to have had close contact with the man who may have been "the main motivator in the beginning." Since "Vestal has a lot of the material in his files," the Browns are probably in a good position to gain access to it.

According to Scott Smith, "The Tanner Project" is not going very well. He would like to see *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* or the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies pick up the ball. John L. Sorenson, Professor of Anthropology at Brigham Young University, has shown some interest in this matter. In a handwritten note, he remarked: "Some of us here are talking about holding a conference with **enough experts taking on the Tanners' garbage to blow them out of the water.**"

Now that we have exposed the dubious foundation of "The Tanner Project," we doubt that any respectable Mormon scholars will want to associate their names with it. The Tanner Project seems doomed to failure. Nevertheless, there is growing unrest among Mormon scholars who are not satisfied with the Church's silent treatment. They feel that something has to be done. Steven Mayfield's desire "to organize" is shared by many Mormons. Robert Brown's non-profit organization is certainly a move in that direction, and Professor Sorenson's threat of assembling

“enough experts” to blow “the Tanners’ garbage” out of the water may also be a sign of things to come in the future. The Mormon leaders, of course, are trying to prevent a confrontation because they know a discussion of the issues will hurt the Church. Apostle Marvin J. Ashton, for instance, pleaded with his people to ignore those who find fault with the Church:

Whether accusations, innuendos, aspersions, or falsehoods are whispered or blatantly shouted, the gospel of Jesus Christ reminds us that we are not to retaliate nor contend. . . . we declare there is no time for contention Probably we will never be free of those who are openly anti-Mormon. Therefore, we encourage **all our members to refuse to become anti-anti-Mormon.** (*The Ensign*, November 1982, page 63)

After telling of Apostle Ashton’s attempt to restrain people like the Browns from contending with the Church’s critics, Linda Ostler Strack comments that “it remains to be seen if the LDS membership can restrain themselves” (*The Sunstone Review*, November 1982, page S). In the same article she says that “LaMar C. Berrett, professor of Church history at BYU, has been appointed by those ‘he is not at liberty to disclose’ to coordinate research on a number of anti-Mormon issues. Berrett points out that their work is directed largely to the missionary and others who are confronted with questions for the first time and have no resources available to them.” Professor Berrett says, however, that those who are involved in the research are “not going to enter into any dialogue with anti-Mormon writers. The main purpose is to help the poor innocent person who has never been confronted by those things.” Berrett feels that the Church must deal with the issues even if it costs thousands of members:

. . . **The church must eventually answer these things** but we’re old and big enough now that the Church isn’t worried about a falling away. **If we have a few thousand fall away, we say “So what?”** It’s a weeding out of those who have faith in the Church and those who don’t. (*Ibid.*, page 4)

This is a very exciting time for us. After many years of laboring in the vineyard, we now see many Mormons turning to the Lord. There are thousands of ex-Mormons and concerned Christians who are working to bring the truth to the Mormon people. The best days of all appear to be ahead. We feel that prayer has been the real key to the success of God’s work among the Mormons, and we ask those who support our work to hold up Utah Lighthouse Ministry in prayer. We believe that God “is able to do

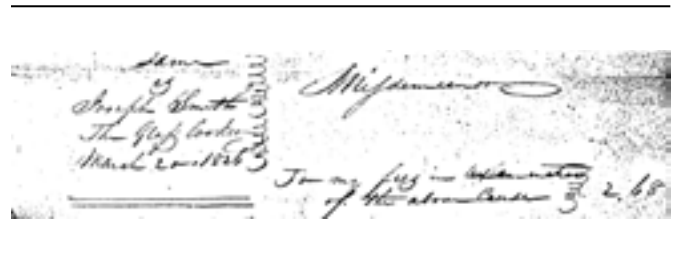
exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20).

NOTICE: We may be writing more concerning “The Tanner Project,” the Browns and those who use similar tactics. If you have any information or photocopies of letters or other documents which throw light on this subject please let us know by writing to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P.O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.

JOSEPH SMITH’S USE OF MAGIC CIRCLES AND ANIMAL SACRIFICE

As we indicated in the last newsletter, we are preparing a book entitled, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. Because of the amount of material that has become available on this subject and because of typesetting problems and the time we have spent forming our non-profit corporation, we have not yet finished it. If things work out as we hope, we should have it completed in about a month.

Among the many things we will be discussing in this book, we intend to deal with Joseph Smith’s use of magic practices in his money digging activities. Mormon apologists used to try to discredit testimony that Joseph Smith used a “seer stone” which he placed in his hat to try to discover buried treasures. In 1971, however, Wesley P. Walters discovered an original document which proves that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, N.Y., in 1826. This document is Justice Albert Neely’s bill showing the costs involved in several trials held in 1826. The fifth item from the top mentions the trial of “Joseph Smith The Glass Looker.” Below is a photograph of this portion of the document (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 33 for a photograph of the complete document).



The importance of this discovery cannot be overstated, for it establishes the historicity of the account of the trial which was first published in 1873. We quote the following from the court record:

STATE OF NEW YORK v. JOSEPH SMITH.

.....

Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826. Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel in Bainbridge . . . That he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowel several times, . . . at Palmyra he pretended to tell by looking at this stone where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and . . . had occasionally been in the habit of **looking through this stone** to find lost property for three years, . . . (*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 32)

Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, seems to have been willing to concede that magic was an "important interest" of her family. Wesley P. Walters quotes her admission in an article entitled, "From Occult to Cult With Joseph Smith, Jr.":

. . . it is quite clear that Joseph Smith surrounded his money digging activities with a religious atmosphere that flavored of the occult. . . . One such feature was the use of a circle marked off on the ground, a practice inherited from medieval magic and considered to aid the magician in his dealing with dangerous spirits. Joseph's use of such magic devices in his early years gave his mother concern in later life that the family not be thought of as having devoted their entire time to such occult matters. In the preliminary draft of her history of that early period (but omitted from the printed version) she wrote:

. . . let not the reader suppose that . . . we stopt our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac, **drawing magic circles**, or sooth saying, to the neglect of all kinds of business. We never during our lives suffered **one important interest** to swallow up every other obligation.

Thus it is quite clear from all sides that Joseph wove occult religious material into his money digging practices, and this led the communities where he dug for treasure to associate him with divination, necromancy, and wizardry. (*Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials*, Part 2, pages 126-127)

One of the most important parts of magic ritual is the drawing of circles to gain control over evil spirits. In magic books it is claimed that a circle drawn within a circle has great power. In *The Ancients Book of Magic*,

page 10, we learn that a person who wants to contact the spirits must draw a circle, and once

he enters into the circle with his books, wands, incense and all things he needs, he draws the outer circle about 3 inches away from the circle he has already drawn . . . The operator must remember not to leave this circle during the whole invocation until the closing words have been said, for as long as he remains in the circle, no matter how fierce the demons may be they cannot break through the walls of the circle, . . .

Joseph Capron tells how Joseph Smith used stakes to form a circle around the treasure:

The sapient Joseph discovered, north west of my house, a chest of gold watches; but, as they **were in possession of the evil spirit**, it required skill and stratagem to obtain them. Accordingly, orders were given to stick a parcel of large stakes in the ground, several rods around, in a **circular form**. This was to be done directly over the spot where the treasures were deposited. A messenger was then sent to Palmyra to procure a polished sword: after which, Samuel F. Lawrence, with a drawn sword in his hand, marched around to guard any assault which his Satanic majesty might be disposed to make. . . . But, in spite of their brave defender, Lawrence, and their bulwark of stakes, **the devil** came off victorious, and carried away the watches. (*Mormonism Unveiled*, pages 259-60)

William Stafford gave the following information in his affidavit:

Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me, that **Joseph Jr. had been looking in his glass**, and had seen, not many rods from his house, two or three keys of gold and silver, some feet under the surface of the earth; and that none others but the elder Joseph and myself could get them. I accordingly consented to go, . . . Joseph Sen. first **made a circle**, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. He then stuck in the ground a **row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits. Within this circle he made another**, of about eight or ten feet in diameter. He walked around three times on the periphery of this last circle, muttering to himself something which I could not understand. He next stuck a steel rod in the centre of the circles, and then enjoined profound silence upon us, lest we should **arouse the evil spirit** who had the charge of these treasures. After we had dug a trench about five feet in depth around the rod, the old man by signs and motions, asked leave of absence, and went to the house to inquire

of young Joseph the cause of our disappointment. He soon returned and said, that Joseph had remained all this time in the house, looking in his stone and watching **the motion of the evil spirit**—that he saw the spirit come up to the ring and as soon as it beheld the cone which we had formed around the rod, it caused the money to sink. (*Ibid.*, pages 238-239)

Animal sacrifices sometimes play an important role in magic ritual. In *The Greater Key of Solomon*, page 122, we find the following:

In many operations it is necessary to make some sort of **sacrifice unto the Demons**, and in various ways. . . . Such sacrifices consist of the blood and sometimes of the flesh.

There seems to be evidence that Joseph Smith participated in blood sacrifices in his money-digging operations. For instance, in his affidavit William Stafford related:

. . . Old Joseph and one of the boys came to me one day, and said that **Joseph Jr.** had discovered some very remarkable and valuable treasures, which could be procured only in one way. That way, was as follows:— That a **black sheep** should be taken on to the ground where the treasures were concealed—that **after cutting its throat, it should be led around a circle while bleeding**. This being done, the wrath of the evil spirit would be appeased: the treasures could then be obtained, . . . To gratify my curiosity, I let them have a large fat sheep. They afterwards informed me, that the sheep was killed pursuant to commandment; but as there was some mistake in the process, it did not have the desired effect. (*Ibid.*, page 239)

The reader will notice that it was a “black” sheep that was supposed to have been sacrificed. This is interesting because *The Greater Key of Solomon*, page 122, says that “Sometimes white animals are sacrificed to the good Spirits and black to the evil.” In any case, W. D. Purple, who attended Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial, related the following concerning another blood sacrifice:

Mr. Thompson, an employee of Mr. Stowell, was the next witness. . . . The following scene was described by this witness, and carefully noted: Smith had told the Deacon that very many years before a band of robbers

had buried on his flat a box of treasure, and as it was very valuable they had by a sacrifice placed a charm over it to protect it, so that it could not be obtained except by faith, accompanied by certain **talismanic** influences. . . . the fruitful mind of **Smith** was called on to devise a way to obtain the prize. Mr. Stowell went to his flock and selected a fine vigorous **lamb, and resolved to sacrifice it to the demon spirit** who guarded the coveted treasure. Shortly after the venerable Deacon might be seen on his knees at prayer near the pit, while Smith, with a lantern in one hand to dispel the midnight darkness might be seen **making a circuit around the spot, sprinkling the flowing blood from the lamb upon the ground, as a propitiation to the spirit** that thwarted them. They then descended the excavation, but the treasure still receded from their grasp, and it was never obtained. . . .

What a picture for the pencil of a Hogarth! . . . it was declared under oath, in a Court of Justice by one of the actors in the scene, and not disputed by his co-laborers . . . (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, by Francis W. Kirkham, 1959, vol. 2, pages 366-67)

Wesley P. Walters has discovered a letter written in 1842 by Joel King Noble, a justice of the peace who tried Joseph Smith in a trial held in Colesville, N.Y., in 1830. Justice Noble relates that when Joseph Smith and others were digging “for a chest of money,” they procured a black dog and offered it as “a sacrafise [blo]od Sprinkled prayer made at the time (no money obtained) the above Sworn to on trial . . .” (Letter by Justice Noble, dated March 8, 1842, photographically reproduced in *Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials*, Part 2, page 134).

In the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith condemned the practice of animal sacrifices after the death of Christ (3 Nephi 9:19), but he later wrote that “These **sacrifices**, . . . will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be **fully restored** and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 211). Wandle Mace, a devout Mormon, recorded this statement in his journal:

Joseph told them to go to Kirtland, and cleanse and purify a certain room in the Temple, that they **must kill a lamb and offer sacrifice** unto the Lord which should prepare them to ordain Willard Richards a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. (“Journal of Wandle Mace,” page 32, microfilmed copy at Brigham Young University)

MORMON RESEARCHER FINDS SMITHS' 1825 MONEY-DIGGING AGREEMENT

In *Lippincott's Magazine* we find this strange story about Joseph Smith's money-digging activities in Pennsylvania:

... On a wilderness hill ... his peek-stone discovered a ton of silver bars ... The third hole had been sunk fifteen out of the necessary twenty feet when the treasure once more jumped to the other side of the big hole. Then **the prophet had a vision: the blood of a black sheep must be shed and sprinkled around the diggings.** Black sheep were scarce, ... At Length, no sheep appearing, Joe said that a **black dog** might answer. A dog, therefore, **was killed, and the blood sprinkled on the ground.** After that the silver ... waltzed about the big hole in such a lively manner that frequent tunnelling to effect its capture availed nothing. At last the prophet decided that it was of no use to dig unless one of their number was made a sacrifice. None of the faithful responded to his call, and thus the magnificent scheme was abandoned. **Oliver Harper**, one of the diggers who furnished the money, **was soon afterward murdered.** The prophet thought this might answer for a sacrifice: he again rallied the diggers, but the charm remained stubborn and would not reveal the silver. (*Lippincott's Magazine*, 1880, pages, 199-200)

On April 23, 1880, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a very important document which shows that Joseph Smith was involved with Oliver Harper's widow in a money-digging agreement after Mr. Harper was murdered:

Ed. *Tribune*: Knowing how interested you are in any matter pertaining to the early history of our church, I enclose a slip cut from the *Susquehanna, P. Journal* of March 20, ...

Respectfully yours,
B. Wade

The following agreement, the original of which is in the possession of a citizen of Thompson township was discovered by our correspondent, and forwarded to us as a matter of local interest.

The existence of the "buried treasure" referred to was "revealed" to Joe Smith, Jr., who with his father the prophet, at that time resided on what is now known as the McCune Farm, ... upon the strength of which revelation a stock company was organized to dig for the aforesaid treasure. After the company was organized, a second communication was received by Joseph Jr., from the "other world" advising the seekers to suspend operations, as it was necessary for **one of the company to die** before the treasure could be secured.

Harper the peddler, who was murdered soon after, ... was one of the original members of the company, and

his death was regarded by the remainder of the band as a **Providential occurrence**, which the powers had brought about for their special benefit. The **death of Harper** having removed the only obstacle in the way of success, the surviving members, recommended operations, and signed an agreement giving **the widow Harper** the half of one-third of all the treasures secured. The following is the agreement, written by the old humbug, Joseph Smith, himself:

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

We, the undersigned, do firmly agree, and by these present bind ourselves, to fulfill and abide by the hereafter specified articles:

First: That if anything of value should be obtained at a certain place in Pennsylvania near a William Hales, supposed to be a valuable mine of either gold or silver and also to contain coined money and bars or ingots of gold or silver, and at which several hands have been at work during a considerable part of the past summer, we do agree to have it divided in the following manner, viz: Josiah Stowell, Calvin Stowell and Wm. Hale to take two-thirds, and Charles Newton, Wm. I. Wiley, and **the widow Harper** to take the other third. And we further agree that **Joseph Smith, Sen. and Joseph Smith Jr.** shall be considered as having two shares, two elevenths of all the property that may be obtained, and shares to be taken equally from each third.

Second: And we further agree, that in consideration of the expense and labor to which the following named persons have been at (Johs F. Shepherd, Elijah Stowell and John Grant) to consider them as equal sharers in the mine after all the coined money and bars or ingot are obtained by the undersigned. Their shares to be taken out from each share; and we further agree to remunerate all the three above named persons in a handsome manner for all their time, expense, and labor which they have been or may be at, until the mine is opened, if anything should be obtained; otherwise they are to lose their time, expense and labor.

Third: And we further agree that all the expense which has or may accrue until the mine is opened, shall be equally borne by the proprietors of each third and that after the mine is opened the expense shall be equally borne by each of the shares.

Township of Harmony, Pennsylvania, November 1, 1825 in presence of:

Isaac Hale	Joseph Smith Sen.
David Hale	Isaiah Stowell
P. Newton	Calvin Stowell
Charles A. Newton	Joseph Smith Jr.
Wm. I. Wiley	

(*The Daily Tribune*, Salt Lake City, April 23, 1880, as cited in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, pp. 492-494)

We recently heard that a Mormon researcher had discovered the original handwritten copy of this money digging agreement. We have confirmed this report and also learned that the person who found the document does not intend to keep it a secret. The details of this discovery, therefore, will probably be announced soon.

At any rate, the *History of Susquehanna County*, page 97, says that "Oliver Harper was murdered by Jason Treadwell, . . ." Wesley P. Walters, who has done original research into the murder of Harper, feels that Treadwell was originally part of the money-digging group. After the murder he stopped at Isaac Hale's house (Hale, of course, later became the father-in-law of Joseph Smith). During the trial Treadwell admitted involvement with money obtained by trading counterfeit coin. The *History*

of *Susquehanna County*, page 325, says that Treadwell was executed on January 13, 1826. This was only two months before "Joseph Smith The Glass looker" was tried before Justice Neely. We could probably overlook Joseph Smith's association with the occult during his youth if it were not for the fact that he later claimed that during this period he was being visited by the Angel Moroni who was preparing him for the translation of the Book of Mormon. In our new book, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, we present a great deal of evidence linking the Smiths to magic. Because this book has taken a great deal of time to prepare and is larger than anticipated, we are going to have to raise the price to \$3.00 a copy. However, all those who have ordered it already or place their orders before April 15, 1983, will receive it for ONLY \$2.00 A COPY.

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