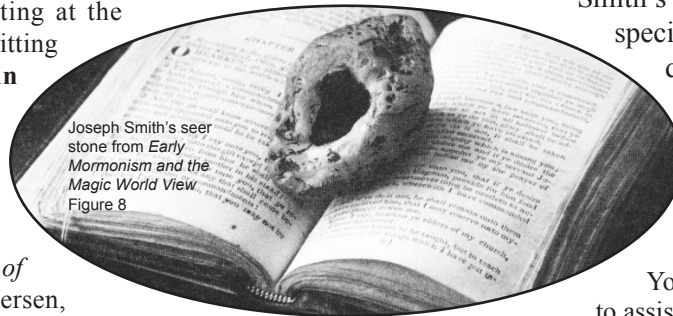


WAS JOSEPH SMITH A MAGICIAN?

How did Joseph Smith translate the supposed ancient record he found in the hill? The eye-witnesses to the translation process of the Book of Mormon seem to be describing a magical event. Joseph Smith would put a stone in his hat and then the “translation” of the plates would appear on the stone. Smith’s wife, Emma related:

“In writing for your father, I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close to him, he sitting with **his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it**, and dictating [the Book of Mormon] hour after hour with nothing between us.” (as quoted in *Creation of the Book of Mormon*, by LaMar Petersen, p. 25)



The Smith family’s involvement with the occult goes back a number of years before the Book of Mormon was “translated” and printed in 1830. Michael Marquardt and Wesley Walters relate the beginnings of the Smith’s magical practices:

When Joseph Smith recalled his money-digging activities for his official history, he wrote only about searching for a lost mine in 1825 for Josiah Stowell. But contemporary records suggest that this had been one of the Smith family occupations in the Palmyra/Manchester area **since the early 1820s**. For example, Joshua Stafford of Manchester recalled that he “became acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. about the year 1819 or 20. They then were laboring people, in low circumstances. A short time after this, they **commenced digging for hidden treasures**, . . . and told marvellous stories about ghosts, hob-goblins, caverns, and various other mysterious matters.” Willard Chase, another friend of the family, similarly recalled, “I became acquainted with the Smith family . . . in the year 1820. At that time they were engaged in the **money digging business**.” (*Inventing Mormonism*, Marquardt and Walters, p. 64)

As early as 1822 Joseph Smith was connected with the magic “seer stone” he found while digging a well for a Mr. Chase. Joseph and his father later joined with a group of men to search for buried treasures, aided by Smith’s stone. In 1825, after hearing of Smith’s powers, Josiah Stowell came to Palmyra to hire the Smiths to help him look for a silver mine in Pennsylvania.

Smith’s mother relates that Mr. Stowell specifically sought out Joseph Smith due to his special powers. Lucy Smith wrote:

A short time before the house was completed [1825], a man by the name of Josiah Stool came from Chenango county, New York, with the view of getting Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine.

He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed **certain means by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye**. (*Biographical Sketches*, Lucy Smith, pp. 91-92, as quoted in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1, p. 309)

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(See other FREE book offer - page 11)

This subject is further explored in LaMar Petersen's new book, *The Creation of the Book of Mormon*:

Lucy [Joseph Smith's mother] provided an even more revealing glimpse into the Smith family's involvement in magical abracadabra and other aspects of folk magic:

Let not the reader suppose that because I shall pursue another topic for a season that we stopt our labor and went at trying to **win the faculty of Abrac [,] drawing Magic circles or sooth saying [sic] to the neglect of all kinds of buisness** [.] We never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation but whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remmember [sic] the service of & the welfare of our souls.

As a young man Joseph Smith not only labored on his family's farm, but he also worked "in blessing crops, finding lost articles, predicting future events or prophesying, and using divine rods and seer stones."

One of the most detailed accounts of Joseph's use of a seer stone for purposes other than translation is recorded in a pre-trial examination by justice Albert Neely at Bainbridge, New York, in March 1826, where Joseph was charged with being a disorderly person and an imposter. . . . LDS Church writers were extremely reluctant to recognize its authenticity, as it seems that such examinations before a justice of the peace were not usually recorded. Also, the fact that it was published through the instrumentality of Episcopal Bishop Daniel S. Tuttle did not enhance its value. In 1961 Hugh W. Nibley, professor of history and religion at Brigham Young University, explained the seriousness of the alleged trial:

You knew its immense value as a weapon against Joseph Smith if its authenticity could be established. . . . If this court record is authentic, it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.

Another LDS researcher, Francis W. Kirkham, recognizing the disturbing implications of the report, said:

If any evidence had been in existence that Joseph Smith had used a **seer stone** for fraud and deception, and especially had he made this confession in a court of law as early as **1826**, or four years before the Book of Mormon was printed, and this confession was in a court record, it would have been impossible for him to have organized the restored Church. . . .

The first part and conclusion of the alleged court record published by Bishop Tuttle is here reproduced, which indicates that young Joseph admitted to using his seer stone to search for lost property, buried coins, hidden treasures, and gold mines:

People of State of New York vs. Joseph Smith. Warrant issued upon oath of Peter G. Bridgman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a **disorderly person and an imposter**. Prisoner brought into court March 20 (1826). **Prisoner examined.** Says that he came from town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowell in Bainbridge most of time since; had small part of time been employed in looking for mines, but the major part had been employed by said Stowell on his farm, and going to school; that he had **a certain stone**, which he had occasionally looked at to

We Were Wrong!

About forty years ago we (Jerald and Sandra Tanner) became acquainted with LaMar Petersen. Mr. Petersen, raised in a devout LDS home, had been studying Mormonism for many years before we came on the scene, and had written a very important pamphlet entitled, *Problems in Mormon Text*. In addition, Mr. Petersen was working on another manuscript and allowed us to read it. At that time we were thoroughly convinced that the Book of Mormon was divinely inspired and came from ancient gold plates that Joseph Smith translated.

Although we respected LaMar Petersen's diligent research and kindness towards us, we could not agree with the material we found in his manuscript. It obviously was an attempt to connect Smith with the occult and to undermine belief in the Book of Mormon. Consequently, we tried to disprove the allegations.

As it turned out, we continued to believe in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon until near the end of 1962. We then concluded that Mr. Petersen was correct after all. We were the ones who had not adequately done our homework.

Mr. Petersen paid a high price for delving into the mysteries of Mormonism. He was, in fact, excommunicated from the Mormon Church because of his stand for the truth. We highly recommend LaMar Petersen's new book, *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry*.

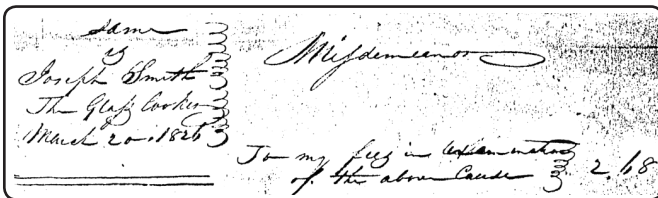
determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold-mines were a distance underground, and had looked for Mr. Stowell several times, and informed him where he could find those treasures, and Mr. Stowell had been engaged in digging for them; that **at Palmyra he pretended to tell, by looking at this stone, where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania**, and while at Palmyra he had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was, of various kinds; that he has occasionally been in the habit of looking through **this stone** to find lost property for three years, **but of late had pretty much given it up on account its injuring his health, especially his eyes**—made them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business. . . .

And thereupon the Court finds the defendant guilty.

Recent discoveries have confirmed the reality of the 1826 pre-trial examination of “Joseph Smith The Glass looker” before Albert Neely, a justice of the peace. (*The Creation of the Book of Mormon*, LaMar Petersen, Freethinker Press, 1998, pp. 29-32)

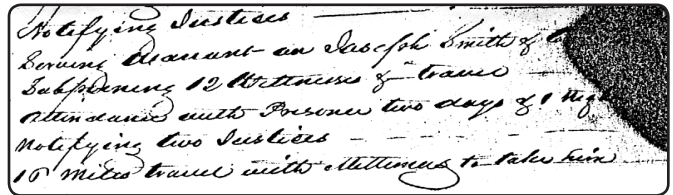
In 1971 Wesley P. Walters, a Presbyterian minister and researcher of Mormon history, went to New York to look for documentation of Smith’s 1826 hearing. In the damp, musty basement of the jail in Norwich, New York, Mr. Walters found the Chenango county documents for 1826. In these bundles of papers were two documents that related to Smith’s 1826 hearing. Mr. Walters explains:

The discovery among the 1826 Chenango County bills of two bills from the officials who participated in the arrest and trial of Joseph Smith at South Bainbridge in 1826 now confirms this story beyond question. The bill of Justice Albert Neely carries this entry:



same [i.e. The People]	
vs	Misdemeanor
Joseph Smith	
The Glass Looker	To my fees in examination
March 20, 1826	of the above cause 2.68

The phrase “Glass looker” appearing on Mr. Neely’s bill is the precise terminology preferred by Joseph Smith himself to describe his crystal gazing occupation and is the same that Mr. Benton adopted five years later to speak of Smith’s use of a peep-stone or glass placed in a hat, which he employed when hired to hunt for hidden treasures. The bill of Constable Philip De Zeng gives further historical evidence and details concerning this trial, by listing:



Serving Warrant on Joseph Smith & travel.....	1.25
Subpoening 12 Witnesses & travel	2.50 (3.50?)
Attendance with Prisoner two days & 1 night.....	1.75
Notifying two Justices.....	1.—
10 miles travel with Mittimus to take him	1.—

This new evidence corroborates and throws fresh light on two accounts of this 1826 trial published almost a hundred years ago but vigorously disputed by the Mormons since they first came into prominence. The first is an account of the trial by Dr. William D. Purple, an eye-witness to the proceedings and a personal friend of Justice Neely. The second is the official trial record itself, torn from **the Docket Book of Justice Neely** and published in three independent printings. Not only do the newly-discovered bills substantiate these two accounts as authentic, they now make it impossible for Mormon scholars to dismiss the numerous affidavits testifying that young Smith prior to founding the Mormon faith had earned part of his livelihood using a peep-stone to hunt for buried treasures. **The peep-stone story can no longer be set aside as a vicious story circulated by those who wished to persecute the budding Prophet, for this new evidence, dating four years before he founded his church, witnesses incontrovertibly to Joseph’s early “glass-looking” activities.** (*Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials*, by Wesley P. Walters, pp. 129-131)

The evidence shows that Joseph Smith appeared before Justice Neely for what was known as an “examination” (see *A New Conductor Generalis: Being a Summary of the Law Relative to the Duty and Office of Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Coroners, Constables, Jurymen, Overseers of the Poor, &c, &c*, Albany, New York, 1819, pages 141-143).

This seems to be like the “preliminary hearing” we have today where the accused is bound over for trial at a later date. It would appear from page 109 of the same

publication that since Justice Neely found Joseph Smith “guilty” of being a “disorderly person” he could have immediately sentenced him to “sixty days” in the “bridewell or house of correction, at hard labor,” but instead he bound him over to be tried by three justices at a later date. These justices could have ordered “him to be detained at hard labor, for any future time not exceeding six months, and during his confinement to be corrected by whipping, according to the nature of the offense, as they shall think fit” (*A New Conductor Generalis*).

Since we do not have the rest of Justice Neely’s docket book nor any other extant record concerning the matter, it is difficult to determine what finally happened in this case. It is possible that Joseph Smith could have admitted his guilt and struck an agreement with the county. Many times officials who wanted to cut expenses would be willing to let prisoners go if they would agree to leave the county where the crime took place.

On March 8, 1842, Justice Joel K. Noble, who acquitted Joseph Smith of some charges brought against him in 1830, wrote a letter in which he spoke of Joseph Smith’s “first trial” — i.e., the case before Justice Neely. According to Justice Noble, Smith “was condemned” at that time. Wesley P. Walters wrote:

Mr. Noble succinctly states that the “whisper came to Jo., ‘Off, Off!’ ” and so Joseph “took Leg Bail,” an early slang expression meaning “to escape from custody.” What is obviously happening is that the justices are privately suggesting to this first offender to “get out of town and don’t come back,” and in exchange they will not impose sentence . . . Judge Noble’s statement agrees precisely with an early account of this 1826 trial published just five years after the trial had taken place. It was written by Dr. Abram Willard Benton, a young medical doctor who lived in South Bainbridge at the time. Dr. Benton, like Justice Noble, mentions that Joseph had been involved in **glass looking**, and that he had been “tried and condemned.” Dr. Benton adds that

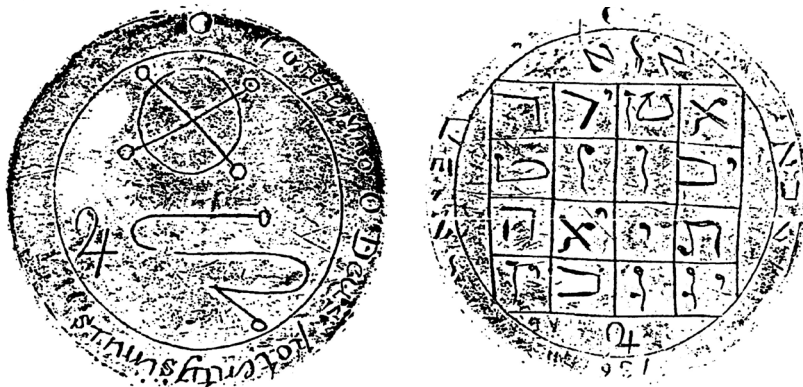
because Joseph was a minor at the time, being 20 years old, “and thinking he might reform his conduct, he was designedly allowed to escape.” Therefore, the court, though it found him guilty of being in violation of the law, had intentionally not imposed sentence as a way of showing mercy on this youthful offender. (“From Occult to Cult With Joseph Smith, Jr.,” *Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials*, p. 123)

Mormon historians are now conceding the reality of the Smith family’s involvement with magic. In D. Michael Quinn’s new edition of his book, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* he observes:

Friendly sources corroborate hostile non-Mormon accounts. As historian Richard L. Bushman has written: “There had always been evidence of it (‘money-digging in the Smith family’) in the hostile affidavits from the Smith’s neighbors, evidence which Mormons dismissed as hopelessly biased. But when I got into the sources, I found evidence from friendly contemporaries as well, Martin Harris, Joseph Knight, Oliver Cowdery, and Lucy Mack Smith. All of these witnesses persuaded me treasure-seeking and vernacular magic were part of the Smith family tradition, and that the hostile witnesses, including the 1826 trial record, had to be taken seriously.” BYU historian Marvin S. Hill has likewise observed: “Now, most historians, Mormon or not, who work with the sources, accept as fact Joseph Smith’s career as village magician.” (*Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 2nd ed. 1998, p. 59)

THE IMPLICATIONS

Now that the authenticity of the Neely record has been established beyond all doubt, Mormon Church leaders are faced with a serious dilemma. Most people would allow Joseph Smith the right to make a few youthful mistakes without maintaining that it would seriously affect his later role as a prophet. The issue, however, is much more



Photos of Joseph Smith’s Jupiter talisman (both sides) from *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. D. Michael Quinn’s book, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* also contains photos of Joseph Smith’s Jupiter talisman.

serious than just the transgression of an early New York law. What is involved here is the question of whether Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God or **merely a man entangled in occultic practices**. The implications of this matter are very serious indeed.

Once we accept the validity of the documents concerning Joseph Smith's trouble with the law, we are forced to admit that he was engaging in witchcraft and magical practices at the very time he claimed he was being tutored by the deceased Moroni, now an angel, to receive the sacred records. These facts undermine the whole story of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.

FAMILIAR SPIRITS

Mormonism claims that Isaiah 29:1-4 is a prophecy of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Past president Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

ISAIAH PROPHECIES OF BOOK OF MORMON. One of the *most important predictions* regarding the Book of Mormon is that found in the 29th chapter of Isaiah. The prophet here speaks of a people who should be like Ariel, the city where David dwelt. They should have heaviness and sorrow and should be brought down to speak out of the ground, and their speech was to be low out of the dust, and their voice was to be as of one that had a *familiar spirit*. (Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, p. 213)

However, Isaiah 29:1-4 is a prediction of God's punishment on Jerusalem. The Bible always condemns familiar spirits. If the Book of Mormon is supposed to be the word of God why would God associate it with demonic forces? The following verses demonstrate God's condemnation of familiar spirits.

- Lev. 19:31 Regard not . . . familiar spirits neither seek after wizards.
- Lev. 19:26 Neither use enchantment nor observe times.
- Lev. 20:6 Familiar spirits, wizards . . . I will set my face against.
- Lev. 20:27 Hath familiar spirit or wizard – put to death.
- Deut. 18:10-12 Divination, enchanter, witch, charmer, consulter with familiar spirits, wizard, necromancer – abomination to Lord.
- Isa. 8:19 When they say – seek familiar spirits or wizards that peep – should not a people seek their God?
- Isa. 19:3 I will destroy counsel thereof and they shall seek idols, charmers, familiar spirits and wizards.
- Isa. 29:1-4 Woe to Ariel . . . one that hath a familiar spirit.
- Isa. 44:24-26 Thus saith the **Lord**, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; That **frustrateth** the tokens of the liars, and maketh **diviners** mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers.

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ANIMAL SACRIFICES

Animal sacrifices were often a part of the magic rituals that accompanied money-digging. In the first edition of his book, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, page 144, Dr. D. Michael Quinn gives this information: “A cousin of Smith’s wife Emma reported that Smith ‘translated the book of Mormon by means of the same peep stone, and under the same inspiration that directed his enchantments and dog sacrifices; it was all by the same spirit’ (H. Lewis 1879).”

In a magic book known as *The Greater Key of Solomon*, page 122, we read that “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.**”

The evidence seems to show that Joseph Smith did make sacrifices to the demons. In an affidavit published in 1834, William Stafford, one of the neighbors of the Smith family, reported the following:

Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me that Joseph Smith Jr. had been looking in his glass, and had seen, not many rods from his house, two or three kegs of gold and silver . . . 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 . . . 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 motions 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 . . . another time, they devised a scheme, by which they might satiate their hunger, with the mutton of one of my sheep. They had seen in my flock a sheep, a large, fat, black weather. 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 to the ground where the treasures were concealed

– that after **cutting its throat**, it should be led around in a circle **while bleeding**. This being done, **the wrath of the evil spirit would be appeased**: the treasures could then be obtained, and my share of them was to be four fold. 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. This, I believe, is the only time they ever made money-digging a profitable business. (*Mormonism Unveiled*, 1834, pp. 238-239; also reproduced in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 2, pp. 59-61)

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, the Mormon apologist Richard L. Anderson says that, “If there was such an event of a borrowed sheep, it had nothing to do with dishonesty” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, page 295). On page 249 of the same article, Professor Anderson quotes the following from BYU Professor M. Wilford Poulson’s notes of a conversation with Wallace Miner: “I once asked Stafford if Smith did steal a sheep from him. He said no, not exactly. He said, he did miss **a black sheep**, but soon Joseph came and admitted he took it **for sacrifice** but he was willing to work for it. He made wooden sap buckets to fully pay for it.”

C. R. Stafford testified concerning the same incident: “Jo Smith, the prophet, told my uncle, William Stafford, he wanted a fat, **black sheep**. He said he wanted to **cut its throat** and make it walk in a circle three times around and it would prevent a pot of money from leaving” (*Naked Truths About Mormonism*, January 1888, p. 3; also reproduced in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 2, p. 197).

The current leaders of the Mormon Church have turned away from many of the occultic practices, which played such an important role in the church Joseph Smith founded. In fact, the church hierarchy has publicly condemned magic. Most Mormons are not aware of Joseph Smith’s involvement in the occult because their leaders have systematically covered up the more embarrassing parts of Smith’s history.

SMITH AND THE METHODISTS

It is interesting to note that as early as 1828 members of the Methodist Church were forced to make a decision

with regard to Joseph Smith. Smith had taken steps to join their church, but they felt his dealings in witchcraft made him unfit to be a member.

In the book *Inventing Mormonism* we read:

In 1879 Joseph and Hiel Lewis, cousins to Joseph's first wife, Emma Hale, stated that Joseph joined the Methodist Episcopal church or class in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 1828. There was disagreement about how long Joseph's name remained on class rolls. See the articles in the *Amboy [Illinois] Journal* . . . It is possible that Joseph attended class with his wife Emma because of the death of their first son on 15 June 1828. That Joseph was a member of the class was not questioned, only the length of time his name remained on the class record. (*Inventing Mormonism*, Marquardt and Walters, p. 61, n. 49)

Part of the statement by Joseph and Hiel Lewis reads:

He presented himself in a very serious and humble manner, and the minister, not suspecting evil, put his name on the class book, in the absence of some of the official members. (*The Amboy Journal*, April 30, 1879, p. 1)

When Joseph Lewis learned of this act, he felt that Smith was not truly repentant of his magic involvement and felt him to be unfit for membership. Mr. Lewis further details the incident:

I with Joshua McKune . . . thought it was a **disgrace to the church to have a practicing necromancer, a dealer in enchantments** and bleeding ghosts in it. So on Sunday we went . . . and talked to him some time . . . Told him that his occupation, habits and moral character were at variance with the discipline . . . that there should have been recantation, confession and at least promised reformation — That he could that day publicly ask that his name be stricken from the class book, or stand investigation. He chose the former, and did that very day make request that his name be taken off the class book. (*The Amboy Journal*, June 11, 1879, pg. 1)

It is certainly strange that Joseph Smith would try to join the Methodist Church. His attempt to unite with the Methodists, in fact, flies in the face of his claim that he had his First Vision when he was, “an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age.” In this vision God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ supposedly appeared to him. Those who have read his story will remember that Joseph emphatically stated that the two personages warned him that he should **not join any church**. Joseph Smith's own statement about the matter reads as follows: “I was answered that **I must join none**

of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me **said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt**; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith — History 1:19).

With the mounting evidence of Joseph Smith's involvement in witchcraft, members of the Mormon Church are faced with a very weighty decision — i.e., can they accept as a prophet a man who was involved in occultic practices at the very time he was supposed to have been receiving revelations from God?

HOW WERE THE PLATES TRANSLATED?

Most Mormons believe that Joseph Smith translated the gold plates with what was known as the Urim and Thummim. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

From time to time, as his purposes require, the Lord personally, or through the ministry of appointed angels, delivers to chosen prophets a **Urim and Thummim** to be used in receiving revelations and in translating ancient records from unknown tongues. With the approval of the Lord these prophets are permitted to pass these instruments on to their mortal successors . . . Because of the sacred nature of these holy instruments, they have not been viewed by most men, and even the times and circumstances under which they have been held by mortals are not clearly set forth . . . **Joseph Smith received the same Urim and Thummim had by the Brother of Jared** for it was the one expressly provided for the translation of the Jaredite and Nephite records. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, by Bruce R. McConkie, p. 818)

Joseph Smith's mother wrote the following concerning the Urim and Thummim:

That of which I spoke, which Joseph termed a key, was indeed, nothing more nor less than the Urim and Thummim, and it was by this that the angel showed him many things which he saw in vision; by which he could ascertain, at any time, the approach of danger, either to himself or the Record, and on account of which **he always kept the Urim and Thummim about his person**. (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and his Progenitors for Many Generations*, p. 106; also reproduced in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1)

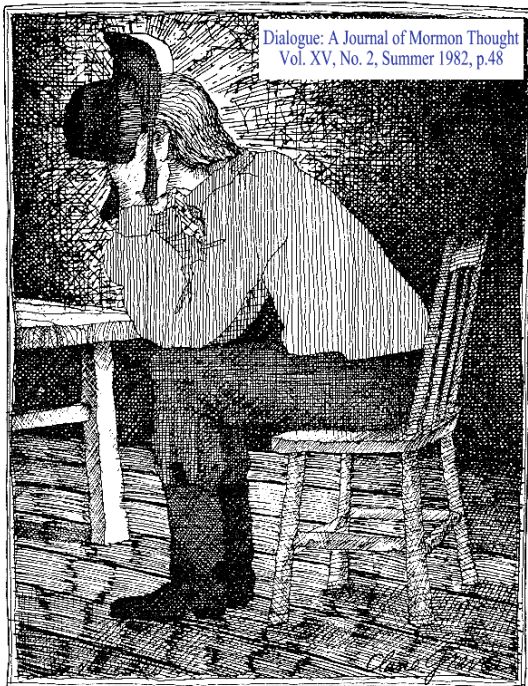
On page 101 of the same book, Lucy Smith claimed that Joseph actually allowed her to examine the Urim and Thummim:

I knew not what he meant, but took the article of which he spoke into my hands, and, upon examination, found that it consisted of **two smooth three-cornered diamonds set in glass, and the glasses were set in silver bows, which were connected with each other in much the same way as old fashioned spectacles.** He took them again and left me, but said nothing respecting the Record. (*Biographical Sketches*, p. 101)

Although Joseph Smith was supposed to have the Urim and Thummim, the evidence shows that he preferred to use the seer stone found in a well to translate the Book of Mormon. The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts acknowledged the use of one of Joseph Smith's seer stones. He made the following statement in the *Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 129:

The Seer Stone referred to here was **a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone which the Prophet found while digging a well** in the company of his brother Hyrum, for a Mr. Clark Chase, near Palmyra, N.Y. It possessed the qualities of Urim and Thummim, since **by means of it** — as described above — as well as by means of the Interpreters found with the Nephite record, **Joseph was able to translate the characters engraven on the plates.**

Joseph Smith's father-in-law, Isaac Hale, noticed a definite relationship between the method Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Mormon and the way he searched for buried treasures. In an affidavit that Isaac Hale provided we find some very interesting information:



I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr. in November, 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called “money-diggers;” and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see by means of **a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face.** In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure . . . Smith, and his father with several other “money-diggers” boarded at my house while they were employed in digging for a mine that they supposed had been opened and worked by the Spaniards, many years since. Young Smith gave the “money-diggers” great encouragement, at first, but when they had arrived in digging, to near the place where he had stated an immense treasure would be found — he said the enchantment was so powerful that he could not see . . .

After these occurrences, young Smith made several visits at my house, and at length asked my consent to his marrying my daughter Emma. This I refused, and gave him my reasons for so doing; some of which were, that he was a stranger, **and followed a business that I could not approve:** he then left the place. Not long after this, he returned, and while I was absent from home, carried off my daughter, into the state of New York, where they were married without my approbation or consent . . . In a short time they returned . . .

Smith stated to me, that he had given up what he called “**glass-looking,**” and that he expected to work hard for a living, and was willing to do so . . . Soon after this, I was informed they had brought a wonderful book of Plates down with them . . . The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was **the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face,** while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods! (*The Susquehanna Register*, May 1, 1834)

David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, described how Joseph Smith placed the “seer stone” into a hat to translate the Book of Mormon:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put **the seer stone into a hat,** and put his **face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light.** A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, by David Whitmer, 1887, p. 12)

In a letter written March 27, 1876, Emma Smith acknowledged that the entire Book of Mormon, that we have today, was translated by the use of the seer stone. James E. Lancaster wrote:

How can the testimonies of Emma Smith and David Whitmer, describing the translation of the Book of Mormon with a seer stone, be reconciled with the traditional account of the church that the Book of Mormon was translated by the “interpreters” found in the stone box with the plates? It is the extreme good fortune of the church that we have testimony by Sister Emma Smith Bidamon on this important issue . . . a woman . . . wrote to Emma Bidamon, requesting information as to the translation of the Book of Mormon. Emma Bidamon replied . . . March 27, 1876. Sister Bidamon’s letter states in part:

Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris **lost, after that he used a small stone**, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color . . .

Sister Bidamon’s letter indicated that at first the Book of Mormon was translated by the Urim and Thummim. She refers to the instrument found with the plates. However, this first method was used only for the portion written on the 116 pages of foolscap, which Martin Harris later lost. After that time the translation was done with the seer stone. (*Saints’ Herald*, November 15, 1962, p. 15; Emma’s letter is also reproduced in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1, p. 532)

David Whitmer frankly admitted that he never did see Joseph Smith use what was later known as the Urim and Thummim (the two stones set in silver bows). This information is found in an article in the *Saints’ Herald*:

According to the testimony of Emma Smith and David Whitmer, the angel **took the Urim and Thummim** from Joseph Smith at the time of the loss of the 116 pages. This was in June 1828, one year before David became involved with the work of translation. David Whitmer could never have been present when the Urim and Thummim were used. All of this he clearly states in his testimony to Brother Traughber:

With the sanction of David Whitmer, and by his authority, I now state **he does not say that Joseph Smith ever translated in his presence by aid of Urim and Thummim, but by means of one dark colored, opaque stone** called a “Seer Stone,” which was placed in the crown of a hat, into which Joseph put his face, so as to exclude the external light. Then, a spiritual light would appear before Joseph, upon which was a line of characters from the plates, and under it, the translation in English; at least, so Joseph said.

(*Saints’ Herald*, November 15, 1962, p. 16)

Many years ago M. T. Lamb made some important observations regarding Joseph Smith’s strange habit of using his seer stone instead of the Urim and Thummim:

Finally, according to the testimony of Martin Harris, Mr. Smith often used the “seer stone” in place of the Urim and Thummim, even while the later remained in his possession — using it as a mere matter of convenience.

It seems almost too bad that he should thus inadvertently give the whole thing away. You must understand that the Urim and Thummim spoken of, and called throughout the Book of Mormon “the Interpreters,” had been provided with great care over 2500 years ago by God himself, for the express purpose of translating these plates. They are often mentioned in the Book of Mormon as exceedingly important. They were preserved with the greatest care, handed down from one generation to another with the plates, and buried with them in the hill Cumorah over 1400 years ago; as sacred as the plates themselves. So sacred that only one man was allowed to handle or use them, the highly favored prophet, Joseph Smith himself. But now, alas! After all this trouble and pains and care on the part of God, and on the part of so many holy men of old, this “Urim and Thummim” is found at last to be altogether superfluous; not needed at all. This “peep stone” found in a neighbor’s well will do the work just as well — and is even more convenient, **“for convenience he used the seer stone.”** So we are left to infer that when he used the Urim and Thummim at all, it was at some inconvenience. And probably he only did it out of regard to the feelings of his God, who had spent so much time and anxiety in preparing it so long ago, and preserving it to the present day for his special use! (*The Golden Bible*, 1887, pp. 250-251)

Although Joseph Smith spent a lot of time staring at his seer stone, it did not seem to help him find the buried treasures he desired. Since Joseph Smith’s failed treasure seeking and translation method for the Book of Mormon were both accomplished through the use of the same magic stone it appears that both efforts were lacking in divine approval. As one former follower of Joseph Smith expressed it, a person must “come out from the company of Joseph the sorcerer.”

LDS CLAIMS
Under the Search Light
Recorded Message (801) 485-4262
(Message is three to five minutes)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

☒ “I cannot tell you enough how much I appreciate the work you are doing. . . . It is not easy to wipe out 46 years of your life and realize how you have been controlled . . . I was a Relief Society president in our stake for a number of years when I began to question & really was tired of ‘the Lord will tell us in His time’ answers.” (Letter from Canada)

☒ “Your a son of perdition, well at least in my opinion, Greg.” (Email)

☒ “I called you . . . in 1998 regarding my wife . . . who was raised a Mormon in Brazil. She has since come out of that darkness & is basking in the grace given through our Lord Jesus Christ. Being very pragmatic in nature, the meticulous research in your documents was used by the Lord to reveal his truth. We look forward to supporting your activities.” (Letter from Florida)

☒ “There was a time when I thought you guys were nuts. Now you’re my heroes!! Thanks for your research and efforts. I sincerely hope you will be around for a long long time. A Former True Blue Mormon.” (Email from Mike)

☒ “I can’t thank you enough for the information that you have sent up from Lighthouse Ministries . . . My 2nd husband loved the Church, and the Priesthood that he held. He is a brilliant man . . . I would bring things up, hoping that something would click with him . . . I couldn’t take it a step at a time, but just ‘blurted’ out everything, and that I felt it was all a lie. He couldn’t believe it, and wanted to know [why] I hadn’t mentioned it to him earlier. We haven’t been to Church since and have been avidly reading lots of books, and papers from your site which we have found so incredibly informative. We haven’t been to church in three months and everyone is scratching their heads . . . we both have given back all our callings, without the ‘permission’ of the Bishop . . . We soooooo enjoy your newsletters . . . Thank you so much for your work. We will be sending a donation from time to time to further the work. You have helped us so much, and we would like to help provide for others. (Email from California)

☒ “. . . I have for a number of years had a few misgivings about some of the Mormon doctrines. I . . . have been a member for 44 years. . . . In my quest to have those questions answered I turned to the Public library and was fortunate to read an article written by the Tanners from which I was able to source the URL . . . and I am truly thankful for your web site . . .” (Email from New Zealand)

☒ “I have, over the years, read your shoddy researched, and intellectually dishonest, commentaries on the Lord’s Kingdom here on earth . . . Still, you serve the purposes of the Lord to keep us . . . on our toes.” (Email from a Mormon)

☒ “I am a seventeen year old girl attending . . . High School . . . I have read your chapter in the book The Counter[feit] Gospel of Mormonism. I just want to say thank-you for helping write the book because terminology was something I really needed to know. . . . There are many Mormons in my school. . . I had never really spoken to ***** [a Mormon friend] but I knew God wanted me to witness to him. . . . The talk went very, very well. The atmosphere was calm and everyone was friendly with each other. . . . I owe part of the meeting’s success to you two . . .” (Letter from California)

☒ “I just found your site . . . [www.utlm.org] I am so glad I found you on the web finally. . . . I also want to thank you for the great work that you do. I first learned of your existence while I was a missionary in Australia. Someone gave us some of your literature trying to ‘save’ us. At that time I was not ready to know the truth but I did read the literature that was given to us and found it fascinating. . . . I never forgot the things that I read. It wasn’t until several years later when I began to ‘see the light’ that I remembered that experience on my mission. I was living in SLC at the time and looked you up in the phone book and came and visited your bookstore. Funny that ‘in the heart of Zion’ there is an oasis of truth! . . . I have to say again, how happy I am to have found you on the internet. Thank God for modern technology!” (Email)

☒ “I wanted to let you know that I have used your book to lead two families out of Mormonism. One was a local Mormon leader in the US military community . . . The other is now a base commander here . . . Both asked to be excommunicated after reading your book. . . . Thought you might be interested. God bless you.” (Email)

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