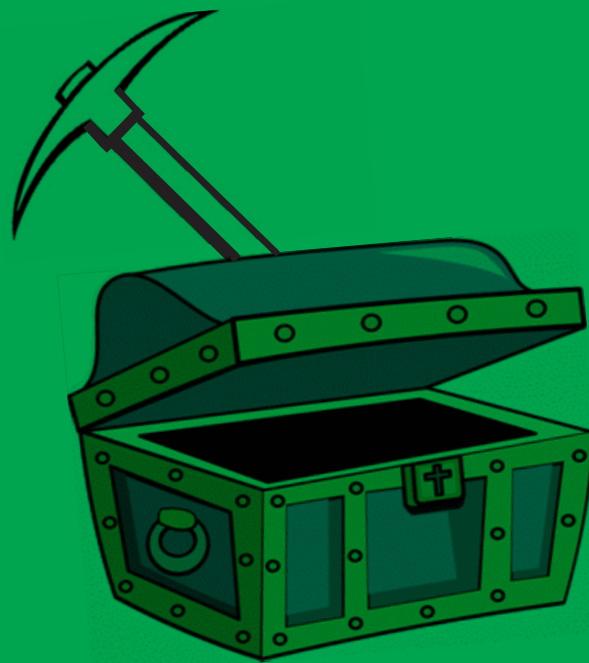


# JOSEPH SMITH & MONEY-DIGGING



By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

JOSEPH SMITH  
&  
MONEY-DIGGING

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

1970  
(Digital version 2015)

Utah Lighthouse Ministry  
[www.utlm.org](http://www.utlm.org)



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## Part 1

# TREASURE HUNTING

In the *Pearl of Great Price* (one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church) Joseph Smith made these statements concerning how he obtained the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated:

Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario county, New York, stands a hill of considerable size, . . . not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner toward the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth.

Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up. I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates, . . . (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 2:51-52)

In a letter to John Wentworth, Joseph Smith stated:

These records were engraven on plates . . . They were filled with engravings, in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, with three rings running through the whole. (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 537)

It is interesting to note that four years before the Book of Mormon was printed, an English traveler had claimed a somewhat similar discovery in Ohio. Josiah Priest gave this information in his book, *American Antiquities*:

In the neighborhood of Fort Harmer, on the Muskingum, opposite Marietta on the Ohio, were discovered, by Mr. Ash, an English traveller, in the year 1826, several monuments of the ancient nations.

“Having made, (says this traveller,) arrangements for an absence of a few days from the fort, I provided myself with an excellent tinder box, some biscuit and salt, and arming my Indian travelling companion, with a good axe and rifle, . . .

“On traversing the valley between Fort Harmer and

the mountains, I determined to take the high grounds, and after some difficulty, ascended an eminence which commanded a view of the town of Marietta, . . .

“After a very short inspection, and cursory examination, it was evident that the very spot or eminence on which I stood, had been occupied by the Indians, either as a place of observation, or a strong hold. . . . I despaired of gaining any further knowledge, and would have left the place, had I not been detained by my Indian companion, whom I saw occupied in endeavoring to introduce a pole into a small opening between two flat stones, near the root of a tree, which grew on the very summit of this eminence.

“The stones we found were too heavy to be removed by the mere power of hands. Two good oak poles were cut, in lieu of levers and crows. Clapping these into the orifice first discovered, we weighed **a large flat stone**, tilting it over, . . .

“I expected to find a cavern: my imagination was warmed by a certain design I thought I discovered from the very beginning; the manner the stones were placed led me to conceive the existence of a **vault** filled with the riches of antiquity, and crowded with the treasures of the most ancient world.

“A bed of sand was all that appeared under these flat stones, . . . the sand was about a foot deep, which I soon removed.

“The design and labor of man was now unequivocal. The space out of which these materials were taken, left a hollow in an **oblong square**, lined with stones on the end and sides, and also paved on what appeared to be the bottom, with square stones, of about nine inches diameter. . . . With the skeleton was found, first an earthen vessel, or urn, in which were several bones, and some white sediment. . . . Sixth; under a heap of dust and tenuous shreds of feathered cloth and hair, **a parcel of brass rings**, cut out of a solid piece of metal, and in such a manner that the rings were suspended from each other, without the aid of solder or any other visible agency whatever. Each ring was three inches in diameter, and the bar of the rings a half an inch thick, and were square; **a variety of characters were deeply engraved on the sides of the rings, resembling the Chinese characters.**” (*American Antiquities*, Albany, N.Y., 1835, pages 90-93)

At the time the Book of Mormon was printed many people were engaged in searching for buried treasures. On July 24, 1822, the *Palmyra Herald* reprinted the following statements from the *Montpelier (Vt.) Watchman*:

Indeed, digging for money hid in the earth is a very common thing; and in this state it is even considered an honorable and profitable employment. We could name, if we pleased, at least five hundred respectable men, who do, in the simplicity and sincerity of their hearts, verily believe that immense treasures lie concealed upon our Green Mountains; many of whom have been for a number of years, most industriously and perseveringly engaged in digging it up.

On February 16, 1825, the *Wayne Sentinel* (a newspaper published in Joseph Smith's neighborhood) reprinted the following from the *Windsor, (Vermont) Jour.*:

Money digging. — We are sorry to observe even in this enlightened age, so prevalent a disposition to credit the accounts of the Marvellous. Even the frightful stories of money being hid under the surface of the earth, and enchanted by the Devil or Robert Kidd, are received by many of our respectable fellow citizens as truths. . . .

A respectable gentleman in Tunbridge, was informed by means of a **dream**, that a **chest of money** was buried on a small island . . . he started off to enrich himself with the treasure. After having been directed by the mineral rod where to search for the money, he excavated the earth . . . Presently he and his laborers came . . . upon a chest of gold . . . One of the company drove an old file through the rotten lid of the chest, and . . . the chest moved off through the mud, and has not been seen or heard of since. . . . Whether he actually saw the chest, or whether it was the vision of a disordered brain, we shall leave to the public to determine.

Many of the people who were digging for buried treasure in Joseph Smith's time were very superstitious. There were many strange stories connected with these treasure hunts. Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, related the following:

Mr. Stowel was at this time at old Mr. Smith's, digging for money. It was reported by these money-diggers, that they had **found boxes**, but before they could secure them, **they would sink into the earth**. A candid old Presbyterian told me, that on the Susquehannah flats he dug down to an iron chest, that he scraped the dirt off with his shovel, but had nothing with him to open the chest; that he went away to get help, and when they came to it, it moved away two or three rods into the earth, and they could not get it. There were a great many strange sights. One time the old log school-house south of Palmyra, was suddenly lighted up, and frightened them away. Samuel Lawrence told me that while they were digging, a large man who appeared to be eight or nine feet high, came and sat on

the ridge of the barn, and motioned to them that they must leave. They motioned back that they would not; but that they afterwards became frightened and did leave. At another time while they were digging, a company of horsemen came and frightened them away. These things were real to them, I believe, because they were told to me in confidence, and told by different ones, and their stories agreed, and they seemed to be in earnest—I knew they were in earnest. (An interview with Martin Harris, published in *Tiffany's Monthly*, 1859, page 165)

On another occasion Martin Harris admitted that he participated in some money digging activities and that a stone box slipped back into the hill:

Martin Harris (speaking to a group of Saints at Clarkston, Utah in the 1870's): I will tell you a wonderful thing that happened after Joseph had found the plates. Three of us took some tools to go to the hill and hunt for some more boxes, or gold or something, and indeed, we found a stone box. We got quite excited about it and dug quite carefully around it, and we were ready to take it up, but behold by some unseen power, **it slipped back into the hill**. We stood there and looked at it, and one of us took a crow bar and tried to drive it through the lid to hold it, but it glanced and broke one corner off the box. Some time that box will be found and you will see the corner broken off, and then you will know I have told the truth. (Testimony of Mrs. Comfort Godfrey Flinders, *Utah Pioneer Biographies*, vol. X, page 65, Genealogical Society of Utah, as quoted in an unpublished manuscript by LaMar Petersen)

It appears that even Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, was influenced by the superstitions of his day. In a sermon delivered June 17, 1877, he stated:

But do you know how to find such a mine? No, you do not. These treasures that are in the earth are carefully watched, **they can be removed from place to place** according to the good pleasure of Him who made them and owns them. He has his messengers at his service, and it is just as easy for an angel to remove the minerals from any part of one of these mountains to another, as it is for you and me to walk up and down this hall. . . .

Sometimes I take the liberty of talking a little further with regard to such things. Orin P. Rockwell is an eye-witness to some powers of removing the treasures of the earth. He was with certain parties that lived near by where the plates were found that contain the records of the Book of Mormon. There were a great many treasures hid up by the Nephites. Porter was with them one night where there were treasures, and they could find them easy enough, but they could not obtain them.

I will tell you a story which will be marvelous to most of you. It was told me by Porter, whom I would believe just as quickly as any man that lives. When he tells a thing he understands, he will tell it just as he knows it; he is a man that does not lie. He said that on this night, when they were

engaged hunting for this old treasure, they dug around the end of a chest for some twenty inches. The chest was about three feet square. One man who was determined to have the contents of that chest, took his pick and struck into the lid of it, and split through into the chest. The blow took off a piece of the lid, which a certain lady kept in her possession until she died. **That chest of money went into the bank.** Porter describes it so [making a rumbling sound]; he says this is just as true as the heavens are. I have heard others tell the same story. I relate this because it is marvelous to you. But to those who understand these things, it is not marvelous.

You hear a great deal said about finding money. There is no difficulty at all in finding money, but there are a great many people who do not know what to do with it when they do find it. This is the great defect with the human family. I could relate many very singular circumstances. I lived right in the country where the plates were found from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and I know a great many things pertaining to that country. I believe I will take the liberty to tell you of another circumstance that will be as marvelous as anything can be. This is an incident in the life of Oliver Cowdery, but he did not take the liberty of telling such things in meeting as I take. I tell these things to you, and I have a motive for doing so. I want to carry them to the ears of my brethren and sisters, and to the children also, that they may grow to an understanding of some things that seem to be entirely hidden from the human family. Oliver Cowdery went with the Prophet Joseph when he deposited these plates. Joseph did not translate all of the plates; there was a portion of them sealed, which you can learn from the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*. When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, **the hill opened, and they walked into a cave**, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but that it was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room **more plates than probably many wagon loads**; they were piled up in the corners and along the walls. The first time they went there the sword of Laban hung upon the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates; it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: "This sword will never be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and his Christ." . . .

. . . People do not know it, but I know there is a seal upon the treasures of earth; men are allowed to go so far and no farther. I have known places where there were treasures in abundance; but could men get them? No. You can read in the Book of Mormon of the ancient Nephites holding their treasures, and of their becoming slippery; so that after they had privately hid their money, on going to the place again, lo and behold it was not there, but was somewhere else,

but they knew not where. (A Sermon by Brigham Young, delivered at a special conference held at Farmington, June 17, 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 19, pages 36-39)

Brigham Young also tells that even the priests from the various churches were influenced by a fortune teller. He stated:

I never heard such oaths fall from the lips of any man as I heard uttered by a man who was called a fortune-teller, and who knew where those plates were hid. He went three times in one summer to get them, —the same summer in which Joseph did get them. Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist priests and deacons **sent for him** to tell where those plates were, and to get them out of the hill where they were deposited; and he had not returned to his home from the last trip he made for them more than a week or ten days before Joseph got them. Joseph was what we call an ignorant boy; but this fortune-teller, whose name I do not remember, was a man of profound learning.

He had put himself in possession of all the learning in the States,—had been to France, Germany, Italy, and through the world,—had been educated for a priest, and turned out to be a devil . . . He could preach as well as the best of them, and I never heard a man swear as he did. He could tell that those plates were there, and that they were a treasure whose value to the people could not be told; for that I myself heard him say. (Remarks by Brigham Young, July 19, 1857, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, page 55)

On another occasion Brigham Young stated:

I well knew a man who, to get the plates, rode over sixty miles three times the same season they were obtained by Joseph Smith. About the time of their being delivered to Joseph by the angel, the friends of this man sent for him, and informed him that they were going to lose that treasure, though they did not know what it was. The man I refer to was a fortune-teller, a necromancer, an astrologer, a soothsayer, and possessed as much talent as any man that walked on the American soil, and was one of the wickedest men I ever saw. The last time he went to obtain the treasure **he knew where it was**, and told where it was, but did not know its value. Allow me to tell you that a Baptist deacon and others of Joseph's neighbors were the very men who sent for this necromancer the last time he went for the treasure. I never heard a man who could swear like that astrologer; he swore scientifically, by rule, by note. To those who love swearing, it was musical to hear him, but not so to me, for I would leave his presence. He would call Joseph everything that was bad, and say, "I believe he will get the treasure after all." He did get it, and the war commenced directly. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, pages 180-181)

The early Mormon leaders grew up at a time when people were very superstitious. The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts made these comments:



Credulity: Yes, the Prophet's ancestors were credulous in that some of them believed that they were healed of bodily ailments by the power of faith in God. Others had dreams, as their neighbors had, . . . It may be admitted that some of them believed in fortune telling, in warlocks and witches— . . . Indeed it is scarcely conceivable how one could live in New England in those years and not have shared in such beliefs. To be credulous in such things was to be normal people. (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, by B. H. Roberts, vol. 1, pages 26-27)

### Peep Stones

At the time the Book of Mormon came forth many people believed in “peep stones.” These stones were sometimes placed in a hat and used to locate buried treasure. The following appeared in the *Wayne Sentinel* on December 27, 1825:

MR. STRONG—Please insert the following and oblige one of your readers.

Wonderful Discovery.—A few days since was discovered in this town, by the help of a **mineral stone**, (which becomes transparent when **placed in a hat**, and the light excluded by the face of him who looks into it, provided he is fortune's favorite,) a monstrous potash kettle in the bowels of old mother Earth, filled with the purest bullion. Some attempts have been made to dig it up, but without success. His Satanic Majesty, or some other invisible agent, appears to keep it under **marching orders**; for no sooner is it dug on to in one place, than it moves off like “false delusive hope,” to another still more remote. But its pursuers are now sanguine of success—they have entrenched the kettle all round, and driven a steel ramrod into the ground directly over it, to break the enchantment. Nothing now remains, but to raise its ponderous weight, . . .

By the rust on the kettle, and the color of the silver, it is supposed to have been deposited where it now lies, prior to the flood. (*Wayne Sentinel*, December 27, 1825, page 2)

Some of the early Mormon leaders believed in peep stones. The Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde claimed that the ability to find metals was a gift from God:

I want to tell a little anecdote which came to my ears. . . . It is said that there is a man in this city, a natural miner, who has a peculiar **gift** to discover metals of value, though **hidden** in the earth at any depth. He can point out the very place where they are. He happened in as gentleman's house in this town one day, and they were discussing his powers to discern any metal in the earth. The lady, doubting his ability, took a piece of lead, and slyly stepped out and buried it, being careful to leave no visible marks by which any other than herself could find it. She returned and told him that in the garden was a piece of lead buried, and wished him to find it if he could. He made the attempt; and after a little rambling, pointed to the very spot where it was; but the lady, thinking to

bluff him off and discourage him, made perfect ridicule of him, and asked what had led him to think it was there. She pretended to regard him as insane, and the poor man came to the conclusion that he might be mistaken, as the lady appeared so sanguine in her ridicule. He gave it up as a mistake, doubting his own **gift**. Since the time that he was bluffed off from the **faith** in the natural **gift that God had given him**—(Pres. H. C. Kimball: And that by a woman!)—yes, and since that, it has been taken away altogether. Before this, he was never mistaken in such matters; but since then, has no more powers of discovering than any other. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, pages 16-17)

There is evidence that the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith possessed a “seer stone.” Willard Chase made these statements in an affidavit dated December 11, 1833:

I became acquainted with the Smith family, . . . in the year 1820. At that time, they were engaged in the **money digging** business, which they followed until the latter part of the season of 1827. In the year 1822, I was engaged in digging a well. I employed Alvin and Joseph Smith to assist me; the latter of whom is now known as the Mormon prophet. After digging about twenty feet below the surface of the earth, we discovered a singularly appearing **stone**, which excited my curiosity. I brought it to the top of the well, and as we were examining it, **Joseph put it into his hat**, and then his face into the top of his hat. It has been said by Smith, that he brought the stone from the well; but this is false. There was no one in the well but myself. The next morning he came to me, and wished to obtain the stone, alledging that he could see in it; but I told him I did not wish to part with it on account of its being a curiosity, but would lend it. After obtaining the stone, he began to publish abroad what wonders he could discover by looking in it, and made so much disturbance among the credulous part of [the] community, that I ordered the stone to be returned to me again. He had it in his possession about two years.—I believe, some time in 1825, Hiram Smith (brother of Joseph Smith) came to me, and wished to borrow the same stone, alledging that they wanted to accomplish some business of importance, which could not very well be done without the aid of the stone. I told him it was of no particular worth to me, but merely wished to keep it as a curiosity, and if he would pledge me his word and honor, that I should have it when called for, he might take it; which he did and took the stone. I thought I could rely on his word at this time; as he had made a profession of religion. But in this I was disappointed, for he disregarded both his word and honor.

In the fall of 1826, a friend called upon me and wished to see that stone, about which so much had been said; and I told him if he would go with me to Smith's, (a distance of about half a mile) he might see it. But to my surprize, on going to Smith's, and asking him for the stone, he said, “you cannot have it;” I told him it belonged to me, repeated to him the promise he made me, at the time of obtaining the stone: upon which he faced me with a malignant look and said, “I don't care who in the Devil it belongs to, you shall not have it.” . . .



In April, 1830, I again asked Hiram for the stone which he had borrowed of me; he told me I should not have it, for **Joseph made use of it in translating his Bible.** (*Mormonism Unveiled*, Painesville, Ohio, 1834, pages 240, 241, 242 and 247)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts accepted the story that Joseph Smith's stone was found in a well. He made the following statement in the *A 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 company with 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.

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe stated:

Some use was made also of the seer stone and occasional mention was made of it. This was a stone found while the Prophet assisted in digging a well for Clark Chase. By divine power this stone was made serviceable to Joseph Smith in the early part of his ministry. (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, by John A. Widtsoe, page 267)

George Q. Cannon, who became a member of the First Presidency, stated:

One of Joseph's aids in searching out the truths of the record was a peculiar **pebble or rock** which he called a **seer stone**, and which was sometimes used by him in lieu of the Urim and Thummim. This stone had been discovered to himself and his brother Hyrum at the bottom of a well; and under divine guidance they had brought it forth for use in the work of translation. (*Life of Joseph Smith*, by George Q. Cannon, page 56)

Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, made this statement concerning Joseph Smith's "stone":

These plates were found at the north point of a hill two miles north of Manchester village. Joseph had a stone which was dug from the well of Mason Chase, twenty-four feet from the surface. In this stone he could see many things to my certain knowledge. **It was by means of this stone he first discovered these plates.**

In the first place, he told me of this stone, and proposed to bind it on his eyes, and **run a race**, with me in the woods. A few days after this, I was at the house of his father in Manchester, two miles south of Palmyra village, and was picking my teeth with a pin while sitting on the bars. The pin caught in my teeth, and dropped from

my fingers into shavings and straw. I jumped from the bars and looked for it. Joseph and Northrop Sweet also did the same. We could not find it. I then took Joseph on surprise, and said to him—I said, "Take your stone." I had never seen it, and did not know that he had it with him. He had it in his pocket. **He took it and placed it in his hat**—the old white hat—and placed his face in his hat. I watched him closely to see that he did not look one side; he reached out his hand beyond me on the right, and moved a little stick, and there I saw the pin, which he picked up and gave to me. I know he did not look out of the hat until after he had picked up the pin.

"Joseph had had this stone for some time. There was a company there in that neighborhood, who were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients. Of this company were old Mr. Stowel—I think his name was Josiah—also old Mr. Beman, also Samuel Lawrence, George Proper, **Joseph Smith, Jr.**, and his father, and his brother Hiram Smith. They dug for money in Palmyra, Manchester, also in Pennsylvania, and other places. When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to **look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while**, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong that he could not see, and they gave it up. There he became acquainted with his future wife, the daughter of old Mr. Isaac Hale, where he boarded. He afterwards returned to Pennsylvania again, and married his wife, taking her off to old Mr. Stowel's, because her people would not consent to the marriage. She was of age, Joseph was not.

"After this, on the 22d of September, 1827, before day, Joseph took the horse and wagon of old Mr. Stowel, and taking his wife, he went to the place where the plates were concealed, and while he was obtaining them, she kneeled down and prayed. He then took the plates and hid them in an old black oak tree top which was hollow. . . .

"The money-diggers claimed that they has as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together. They claimed that Joseph had been a traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them. For this reason Joseph was afraid of them, and continued concealing the plates. . . ." Joseph had before this described the manner of his finding the plates. He **found them by looking in the stone**, found in the well of Mason Chase. The family had likewise told me the same thing.

"Joseph said that the angel told him he **must quit the company of the money-diggers**. That there were wicked men among them. He must have no more to do with them. He must not lie, nor swear, nor steal. (Interview with Martin Harris, *Tiffany's Monthly*, 1859, pages 163, 164, 165, 167, and 169)

On April 23, 1880, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed what was purported to be the agreement between Joseph Smith and the other money-diggers:

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, which will throw some light on the subject. The *Journal* is published near the scene of our martyred Prophet's early exploits.

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. . . .

#### 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 (Johns F. Sheperd, 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	Wm. I. Wiley

(*The Daily Tribune*, Salt Lake, Friday morning, April 23, 1880, as quoted in *A New Witness for Christ In America*, by Frances W. Kirkham, 1951 ed., vol. 1, pages 492-494)

While the Mormon apologist Frances W. Kirkham feels that Joseph Smith did not use a "seer stone" to deceive, he does not seem to question the authenticity of this agreement:

The April 23, 1880, issue of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, printed articles of an agreement between nine persons including Isaiah Stowell, Joseph Smith, Sr. and Joseph Smith, Jr., regarding excavating "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 of ingots of gold and silver." This agreement when published was preceded with the usual vitriolic comments made regarding Joseph Smith and his activities. At this time, anti-Mormon literature portrayed Joseph Smith as a fraud, ignorant and superstitious.

If the comments are disregarded, **the agreement is found to be similar to the statements made by Isaac Hale**, (see his quoted affidavit on page 472) Joseph Smith, and Josiah Stowell. All agree that an effort was made to find a place where early Spanish explorers might have hidden "gold or silver bars or ingots." Joseph Smith writes that their activity lasted about one month when he persuaded Mr. Stowell to discontinue his effort.

But such employment in a mine is in no way related to the alleged use of a "seer stone" by Joseph Smith to deceive superstitious persons that he had the ability to look into the depths of the earth for hidden treasures. (*A New Witness for Christ In America*, vol. 1, pages 487-488)

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, made these statements concerning Joseph Smith's connection with money-digging:

One of the first objections that was urged against Joseph Smith was that he was a **money digger**; and now the digging of gold is considered an honorable and praiseworthy employment. They are hunting for gold all over the country, doing the very thing which they condemned in him. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 12, page 165)

The cry with regard to brother Joseph was, "He is a money digger, he is a speculator." Well, how long was it before the whole world was on his track digging money? It was no disgrace just as soon as the world commenced digging money, but when there were only a few accused of it, it was a disgrace. How things are changed! (*Ibid.*, vol. 16, page 29)

After Joseph Smith organized the Mormon Church he did not have much to say about his money-digging activities. He did, however, admit that he had been engaged in money-digging. In the July, 1838, issue of the *Elders' Journal*, Joseph Smith attempted to answer the questions that were most frequently asked him. Question No. 10 read as follows:

Question 10: Was not Jo Smith a money digger?

Answer: YES, but it was never a very profitable job to him, as he only got fourteen dollars a month for it. (*Elders' Journal*, July, 1838, page 43; reprinted in the *History of the Church*, vol. 3, page 29)

According to David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith gave the stone which he used to translate the Book of Mormon to Oliver Cowdery. Later this stone was brought to Utah. A newspaper reporter wrote the following in his account of an interview with David Whitmer:

**With this stone all of the present Book of Mormon was translated.** It is the only one of these relics which is not in the possession of the Whitmers. For years Oliver Cowdery surrounded it with care and solicitude, but at his death old Phineas Young, a brother of Brigham Young, and an old-time and once intimate friend of the Cowdery family, came out from Salt Lake City, and during his visit he contrived to get the stone from its hiding place, through a little deceptive sophistry, expended upon the grief-stricken widow. When he returned to Utah he carried it in triumph to the apostles of Brigham Young's "lion house." (*Des Moines Daily News*, October 16, 1886)

We know that by 1856 Joseph Smith's "seer stone" had been brought to Utah, for Hosea Stout recorded the following in his diary under the date of February 25, 1856:

President Young exhibited the **seer's stone** with which The Prophet Joseph discovered the plates of the Book of Mormon, to the Regents this evening

It is said to be a sileicious granite dark color almost black with light colored stripes some what resembling petrified poplar or cotton wood bark It was about the size but not the shape of a hen's egg (*On The Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*, vol. 2, page 593)

### Book of Mormon from Stone

In the *History of the Church* the following incident is recorded:

"Brother Hyrum Smith said that he thought best that the information of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon be related by Joseph himself to the Elders present, that all might know for themselves."

"Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., said that it was not intended to tell the world all the **particulars** of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and also said that it was not expedient for him to relate these things." (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 220)

One of the "particulars" Joseph Smith failed to relate was his use of the stone in a hat to translate the Book

of Mormon. It is claimed that the Urim and Thummim consisted of two stones set in silver bows fastened to a breastplate. While Joseph Smith may have possessed two stones set in silver bows, evidence seems to indicate that he used the stone which he placed in a hat to translate the Book of Mormon. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, stated:

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; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. (*An Address To All Believers In Christ*, by David Whitmer, page 12)

Emma Smith, Joseph Smith's wife, told the following to her son:

In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, after sitting by the table close by him, he sitting with **his face buried in his hat with the stone in it**, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us. (*The Saints' Herald*, May 19, 1888, page 310)

Martin Harris, another of the three witnesses, also stated that a stone was used:

On Sunday, Sept. 4, 1870, Martin Harris addressed a congregation of Saints in Salt Lake City. He related an incident which occurred during the time that he wrote that portion of the translation of the Book of Mormon which he was favored to write direct from the mouth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and said that the Prophet possessed a **seer stone**, by which he was enabled to **translate** as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for **convenience** he then used the seer stone. . . . Martin said that after continued translation they would become weary, and would go down to the river and exercise by throwing stones out on the river, etc. While so doing, on one occasion, Martin Harris found a stone very much resembling the one used for translating, and on resuming their labor of translation, he put in place the **stone** he had found. He said that the Prophet remained silent, unusually and intently gazing in darkness, no traces of the usual sentences appearing. Much surprised, Joseph exclaimed, "Martin! What is the matter! All is as dark as Egypt!" Martin's countenance betrayed him, and the Prophet asked Martin why he had done so. Martin said, to stop the mouths of fools, who had told him that the Prophet had learned those sentences and was merely repeating them, etc. (*Historical Record*, by Andrew Jenson, page 216)

In his booklet, *How Did Joseph Smith Translate?* the Mormon writer Arch S. Reynolds stated:

In the B. of M. [Book of Mormon] the Lord gives:

I will prepare my servant Gazelem, **a stone**, which shall shine forth in darkness into light, that I may discover unto them (the Lamanites) the works of their brethren. (Alma 37:23)

Compare this with the *Doc. and Cov.* 82:11 and see that Joseph Smith is the Gazelem. This **stone** did shine forth to us in darkness when he received the B. of M. characters with their English equivalents when **he had his eyes hidden from natural light in a hat** as testified by his associates. (*How Did Joseph Smith Translate?* by Arch S. Reynolds, page 7)

James E. Lancaster gives us this interesting information:

One other person who was a witness to the events that transpired in the Whitmer home has left us an account of the translation of the Book of Mormon. Michael Morse who was married to Trial [Tyrall] Hale, one of Isaac Hale's daughters, a sister to Emma Smith, was present at the time of the translation. In 1879 in an interview with W. W. Blair of the Reorganized Church, Mr. Morse gave his testimony as to the method of translation of the Book of Mormon. From this testimony it appears that Mr. Morse was prejudiced neither for nor against the church. The pertinent parts of his testimony as related by President Blair are as follows:

He further states that when Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon, he, (Morse), had occasion more than once to go into his immediate presence, and saw him engaged at his work of translation.

The mode of procedure consisted in Joseph's placing the **Seer Stone in the crown of a hat, then putting his face into the hat**, so as to entirely cover his face, resting his elbows upon his knees, and then dictating, word after word, while the scribe—Emma, John Whitmer, O. Cowdery, or some other, wrote it down.

Isaac Hale, Emma's father, has also left his testimony regarding the translation of the Book of Mormon. This testimony first appeared in 1834, fairly early in the history of the church. Unlike Mr. Morse, Isaac Hale obviously felt very strongly against Joseph Smith and the Mormon movement. He stated:

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 same source also contains the testimony of Alva Hale, one of the sons of Isaac Hale. It is not worthwhile to quote it here because of its extreme bias. (*Saints' Herald*, November 15, 1962, page 17)

Arch S. Reynolds stated:

The Seerstone that the Prophet Joseph Smith used was, according to the *Millennial Star*, vol. 24, p. 86, a chocolate-colored stone about the size of an egg that was oval in shape. It was found by Joseph in a well when working for Clark Chase in the year 1826. (See *Reminiscences of the Prophet Joseph* by Edward Stevenson, page 30)

It is well known that Joseph used this stone to translate the first part of the Book of Mormon record while Martin Harris was scribe. This is proved by Martin's description of the medium and its use. After Joseph used it for receiving revelations and translating the Nephite record, he gave it in the care of Oliver Cowdery in April 1830 according to David Whitmer. . . . We find Joseph using this instrument, however, after that date. Orson Pratt declared that:

Joseph received **several revelations**, to which I was witness by means of the **Seerstone**, but he could receive also without any instrument. (*Millennial Star*, vol. 40, no. 49)

. . . .

On May 17, 1888, we find this same Seerstone, offered on the altar of the Manti Temple by President Wilford Woodruff. Brother B. H. Roberts describes the incident:

President Woodruff May 17, 1888, at a private dedication mentioned, "before leaving I consecrated upon the altar the **Seerstone** that Joseph Smith found by revelation some thirty feet under the earth, and carried by him throughout life."

"This is the **very Seerstone** that the Prophet used part of the time when **translating the Book of Mormon**; the one he took from the well he was digging with his brother Hyrum, near Paltry, for Mr. Clark Chase, and which he was falsely accused of taking from the children of Mr. Chase, spoken of in chapter ten of this work" (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 230). On the next page Roberts says: "What became of the Seerstone immediately after this is not known. The writer (Roberts) knows, that it was in the possession of the Church as a matter of conversation between President Smith and himself (Roberts); and he has reason for knowing that it is now in possession of the Church this year of 1930." (*Ibid.*, page 231)

(*The Urim and Thummim*, by Arch S. Reynolds, pages 18-20)

In a letter written March 27, 1876, Emma Smith, who was married to Joseph Smith, stated that the entire Book of Mormon, that we have today, was translated by the use of a stone. James E. Lancaster states:

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. Sometime in the early part of 1876 a woman by the name of Pilgrim wrote to Emma Bidamon, requesting information as to the translation of the Book of Mormon. Emma Bidamon replied in a letter to Sister Pilgrim, written from Nauvoo, Illinois, 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. I cannot tell whether that account in the *Times and Seasons* is correct or not because someone stole all my books and I have none to refer to at present, if I can find one that has that account I will tell you what is true and what is not.

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, page 15)

David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses, admitted that he never did see Joseph Smith use the Urim and Thummim (or the two stones set in silver bows). This information is found in the article by James E. Lancaster:

The other is a statement he made to a member of the Reorganized Church, J. L. Traughber, Jr., in October, 1879, and printed in *Saints' Herald*. In connection with this latter testimony it should be pointed out that David Whitmer never met Joseph Smith until June, 1829. 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 that he **does not say the 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, page 16)

Mr. Lancaster quotes an interview with David Whitmer which was published in the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, October 17, 1886. In this interview the following statement appeared:

By fervent prayer and by otherwise humbling himself, the prophet, however, again found favor, and was presented with a strange, oval-shaped, chocolate-colored stone, about the size of an egg, only more flat, which, it was promised, should serve the same purpose as the missing Urim and Thummim (the latter was a pair of transparent stones set in a bow-shaped frame and very much resembled a pair of spectacles). **With this stone all of the present Book of Mormon was translated.** (*Saints' Herald*, November 15, 1962, page 16)

One thing that has caused confusion is the fact that the "seer stone" was sometimes called the Urim and Thummim. Bruce R. McConkie, of the First Council of the Seventy, makes this statement concerning the seer stone:

The Prophet also had a **seer stone** which was separate and distinct from the Urim and Thummim, and which (speaking loosely) has been called by some a Urim and Thummim. (*Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City, 1966, page 818)

Joseph Smith's brother William referred to the stone as the Urim and Thummim:

The manner in which this was done was by looking into the Urim and Thummim, which was placed in a hat to exclude the light, (the plates lying near by covered up), and reading off the translation, which appeared in the **stone** by the power of God. (*William Smith On Mormonism*, reprinted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, by Francis W. Kirkham, vol. 2, page 417)

Brigham Young also called the seer stone the Urim and Thummim. The following is found in a thesis submitted to the Brigham Young University:

Some have felt to question Wilford Woodruff's correctness in calling the instrument the Urim and Thummim. On the same date of December 27, 1841, Elder Woodruff claims to have been shown the Urim and Thummim, Brigham Young recorded in his history the showing of the instrument—only he said that it was the "seer stone."

—27.—I met with the Twelve at brother Joseph's. He conversed with us in a familiar manner on a variety of subjects, and explained to us the Urim and Thummim which he found with the plates, called in the Book of Mormon the Interpreters. He said that every man who lived on the earth was entitled to a seer stone, and should have one, but they are kept from them in consequence of their wickedness, an most of those who **do find**

**one make an evil use of it; he showed us his seer stone.**

(“Textual Changes in the *Pearl of Great Price*,” M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, typed copy, page 9)

The Mormon Historian Joseph Fielding Smith admits that the seer stone was sometimes called the Urim and Thummim:

The statement has been made that the Urim and Thummim was on the altar in the Manti Temple when that building was dedicated. The **Urim and Thummim** so spoken of, however, was the **seer stone** which was in the possession of the Prophet Joseph Smith in early days. This seer stone is now in the possession of the Church. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, page 225)

### Embarrassed Over Stone

The fact that Joseph Smith used a stone, which he placed in a hat, to translate the Book of Mormon has caused a great deal of embarrassment because it so closely resembled crystal gazing. Crystal gazing is an ancient practice. Crystal gazers have claimed to see writings in their stones in the same way that Joseph Smith was supposed to have translated the Book of Mormon. In the book, *Strange Superstitions and Magical Practices*, we read:

Among primitive peoples there is a widespread belief in the **magical** efficacy of quartz crystals—one of the most common of all **luminous stones**. These mineralogical specimens are frequently the main prop of the magician. They are used for this purpose by the aborigines of Australia, Polynesia and North America, among others. (*Strange Superstitions and Magical Practices*, by William J. Fielding, page 53)

On pages 137-138 of the *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* by Rossell Hope Robbins, the following information appears: “In England, for example, in 1467 a William Byg was convicted of using a **crystal stone** to locate stolen property; . . .”

The Mormon writer Arch S. Reynolds stated:

During the early history of the Latter-day Saints’ Church, many people arose with so-called seerstones, claiming to have power of seeing many things such as seeing the place where lost articles were, also where the Book of Mormon plates were hidden. Some of these clairvoyants were the means of leading many astray from the truth. One of the earliest of these peepstone gazers was a young woman named Miss Chase, sister of Willard Chase, a Methodist class-leader. (See Lucy Smith’s *Life of*

*the Prophet Joseph*, page 102) Miss Chase found a green glass, through which she claimed she could see where Joseph Smith kept the Gold Plates. (*Ibid.*, page 109)

. . . .

Brewster had a stone by which he pretended to receive revelations. There were others in the early rise of the Church—Isaac Russel and James J. Strang who tried to lead factions from the Church and pretended to receive revelations by stone or Urim. . . .

From the earliest days of the Church we have had many who have claimed to have had the power to see things in so-called peepstones. There are stones among the Church members that are considered by some to be their receiving communications from the unseen world.

Edwin Rushton dug in the ground in the city of Nauvoo, Illinois, as a dream had previously shown, and obtained a seerstone about five feet underground, on May 4, 1846. He was a resident of Nauvoo at the time he obtained it. The stone, which still exists, appears to be a little smaller than a quarter of a baseball, and is crystal clear. He never tried to use the stone, as far as we know. It now reposes in the possession of his son-in-law, C. W. Christensen, of Salt Lake City, Utah. (*The Urim and Thummim*, by Arch S. Reynolds, pages 21-24)

On page 28 of the same booklet, Arch S. Reynolds states:

Not only true media have been used by God’s seers throughout the centuries; but false ones such as peepstones, crystal balls, etc. have been brought forth by the Adversary to further his diabolic work and hinder God’s plan on earth.

Bruce R. McConkie, of the First Council of the Seventy, made this statement:

In imitation of the true order of heaven whereby seers receive revelations from God through a Urim and Thummim, the devil gives his own revelations to some of his followers through peep stones or crystal balls. (*Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City, 1966, pages 565-566)

Charlotte Haven gave this interesting information in a letter from Nauvoo, dated May 2, 1843:

It is said that Joseph read the golden plates by looking through the Peep Stone. Now he pretends not to believe in the Peep Stone, although many of his followers undoubtedly do. The stone is in the possession of a high church dignitary, and has the power of seeing and reading things without the use of eyes—a sort of clairvoyant. I am told that many of the English and Scotch, when becoming anxious about their friends across the ocean, with implicit faith consult the Peep Stone, which not only tells them of their friends health, but what they are doing at the time. But it is not always infallible, as you will see.



Some weeks ago, a store was broken open and nearly all its contents stolen. The Peep Stone pretended to reveal where the goods were deposited, and immediately ten or fifteen men with teams started for the spot, but lo! nothing was there. (*Overland Monthly*, December 1890, page 630)

The early Mormon people were prone to the use of “peep stones.” Hosea Stout recorded the following in his diary under the date of September 9, 1845:

Went Early this morning to see B. Young, . . . and came home by way of Br C. Allen & then I took the horse & buggy home and came home and met the police and then went with Br Harmon & Horr to see a boy look in a “peep Stone,” for some money which he said he could see hid up in the ground, he would look and we would dig but he found no money he said it would move as we approached it, I came home about ten oclock at night. (*On The Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*, vol. 1, pages 61-62)

Wandle Mace recorded this interesting information in his journal:

Uncle John visited us and during his stay we related to him our experience (with evil spirits) and we learned from him that . . . In Staffordshire a branch of the Church was organized at the Potteries and Elder Alfred Cordon was president; among those who embraced the Gospel at this place were some who had practiced magic, or astrology. They had Books which had been handed down for many generations; they also had two stones, about the size of goose eggs; . . . This is the substance of the narration as I heard it from Uncle John. Sometime after I moved to Nauvoo I became acquainted with Elder Alfred Cordon, who related to me the same; he also said the Books with the stones were placed into his hands by these men after they joined the church, and he gave them to Apostle George A. Smith who destroyed the books, but put the stones in the bottom of his trunk and brought them to Nauvoo. He gave them to Joseph the prophet who pronounced them to be a Urim and Thummim—as good as ever was upon the earth—but he said, “They have been consecrated to devils.” (*Wandle Mace Diary*, page 66, as quoted in *Seer Stones*, by Ogden Kraut, pages 22-23)

In Utah the anti-Mormon paper, *Valley Tan*, accused the Mormons of using “peep stones”:

. . . the Mormons . . . have better facilities for obtaining information than through newspapers. About every other family, and generally the one between, is possessed of either astrological science or a “peep-stone.” . . . through the latter—a small globular-shaped pebble—they can see cattle beyond mountains twenty or a hundred miles, or even a greater distance off. (*Valley Tan*, October 5, 1859, page 2)

Although this is probably an exaggeration, there were many who used “peep stones” in Utah. In John M. Whitaker’s journal, for instance, we find the following:

Sister Greaves and I had often met and she opened her heart to me and told me of her troubles with her Bishop, Orson F. Whitney, going to her sisters place and getting information from a **sear** [seer] stone I tried in several ways to explain what a fine man Bishop Whitney was, and could not understand why he sought such a source for information—“I sincerely believe he has more faith than that,—” and she said, “you see dear, he has a little **Adam** in him.” (Excerpts from the Daily Journal of John M. Whitaker, typed copy, vol. 1, page 151)

According to Ogden Kraut, J. Golden Kimball, one of the first seven presidents of seventies, told Nels B. Lundwall the following:

“During the 1920’s I became a very close acquaintance of J. Golden Kimball. On one occasion he told me that while he was a young man the family cows wandered away and became lost. They hunted everywhere for them, but to no avail. Someone suggested that they go to a certain person who was known to have a ‘seer stone;’ so they proceeded to that person and inquired if they could locate the cows for them. The person used the stone and told them where the cows could be found. Golden said that they went to the place that was specified and there were the cows!”

Statement by Nels B. Lundwall  
to the author, 4-22-67

(*Seer Stones*, by Ogden Kraut, page 25)

The following statements appear in the journal of Priddy Meeks:

After I settled in Parowan some time, I went to the city. . . . after I had got home, President Daniel H. Wells sent a boy to me by the name of Wm. Titt, some 12 or 14 years of age. He was born a natural Seer, . . . Seer Stones, or peepstones as they are more commonly called, was very plenty about Parowan. I rather being a gifted person in knowing a peepstone when seeing one, altho I have never found one yet that I could see in, a seerstone appears to me to be the connecting link between the visible and invisible worlds. . . .

It is not safe to depend on a peepstone in any case where evil spirits has the power to put false appearances before them while looking in a peepstone. If evil influences will not interfere, the verdict will be as true as preaching. That is my experience in the matter. Also, the Patriarch, Hiram Smith, the brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, held the same idea, but stated that our faith was not strong enough to overcome the evil influences that might interfere, but seemed to think that time would come. I have seen peepstones as well polished as a fiddle, with a nice

hole thro one end that belonged to the Ancients. I asked Bro. Smith the use for that hole. He said the same as for a watch chain, to keep from losing it. He said in time of war the Nephites had the advantage of their enemies, by looking in the seerstone, which would reveal whatever they wished to know. (I believe a peepstone is of the same piece with the Urim & Thummum if we understood it.)

Now then, Wm. Titt was the best Seer in peepstones I ever was acquainted with. . . . I believe that Satan and his gang saw the danger his kingdom would be in thro Wm. Titt and the Peepstone, that they done their best to destroy him, . . . (*Priddy Meeks Journal*, pages 32-33)

. . . William Titt, . . . was born a natural Seer. He was the best hand to look in a Seer Stone that I was ever acquainted with. I believe the Lord overruled his coming to me, I having some knowledge of the science of Seer Stones and being somewhat gifted in knowing one when I saw it. I used to find many, and William could tell by looking in it who that stone was for, and I would give that Stone to the one he said it was for, and they would see in them. I yet remember two (2) men's names. Isaac Grundy and James Rollands. They both could see in their Stones when they got them, and if they was strangers, he could discribe the persons, but could not tell their names. I told him if he would be faithful, he did not know the eminence he would arrive at in consequence of his gift. I kept the Seer Stones under my immediate controll, and when needed, I would bring it out and he done a great deal of good by finding lost property and by telling people how their kinsfolks was getting along, even in England. He could satisfy them that he could see correct by discribing things correct, but when it come to things that the Devil did not want the truth to come out, the Devil had power to make false appearances, and William would miss the truth. William being young and limited in experience, he was not able to compete with the devil at all times, and they undertook to distroy him, and they told him if it had not been for old Meeks, they would have destroyed him. I think it was on account of his gift that made them try to distroy him. They comminced by coming into the house one evening some an hour by sun where William was sitting on the floor by the fire. There was three of them, and they caught him around the body and squeezed him nearly to death. I called on two of the brethren to lay hands on with me. Befor they entered the door, William commenced cursing them. They was so astonished at that, knowing that William did not swear, they stoped at the door. I urged them in quick, saying it is the devil talking through William. We had not hands on him but a little while till William says, "There does one devil out at the door; there goes another, and there goes another," says he. And the three all went out at the door and William was rational again. (*Priddy Meeks Journal*, typed copy, pages 46-47)

Mormon apologists have a difficult time explaining the fact that Joseph Smith used a "seer stone." The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made this statement:

Some use was made also of the seer stone and occasional mention was made of it. This was a stone found while the Prophet assisted in digging a well for Clark

Chase. By divine power this stone was made serviceable to Joseph Smith in the early part of his ministry. There is no evidence that this stone was used in Joseph's sacred work. (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, by John A. Widtsoe, Salt Lake City, 1951, page 267)

Notice that Mr. Widtsoe states there is "no evidence that this stone was used in Joseph's sacred work," yet on page 260 of the same book Widtsoe states that Joseph did use the stone in his "spiritual work":

Before Joseph received the Urim and Thummim he had a stone, obtained during the digging of a well for Clark Chase. This stone, through the blessing of the Lord, became a seer stone which was used frequently by him in his spiritual work.

The use of the seer stone explains in part the charge against Joseph Smith that he was a "peep stone gazer." . . . The use of the seer stone and the Urim and Thummim was well-known to the people of his time and neighborhood.

The use of stones in sacred work has been frequent; for example, the ball known as the Liahona, the rod of Aaron, and the twelve stones used by Lehi. (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, page 260)

Joseph Fielding Smith, who recently became the tenth President of the Mormon Church, seems to be embarrassed over the use of the stone. Although he admits that Joseph Smith had a stone, he is unwilling to admit that Joseph used a stone in the translation of the Book of Mormon. He stated:

While the statement has been made by some writers that the Prophet Joseph Smith used a seer stone part of the time in his translating of the record, and information points to the fact that he did have in his possession such a stone, yet there is no authentic statement in the history of the Church which states that the use of such a stone was made in that translation. The information is all hearsay, and personally, I do not believe that this stone was used for this purpose. . . . It hardly seems reasonable to suppose that the Prophet would substitute something evidently **inferior** under these circumstances. It may have been so, but is so easy for a story of this kind to be circulated due to the fact that the Prophet did possess a seer stone, which he may have used for some other purposes. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, by Joseph Fielding Smith, vol. 3, pages 225-226)

A few things should be noted concerning Joseph Fielding Smith's statement. He states that the information concerning the use of the stone in the translation of the Book of Mormon is "hearsay." In making this statement Mr. Smith overlooks the fact that not only Joseph Smith's wife and brother testified that a stone was used, but also David Whitmer and Martin Harris, who were witnesses to the Book of Mormon. These people were eye witnesses to the translation. Mr. Smith also claims that "there is no authentic statement in the history of the Church which states that the use of such a stone was made in that translation." While

it may be true that there is no statement in Joseph Smith's History still the *Comprehensive History of the Church*, by B. H. Roberts, very definitely states that a stone was used in the translation of the Book of Mormon. The fact that Joseph Fielding Smith is embarrassed over the use of the stone is evident from his statement that "It hardly seems reasonable to suppose that the Prophet would substitute something evidently **inferior** under these circumstances."

Perhaps Mr. Smith is reluctant to admit that a stone was used because of the criticism of anti-Mormon writers. M. T. Lamb made this observation concerning the use of the stone:

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*, by M. T. Lamb, pages 250-251)

Joseph Fielding Smith, confronted with so much evidence that a stone was used in the translation of the Book of Mormon, finally has to admit, "It may have been so, but it is so easy for a story of this kind to be circulated due to the fact that the Prophet did possess a seer stone, which he may have used for some other purposes." Mr. Smith does not explain what "other purposes" the stone might have been used for.

The Mormon writer John J. Stewart is willing to concede that Joseph Smith was a money-digger, but he evades the issue of whether or not Joseph Smith actually used a "peep stone":

One of the most persistent stories circulated about young Joe Smith was that he was a peep stone gazer and money digger. In the early nineteenth century New York, Ohio and other areas abounded with mounds and other relics of the past. Newspapers frequently carried accounts

of such "treasures" being unearthed. This fact plus the age old, universal desire of man to find buried treasure and thus secure a life of ease, gave rise to legends and stories of lost mines, hidden gold, etc. What region and what period of time do not have such stories?

Whether Joseph ever did any peep stone gazing, as any youth might, remains a matter of speculation. Nor is it important. But that he did engage in money digging is certain. (*Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, Salt Lake City, 1966, page 22)

On page 225 of his book, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, Joseph Fielding Smith stated:

The Urim and Thummim so spoken of, however, was the **seer stone** which was in the possession of the Prophet Joseph Smith in early days. This seer stone is now in the possession of the Church.

Now, if the Church does still possess this stone, as Mr. Smith claims, the leaders are very reluctant to display it. In an unpublished manuscript on the Book of Mormon, LaMar Petersen states:

Today the Church is silent regarding the stone. It seems somehow beneath the dignity of a Prophet to have ever placed one in his hat. Little or no information can be obtained as to the present whereabouts of the stone. [A.] William Lund, assistant Church historian says: "I have been here in the Library more than forty years and I have never seen it." Yet there are at least three definite statements in responsible Church organs that it does, or did, repose there.

## Relationship to Book of Mormon

A careful examination of the whole story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and even the text of the book itself reveals that it originated in the mind of someone who was familiar with the practice of money-digging. To begin with, the "seer stone" used in "translating" the book seems to be nothing but a common "peep stone." Many people in Joseph Smith's area were using these stones to search for buried treasures. The evidence shows that Joseph Smith found such a stone while digging a well, and that he used his stone to search for treasures. Even Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, admitted that the money-diggers "took Joseph to look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while, . . ." (*Tiffany's Monthly* 1859, page 164). On page 169 of the same publication Martin Harris claimed that Joseph "had before this described the manner of his finding the plates. He found them by looking in the stone found in the well of Mason Chase. The family had likewise told me the same thing." Henry Harris also stated that Joseph Smith told him he saw the plates in the hill Cumorah by means of the stone: "He said he had a revelation from God that told him they were hid in a certain hill and he looked in his stone and saw them in the place



of deposit: . . .” (Affidavit by Henry Harris, as quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, page 133). Hosea Stout also claimed that Joseph Smith used the stone to find the Book of Mormon plates:

President Young exhibited the seer’s stone with which the Prophet Joseph discovered the plates of the Book of Mormon, to the Regents this evening. (*On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*, vol. 2, page 593)

Evidence also shows that in “translating” the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith placed the stone in a hat in the same manner “as when he looked for the money-diggers.” According to witnesses, the plates didn’t even have to be present when Joseph Smith was “translating.” The following statement appears in Arch S. Reynolds’ booklet, *How Did Joseph Smith Translate?* page 6:

At another time David Whitmer gave a description of the procedure:

Joseph Smith did **not see the plates** in translation, but would hold the interpreters (Urim and Thummim) to his eyes and cover his face with a hat, excluding all light, and before him would appear what seemed to be parchment on which would appear the characters of the plates on a line at the top, and immediately below would appear the translation in English, . . . (*Kansas City Journal*, June 5, 1881).

On page 21 of the same booklet, Mr. Reynolds states:

The evidence proves that the plates were not always before Joseph during the translation. His wife and mother state that the plates were on the table wrapped in a cloth while Joseph translated with his eyes hid in a hat, with the seer stone or the Urim and Thummim. David Whitmer, Martin Harris and others state that Joseph hid the plates in the woods and other places while he was translating. Also if Joseph hid his face in a hat while translating what good would the plates have been to him in helping him read the characters? Where it was dark he could not have seen the characters anyway, and the plates were too large to be hidden in a hat.

Although Joseph Smith suppressed the fact that he used a “seer stone” in his history, the Book of Mormon states:

And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations. (Book of Mormon, Alma 37:23)

In the *Doctrine and Covenants* 78:9, Gazelam is identified as “Joseph Smith, Jun.”

As we examine the Book of Mormon story in the light of the money-digging activities of the 1820’s, we notice that the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was “translated” were supposed to have been a very valuable treasure. In fact, when the “first published consecutive account of the origin of the Church” appeared in 1834 and 1835 it stated that Joseph Smith desired to have the Book of Mormon plates to make himself wealthy. This account was republished in the *Times and Seasons* as follows:

. . . I have said that two invisible powers were operating upon his mind during his walk from his residence to Cumorah, and that the one urging the certainty of wealth and ease in this life, had so powerfully wrought upon him, that the great object so carefully and impressively named by the angel, had entirely gone from his recollection, that only a fixed determination to obtain now urged him forward, . . . a little exertion in removing the soil from the edges of the top of the box, and a light pry, brought to his natural vision its contents. No sooner did he behold this sacred **treasure** than his hopes were renewed, and he supposed his success certain; and without first attempting to take it from its long place of deposit, he thought, perhaps, there might be something more equally as valuable, and to take only the plates, might give others an opportunity of obtaining the remainder, which could he secure, would still add to his **store of wealth**. These, in short, were his reflections, without once thinking of the solemn instruction of the heavenly messenger, that all must be done with an express view of glorifying God.

On attempting to take possession of the record a shock was produced upon his system, by an invisible power, which deprived him, in a measure, of his natural strength. He desisted for an instant, and then made another attempt, but was more sensibly shocked than before. What was the occasion of this he knew not—there was the pure unsullied record, as had been described—he had heard of the power of enchantment, and a thousand like stories, which held the hidden treasures of the earth, and supposed that physical exertion and personal strength was only necessary to enable him to yet obtain the object of his wish. He therefore made the third attempt with an increased exertion, when his strength failed him more than at either of the former times, and without premeditating he exclaimed: “Why can I not obtain this book?”

“Because you have **not** kept the commandments of the Lord,” answered a voice, within a seeming short distance.

He looked, and to his astonishment, there stood the angel who had previously given him the directions concerning this matter. (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 2, pages 392-393)

Even Joseph Smith’s mother seems to have had an interest in the value of the treasures found in the hill Cumorah. Speaking of the breastplate which was found with the Book of Mormon plates, she said: “The whole plate was **worth at least five hundred dollars**: . . .” (*Biographical*

*Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, London, 1853, page 107). In later printings of Mrs. Smith's book, these words have been completely deleted without any indication (see photograph in our *Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 1, page 61). The Mormon leaders have also deleted her description of the Urim and Thummim. In this description Joseph's mother claimed that the Urim and Thummim consisted of "Diamonds set in glass":

. . . 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. (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, page 101)

In an affidavit given December 8, 1833, William Stafford told of the great interest which the Smith family had in money-digging:

. . . I first became acquainted with Joseph, Sen., and his family in the year 1820. . . They would say, for instance, that in such a place, in such a hill, on a certain man's farm, there were deposited kegs, barrels and hogsheads of coined silver and gold—bars of gold, golden images, brass kettles filled with gold and silver—gold candlesticks, swords, &c &c. They would say, also, that nearly all the hills in this part of New York, were thrown up by human hands, and in them were large caves, which Joseph Jr., could see, by placing a stone of singular appearance in his hat, in such a manner as to exclude all light; at which time they pretended he could see all things within and under the earth,—that he could see within the above mentioned caves, large gold bars and silver plates—that he could also discover the spirits in whose charge these treasures were clothed in ancient dress. (*Mormonism Unveiled*, Painesville, Ohio, 1834, pages 237-238)

It is very interesting to compare Stafford's statement about the caves with a statement by Brigham Young which we have previously quoted:

Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a **cave**, in which there was a large and spacious room. . . They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room **more plates than probably many wagon loads**; . . . (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 19, page 38)

Heber C. Kimball, who was a member of the First Presidency, also spoke of this cave:

How does it compare with the vision that Joseph and others had, when they went into a **cave** in the hill Cumorah, and saw more records than ten men could carry? There were books piled up on tables, book upon book. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, page 105)

The Mormon writer Edward Stevenson made these interesting statements about the cave:

It was likewise stated to me by David Whitmer in the year 1877 that Oliver Cowdery told him that the Prophet Joseph and himself had seen this room and that it was filled with treasure, and on a table therein were the breastplate and the sword of Laban, as well as the portion of gold plates not yet translated, and that these plates were bound by three small gold rings, and would also be translated, as was the first portion in the days of Joseph. When they are translated much useful information will be brought to light. But till that day arrives, no Rochester adventurers shall ever see them or the treasures, although science and mineral rods testify that they are there. At the proper time when greed, selfishness and corruption shall cease to reign in the hearts of the people, these vast hoards of hidden treasure shall be brought forth to be used for the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ. (*Reminiscences of Joseph the Prophet*, Salt Lake City, 1893, pages 14-15)

The Book of Mormon makes these statements concerning hidden treasures:

And behold, if a man hide up a treasure in the earth, and the Lord shall say—Let it be accursed, because of the iniquity of him who hath hid it up—behold, it shall be accursed.

And if the Lord shall say—Be thou accursed, that no man shall find thee from this time henceforth and forever—behold, no man getteth it henceforth and forever. (Book of Mormon, Helaman 12:18-19)

. . . whoso shall hide up treasures in the earth shall find them again no more, because of the great curse of the land, save he be a righteous man and shall hide it up unto the Lord.

For I will, saith the Lord, that they shall hide up their treasures unto me; and cursed be they who hide not up their treasures unto me; for none hideth up their treasures unto me save it be the righteous; and he that hideth not up his treasures unto me, cursed is he, and also the treasure, and none shall redeem it because of the curse of the land. (*Ibid.*, Helaman, 13:18-19)

The reader will remember that Brigham Young told of a "chest of money" that moved by itself "into the bank," and that Martin Harris told of "stone box" which "slipped back into the hill." This idea of treasures slipping into the earth seems to be reflected in the Book of Mormon. In Helaman 13:34-36 we read:

Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle.

"Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have **slipped** away from us, because of the curse of the land.

O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold the land is cursed, and all things are become **slippery**, and we cannot hold them. (Book of Mormon, Helaman 13:34-36)

In Mormon 1:18 we read that the people “began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became **slippery**, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them again.”

From the evidence we have presented it becomes clear that the Book of Mormon had its origin among a people who believed in “seer stones” and money-digging.

### Working with the Rod

One of the most important changes Joseph Smith made in his revelations was an obvious attempt to cover up the fact that he had endorsed the idea that Oliver Cowdery had a gift from God to work with a divining rod. Below is a comparison of the way this revelation was first printed in the *Book of Commandments* and the way it has been changed to read in recent editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants* (see photograph in our *Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 1, page 144, Change F).

#### BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS

Now this is not all, for you have another gift, which is the gift of **working with the rod**: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this **rod of nature**, to work in your hands, . . . (Chapter 7:3)

#### DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the **gift of Aaron**; behold, it has told you many things;

Behold, there is no other power, save the power of God, that can cause this **gift of Aaron** to be with you. (Section 8:6 and 7)

The reader will notice that the words “**working with the rod**” and “**rod of nature**” have been entirely deleted from this revelation.

In the *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* we find some information that would seem to show that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery derived their interest in working with the rod from their parents:

About 1800, occurred the “Wood scrape,” a term not expressive perhaps of what is meant, but a name which has always been given by the people to a strange affair in which the Wood families, then living here, were the leading actors. It was a religious delusion, and, at the time, the cause of great excitement here, and of a good deal of notoriety in this part of the State. . . .

Before 1860, I had conversed with more than 30 old men and women who were living here in 1800, and then supposed I had obtained all the information that could be had on that subject, the substance of which was that the Woods dug for money in various parts of the town, and were engaged in this for nearly a year; that they used hazel-rods which they pretended would lead them to places where money had been buried, and that they finally predicted that there would be an earthquake on a future day by them named, and that when that day arrived there was great excitement and commotion among the people, such as was never known here before nor since. . . . His [Nathaniel Wood’s] peculiar religious doctrines will appear as we proceed. Suffice it to say, for the present, that he regarded himself and his followers as modern Israelites or Jews, under the special care of Providence; that the Almighty would not only specially interpose in their behalf, but would visit their enemies, the Gentiles (all outsiders), with his wrath and vengeance.

In this condition we find Nathaniel Wood and his followers when the hazel-rod was introduced, and the money digging commenced; but the Woods did not commence it; that honor belongs to a man of another name; but they were in a condition to adopt this man’s rod-notions, which they did with great effect in their work of deluding the people.

A man by the name of Winchell, as he called himself when he came here, was the first man who used the hazel-rod. . . . He was a fugitive from justice from Orange county, Vermont, where he had been engaged in counterfeiting. He first went to a Mr. Cowdry’s, in Wells, who then lived in that town, near the line between Wells and Middletown, in the house now owned and occupied by Robert Parks, Esq. Cowdry was the father of **Oliver Cowdery**, the noted Mormon, who claimed to have been one of the witnesses to Joe Smith’s revelations, and to have written the book of Mormon, as it was deciphered by Smith from the golden plates. Winchell, I have been told, was a friend and acquaintance of Cowdry’s, but of this I cannot be positive; they were intimate afterwards; but Winchell staid at Cowdry’s some little time, keeping himself concealed, and it is the opinion of some with whom I have conversed that he commenced his operations of digging for money in Wells, but I have been unable to determine as to that. . . .

Winchell next turns up in Middletown, at Ezekiel Perry’s in the Fall or fore part of the winter of 1799. . . . and here he began to use the hazel-rod (whether he had before used it at Cowdry’s, in Wells, I cannot say). . . . he gathered quite a number about him from the immediate neighborhood, and told them there was money buried in that region, and with his rod he could find it, and if they would assist in digging it out, and forever keep it a secret, he would give them a part of the money. This they agreed to, and were all eager to commence digging.

Before we proceed further, we should, perhaps, say a word about this rod, which played such a part in Middletown in this eventful year. The best description we can give of it is this: It was a stick of what has been known as witch-hazel—a small bush or shrub very common in this vicinity. It was cut with two prongs, in the form of a fork, and the person using it would take the two prongs,



one in each hand, and the other end from the body. From the use of this stick Winchell an[d] [t]he Woods pretended to divine all sorts of things to suit their purposes. . . .

After Winchell had made his proposals to those whom he gathered about him, and they had been accepted, he had recourse to his rod to determine whether they were sincere in their promises to keep the money digging a secret. The rod, as he pretended, told him they were, and then he sallied out; went on to the hill, east of Perry's house, holding his rod before him in the manner indicated, his dupes following after. . . . The men, under Winchell, immediately prepared themselves with shovels and other implements, and commenced digging. They worked hard for two or three days, and becoming weary, their enthusiasm began to cool, and they began to show signs of giving out. Winchell held up his rod, got some motion from it, and told them the money was in an iron chest and covered with a large stone, and that they would soon come to it. . . . He impressed it upon them, that the occasion was one of "awful moment," that there was a "divinity" guarding the treasure, and that if there was any lack of faith in any one of the party, or any should utter a word while removing the stone and taking out the chest, that this divinity would put the money forever beyond their reach, . . . Some one of the party stepped on the foot of another, the latter crying out in pain, "Get off from my toes." Winchell exclaimed with a loud voice, "The money is gone, flee for your lives!" Every man of the party dropped his bar or lever, and ran as though it was for life. . . .

The Woods then commenced using the hazel rod and digging for money, which was in the Spring or early summer of 1800, and continued in this until late in the Fall, and some have said until into the Winter. Winchell was with them, but it was not generally known, he being concealed—the Woods were the ostensible managers. . . . the Woods superintended the work, and were the men who handled the rod for the most part in those operations. Jacob Wood, known as Capt. Wood, one of the sons of Nathaniel, was the leader in the use of the rod. "Priest Wood" his father, seemed to throw his whole soul into the rod delusion, but his use of the rod was mostly as a medium of revelation. It was "St. John's rod" he said, and undoubtedly was very convenient for him, as he was much more fruitful in his prophecies than before—but Capt. Jacob was the man to find where the money was buried, and to use the rod at their public meetings, and on other occasions, though all the Woods and their followers, had each a rod, which was used whenever they desired any information. If any one was sick, they sought the rod to know whether they would live or die, and to know what medicine to administer to them. In all their business matters, they followed, as they said, the direction of the rod, and with it they could, as they pretended, divine the thoughts and intentions of men. . . . Many of the old people have told me, that almost every day during that season, Capt. Wood, or some other one, could be seen with the two prongs of the rod twisted around his hands, in search for buried treasures. . . . there was no show of reason in the affair from beginning to end, their idea was, that it was revelation, that it was made known to them through the medium of St. John's rod, and would be revealed to none others but God's chosen people. Nathaniel Wood's Jewish theory, (if I may so call it,) ran through the whole thing from first to last. . . .

The rods-men, (such they were called,) became so infatuated as to give up nearly their whole time to this scheme. All the believers became wild fanatics. . . .

The Woods at one time had it revealed to them, that they must build a temple. . . .

Mr. Clark in his letter says: "By what I have heard of them (the Woods), I have no doubt that the movement gave origin to the Mormons." . . .

That the system of religion promulgated by Nathaniel Wood, and adopted by his followers in 1800, was the same, or "much the same," as the Mormons adopted on the start, is beyond question. It was claimed by the Mormons, so says a writer of their history, "that pristine Christianity was to be restored, with the gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues—with power to heal all manner of diseases—that the fulness of the gospel was to be brought forth by the power of God, and the seed of Israel were to be brought into the fold, and that the gospel would be carried to the Gentiles, many of whom were to receive it." These were the doctrines of the Woods. The Woods were very fruitful in prophecies, especially after the hazel rod came to their use; so were the Mormons in the beginning of their creed, and both the Woods and the Mormons claimed to have revelations, . . . I have been told that Joe Smith's father resided in Poultney at the time of the Wood movement here, and that he was in it, and one of the leading rods-men. Of this I cannot speak positively, for the want of satisfactory evidence, . . . I have before said that Oliver Cowdry's father was in the "Wood scrape." He then lived in Wells, afterwards in Middletown, after that went to Palmyra, and there we find these men with the counterfeiter, Winchell, searching for money over the hills and mountains with the hazel-rod, and their sons Joe and Oliver, as soon as they were old enough, were in the same business, . . .

Gov. Ford of Illinois, in his history of the Mormons, says of Joe Smith.

"That his extreme youth was spent in idle, vagabond life, roaming in the woods, dreaming of buried treasures, and exerting the art of finding them by twisting a forked stick in his hands, or by looking through enchanted stones. He and his father before him, were what are called 'water-witches,' always ready to point out the ground where wells might be dug and water found."

. . . .  
I have perhaps already occupied more time upon this matter than I should, but I have thought it proper and important too, to give what evidence I have been able to obtain, to show that the Wood movement here "gave origin to the Mormons" . . . They used the rod, that is, the elder Smith and Cowdry, and pretended by that to obtain revelations, . . . and their sons Joe jr, and Oliver, . . . commenced their education with the use of the hazel-rod or forked stick, in searching for hidden treasures—though afterwards they used what they called enchanted stones. (*The Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, edited by Abby Maria Hemenway, Claremont, N. H., 1877, vol. 3, pages 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 818 and 819)

Although the material above was not printed until many years after the events were supposed to have occurred, the "Rodmen" were mentioned in the *Vermont American* as early as 1828:

About the year 1800, one or two families in Rutland county, . . . pretended to have been informed by the Almighty, that they were descendants of the ancient Jews, . . . They claimed, also, inspired power, with which to cure all sorts of diseases—intuitive knowledge of lost or stolen goods, and ability to discover the hidden treasures of the earth, . . . most of the connexions of its originators were drawn in, . . . numbering nearly forty persons. The instrument of their miraculous powers, was a cleft stick, or rod, something of the form of an inverted Y; . . .

Before the adoption of any project among the fraternity, a nod of assent was required from the rods of the whole, . . . excavations were made in the mountains, some to a great depth; . . . From the bowels of the mountain valuable ore was to be taken; the building was to be erected into a furnace for smelting and refining it; and the horses' bones were to be converted into crucibles! (*Vermont American*, Middlebury, Vermont, May 7, 1828)

Joseph Smith's father was undoubtedly a believer in the practice of working with the rod. In an affidavit, dated December 2, 1833, Peter Ingersoll stated:

I, Peter Ingersoll, first became acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. in the year of our Lord, 1822. . . .

The general employment of the family, was digging for money. . . . I was once ploughing near the house of Joseph Smith, Sen. about noon, he requested me to walk with him a short distance from his house, for the purpose of seeing whether a mineral rod would **work in my hand**, saying at the same time he was confident it would. . . . he cut a small witch hazel bush, and gave me direction how to hold it. He then went off some rods, and told me to say to the rod, "work to the money" which I did, in an audible voice. He rebuked me severely for speaking it loud, and said it must be spoken in a whisper. This was rare sport for me. While the old man was standing off some rods, throwing himself into various shapes, I told him the rod did not work. He seemed much surprized at this, and said he thought he saw it move in my hand. It was now time for me to return to my labor. (Affidavit of Peter Ingersoll, as found in *Mormonism Unveiled*, Painseville, Ohio, 1834, page 232)

It would appear, then, that Joseph Smith learned about "working with the rod" from his father. He approved of this practice, and claimed to have a revelation from God which spoke of Cowdery's "gift of working with the rod." Later, however, he became embarrassed about his money-digging activities and changed the revelation to remove all reference to the rod.

In 1843 a member of the Mormon Church found himself in trouble with the Church because of working with the rod and similar practices. Under the date of March 25, 1843, we find this statement in Joseph Smith's *History*:

The High Council, with my brother Hyrum presiding, sat on an appeal of Benjamin Hoyt, from the decision of David Evans, bishop; which was, that Brother Hoyt cease

to call certain characters witches or wizards, cease to work with the divining rod, and cease burning a board or boards to heal those whom he said were bewitched. (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, pages 311-312)

Although the Utah Mormon leaders appear to want their people to remain in the dark concerning the changes in the revelations, the Reorganized LDS Church leaders have made some real progress toward facing this problem. Richard P. Howard, RLDS Church Historian, makes these startling admissions in a book recently published by his Church:

Several writers have established that both in Vermont and in western New York in the early 1800's, one of the many forms which enthusiastic religion took was the adaptation of the witch hazel stick (used then and even to this date for locating underground water sources) to religious purposes. For example, the "divining rod" was used effectively by one Nathaniel Wood in Rutland County, Vermont, in 1801. Wood, Winchell, William Cowdery, Jr., and his son, Oliver Cowdery, all had some knowledge of and associations with the various uses, both secular and sacred, of the forked witch hazel rod. Winchell and others used such a rod in seeking buried treasure; and, as the following parallel column arrangement suggests, when Joseph Smith met Oliver Cowdery in April, 1829, he found a man peculiarly adept in the use of the forked rod—one who may have brought information to him about the strange, mystical uses to which such an artifact had been put back in the hometown of his boyhood. Cowdery had already proved himself to Joseph as one who could be trusted in the important work on the Book of Mormon. He was a man of no little education and literary gifts for his day—a schoolmaster and, though perhaps unknown to both Oliver and Joseph at the time, a third cousin to Joseph's mother Lucy Mack Smith. He soon was Joseph's close friend and confidant, his scribe and trusted counselor. In the midst of such mutual rapport and against the background of his own experiments with and uses of oracular media, Joseph Smith's April, 1829, affirmations about Cowdery's unnatural powers related to working with the rod, are quite understandable. . . .

By the time that Joseph Smith approached the reinterpretation and **rewording** of this document for the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, he had had the time and experience necessary to place his 1829 assessment of the meaning of Cowdery's gift of working with the rod in a somewhat more accurate perspective. Both he and Cowdery had developed away from an emphasis on the religious or mystical meanings in such mechanical objects as the water witching rod. Joseph's 1835 wording of this document expressed in more general and symbolic terms the significance and promise of the relationship of trust still existing between Cowdery and himself. It left behind the apparent 1829 reliance upon external media, which by 1835 had assumed in Joseph's mind overtones of **superstition** and speculative experimentation. (*Restoration Scriptures*, by Richard P. Howard, Independence, Mo., 1969, pages 211-214)

## The Treasure Hunt Revelation

Ebenezer Robinson, who was at one time the editor of the Mormon Church paper, *Times and Seasons*, gave the following information in *The Return*:

A brother in the church, by the name of Burgess, had come to Kirtland and stated that a large amount of money had been secreted in a cellar of a certain house in Salem, Massachusetts, which had belonged to a widow, and he thought he was the only person now living who had knowledge of it, or to the location of the house. We saw the brother Burgess, but Don Carlos Smith told us with regard to the hidden treasure, his statement was credited by the brethren, and steps were taken to try and secure the treasure, of which we will speak more fully in another place. (*The Return*, vol. 1, page 105)

On page 106 of the same book, Mr. Robinson stated:

On our return home we went to work in the printing office as heretofore.

We soon learned that four of the leading men of the church had been to Salem Massachusetts, in search of the hidden treasure spoken of by Brother Burgess, viz: **Joseph Smith**, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery. They left home on the 25th of July, and returned in September.

Joseph Smith's *History* tells of this trip:

On Monday afternoon, July 25th, in company with Sidney Rigdon, Brother Hyrum Smith, and Oliver Cowdery, I left Kirtland, . . .

From New York we continued our journey to Providence, on board a steamer; from thence to Boston, by steam cars, and arrived in **Salem**, Massachusetts, early in August, where we hired a house, and occupied the same during the month, . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 464)

David R. Proper, who has done a great deal of research concerning Joseph Smith's trip to Salem, gives this information:

It appears at this time Joseph Smith began to pay attention to some reports published in the Painesville, Ohio, *Telegraph* describing a great treasure hidden in a house in Salem. . . .

Tales of buried treasure in Salem were evidently quite common, especially as the old shipping families began to decline . . .

The Mormon visitors were definitely in Salem as early as August 6, 1836, when Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery signed the visitors' book of the East India Marine Society museum; Joseph Smith, Jr., signed the register on August 9. . . .

That there was evidently something behind the visit paid to Salem by the Mormon leaders is strengthened not only by Robinson's sad admission, but also by the lack of any public notice of the mission in Salem newspapers. There were five papers in the city; four of them reported the public address by Sidney Rigdon. The papers had carried stories and features about Mormonism before and continued to do so after this event, but nothing on the local visitation. So famous a personage as Joseph Smith, Jr., the prophet himself, could hardly have gone unnoticed unless he chose to remain so. . . .

When Rigdon gave his Salem lecture, doubtless Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and possibly Brigham Young and Lyman Johnson were present, but went unrecognized. It seems incredible that had Mormon missionary efforts been the real object, the prophet would not have been called upon, . . . One can hardly believe as experienced an evangelist as Sidney Rigdon would have failed to make use of such personages in his delivery unless they wished to remain unrecognized for some reason.

The final note in the mysterious adventure is given by the rather sympathetic *Salem Register* of August 25, 1836, which four days earlier had given Rigdon as fair a report as he received. In making note of the fact that he had left the city after having "introduced himself" the previous week, the paper goes on to state: "None knew the names, character, or object of these men, until the day Rigdon held forth, although they had been for a week or two in the city." The group, it was stated, "retained possession of the tenement leased by them in Union street and intend to return to this city next spring." . . . The whole adventure is too mysterious to be explained simply as a missionary tour to Salem and Essex County. What was the object of the Mormon prophet's visit cannot be known, but certainly it adds to the luster of Salem, as well as to its ability to draw visitors from far corners of the world for one reason or another—even then as now. (*Essex Institute Historical Collections*, vol. C, no. 2, April 1964, pages 93-97)

Joseph Smith actually received a revelation concerning the treasure hunt, which is published by the Mormon Church in their *Doctrine and Covenants*. In this revelation we read the following:

I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, notwithstanding your follies.

I have **much treasure** in this city for you, . . . and its wealth pertaining to **gold and silver shall be yours**.

Concern not yourselves about your debts, for I will give you **power to pay them**.

. . . And inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city;

For there are **more treasure than one** for you in this city. (*Doctrine & Covenants*, Sec. 111, verses 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, and 10)

Mr. Robinson informs us that the treasure was never found, and Joseph Smith was unable to pay his debts as the revelation had promised:

We were informed that Brother Burgess met them in Salem, evidently according to appointment, but time had wrought such a change that he could not, for a certainty point out the house, and soon left. They however, found a house which they felt was the right one, and hired it. It is needless to say they failed to find that treasure, or the other gold and silver spoken of in the revelation.

We speak of these things with regret, but inasmuch as they occurred we feel it our duty to relate them, as also some of those things which transpired under our personal observation, soon after. (*The Return*, vol. 1, page 106)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts stated:

While the Prophet gives a somewhat circumstantial account of this journey to Salem and his return to Kirtland in September, he nowhere assigns an **adequate** cause for himself and company making it—the object of it is not stated. (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 411)

B. H. Roberts admits that the Mormon leaders went to Salem seeking “an earthly treasure,” but claims that the

other treasures spoken of in the revelation were of a spiritual nature:

Here we have an opportunity of discerning the difference between the ways of God and the ways of men. Whereas these brethren had **come seeking an earthy treasure**, God directs their attention to spiritual things, telling them there are more treasures than one for them in that city; and instructs them to inquire diligently concerning the ancient inhabitants and founders of that city, doubtless having in view the securing of their genealogies and the redemption of the past generations of men who had lived there; so that if for a moment **the weakness of men was manifested in this journey**, we see that fault reprov'd and the strength and wisdom of God made manifest by directing the attention of his servants to the real and true treasures that he would have them seek, even the salvation of men, both the living and the dead. (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 412)

While it is interesting to note that B. H. Roberts admits that the Mormon leaders went to Salem seeking “an earthly treasure,” his explanation of the revelation seems to be an attempt to keep from facing reality.

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## Part 2

### THE 1826 TRIAL

In her book, *No Man Knows My History*, Fawn M. Brodie states:

In March 1826 Joseph's magic arts for the first time brought him into serious trouble. One of Stowel's neighbors, Peter Bridgman, swore out a warrant for the youth's arrest on the charge of being a disorderly person and an impostor. . . . the court pronounced him guilty, though what sentence was finally passed the record does not say. (*No Man Knows My History*, page 30)

Mrs. Brodie states that the court record was "first unearthed in southern New York by Daniel S. Tuttle, Episcopal Bishop of Salt Lake City, and published in the article on 'Mormonism' in the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*" (*Ibid.*, page 405).

The following account of the trial is taken from Tuttle's article:

**"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 impostor. Prisoner examined. Says that he came from town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel 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 Stowel on his farm, and going to school; 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, and informed him where he could find those treasures, and Mr. Stowel 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 had 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 any thing to do with this business.

**"Josiah Stowel sworn.** Says that prisoner had been at his house something like five months. Had been employed

by him to work on farm part of time; that he pretended to have skill of telling where hidden treasures in the earth were, by means of looking through a certain stone; that prisoner had looked for him sometimes,—once to tell him about money buried on Bend Mountain in Pennsylvania, once for gold on Monument Hill, and once for a salt-spring,—and that he positively knew that the prisoner could tell, and professed the art of seeing those valuable treasures through the medium of said stone: that he found the digging part at Bend and Monument Hill as prisoner represented it; that prisoner had looked through said stone for Deacon Attelon, for a mine—did not exactly find it, but got a piece of ore, which resembled gold, he thinks; that prisoner had told by means of this stone where a Mr. Bacon had buried money; that he and prisoner had been in search of it; that prisoner said that it was in a certain root of a stump five feet from surface of the earth, and with it would be found a tail-feather; that said Stowel and prisoner thereupon commenced digging, found a tail-feather, but money was gone; that he supposed that money moved down; that prisoner did offer his services; that he never deceived him; that prisoner looked through stone, and described Josiah Stowel's house and out-houses while at Palmyra, at Simpson Stowel's, correctly; that he had told about a painted tree with a man's hand painted upon it, by means of said stone; that he had been in company with prisoner digging for gold, and had the most implicit faith in prisoner's skill.

**"Horace Stowel sworn.** Says he see prisoner look into hat through stone, pretending to tell where a chest of dollars were buried in Windsor, a number of miles distant; marked out size of chest in the leaves on round,

**"Arad Stowel sworn.** Says that he went to see whether prisoner could convince him that he possessed the skill that he professed to have, upon which prisoner laid a book open upon a white cloth, and proposed looking through another stone which was white and transparent; hold the stone to the candle, turn his back to book, and read. The deception appeared so palpable, that went off disgusted.

**"McMaster sworn.** Says he went with Arad Stowel to be convinced of prisoner's skill, and likewise came away disgusted, finding the deception so palpable. Prisoner pretended to him that he could discern objects at a distance by holding this white stone to the sun or candle; that prisoner rather declined looking into a hat at his dark-colored stone, as he said that it hurt his eyes.

**"Jonathan Thompson** says that prisoner was requested to look Yeomans for chest of money; did look,

and pretended to know where it was, and that prisoner, Thompson, and Yeomans went in search of it; that Smith arrived at spot first (was in night); that **Smith looked in hat while there**, and when very dark, and told how the chest was situated. After digging several feet, struck upon something sounding like a board or plank. Prisoner would not look again, pretending that he was alarmed the last time that he looked, on account of the circumstances relating to the trunk being buried came all fresh to his mind; that the last time that he looked, he discovered distinctly the two Indians who buried the trunk; that a quarrel ensued between them, and that one of said Indians was killed by the other, and thrown into the hole beside of the trunk, to guard it, as he supposed. **Thompson says that he believes in the prisoner's professed skill**; that the board which he struck his spade upon was probably the chest, but, on account of an enchantment, the trunk kept settling away from under them while digging; that, notwithstanding they continued constantly removing the dirt, yet the trunk kept about the same distance from them. Says prisoner said that it appeared to him that salt might be found at Bainbridge; and that he is certain that **prisoner can divine things by means of said stone and hat**; that, as evidence of fact, prisoner looked into his hat to tell him about some money witness lost sixteen years ago, and that he described the man that witness supposed had taken it, and disposition of money.

**“And thereupon the Court finds the defendant guilty.”** (*New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, New York, 1883, vol. 2, page 1576)

A number of Mormon writers have denied the authenticity of this document. In the “Church Section” of the *Deseret News* the following statements appeared:

. . . the alleged find is no discovery at all, for the purported record has been included in other books dating back, some of them half a century and derived always from the same source. . . after all her puffing and promise the author produces no court record at all, though persistently calling it such. . . A justice's court is not what the lawyers call a court of record, the testimony of witnesses is usually not taken down nor preserved as a part of the record in the case. This **alleged record is obviously spurious** because it has Joseph testify first, giving the defense before the prosecution has made its case. . . Then, more wonderful still, the record does not tell what the judgment or sentence of the court was. The really vital things which a true record must contain are not there, though there is a lot of surplus verbiage set out in an impossible order which the court was not required to keep.

This record could not possibly have been made at the time as the case proceeded. It is patently **a fabrication** of unknown authorship and never in the court records at all. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, May 11, 1946, as quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, by Francis W. Kirkham, Salt Lake City, 1959, vol. 2, pages 430-431)

The Mormon writer Francis W. Kirkham made these statements concerning this document:

A careful study of all facts regarding this **alleged** confession of Joseph Smith in a court of law that he had used a seer stone to find hidden treasure for purposes of fraud, must come to the conclusion that **no such record was ever made**, and therefore, is **not in existence**. . . .

(5) Thousands of intelligent and devout persons accepted the evidence presented by Joseph Smith during his lifetime. . . . 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. (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, pages 385-387)

**If** a court record could be identified, and **if** it contained a confession by Joseph Smith which revealed him to be a poor, ignorant, deluded, and superstitious person—unable himself to write a book of any consequence, and whose church could not endure because it attracted only similar persons of low mentality—**if** such a court record confession could be identified and proved, then it follows that his believers must **deny his claimed divine guidance** which led them to follow him. . . . How could he be a prophet of God, the leader of the Restored Church to these tens of thousands, if he had been the **superstitious fraud** which “the pages from a book” declared he confessed to be? (*Ibid.*, pages 486-487)

On page 469 of the same book, Dr. Kirkham stated that the “use of a seer stone, by Joseph Smith buried in a hat to exclude the light, seemed to have had its origin and emphasis in *Mormonism Unveiled*, 1834.”

A recent attack on Fawn Brodie's book by the Mormon writer F. L. Stewart seems to be somewhat more liberal with regard to this subject. Although the author questions the authenticity of the record of the trial, she does make these interesting comments:

Since the publication of NM [*No Man Knows My History*], other scholars have taken up the search for the facts regarding the alleged court trial before a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, New York, in 1826. Some believe there actually was such a trial; others are equally convinced there was not. . . .

Joseph Smith was actually arrested in South Bainbridge in 1830 and many times thereafter in other places. One more time wouldn't seem to matter much, except for the fact that this **earlier arrest** is seized upon by detractors of Mormonism as an **indication**, if not an outright proof, that Joseph Smith had been a charlatan before and during the finding of the Book of Mormon plates. This charge, even if the court record is authentic, is vague. **If**, as the alleged record states, **Joseph had been guilty of treasure hunting, it would seem not to disqualify him as being worthy of a divine mission**. Only five years after Joseph's death, the gold rush of 1849 had almost every citizen in the country thirsting for treasures of the earth. Many methods were employed for ferreting out these treasures, including



the use of the old-fashioned divining rod. Being found guilty of the same indulgence would hardly preclude Joseph Smith's religious worthiness. (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, by F. L. Stewart, New York, 1967, pages 64-65)

The Mormon writers James B. Allen and Leonard J. Arrington have made these comments concerning the 1826 trial:

11. What verifiable accounts do we have of the various **court trials** experienced by Joseph Smith in New York? Fawn Brodie has published a document purporting to be the transcript of **an 1826 trial** in which Joseph Smith was found guilty of disturbing the peace, but **its authenticity is not beyond question**. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1969, page 273)

Dr. Kirkham asks why the court record was not printed at an earlier date if it is genuine:

(2) The affidavits in *Mormonism Unveiled* which assert that Joseph Smith had a seer stone which he had found while he was working for Willard Chase at Palmyra, were written for the specific purpose to prove that Joseph Smith by this means practiced **fraud**, and claimed to have found the metallic plates of the Book of Mormon. If a court record had been in existence within a reasonable distance of the residence of the people who signed these affidavits in which Joseph Smith confessed he had used a seer stone, this record in all probability would have been known to the author of *Mormonism Unveiled*, and would have been printed at the time, and quoted thereafter by all anti-Mormon writers. (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, page 386)

While it is true that *Mormonism Unveiled* contains nothing concerning this trial, we must realize that Bainbridge was a small community located many miles from Joseph Smith's home. It is certainly possible that a trial could have occurred in Bainbridge before Joseph Smith became well-known without the outside world being aware of it.

The Mormon writer F. L. Stewart has pointed out that Joseph Smith should have been referred to as "Joseph Smith, Jr.," in the court record:

The alleged court record does not specify which Joseph Smith was under arrest. In March, 1826, the date given on the alleged record, the Joseph Smith was only twenty years of age and therefore a minor. . . . His correct name was "Joseph Smith, Junior." . . . Certainly in a court of law in 1826, before Joseph Smith made any public claims to being a Prophet and at a time when he and his father were employed as common laborers by Joseph Stowel, no one would take for granted that everyone would know which Joseph Smith was being arrested. . . . The Book of Mormon copyright, dated 1830, designated Joseph Smith correctly as "Junior." A court record, being a legal document should be more specific than more casual references. . . . there is no way of proving that it wasn't written as a prank. In fact, it

seems that it was written at a much later date when Joseph Smith, Junior, became plain Joseph Smith, after the death of his father in 1840. (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, pages 67, 68, 69 and 73)

While F. L. Stewart has an interesting point here, we must remember that it would be possible to omit the word "Junior" by mistake. An example is found in a letter written by Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery. As it was published in the *Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1, page 40, the signature reads: "Joseph Smith jr." When this letter was reprinted in the *History of the Church*, however, it read as follows: "Joseph Smith" (see *History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 10). The reader will also notice that in the court record one of the witnesses in the trial is listed only as "McMaster." The first name has apparently been omitted by mistake.

## Purple's Account

Since Mormon writers contested the authenticity of the trial, scholars began to search to find more documentation with regard to this matter. Helen L. Fairbanks, of Guernsey Memorial Library, Norwich, N.Y., made a very interesting discovery. She found that Dr. W. D. Purple, who had lived at Bainbridge and claimed to be an eyewitness to the trial, had written concerning it. Although his article was not published until 1877, he was supposed to have had a very good memory. Dr. Purple's account appeared in *The Chenango Union*, May 3, 1877. It has been reprinted in Francis W. Kirkham's *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, pages 363-368. Because of the importance of this article we will reprint it in its entirety, although we will do it in sections to include some of our own observations. Dr. Purple begins by stating:

More than fifty years since, at the commencement of his professional career, the writer spent a year in the present village of Afton, in this County. It was then called **South Bainbridge**, and was in striking contrast with the present village at the same place. It was a mere hamlet, with one store and one tavern. The scenes and incidents of that early day are vividly engraven upon his memory, by reason of his having written them when they occurred, and by reason of his public and private rehearsals of them in later years. He will now present them as historical reminiscences of old Chenango, and as a precursor of the advent of the wonder of the age, **Mormonism**.

In the year 1825 we often saw in that quiet hamlet, Joseph Smith, Jr. the author of the Golden Bible, or the Books of Mormon. He was an inmate of the family of Deacon Isaiah Stowell, who resided some two miles below the village, on the Susquehanna. Mr. Stowell was a man of much force of character, of indomitable will, and well fitted as a pioneer in the unbroken wilderness that this country possessed at the close of the last century. He was one of the Vermont sufferers, who for defective titles, consent on the forming a new State from a part of Massachusetts, in 1791, received wild lands in Bainbridge.

He had been educated in the spirit of orthodox puritanism, and was officially connected with the first Presbyterian church of the town, organized by Rev. Mr. Chapin. He was a very industrious, exemplary man, and by severe labor and frugality had acquired surroundings that excited the envy of many of his less fortunate neighbors. He had at this time grown up sons and daughters to share his prosperity and the honors of his name.

About this time he took upon himself a monomaniacal impression to **seek for hidden treasures**, which he believed were buried in the earth. He hired help and repaired to Northern Pennsylvania, in the vicinity of Lanesboro, to prosecute his search for untold wealth which he believed to be buried there. Whether it was the “Ninety bars of gold and dollars many fold” that Capt. Robert Kidd, the pirate of a preceding century, had despoiled the commerce of the world, we are not able to say, but that he took his help and provisions from home, and camped out on the black hills of that region for weeks at a time, was freely admitted by himself and family.

What success, if any, attended these excursions, is unknown, but his hallucinations adhered to him like the fabled shirt of Nessus, and had entire control over his mental character. The admonition of his neighbors, the members of his church, and the importunities of his family, had no impression on his wayward spirit.

There had lived a few years previous to this date, in the vicinity of Great Bend, a poor man named Joseph Smith, who, with his family, had removed to the western part of the State, and lived in squalid poverty near Palmyra, in Ontario County. Mr. Stowell, while at Lanesboro, heard of the fame of one of his sons, named Joseph, who, by the aid of a magic stone had become a famous seer of lost or hidden treasures. These stories were fully received into his credulous mind, and kindled into a blaze his cherished hallucination. Visions of untold wealth appeared through this instrumentality, to his longing eyes. He harnessed his team, and filled his wagon with provisions for “man and beast,” and started for the residence of the Smith family. In due time he arrived at the humble log-cabin, midway between Canandaigua and Palmyra, and found the sought for treasure in the person of Joseph Smith, Jr., a lad of some eighteen years of age. He, with the magic stone, was at once transferred from his humble abode to the more pretentious mansion of Deacon Stowell. Here, in the estimation of the Deacon, he confirmed his conceded powers as a seer, by means of the stone which he placed in his hat, and by excluding the light from all other terrestrial things, could see whatever he wished, even in the depths of the earth. This omniscient attribute he firmly claimed. Deacon Stowell and others as firmly believed it. Mr. Stowell, with his ward and two hired men, who were, or professed to be, believers, spent much time in mining near the State line on the Susquehanna and many other places. I myself have seen the evidences of their nocturnal depredations on the face of Mother Earth, on the Deacon’s farm, with what success “this deponent saith not.” (*The Chenango Union*, Norwich, N. Y., May 3, 1877, as reprinted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, pages 362-364)

Notice that Dr. Purple claims that Stowell came to Joseph Smith because he had heard of his “magic stone.” Joseph Smith’s own mother confirms the fact that Stowell came to her son for help in locating hidden treasures:

A short time before the house was completed, a man, by the name of Josiah Stoyal, 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 keys**, by which he could **discern things invisible to the natural eye**.

Joseph endeavoured to divert him from his vain pursuit, but he was inflexible in his purpose, and offered high wages to those who would dig for him, in search of said mine, and still insisted upon having Joseph to work for him. Accordingly, Joseph and several others, returned with him and commenced digging. (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, London, 1853, pages 91-92)

Joseph Smith himself admitted he went with Stowell to dig for a “silver mine”:

In the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman by the name of Josiah Stowel, who lived in Chenango county, state of New York. He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards in Harmony, Susquehanna county, state of Pennsylvania; and had previous to my hiring to him, been digging, in order, if possible, to discover the mine. After I went to live with him, he took me, with the rest of his hands, to dig for the silver mine, at which I continued to work for nearly a month, without success in our undertaking, and finally I prevailed with the old gentleman to cease digging after it. Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger. (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 17)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts states that Stowell came to Joseph Smith because he had “heard of Joseph Smith’s gift of seership”:

. . . in October, 1825, to be exact, Joseph engaged to work for an elderly gentleman, Josiah Stoyal, of Bainbridge, Chenango county, in the south part of New York state. Bainbridge is located on the west bank of the Susquehanna river, and some forty miles south, or down the river, in the township of Harmony, Susquehanna county, Pennsylvania. Near Bainbridge was an **extensive cave**, . . . a local legend had it that it was an old mine formerly worked by Spaniards; and that they had concealed within it much of the treasure they had discovered, . . .

Mr. Stoyal believed this legend and had employed men to explore the cave for the treasure. Having heard of Joseph Smith’s **gift of seership**, he came to the Smith residence to employ him in this undertaking, Joseph hired out to Mr. Stoyal and went with him and the rest of his men to Harmony, Pennsylvania, where for something

like a month they vainly sought to find the “hidden treasure.” . . . Although Mr. Stool gave up the search for the “Spanish treasure,” Joseph continued for some time in his employment. (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 81-82)

The Mormon writer Hyrum L. Andrus made these interesting comments concerning this matter:

According to Mother Smith, he wanted the Prophet to work for him because he had heard that Joseph “possessed certain means by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye.” She does not say what Joseph had in his possession. But Stool was acquainted with Joseph Knight, Sr., and may have heard from him of the Urim and Thummim which were with the gold plates. Joseph could also have had the seer stone at this time. . . . Having worked for Josiah Stool, he was marked in the popular mind as a money digger; and in the opinion of those with whom he had worked, he was subject to the code of the money diggers which required him to share what he found. Martin Harris stated that the money diggers claimed “they had as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together.” In taking this position, they asserted “that Joseph had been traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them.” That these men were actively opposed to the Prophet is attested to by David Whitmer. While in Palmyra in 1828, he conversed with some men who assured him “that Joseph Smith certainly had golden plates, and that before he had attained them he had promised to share with them, but had not done so and they were very much insensed with him.” (*God, Man and the Universe*, Salt Lake City, 1968, pages 70, 71, 74 and 75)

Dr. Purple continues by stating:

In February, 1826, the sons of Mr. Stowell, who lived with their father, were greatly incensed against Smith, as they plainly saw their father squandering his property in the fruitless search for hidden treasures, and saw that the youthful seer had unlimited control over the illusions of their sire. They made up their minds that “patience had ceased to be a virtue,” and resolved to rid themselves and their family from this incubus, who, as they believed, was eating up their substance, and depriving them of their anticipated patrimony. They caused the arrest of Smith as a vagrant, without visible means of livelihood. The trial came on in the above mentioned month, before Albert Neeley, Esq., the father of Bishop Neeley of the State of Maine. I was an intimate friend of the Justice, and was invited to take notes of the trial, which I did. There was a large collection of persons in attendance, and the proceedings attracted much attention. (*The Chenango Union*, May 3, 1877, as quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, page 364)

Francis W. Kirkham points out that Purple says the trial was in February, 1826, whereas the court record gives the date as March 20, 1826. While there is a discrepancy

here, we must remember that Dr. Purple was an old man at the time he wrote his account. The fact that he comes within a month of the date given in the court record is rather amazing.

It is true that Dr. Purple claimed to have taken notes at the time of the trial, but, as Francis W. Kirkham observes, Purple “does not quote his notes nor assert he kept them” (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, page 469).

Mormon writers point out that Purple states that Joseph Smith was arrested as a “vagrant, without visible means of livelihood, whereas the court record states that he was charged with being “a disorderly person and an impostor.” This discrepancy could also be attributed to Dr. Purple’s age and the long period of time which had elapsed since the trial. The Mormon writer F. L. Stewart states:

Without questioning Dr. Purple’s veracity, we should remember that he was seventy-five years of age when he wrote the article. . . . Perhaps Dr. Purple’s memory was slipping at age seventy-five, more than fifty years after the alleged incident. (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, page 70)

Dr. Purple goes on to state that Joseph Smith was “examined by the Court”:

The affidavits of the sons were read, and Mr. Smith was fully examined by the Court. It elicited little but a history of his life from early boyhood, but this is so unique in character, and so much of a key-note to his subsequent career in the world, I am tempted to give it somewhat in extenso. He said when he was a lad, he heard of a neighboring girl, some three miles from him, who could look into a glass and see anything however hidden from others; that he was seized with a strong desire to see her and her glass; that after much effort he induced his parents to let him visit her. He did so, and was permitted to look in the glass, which was placed in a hat to exclude the light. He was greatly surprised to see but one thing, which was a small stone, a great way off. It soon became luminous, and dazzled his eyes, and after a short time it became as intense as the mid-day sun. He said that the stone was under the roots of a tree or shrub as large as his arm, situated about a mile up a stream that puts in on the South side of Lake Erie, not far from the New York and Pennsylvania line. He often had an opportunity to look in the glass, and with the same result. The luminous stone alone attracted his attention. This singular circumstance occupied his mind for some years, when he left his father’s house, and with his youthful zeal traveled west in search of this luminous stone.

He took a few shillings in money and some provisions with him. He stopped on the road with a farmer, and worked three days, and replenished his means of support. After traveling some one hundred and fifty miles he found himself at the mouth of the creek. He did not have the glass with him, but he knew its exact location. He borrowed an old ax and a hoe, and repaired to the tree. With some



labor and exertion he found the stone, carried it to the creek, washed and wiped it dry, sat down on the bank, placed it in his hat, and discovered that time, place and distance were annihilated; that all the intervening obstacles were removed, and that he possessed one of the attributes of Deity, an All-Seeing-Eye. He arose with a thankful heart, carried his tools to their owner, turned his feet towards the rising sun, and sought with weary limbs his long deserted home.

On the request of the Court, he exhibited the stone. It was about the size of a small hen's egg, in the shape of a high-instepped shoe. It was composed of layers of different colors passing diagonally through it. It was very hard and smooth, perhaps by being carried in the pocket. (*The Chenango Union*, May 3, 1877, as quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, pages 364-365)

Although both Purple's account and the account found in the "court record" deal with Joseph Smith's seer stone, they appear to discuss different aspects of this matter. While Purple's account is concerned with how Joseph Smith acquired the stone, the "court record" speaks only of what he used the stone for after he obtained it. Since neither account claims to give a word for word account of Joseph Smith's statements, it is possible that both the origin and subsequent use of the stone could have been discussed.

The reader will note that Purple's recollection of how Joseph Smith claimed he obtained his stone differs from the usual version. The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts claims that Joseph Smith found the stone while digging a well: "The Seer Stone referred to here was a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone which the Prophet found while digging a well in company with his brother Hyrum, for a Mr. Clark Chase, near Palmyra, N. Y. (*A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1, page 129).

Even though Purple's account differs from the usual version, it is interesting to note that there was a girl in Joseph Smith's neighborhood who had a "glass" that she used for divination. Joseph Smith's mother related the following:

A young woman by the name of Chase, sister to Willard Chase, found a green glass, through which she could see many very wonderful things, and among her great discoveries she said that she saw the precise place where "Joe Smith kept his gold bible hid," and obedient to her directions, the mob gathered their forces and laid siege to the cooper's shop. (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith*, by Lucy Smith, Liverpool, 1853, page 109)

Richard L. Anderson, of Brigham Young University, gives this interesting information concerning this matter:

The Palmyra-Manchester sources attach a firm money-digging tradition to the Chase family. For instance, Dr. John Stafford recalled:

The neighbors used to claim Sally Chase could look at a stone she had, and see money. Willard

Chase used to dig when she found where the money was. Don't know as anybody ever found any money.

The interview the same year with Abel Chase confirmed his family's involvement. After describing the stone in possession of his sister, Abel Chase responded to the following questions:

"Do you really think your sister could see things by looking through that stone, Mr. Chase?"

"Well, she claimed to; and I must say there was something strange about it."

(*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, page 296)

On page 300 of the same article, Richard L. Anderson quotes Caroline Rockwell Smith as saying: "There was considerable digging for money in our neighborhood by men, women and children . . . I saw Joshua Stafford's peepstone, which looked like white marble and had a hole through the center. Sally Chase a Methodist, had one, and people would go for her to find lost and hidden or stolen things."

Fayette Lapham claimed that Joseph Smith's father told him that Joseph Smith, Jr., found his own stone by looking in other man's stone:

I think it was in the year 1830, I heard that some ancient records had been discovered . . . Accompanied by a friend, Jacob Ramsdell, I set out to find the Smith family, . . . Joseph, Junior, afterwards so well known, not being at home, we applied to his father for the information we wanted. This Joseph Smith, Senior, we soon learned, from his own lips, was a firm believer in witchcraft and other supernatural things; and had brought up his family in the same belief. He also believed that there was a vast amount of money buried somewhere in the country; that it would someday be found; that he himself had spent both time and money searching for it, with diving rods, but had not succeeded in finding any, though sure that he eventually would. . . .

His son Joseph, whom he called the illiterate, when about fourteen years of age, happened to be where a man was looking into a dark stone, and telling people, therefrom, where to dig for money and other things. Joseph requested the privilege of looking into the stone, which he did by putting his face into the hat where the stone was. It proved to be not the right stone for him; but he could see some things, and, among them, he saw the stone, and where it was, in which he could see whatever he wished to see. Smith claims and believes that there is as stone of this quality, somewhere, for every one. The place where he saw the stone was not far from their house; and, under pretence of digging a well, they found water and the stone at a depth of twenty or twenty-two feet. (*The Historical Magazine, and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History and Biography of America*, 1870, vol. VII, as quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, page 384)



Joseph Smith may have possessed more than one seer stone, and may have had different stories as to how he obtained them. In the “court record” Arad Stowel and McMaster testified that Joseph Smith had two stones.

Dr. Purple continued his narrative by stating:

Joseph Smith, Sr., was present, and sworn as a witness. He confessed at great length all that his son had said in his examination. He delineated his characteristics in his youthful days—his visions of the luminous stones in the glass—his visit to Lake Erie in search of the stone—and his wonderful triumphs as a seer. He described very many instances of his finding hidden and stolen goods. He swore that both he and his son were mortified that this wonderful power which God had so miraculously given him should be used only in search of filthy lucre, or its equivalent in earthly treasures and with a long-faced, “sanctimonious seeming,” he said his constant prayer to his Heavenly Father was to manifest His will concerning this marvelous power. He trusted that the Son of Righteousness would some day illumine the heart of the boy, and enable him to see His will concerning Him. These words have ever had a strong impression on my mind. They seemed to contain a prophetic vision of the future history of that mighty delusion of the present century, Mormonism. The “old man eloquent” with his lank and haggard visage—his form very poorly clad—indicating a wandering vagabond rather than an oracle of future events, has, in view of those events, excited my wonder, if not my admiration. (*The Chenango Union*, May 3, 1877, as quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, pages 365-366)

Dr. Purple’s statement concerning Joseph Smith’s father presents a problem, for the “court record” says nothing about Joseph Smith’s father giving testimony at the trial. There is a possibility, however, that the testimony of two of the witnesses was omitted when the trial was recorded. In the first published version of the trial (which we will discuss later) the costs of the trial were included at the end of the proceedings, and among these costs we find the statement that there were “seven witnesses.” If this is correct, then the testimony of some of the witnesses was not recorded in the “court record.”

Dr. Purple goes on to relate the following:

The next witness called was Deacon Isaiah Stowell. He confirmed all that is said above in relation to himself, and delineated many other circumstances not necessary to record. He swore that the prisoner possessed all the power he claimed, and declared he could see things fifty feet below the surface of the earth, as plain as the witness could see what was on the Justice’s table, and described very many circumstances to confirm his words. Justice Neeley soberly looked at the witness and in a solemn, dignified voice, said, “Deacon Stowell, do I understand you as swearing before God, under the solemn oath you have taken, that you believe the prisoner can see by the aid of the stone fifty feet below the surface of the earth, as plainly as you can see what is on my table?” “Do I believe it?” says Deacon Stowell, “do I believe it? No, it is not a matter of belief. I positively know it to be true.”

(*The Chenango Union*, May 3, 1877, as quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, page 366)

The reader will note that Dr. Purple refers to this witness as “Isaiah Stowell.” The “court record,” however, gives the name as “Josiah Stowel.” The Mormon writer F. L. Stewart states that there was a man named Isaiah Stowell in Bainbridge: “Dr. Purple also referred to Joseph’s employer as ‘Isaiah’ and not ‘Josiah’ Stowel. Since there was also an ‘Isaiah’ Stowell living in South Bainbridge at the time, Dr. Purple apparently confused one with the other” (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet*, page 70). Since Dr. Purple talks of “Deacon Isaiah Stowell” earlier in his narrative when speaking of Joseph Smith’s employer, it is obvious that he was referring to Josiah Stowell.

The reader will note that Purple’s account agrees with the “court record” in stating that Josiah Stowell defended Joseph Smith and claimed to believe in Joseph Smith’s ability to see hidden treasures in the earth. Purple claimed that when Stowell was asked if he believed that Joseph Smith “can see by the aid of the stone fifty feet below the surface of the earth,” he replied: “‘Do I believe it?’ says Deacon Stowell, ‘do I believe it? No, it is not a matter of belief. I positively know it to be true.’” This should be compared with Stowell’s testimony in the “court record”:

**Josiah Stowel sworn.** Says that prisoner . . . pretended to have skill of telling where hidden treasures in the earth were, by means of looking through a certain stone; . . . and that he positively knew that the prisoner could tell, and professed the art of seeing those valuable treasures through the medium of said stone: . . . and had the most implicit faith in prisoner’s skill.

Dr. Purple finishes his narrative by stating:

**Mr. Thompson**, an employee of Mr. Stowell, was the next witness. He and another man were employed in digging for treasure, and always attended the Deacon and Smith in their nocturnal labors. He could not assert that anything of value was ever obtained by them. 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. So, after arming themselves with fasting and prayer, they sallied forth to the spot designated by Smith. Digging was commenced with fear and trembling, in the presence of this imaginary charm. In a few feet from the surface the box of treasure was struck by the shovel, on which they redoubled their energies, but it gradually receded from their grasp. One of the men placed his hand upon the box, but it gradually sunk from his reach. After some five feet in depth had been attained without success, a council of war against this spirit of darkness was called, and they resolved that the lack of faith, or some untoward mental emotion, was the cause of their failure.

In this emergency 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! How difficult to believe it could have been enacted in the nineteenth century of the Christian era! It could have been done only by the hallucination of diseased [*sic*] minds, that drew all their philosophy from the Arabian nights and other kindred literature of that period! But as 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 it is worth of recital as evincing the spirit of delusion that characterized those who originated that prince of humbugs, Mormonism.

These scenes occurred some four years before Smith, by the aid of his luminous stone, found the Golden Bible, or the Book of Mormon. The writer may at some subsequent day give your readers a chapter on its discovery and a synopsis of its contents. It is hardly necessary to say that, as the testimony of Deacon Stowell could not be impeached, the prisoner was discharged, and in a few weeks he left the town. Greene, April 28, 1877 (*The Chenango Union*, May 3, 1877, we quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, pages 366-368)

While the “court record” gives the testimony of three other witnesses before that of Thompson, both accounts agree in stating that Thompson testified that a box of treasures slipped into the ground while he was digging. Below is a comparison of the two accounts.

#### Court Record

After digging several feet, struck upon something sounding like a board or plank. . . . Thompson says . . . the board which he struck his spade upon was probably the chest, but, on account of an enchantment, the trunk kept settling away from under them while digging; that, notwithstanding they continued constantly removing the dirt, yet the trunk kept about the same distance from them.

#### Dr. Purple

In a few feet from the surface the box of treasure was struck by the shovel, on which they redoubled their energies, but it gradually receded from their grasp. One of the men placed his hand upon the box, but it gradually sunk from his reach . . . the treasure still receded from their grasp, and it was never obtained.

The reader will notice the Purple’s account tells of a lamb being sacrificed [see column to the left]. While this is not included in the “court record,” it is very possible that Joseph Smith may have ordered such a sacrifice. We know that Joseph Smith taught that animal sacrifices were to be restored, for in the *History of the Church* we find this statement attributed to him:

. . . it is generally supposed that **sacrifice** was entirely done away when the Great Sacrifice [i.e., the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus] was offered up, and that there will be no necessity for the ordinance of sacrifice in future: but those who assert this are certainly **not** acquainted with the **duties, privileges and authority of the priesthood**, or with the Prophets. . . .

These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, 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, ramification, 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 a 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 writers have pointed out a discrepancy at the end of Dr. Purple’s account of the trial. Purple states that “the prisoner was discharged,” whereas the “court record” claims that he was found “guilty.”

Dr. Francis W. Kirkham feels there is a serious discrepancy between the two documents as to those who gave testimony at the trial. He gives the following names of witnesses in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, pages 357-358 (we have placed the corresponding names side by side for easy comparison):

#### Court Record

Josiah Stowell  
Horace Stowell  
Arad Stowell

#### Dr. Purple

Joseph Stowell

Joseph Smith Senior

Mr. McMaster

Jonathan Thompson

M. Thompson

Dr. Kirkham lists one of the witnesses as “Joseph Stowell,” but this is apparently a typographical error and should read “Isaiah Stowell.” However this may be, the two lists are far from agreement, for Purple mentions Joseph Smith’s father and omits three witnesses listed in the “court record.” Of course, we must remember that it would be very easy for an old man to forget some of the witnesses who gave testimony and that Dr. Purple does not claim to give a full account of everything that happened at the trial. Speaking of the testimony given by Joseph Smith’s employer, Dr. Purple states that there were “many other circumstances not necessary to record.”

There is one thing, however, which may bring the two lists into closer harmony. The reader will notice that Purple states that the “affidavits of the sons were read, and Mr. Smith was fully examined by the Court.” If Horace and Arad Stowell were the sons of Josiah Stowell, this would help to bring the two accounts into closer agreement. By adding the names of two more Stowells to Dr. Purple’s list, we come up with the following:

<u>Court Record</u>	<u>Dr. Purple</u>
Josiah Stowel	Isaiah Stowell
Horace Stowel	_____ Stowell
Arad Stowel	_____ Stowell
	Joseph Smith, Sr.
McMaster	
Jonathan Thompson	Mr. Thompson

The Mormon writer Francis W. Kirkham makes this comment concerning Purple’s account:

The newspaper article by W. D. Purple, published in the *Chenango Union* under the date of May 3, 1877, . . . does not appear to have been known to Bishop Tuttle who also accused Joseph Smith of confessing in a Justice of the Peace court that he used a seer stone for purposes of deception. (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, page 467)

The following statement by Dr. Kirkham is found in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, page 485:

In as much as the alleged court record of 1883 and 1877 disagree extensively in content, it is more and more evident that both these records were written by different persons and at different times for the sole purposes of defaming the character of Joseph Smith and members of the Restored Church.

While it is true that there are a number of disagreements between the two accounts, these could be explained by the fact that Dr. Purple was writing fifty years after the events he was describing. It is interesting to note that the Mormon

writer Richard L. Anderson feels that Joseph Smith’s mother placed some events “a year too early” in her book. These events had occurred about twenty years before, yet Dr. Anderson states: “. . . it is remarkable that when Lucy Smith’s dictated history is inaccurate in chronology, the deviation is confined to narrow limits” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, page 27).

As we stated before, Francis W. Kirkham points out that Dr. Purple dated the trial one month before the date that appears on the “court record.” Now, if Joseph Smith’s mother, writing twenty years after the events she describes, can be excused for an error of about a year in her chronology, we feel that Dr. Purple, writing fifty years later than the events he speaks of, can be excused for his error.

Taken as a whole, then, we feel that Dr. Purple’s account is a remarkable document. It seems to add a great deal to Fawn Brodie’s argument that the “court record” is a genuine document.

### Tracing the Record

While Mormon writers were willing to concede that Purple mentioned the trial in 1877, they felt confident that no earlier mention of the trial would be discovered. Dr. Francis W. Kirkham made this statement:

No account of the life of Joseph Smith written either by those who accepted his message as the truth, or those who tried to find a human explanation for the origin of the Book of Mormon, **prior** to Purple in 1877, and Tuttle in 1883, assert that Joseph Smith confessed in a court of law that he had used a seer stone for any purpose, and especially that the record of such confession was in existence. (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, pages 386-387)

After Dr. Kirkham made these statements an earlier printing of the “court record” was discovered in a magazine printed in England. Mrs. Brodie gives this information in the 1967 printing of her book:

The court record was first published by Charles Marshall in *Fraser’s Magazine*, London, February 1873. . . . Bishop Tuttle presented the original manuscript pages of the trial to the *Utah Christian Advocate*, which published them January 1886. At this point the manuscript seems to have disappeared. (*No Man Knows My History*, page 418)

Mrs. Brodie’s statements show that the trial had been printed ten years before Bishop Tuttle’s work, and four years before Purple’s account appeared. In a “Supplement” to his book, Dr. Kirkham conceded that the “court record” had been printed as early as 1873:



Apparently the source of the alleged court record published by Bishop D. S. Tuttle in 1883 is now known. It was printed in *Fraser's Magazine*, London, in February 1873, republished in the *Eclectic Magazine*, New York, April 187, and again in the *Utah Christian Advocate*, January 1886. (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, pages 485-486)

The reader will remember that Mrs. Brodie stated the "court record" was "first unearthed in southern New York by Daniel S. Tuttle, . . ." Dr. Kirkham contested this statement:

It can be definitely asserted that Daniel S. Tuttle could not have visited this county prior to 1883, and found such a record that he allegedly reports. (*Ibid.*, page 389)

Further research revealed that the original manuscript pages were brought to Utah about 1870 by Emily Pearsall. The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe stated:

This alleged court record was brought to Utah in the 1870's by a woman who said that she had torn the pages from her father's record book. It seems to be a literary attempt of an enemy to ridicule Joseph Smith by bringing together all the current gossip of that day and making him appear to confess to it. (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, Salt Lake City, 1951, page 78)

Mormon writers were very critical of the fact that Miss Pearsall tore the pages from the record book. Francis W. Kirkham stated:

In all probability a pretended court record of a trial in 1826 was brought to Utah by Miss Emily Pearsall in 1871, who died a few years later. . . . Why did she not bring the book so the evidence would be complete and irrefutable? These leaves of a claimed record were shown to Charles Marshall as early as 1871, published February 1873, . . . Why were these leaves torn from a book lost or destroyed? (*A New Witness For Christ in America*, vol. 2, page 492)

While it is true that the leaves should not have been torn from the book, this is the kind of mistake that people who are not familiar with historical research frequently make. For instance, we have often seen people tear out interesting clippings from the newspaper, but forget to write down the date or even the name of the paper.

The pages were brought to Utah, and in the early 1870's they were examined by Charles Marshall. In an article published in England in 1873, Mr. Marshall stated:

During my stay in Salt Lake permission was courteously accorded me to copy out a set of such **judicial proceedings** not hitherto published. I cannot doubt their genuineness. The **original papers** were lent me by a lady

of well-known position, in whose family they had been preserved since the date of the transactions. I reproduce them here, partly to fulfil a duty of assisting to preserve a piece of information about the prophet, . . . (*Fraser's Magazine*, February 1873, vol. VII, page 229)

When Daniel S. Tuttle published the "court record" in 1883, he apparently did not realize that it had been printed ten years before. He stated:

In what light he appeared to others may be gathered from the following extract, never before published, from the records of the proceedings before a justice of the peace of Bainbridge, Chenango County, N. Y. (*New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 1883, vol. 2, page 1576)

In January, 1886, the *Utah Christian Advocate* printed the "court record." They claimed that they had "received the Manuscript from Bishop Tuttle; . . ." Thus it appears that the original pages were in Salt Lake City for at least 13 years. During this time the Mormons could have contested the authenticity of these pages if they did not believe they were genuine. It appears, however, that the Mormon leaders chose to ignore the issue. Francis W. Kirkham states:

A careful search has been made in Utah and England Mormon publications for an answer or reply to the claims of this alleged court record. Up to the present, none have been found. It would appear that the Utah people, accustomed to such accusations against their beloved Prophet and such claims of their superstition and ignorance, made no reply. (*A New Witness For Christ in America*, vol. 2, pages 473-474)

There were probably a number of ways in which the authenticity of the original pages could have been determined at that time. The handwriting could have been examined, and other tests performed on these pages. The Mormons could have called on the opposition to produce the original book. Besides, there may have been eyewitnesses of the trial still living at that time. That the non-Mormons did little to establish the genuineness of the pages may be explained by the fact that the Mormons did not contest their authenticity at the time.

The "court record" was published at least three times by people who had access to the original pages. Dr. Kirkham not only rejects the authenticity of the original pages, but he also tries to cast doubt upon the accuracy of the printed versions:

In 1871 Emily Pearsall may have brought to Bishop Daniel Sylvester Tuttle, to help him in his bitter opposition to the Latter-day Saint people, leaves from a book of some



kind, written sometime, somewhere, by some one. But it was not a court record. She brought no proof of its validity. C. H. Marshall made a copy. Did he change the contents of the reported leaves from a record? Emily Pearsall had died before the printing and could have made no corrections. Bishop Tuttle published the contents of the leaves torn from a book, either changed and edited or as originally written, . . . (*A New Witness For Christ in America*, vol. 2, pages 496-497)

We have compared the versions printed by the three different individuals who had access to the original pages, and we find that the printings are essentially the same. Charles Marshall omitted the testimony of Horace Stowel, but as this only amounts to about 40 words it was probably omitted by accident. It appears in both of the other printings.

The discovery of the two additional printings may provide some important evidence in the matter of the trial's authenticity. Tuttle's account, published in 1883, ends with this statement: "and thereupon the court finds the defendant guilty." The two other versions, however, include a statement of the costs of the trial at the end of the proceedings. In the first printed version we read:

And therefore the Court find the Defendant guilty.  
Costs: Warrant, 19c. Complaint upon oath, 25 1/2c. Seven witnesses, 87 1/2c. Recognisances, 25c. Mittimus, 19c. Recognisances of witnesses, 75c. Subpoena, 18c.—\$2.68.  
(*Fraser's Magazine*, February 1873, vol. VII, page 130)

The fact that the costs were included is verified by the 1886 printing in the *Utah Christian Advocate*.

Francis W. Kirkham quotes the following from "Bender's Manual for all counties and Town Officers," 15th edition, 1837:

"The civil docket shall show in each case the names of the plaintiff and the defendant and their attorneys, if there be any, the names and addresses of all the witnesses sworn, the names of the persons constituting the jury, if any, and the final disposition of the case, together with an itemization of all costs collected therein." (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, page 389)

We do not know if this rule would apply to a justice of the peace in Bainbridge in 1826, but it seems reasonable to suppose that the costs would be included in such a record. Therefore, the fact that the costs are itemized in the 1826 "court record" seems to give it a more authentic appearance.

The fact that the "court record" was published three different times by people who had access to the original pages makes us almost certain that we have an accurate copy of these pages. The question remains, however, whether the original pages were actually taken from a court record book. The Mormon writer F. L. Stewart seems willing to admit

that Miss Pearsall, who had lived at Bainbridge, brought the pages to Bishop Tuttle:

Actually this document was first submitted for publication by Bishop Tuttle when it was presented to him by a missionary, a Miss Emily Pearsall, who had gone to Utah from Bainbridge in 1870. She said she had torn the document from the court record book of a relative. (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, pages 64-65)

Bishop Tuttle claimed that either Miss Pearsall's "father or uncle was a Justice of the Peace in Bainbridge," and that she tore the leaves from the original record book. We find this statement in the *Utah Christian Advocate* for January, 1886:

The document we print below is interesting to those, who desire historic light on the origin of Mormonism. We received the Manuscript from Bishop Tuttle; and the following, from the good bishop's pen, explains how he came into possession of the Manuscript:—"The Ms. was given me by Miss Emily Pearsall who, some years since, was a woman helper in our mission and lived in my family, and died here. Her father or uncle was a Justice of the Peace in Bainbridge Chenango Co., New York, in Jo. Smith's time, and before him Smith was tried. Miss Pearsall tore the leaves out of the record found in her father's house and brought them to me."

Stanley S. Ivins did a great deal of research regarding this matter and found that Miss Pearsall's uncle was named Albert Neely. The reader will recollect that Dr. Purple stated Joseph Smith was tried before "Albert Neely, Esq., the father of Bishop Neely of the State of Maine." Mr. Ivins gives this information in his notes on the 1826 trial:

**History of Chenango & Madison counties, N.Y.**, By James Smith—D. Mason & Co. (Syracuse, N.Y.) 1880.

...  
P. 176 — Smith says that Albert Neely was a vestryman of the St. Peters Protestant Episcopal Church in Bainbridge in 1825.

**History & Genealogy of the Pearsall Family in England & America.** — Edited by Clarence E. and Hettie May Pearsall and Harry L. Neal

Vol. 2, pages 1143, 1144, 1151 — Thomas Pearsall moved from Long Island to Chenango County, N.Y., in 1790. Among his children were Robert and Phebe Pearsall. Phebe married **Albert Neely**, and their son Harry A. became the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Maine. Robert Pearsall married Flavia Newton and lived at Bainbridge, N.Y. Their second child was: "**Emily Pearsall**, born January 25, 1833; died November 5, 1872, at the home of Bishop D. S. Tuttle, Salt Lake City, Utah, where she had gone as in Episcopal missionary. She was unmarried." (Stanley S. Ivins' notes, now in the Utah State Historical Society Library, Salt Lake City, Utah)

Stanley S. Ivins' research plainly shows that Miss Pearsall was related to Justice Neely, and therefore it was certainly possible that she could have taken the pages from his record book.

### Mentioned in 1831

We have shown that at first Dr. Kirkham claimed the trial was not mentioned before 1877, but that he later had to admit that it was printed in 1873. Dale L. Morgan, a noted historian, discovered that the trial was actually mentioned as early as 1831 in a letter published in the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, published in Utica, N.Y. The letter is "signed A. W. B., and Mr. Morgan identifies him from subsequent articles as A. W. Benton" (*No Man Knows My History*, page 418A). Since Mr. Benton lived in Bainbridge, his account is very important. Wesley P. Walters has furnished us with a photograph of Benton's account as it appears in the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*. We will reprint this article in its entirety, although we will do it in sections to include some of our own observations:

Messrs. Editors—In the sixth number of your paper I saw a notice of a sect of people called Mormonites; and thinking that a fuller history of their founder, Joseph Smith, Jr., might be interesting to community, and particularly to your correspondent in Ohio, where, perhaps, the truth concerning him may be hard to come at, I will take the trouble to make a few remarks on the character of that infamous impostor. For several years preceding the appearance of his book, **he was about the country in the character of a glass-looker: pretending, by means of a certain stone, or glass, which he put in a hat, to be able to discover lost goods, hidden treasures, mines of gold and silver, &c.** Although he constantly failed in his pretensions, still he had his dupes who put implicit confidence in all his words. In this town, a wealthy farmer, named Josiah Stowell, together with others, spent large sums of money in digging for hidden money, which this Smith pretended he could see, and told them where to dig; but they never found their treasure. (*Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, April 9, 1831, page 120)

We have previously quoted Francis W. Kirkham as maintaining that "The use of the seer stone by Joseph Smith buried in a hat to exclude the light, seemed to have had its origin and emphasis in *Mormonism Unveiled*, 1834" (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, page 469). The reader will notice, however, that A. W. Benton states that Joseph Smith was using a stone or glass which he placed in a hat. Since his letter was published April 9, 1831, it clearly shows that this was publicly known years before *Mormonism Unveiled* was printed.

A. W. Benton goes on to relate that Joseph Smith was arrested as a disorderly person:

At length the public, becoming wearied with the base imposition which he was palming upon the credulity of the ignorant, for the purpose of sponging his living from their earnings, had him arrested as **a disorderly person, tried and condemned before a court of justice.** But considering his youth, (he then being a minor,) and thinking he might reform his conduct, he was designedly allowed to escape. This was **four or five years ago.** From this time he absented himself from this place, returning only privately, and holding clandestine intercourse with his credulous dupes, for two or three years. (*Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, April 9, 1831, page 120)

The reader will notice that Benton claimed that Joseph Smith was "arrested as a disorderly person." This agrees well with the "court record," for it states that Joseph Smith was "a disorderly person and an impostor." Benton's statement also agrees with the "court record" in stating that Joseph Smith was found guilty.

The "court record" states that the trial took place on March 20, 1826. This would have been five years prior to the time Benton wrote his letter in 1831. Mr. Benton states that the trial took place "four or five years ago."

Mr. Benton goes on to relate that Joseph Smith was arrested again in 1830:

It was during this time, and probably by the help of others more skilled in the ways of iniquity than himself, that he formed the blasphemous design of forging a new revelation, which, backed by the terrors of an endless hell, and the testimony of base unprincipled men, he hoped would frighten the ignorant, and open a field of speculation for the vicious, so that he might secure to himself the scandalous honor of being the founder of a new sect, which might rival, perhaps, the Wilkinsonians, or the French Prophets of the 17th century.

During the past Summer he was frequently in this vicinity, and others of the baser sort, as Cowdry, Whitmer, etc., holding meetings, and proselyting a few weak and silly women, and still more silly men, whose minds are shrouded in a mist of ignorance which no ray can penetrate, and whose credulity the utmost absurdity cannot equal.

In order to check the progress of delusion, and open the eyes and understandings of those who blindly followed him, and unmask the turpitude and villany of those who knowingly abetted him in his infamous designs; he was again arraigned before a bar of Justice, during last Summer, to answer to a charge of misdemeanor. (*Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, April 9, 1831, page 120)

Joseph Smith himself tells of this trial in his *History of the Church*:

I was visited by a constable, and arrested by him on a warrant, on the charge of being a disorderly person of setting the country in an uproar by preaching the Book of Mormon, etc. . . . He drove on to the town of South



POETRY.

[For the Magazine and Advocate.]

HEAVEN.

There is a land beyond the sky,
Where souls immortal bloom,
And tears of sorrow will be dry,
On that blest shore, and every sigh
Will cease beyond the tomb.
O, glorious thought! eternal joy
Will be our portion there—
No sating knives, no base alloy
Shall mar our bliss, our peace destroy,
Nor plunge us in despair.
Yet there are those who often tell
About vindictive wrath,—
How sinners must, by demons fell,
Be dragged away to endless hell,
Along some burning path;
And there in vain forever cry,
In seas of liquid fire;
And souls look down, without a sigh,
Upon them, as they roast and fry
'Neath God's eternal ire.
" And this is justice," hear them say,
" To torment sinners—
They must (because in life's dark day
To happiness they miss the way)
Be plunged in endless woe."
Heed not their dogma: nor believe
Their " tongues, on fire of hell;"
God made us, and will never leave
Our souls in hell, but us receive
With him for eye to dwell.
Rejoice, I say again, rejoice—
We have a God of love—"
I come to a tree," 'tis Christ's own voice—
And we shall taste of heavenly joys,
In brighter worlds above.
Verona, April, 1831. J. S.

MARRIAGES.

At Lee, Feb. 13, by Rev. S. Miles, Mr. Julian Carter, Esq., of Albany, Oswego co., to Miss Martha Uford, of the former place.
At Deerfield, March 16th, by the same, Mr. Adam F. Starring, to Miss Beulah Rowley, all of that place.
At Eaton, March 15th, by the Rev. John Freeman, Mr. De Ruyter Avery, to Miss ———— Pratt.
At Hamilton, March 26th, by the same, Mr. James Muir, to Mrs. Esther D. Rolla.

DEATH.

At New-Hartford, March 14, Mrs. Lucy Morey, aged 34 years, daughter of Mr. Salmon Lusk. She fell a victim to that incurable disease, so common to our climate—the consumption; wasting slowly, but surely, under its unremitting and destroying influence.
Mrs. M. was a person of more than ordinary talent, possessed the highest sense of moral propriety, and illustrated her convictions by a life of great innocence and practical virtue. The warmest sympathies of her acquaintance, were manifested at her funeral, by mingling their tears with those of her afflicted friends.
Mrs. M. was never directly connected with any religious denomination. She was early acquainted with the great doctrine of the restitution, and her predilections were probably in favor of that faith. She knew that her Redeemer lives—submitted with exemplary patience, to afflictions dispensed in the order of Providence, and confident with strong hope in the promises of God, and the resurrection of the dead. [Communicated.]

[For the Magazine and Advocate.]

MORMONITES.

Messrs. Editors—In the sixth number of your paper I saw a notice of a sect of people called Mormonites; and thinking that a fuller history of their founder, Joseph Smith, Jr., might be interesting to community, and particularly to your correspondents in Ohio, where, perhaps, the truth concerning him may be hard to come at, I will take the trouble to make a few remarks on the character of that infamous impostor. For several years preceding the appearance of his book, he was about the country in the character of a glass-looker: pretending, by means of a certain stone, or glass, which he put in a hat, to be able to discover lost goods, hidden treasures, mines of gold and silver, &c. Although he constantly failed in his pretensions, still he had his dupes who put implicit confidence in all his words. In this town, a wealthy farmer, named Josiah Stowell, together with others, spent large amounts of money in digging for hidden money, which this Smith pretended he could see, and told them where to dig; but they never found their treasure. At length the public be-

coming wearied with the base imposture which he was pursuing upon the credulity of the ignorant, for the purpose of sponging his living from their earnings, had him arrested as a disorderly person, tried and condemned before a court of Justice. But, considering his youth, (he then being a minor,) and thinking he might reform his conduct, he was designly allowed to escape. This was four or five years ago. From this time he absented himself from this place, returning only privately, and holding clandestine intercourse with his credulous dupes, for two or three years.

It was during this time, and probably by the help of others more skilled in the ways of iniquity than himself, that he formed the blasphemous design of forging a new revelation, which, backed by the terrors of an endless hell, and the testimony of base unprincipled men, he hoped would frighten the ignorant, and open a field of speculation for the vicious, so that he might secure to himself the scandalous honor of being the founder of a new sect, which might rival, perhaps, the Wilkinsonsians, or the French Prophets of the 17th century.

During the past Summer he was frequently in this vicinity, and others of the baser sort, as Cowdry, Whimer, etc., holding meetings, and proselyting a few weak and silly women, and still more silly men, whose minds are shrouded in a mist of ignorance which no ray can penetrate, and whose credulity the utmost absurdity cannot equal.

In order to check the progress of delusion, and open the eyes and understandings of those who blindly followed him, and unthink the turpitude and villany of those who knowingly abetted him in his infamous designs; he was again arraigned before a bar of Justice, during last Summer, to answer to a charge of misdemeanor. This trial led to an investigation of his character and conduct, which clearly evinced to the unprejudiced, where the spirit came which dictated his inspirations. During the trial it was shown that the Book of Mormon was brought to light by the same magic power by which he pretended to tell fortunes, discover hidden treasures, &c. Oliver Cowdry, one of the three witnesses to the book, testified that he saw Smith found with the plates, from which he translated his book, two transparent stones, resembling glass, set in silver bows. That by looking through these, he was able to read in English, the reformed Egyptian characters, which were engraved on the plates.

So much for the gift and power of God, by which Smith says he translated his book. Two transparent stones, undoubtedly of the same properties, and the gift of the same spirit as the one in which he looked to find his neighbor's goods. It is reported, and probably true, that he commenced his juggling by stealing and hiding property belonging to his neighbors, and when inquiry was made, he would look in his stone, (his gift and power) and tell where it was. Josiah Stowell, a Mormonite, being sworn, testified that he positively knew that said Smith never had lied to, or deceived him, and did not believe he ever tried to deceive any body else. The following questions were then asked him, to which he made the replies annexed.

Did Smith ever tell you there was money hid in a certain place which he mentioned? Yes. Did he tell you you could find it by digging? Yes. Did you dig? Yes. Did you find any money? No. Did he not lie to you then, and deceive you? No! the money was there, but we did not get quite to it! How do you know it was there? Smith said it was! Addison Austin was next called upon, who testified, that at the very same time that Stowell was digging for money, he, Austin, was in company with said Smith alone, and asked him to tell him honestly whether he could see this money or not. Smith hesitated some time, but finally replied: "to be candid, between you and me, I cannot, any more than you or any body else; but any way to get a living." Here, then, we have his own confession, that he was a vile, dishonest impostor. As regards the testimony of Josiah Stowell, it needs no comment. He swears positively that Smith did not lie to him. So much for a Mormon witness. Paramount to this, in truth and consistency, was the testimony of Joseph Knight, another Mormonite. Newel Knight, son of the former, and also a Mormonite, testified, under oath, that he positively had a devil cast out of himself by the instrumentality of Joseph Smith, Jr., and that he saw the devil; and it was out, but could not tell how it looked! Those who have joined them in this place, are, without exception, children who are frightened into the measure, or ignorant adults, whose love for the marvellous is equalled by nothing but their entire devotedness to the will of their leader; with a few who are as destitute of virtue and moral honesty, as they are of truth and consistency. As for his book, it is only the counterpart of his money-digging plan. Fearing the penalty of the law, and wishing still to amuse his followers, he fled for safety to the sanctuary of pretended religion. A. W. B.

[S. Bainbridge, Chen-co., March, 1831.]

[For the Magazine and Advocate.]

THE GOD OF ROCHESTER.

I send you the following extract of a letter—of the truth of which there is no doubt. It is of so particular consequence, except to show the spirit of the times, and may serve to fill a niche in your paper.

"At a three-day's meeting, held some of the last days of February, at Onida, it was given out the first day, by some of the Rev. Gentlemen, that the God of Rochester was coming there. This was repeated the second day; and on the third day, in the afternoon, it was stated that the God of Rochester had come. I stated this to a clergyman of the Episcopal church, from Oswego co., who very humorously, and with some propriety observed,—'They have given him time to come in a post coach!'"

"There is much boasting by the Orthodox about their God of Rochester: they even go so far as to stain particular. Last Wednesday evening I was present, and heard it stated, that two Brigadier Generals, four Colonels, nine Lawyers, eleven Merchants, and four or five Physicians had fallen victims to their God."

Query.—Would not the catalogue have been more complete, had it been further stated—that nearly all the Presbyterian clergymen in the country had been the first converts? And can it be matter of surprise, that ordinary men should be subjects of a power equal to the labor of calculating any thing with such a race of men? S.

LETTERS CONTAINING REMITTANCES.

Received at this office during the week, ending April 7.

- A. F. Backstead, (S. C.) \$10—A. F., Russia, \$9—A. P., Albany, \$2—L. F., De Peyster, \$3—P. M., W. Lincklean, \$1—G. H., Johnstown, (O.) \$3—J. S., Crafisbury, (Vt.) \$4—H. B., Cazenovia, \$2—P. M., Salisbury, \$3—former remittance received.—D. D. & J. L., German Flats, \$1.50 each—A. H. C., Cohocton, \$3—P. M., Bridport, (Vt.) \$1—J. H., Jackson, (Mo.) \$10—T. H. & W. B., N. Adams, (Me.) \$1.50 each—A. L., Lansingburg, \$4—R. E., Eaton, \$12—L. C., Woleot, \$10—H. B., Camden, \$3—C. G. H., Norfolk, \$10—P. M., Oxford, \$2.50—S. H., N. Bloomfield, \$5—E. L., New Lisbon, \$6—S. O. T., Penfield, \$2—P. M., Madrid, \$7—P. C., Troy, \$20—J. H., Osnabuck, (U. C.) \$12—T. B. H., Luzerne, \$10—F. L., Madrid, \$5—T. A. K., Bangor, \$2—E. S., Hopkinton, \$6—S. J. Jr., Holland, \$3—P. M., Greenfield, \$1.50—A. K., West Galway, \$3—M. & H., Caughnewaga, \$3—J. L., S. K. B. & S., A. R. B. & W., Honesdale, (Pa.) \$1.50 each; J. R. A., do. \$0.75—A. T., Middlefield Centre, \$12—H. C., Petersboro', \$1—W. C., Southport, \$5—C. C. R., Kirkville, \$3—J. C. Jr., Unity, (N. H.) \$5—P. M., Slatersville, \$2—J. B., Mansville, \$1—T. G. & S. W., Nelson, (N. H.) \$1.50 each; former remittance rec'd.—T. N., Hamtramck, (Mich.) \$1.50—A. G., Perrinton, \$6—A. W. L., Liverpool, (Pa.) \$3—A. M., Concord, (O.) \$3—A. H., Burlington, \$1—S. W., Lexington, (O.) \$5.

THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER, AND UNIVERSALIST REGISTER.

Is a Monthly publication of Original Sermons, by living Universalist Ministers. The design of the work is to spread before the public the best pulpit productions of clergymen in this denomination, with a view to correct the misrepresentations which are abroad concerning our sentiments, and to promote the cause of a rational faith and of practical godliness.

Each number will contain at least 10 octavo pages. On the last two pages of the covers will be published, under the title of Universalist Register, an account of events, interesting to the Universalist denomination, short expositions of Scripture passages, &c.

Terms—One dollar per year, payable in advance, or on delivery of the first number. New subscribers can be furnished with all the numbers of the volume, commencing in January, 1831.

Orders for the work should be addressed (post paid) to William A. Dree, Augustin, Me., who will be very thankful for any favors our Universalist brethren may grant him towards extending its circulation. February, 1831.

The Magazine and Advocate, IS PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY, BY DOLPHUS SKINNER, Proprietor.

TERMS.—To Mail and Office Subscribers, \$1.00 per annum, in advance, or \$2, if not paid within three months from the time of subscribing. No subscription received for less than one year, (unless the money be paid in advance,) and no paper discontinued till all arrearages are paid, except at the discretion of the Publisher. Agents, or Companies, paying for eight copies, are entitled to the ninth, gratis. All communications, by mail, to the Editors, must be post-paid, or free. To Village Subscribers, who receive their papers by a carrier, \$3 per annum payable half-yearly in advance.

A. B. & R. E. GROSH, Printers, Genesee-street, head of Seneca, nearly opposite the Unitarian Church.

A photograph from the Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, April 9, 1831, page 120. This photograph proves that Joseph Smith's trouble with the law was known at an early date.

Bainbridge, Chenango county, where he lodged . . . the day following, a court was convened for the purpose of investigating those charges which had been preferred against me. (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 88-89)

A. W. Benton gives this information concerning the trial:

This trial led to an investigation of his character and conduct, which clearly evinced to the unprejudiced, whence the spirit came which dictated his inspirations. During the trial it was shown that the Book of Mormon was brought to light by the same magic power by which he pretended to tell fortunes, discover hidden treasures, &c. Oliver Cowdry, one of the three witnesses to the book, testified under oath, that said Smith found with the plates, from which he translated his book, two transparent stones, resembling glass, set in silver bows. That by looking through these, he was able to read in English, the reformed Egyptian characters, which were engraved on the plates.

So much for the gift and power of God, by which Smith says he translated his book. Two transparent stones, undoubtedly of the same properties, and the gift of the same spirit as the one in which he looked to find his neighbor's goods. It is reported, and probably true, that he commenced his juggling by stealing and hiding property belonging to his neighbors, and when inquiry was made, he would look in his stone, (his gift and power) and tell where it was. Josiah Stowell, a Mormonite, being sworn, testified that he positively knew that said Smith never had lied to, or deceived him, and did not believe he ever tried to deceive any body else. The following questions were then asked him, to which he made the replies annexed.

Did Smith ever tell you there was money hid in a certain place which he mentioned? Yes. Did he tell you, you could find it by digging? Yes. Did you dig? Yes. Did you find any money? No. Did he not lie to you then, and deceive you? No! the money was there, but we did not get quite to it! How do you know it was there? Smith said it was! Addison Austin was next called upon, who testified, that at the very same time that Stowell was digging for money, he, Austin, was in company with said Smith alone, and asked him to tell him honestly whether he could see this money or not. Smith hesitated some time, but finally replied, "to be candid, between you and me, I cannot, any more than you or any body else; but any way to get a living." Here, then, we have his own confession, that he was a vile, dishonest impostor. As regards the testimony of Josiah Stowell, it needs no comment. He swears positively that Smith did not lie to him. So much for a Mormon witness. (*Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, April 9, 1831, page 120)

In his *History of the Church*, Joseph Smith states that among the "many witnesses called up against me, was Mr. Josiah Stool . . ." (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 89).

Smith claimed that his former employer defended him. In fact, he quoted him as giving this testimony:

"Did not the prisoner, Joseph Smith, have a horse of you?"

"Yes."

"Did not he go to you and tell you that an angel had appeared unto him and authorized him to get the horse from you?"

"No, he told me no such story."

"Well, how had he the horse of you?"

"He bought him of me as any other man would."

"Have you had your pay?"

"That is not your business."

The question being again put, the witness replied:

"I hold his note for the price of the horse, which I consider as good as the pay; for I am well acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jun., and know him to be an honest man; and if he wishes, I am ready to let him have another horse on the same terms." (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 90)

While Joseph Smith says nothing about his money-digging activities being brought up at this trial, he goes onto relate that after he was acquitted he was again arrested and taken "about fifteen miles" to Broome County, where his money-digging was discussed:

Mr. Seymour now addressed the court, and in a long and violent harangue endeavored to blacken my character . . . he brought up the story of my having been a money-digger; and in this manner proceeded, hoping evidently to influence the court and the people against me. (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 93)

Mr. Benton finishes his letter by stating:

Paramount to this, in truth and consistency, was the testimony of Joseph Knight, another Mormonite. Newel Knight, son of the former, and also a Mormonite, testified, under oath, that he positively had a devil cast out of himself by the instrumentality of Joseph Smith, jr., and that he saw the devil after it was out, but could not tell how it looked!

Those who have joined them in this place, are, without exception, children who are frightened into the measure, or ignorant adults, whose love for the marvellous is equalled by nothing but their entire devotedness to the will of their leader; with a few who are as destitute of virtue and moral honesty, as they are of truth and consistency. As for his book, it is only the counterpart of his money-digging plan. Fearing the penalty of the law, and wishing still to amuse his followers, he fled for safety to the sanctuary of pretended religion. A. W. B.

S. Bainbridge, Chen. co., March, 1831.

(*Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, April 9, 1831, page 120)



Joseph Smith gives little information concerning the trial at Bainbridge in 1830, nor does he have much to say about the trial which followed in Broome county. He does, however, state that his “former faithful friends and lawyers” were again at his side at the latter trial. He stated that at this trial Newel Knight did testify that the devil was cast out of him through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith. Evidently Knight was unable to describe the appearance of the devil, for Joseph Smith quoted him as saying:

“Well, then,” replied Knight, “it would be of no use to tell you what the devil looked like, for it was a spiritual sight, and spiritually discerned; and of course you would not understand it were I to tell you of it.” (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 93)

The details which A. W. Benton gives of the 1830 trial are very convincing, and some of his statements are even confirmed by Joseph Smith’s own *History of the Church*. Therefore, we feel that his statement that Joseph Smith was arrested as “a disorderly person” some “four or five years” before must be given serious consideration. Even the Mormon apologist F. L. Stewart has to admit that A. W. Benton’s letter is “impressive and puzzling” (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet*, page 71).

### Cowdery’s Statement

Dr. Hugh Nibley tries to dismiss Benton’s letter as “fiction.” In his book, *The Myth Makers*, we find the following statements:

. . . we are inclined to regard A. W. B.’s story of the 1826 trial as fiction. . . part, at least, of A. W. B.’s story is made up. But without the reality of the peep-stones, the whole legend of the 1826 trial collapses. The 1830 trial was real; the 1826 trial, unattested in any source but his for fifty years, was a product of A. W. B.’s own wishful thinking. (*The Myth Makers*, Salt Lake City, 1961, page 157)

Actually, there is some very good evidence from a Mormon source to show that Joseph Smith had some trouble with the law after he began working for Josiah Stowell. In 1835 Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote the following:

Soon after this visit to Cumorah, a gentleman from the south part of the State, (Chenango County,) employed our brother as a common laborer, and accordingly he visited that section of the country; and had he not been accused of digging down all, or nearly so, the mountains of Susquehannah, or causing others to do it by some art of micromancy, I should leave this, for the present unnoticed. . . . This gentleman, whose name is Stowel, resided in the town of Bainbridge, on or near the head waters of the Susquehannah river. Some forty miles south, or down the river, in the town of Harmony, Susquehannah county, Pa. is said to be a cave or subterraneous recess, . . . where a

company of Spaniards, a long time since, when the county was uninhabited by white settlers, excavated from the bowels of the earth ore, and coined a large quantity of money; after which they secured the cavity and evacuated, leaving a part still in the cave, purposing to return at some distant period. A long time elapsed and this account came from one of the individuals who was first engaged in this mining business. The country was pointed out and the spot minutely described. . . . Enough however, was credited of the Spaniard’s story, to excite the belief of many that there was a fine sum of the precious metal lying coined in this subterraneous vault, among whom was our employer; and accordingly our brother was required to spend a few months with some others in excavating the earth, in pursuit of this treasure.

On the private character of our brother I need add nothing further, at present, previous to his obtaining the records of the Nephites, only that while in that country, **some very officious person complained of him as a disorderly person, and brought him before the authorities of the county;** but there being no cause of action he was honorably acquitted. (*Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, October, 1835, vol. 2, pages 200 & 201)

Notice that Oliver Cowdery stated that this happened “previous” to the time Joseph Smith obtained the “records of the Nephites.” Since Joseph Smith obtained the plates on September 22, 1827, this would mean that he had trouble with the law prior to that time. While Oliver Cowdery disagrees with the “court record” when he states that Joseph Smith was acquitted, he is in agreement with the “court record” and with A. W. Benton’s letter in stating that Joseph Smith was charged with being “a disorderly person.”

The Mormon writer F. L. Stewart tries to make Oliver Cowdery’s statements refer to an incident that occurred in 1828:

The above statement does not apply to any alleged trial of 1826, and for that matter not to any trial where Joseph Smith was found guilty and fined. It best applies to another incident altogether.

While Joseph was “in that country” (Chenango county, New York—Harmony, Pennsylvania area) Lucy Harris, “a very officious person” (which would be a polite way to describe the vindictive wife of a fellow Church member, Martin Harris) complained of him as a disorderly person, and brought him before the authorities of the county: but there being no cause for action, he was honorably acquitted.

Joseph’s mother gives details of this incident that occurred while Joseph was in Pennsylvania dictating to Oliver Cowdery in 1828. . . . It is the above incident that Oliver Cowdery was most likely describing. (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet*, page 72)

This is an interesting attempt to explain away Cowdery’s statement. The reader will note, however, that Cowdery plainly states that the trouble occurred “previous” to the time Joseph Smith obtained the plates, and Joseph

Smith clearly states that he obtained them on “the twenty-second day of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty seven, . . .” (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 18). Thus it is plain to see that F. L. Stewart’s explanation of Cowdery’s statement cannot be accepted. The Mormon writer Richard L. Anderson frankly states that Stewart is in error with regard to this matter, although he does not believe that the “court record” is authentic:

A final chapter is added that contains an imaginary dialogue between Stewart and Brodie concerning the supposed transcript of an 1826 trial of Joseph Smith popularized by *No Man Knows My History*. . . . In regard to the subject of this chapter, however, more evidential work needs to be done on what appears to be a fictitious transcript of a genuine trial. . . . Stewart attempts to equate this early trial with one mentioned by Lucy Smith in Wayne County in 1829. But this conclusion violates Cowdery’s description both in location and chronology; the trial he mentions took place “previous to his obtaining the records of the Nephites.” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1968, pages 231-232)

Francis W. Kirkham feels that the “court record” is not genuine, but he is willing to concede that Joseph Smith may have been arrested in 1826:

While residing in Chenango County, probably March 1826, Joseph Smith may have been arrested and brought before a justice of the peace, either as a disorderly person or as a vagrant. As there was no evidence to convict him, he was discharged being still under 21 years of age, with the hope he would reform. . . .

Both Oliver Cowdery and A. W. Benton agree that Joseph Smith was discharged by the justice. . . . It is beyond any reason to assume that either of these two men confirm the ridiculous assumed confession of Joseph Smith on leaves torn from a record brought to Utah by Emily Pearsall in 1871 or the memories written by W. D. Purple, who said he was invited to take notes at the trial, but whose writings were not printed until 50 years after the event. (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, pages 491-492)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe also doubts the authenticity of the “court record,” but he is willing to admit that Joseph Smith was brought into court in 1826:

Only one arrest of Joseph Smith has been found between his eighteenth and twenty-second year. While working for Josiah Stool, “some very officious person complained of him, Joseph Smith, as a disorderly person, and brought him before the authorities of the county. There being no cause of action, he was honorably acquitted.” (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, page 79)

1. He stood before law courts, for various reasons, from March, 1826, until the end of his days: justices’ courts, county, municipal, and district courts of the

American states, and the Federal District Courts. (*Ibid.*, page 214)

## Historical Setting

Although the “court record” for the 1826 trial was not published until many years after Joseph Smith’s death, the information given in the record seems to agree well with facts derived from many other sources. For one thing, we know that Joseph Smith was probably in the area of Bainbridge at the time the trial was supposed to have occurred. The Mormon writer F. L. Stewart states that “it was common knowledge that Joseph Smith lived in Bainbridge in 1826” (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet*, page 66). Furthermore, we know that Joseph Smith was working for Josiah Stowell at the time. In his testimony Josiah Stowell claimed that Joseph Smith “had been at his house something like five months.” This statement is in harmony with a statement made by Joseph Smith himself:

In the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman by the name of Josiah Stowel, who lived in Chenango county, state of New York. He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards . . . . After I went to live with him, he took me, . . . to dig for the silver mine, . . . . Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger. (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 17)

If we add five months to the date given by Joseph Smith—i.e., October, 1825—it would make the date March, 1826, and the reader will remember that the trial was supposed to have been held March 20, 1826.

In the “court record” we read that Josiah Stowell “positively knew that the prisoner could tell, and professed the art of seeing those valuable treasures through the medium of said stone; . . .” This would be in harmony with the statement by Joseph Smith’s mother that Stowel “came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye” (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, by Lucy Smith*, London, 1853, pages 91-92). Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, gave this very revealing information:

Joseph had had this stone for some time. There was a company there in that neighborhood, who were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients. Of this company were old Mr. Stowel—I think his name was Josiah—also old Mr. Beman, also Samuel Lawrence, George Proper, Joseph Smith, jr., and his father, and his brother Hiram Smith. They dug for money in Palmyra, Manchester, also in Pennsylvania, and other places. When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to look in the stone

for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong that he could not see, and they gave it up. (*Tiffany's Monthly*, 1859, page 164)

In his testimony at the trial, Stowell states that Joseph Smith used the stone to locate “a salt-spring.” This is very interesting because in 1880 Frederic G. Mathers wrote an article in which he stated:

Three miles above Nineveh lies Afton, just on the edge of Chenango county, and a short distance above are Sidney, in Delaware county, and Otego, in Otsego county. Smith and his followers operated with the peek-stone in this part of the valley, where he was a comparative stranger. George Collington, one of the most substantial farmers in Broome county, was then a lad of sixteen. One evening, at twilight, he discovered Smith, Joseph Knight, William Hale (uncle of Smith's wife) and two men named Culver and Blowers in the act of dodging through the woods with shovels and picks upon their shoulders, their object being to discover a **salt-spring** by the agency of the peek-stone. He followed them, under cover of the brush, to a point where they stopped for consultation and finally decided to dig the next day. Noticing that Bostwick Badger, who then owned the farm now occupied by Collington, had felled an oak near the place, and that he had drawn out the timber, Collington obtained permission to cut the top for wood. Collington's axe and the prophet's diggers began operations about the same time on the following morning. Out from the treetop came Collington and asked what they were doing. They told him to mind his business, which he did by thoroughly publishing them about the neighborhood—a proceeding that brought them a number of unwelcome visitors in the place of one. Frederick Davenport furnished young Collington with a half bushel of salt to be deposited in the hole at night. By Morning the water had dissolved the salt and retained its briny flavor. Bottles were filled for exhibition, and the stock of the converts in the peek-stone, ran high until the trick was discovered. It was claimed that the peek-stone also pointed out an extensive silver-mine on the farm of Abram Cornell at Bettsburg, nearly opposite Nineveh. No silver was found except that furnished by Josiah Stowell, a not overbright man whose little all went into the pocket of Smith. (*Lippincott's Magazine*, vol. XXVI, 1880, pages 202-203)

The “court record” states that the warrant was issued “upon oath of Peter G. Bridgman” . . . In his notes on the 1826 trial Stanley Ivins presents evidence to show that Peter G. Bridgman was a resident of Afton (Bainbridge):

**History of Chenango & Madison Counties, N.Y.**, By James Smith—D. Mason & Co. (Syracuse, N.Y.) 1880.

. . . .  
P. 152—In his sketch of North Afton, Smith says that the North Afton Methodist Episcopal Church was incorporated at a Feb. 17, 1829 meeting presided over by **Peter G. Bridgman** and Rev. George Evans.

Wesley P. Walters has pointed out the possibility that Peter G. Bridgman may have been related to Josiah Stowell's wife, for, according to Larry C. Porter, her name was “Mariam Bridgeman Stowell” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, page 376).

Stanley Ivins also found evidence that Arad Stowel, McMaster and Jonathan Thompson, who are listed as witnesses at the trial, were in the area at about that time:

P. 150—In his sketch of Afton Village, Smith says that, when the South Bainbridge Presbyterian Society was organized, in 1825, Arad Stowel and David McMaster were two of the trustees. . . .

P. 322—Smith says that in 1822 Jonathan Thompson was supervisor of the town of Norwich.

We know, of course, that Josiah Stowell lived at Bainbridge (see *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 81). The “court record” presents him as giving testimony favorable to Joseph Smith. This seems consistent with Stowell's feelings about Joseph Smith, for according to Joseph Smith, Stowell spoke of his honesty in the 1830 trial. This is confirmed by A. W. Benton's letter.

According to the 1826 “court record,” Jonathan Thompson gave testimony favorable to Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith states that a man named Jonathan Thompson testified at the 1830 trial. This testimony also appears favorable:

Mr. Jonathan Thompson was next called up and examined:

“Has not the prisoner, Joseph Smith Jun., had a yoke of oxen of you?”

“Yes.”

“Did he not obtain them of you by telling you that he had a revelation to the effect that he was to have them?”

“No, he did not mention a word of the kind concerning the oxen; he purchased them the same as any other man would.” (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 90)

Thus we see that the 1826 trial seems to have a good historical setting. The Mormon apologist F. L. Stewart admits that the record lists individuals who are known to have lived in the area of Bainbridge, but she states:

. . . this merely indicates that it was written by someone who was familiar with Bainbridge and its citizens. This narrows the field, but still gives us hundreds of potential authors. (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet*, page 67)

In the “court record” Joseph Smith stated that he had been “going to school” at the time he lived with Josiah Stowell. Since Mormon writers have claimed that Joseph Smith's “school education was very meager” (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, by John A. Widtsoe, page 67), we were surprised to read that he was still attending school when he was about twenty years old. At first this seemed



like a mark against the authenticity of the “court record” Further research, however, seems to show that Joseph Smith did attend school in Bainbridge. In his book, *History of Chenango and Madison Counties*, New York, James H. Smith stated:

Smith, while here, attended school in District No. 9. (*History of Chenango and Madison Counties*, New York, as quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, page 381)

The Mormon writer Larry C. Porter gives this information:

Both the townships of Coleville and Bainbridge traditionally claim that Joseph Smith attended school in their respective districts at some juncture during his residency there. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, page 370)

Wesley P. Walters gives this interesting information in a letter he has allowed us to use:

While it is true that Smith would be 19-20 years old during the period he was at Bainbridge, in the rural one-room school system that generally prevailed, so far as I know, there was no age limitation on school attendance. With the necessity of boys helping with farm work during spring, summer & fall, plus chores in winter, school—even in the winter—often became a hit or miss proposition.

In the same letter Wesley P. Walters made some interesting comments with regard to other problems connected with the “court record”:

The bigger problem is the fact that the record refers simply to “Joseph Smith” instead of Joseph Smith, Jr.” . . . The trial was held at a Justice of the Peace Court. Generally—at least it is true in Illinois—this did not require a complete stenographic record of every word that was said, nor was it necessary to retain the trial record or to turn it over to the county court house. This is why Neely could have the book in his possession. In our little village I know of one J. P. court record book from about 1920 following that is tucked away in the attic of the descendant of that J. P. So under such rather loose form of record-keeping, unlike the more formal courts, I don’t think the lack of the term “Jr.” can be pressed too hard. (This laxity of recording would account for Purple giving added information not in the court record). . . . the J. P. Court records lack the legal niceties that are usually present in more formal courts of justice.

Although the evidence supporting the authenticity of the “court record” seems to be rather convincing, more research needs to be done. Larry C. Porter, “a doctoral candidate in history of religion at Brigham Young University,” has recently written an article which deals with Joseph Smith’s connection with Josiah Stowell. This article is well documented from primary sources. At first glance, it appears that Mr. Porter has omitted all reference to the 1826 trial. A more careful examination of his article, however, reveals that he has endorsed the authenticity of the “court record.” He states:

. . . Mr. Stowell had hired a number of workmen to assist him in seeking for the purported treasure. In 1825 he was desirous of securing Joseph’s services “on account of having heard that he possessed certain means, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye,” as he had heard while visiting a relative, **Simpson Stowell**, at Palmyra, New York. He offered \$14 per month to Joseph, who initially demurred. But the insistence of Mr. Stowell and the prospect of good wages apparently prompted him and his father to go to the site on the Susquehanna. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, page 366)

The reader may notice that Larry C. Porter’s statement that Josiah Stowell learned of Joseph Smith’s skill “while visiting a relative, Simpson Stowell, at Palmyra,” sounds like the testimony of Josiah Stowell as printed in the “court record”: “. . . that prisoner looked through stone and described Josiah Stowell’s house and outhouses, while at Palmyra at Simpson Stowell’s, correctly; . . .” (*Fraser’s Magazine*, February, 1873, page 229). That Larry C. Porter was referring to the court record is obvious from his footnote: “*Fraser’s Magazine*, New series, vol. 7 (February 1873), page 229; . . .” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, page 366, footnote 7).

Thus we see that Mr. Porter has endorsed the authenticity of the “court record” without really mentioning the trial. Perhaps he will refer to this trial in another article he hopes to write about Joseph Smith’s legal difficulties in New York.

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### Part 3

## HOWE'S AFFIDAVITS

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts made these statements concerning the affidavits published by E. D. Howe in 1834:

The evidence relied upon to support the charge of being lazy, shiftless, intemperate and unreliable as to speaking the truth, is from a collection of affidavits made in Palmyra, and Manchester, New York; and in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the closing months of 1833, and published in E. D. Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled*, 1834. . . . Hurlburt had been expelled from the "Mormon" church in Kirtland, in June, 1833, for immoralities; and because he had threatened to take the life of Joseph Smith, Jun., he was placed under bonds . . .

Hurlburt between these two events,—his excommunication and his trial for threatening the life of Joseph Smith, Jun.,—was sent as the special agent of the anti-"Mormon" party in and about Kirtland, to gather up all that report had to say about the Prophet and his family both in Palmyra, New York, and in Harmony, Pennsylvania. The collection of affidavits in Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled* was the result. It was simply a matter of "muck raking" on Hurlburt's part. Every idle story, every dark insinuation which at that time could be thought of and unearthed was pressed into service to gratify this man's personal desire for revenge, . . . (*A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1, pages 40-41)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made these comments concerning this matter:

In the preparation of a book against the Church he secured from upwards of a hundred people in Palmyra and vicinity unfriendly affidavits as to the character of Joseph Smith and his family. This was done in 1833, eight or ten years after the period discussed in the affidavits. . . . The affidavits are weak and watery, . . .

The spirit of religious intolerance which ran high in those days explains these affidavits. . . . Honest historians would accept with much caution statements made by such a combination. In *Mormonism Unveiled* hate and the lust for money stand out primarily . . .

The famous affidavits in Howe's book are remarkably alike in composition. One hand must have written them.

They have little to say about "peepstones"; much about treasure hunting and the deluded nature of the Smith family. (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, pages 76, 77 and 80)

Although Mormon writers condemn others for using these affidavits, they often use them when it serves their purpose. For instance, the Mormon writer F. L. Stewart cites the affidavit of Abigail Harris to try to prove a point: "An excerpt from an affidavit of Abigail Harris, presumably the sister-in-law of Martin Harris, collected by Hurlburt, makes it clear that Harris was in Palmyra at that time: . . ." (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet*, page 40).

Francis W. Kirkham also finds some statements in the affidavits useful:

Further evidence of the knowledge of the facts of the "coming forth" and publication of the Book of Mormon by persons who knew the Joseph Smith family personally from 1816 until 1830 when the book was presented to the public are the affidavits of many residents of Palmyra and vicinity. These were obtained by Philastus Hurlburt in 1833. . . .

In his anger, Hurlburt went to Palmyra and obtained affidavits from more than sixty citizens who declared they personally knew the Joseph Smith family and were willing to add that they knew them to be ignorant, lazy, deluded, deceivers, money diggers, etc., etc. . . .

Although they were willing to defame the personal character of Joseph Smith, yet they agree with the Prophet's statement and that of his mother and others regarding the physical facts of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and how and where Joseph Smith spent his time and energy while the book was in process of production. . . . A very important affidavit is by Isaac Hale, father-in-law of Joseph Smith, . . . many important events regarding the origin of the Book of Mormon are confirmed by the neighbors of Joseph Smith, . . .

The affidavits were to prejudice the reader against Joseph Smith . . . Fortunately, however, these many persons who knew Joseph Smith intimately have left their personal knowledge of the physical facts of the origin of the Book of Mormon as known to the residents of Palmyra at the time. In this manner they have left for all time proof that Joseph Smith declared the possession of an ancient record entrusted to him by divine power at the time of the

event. They give the same persons, the same facts, and the same dates as were later written by Joseph Smith. They did not anticipate that their declarations concerning the origin of the Book of Mormon would thus be important, corroborative evidence, of the declarations of Joseph Smith concerning its divine origin. (*A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 1, page 137)

The Mormon writer Hyrum L. Andrus states: “Though these affidavits reflect the prejudice that was manifested toward the Smiths, they verify the physical facts relating to the origin of the Book of Mormon” (*God, Man and the Universe*, page 68, footnote 34).

Thus we see that even Mormon writers use Howe’s affidavits when it is to their advantage.

Although we feel that some of the witnesses may have exaggerated in their testimony, we feel that the affidavits contain important information concerning the money-digging activities of the Smith family. The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe argues that the affidavits in Howe’s book “are remarkably alike in composition.” This may be true, but “The Testimony of Three Witnesses” and “The Testimony of Eight Witnesses” in the Book of Mormon are also “remarkably alike in composition.” Mormons would not reject the Book of Mormon because of this; instead, they would point out that the witnesses all signed their names, regardless of who drew up the statements. Hurlbut might have influenced the wording of the affidavits in Howe’s book, but the individuals signed their names, and this indicates that they approved of the contents. The Mormon writer F. L. Stewart stated: “All apparently were heavily edited by Hurlbut or dictated by him, as they bear a remarkable similarity in language and style” (*Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet*, page 25). Richard L. Anderson, of Brigham Young University, has made a discovery which seems to disprove that Hurlbut edited “All” of the affidavits. An examination of the affidavits printed by Howe reveals that some of them did not come from the Palmyra-Manchester area but rather from Pennsylvania. Richard L. Anderson makes this statement concerning these affidavits:

A set of statements about this period exists from Joseph Smith’s in-laws and their Pennsylvania friends. Although appearing in the same publication with E. D. Howe’s first publication of the Hurlbut affidavits, they were apparently procured by Howe’s direct correspondence **independent** of Hurlbut. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, page 25)

In footnote 46 on the same page Richard L. Anderson states:

Letter of E. D. Howe to Isaac Hale, February 4, 1834, Painesville, Ohio, cit. *Susquehanna Register*, May 1, 1834, cit. *New York Baptist Register*, vol. II (1834). Howe’s letter discloses that Hale had written to Hurlbut but that Howe wished verification and sought an attested statement “to lay open the imposition to the world.” A battery of sworn statements were made in the Harmony, Pennsylvania area by Hale and his neighbors, published first in the newspaper at the county seat of Susquehanna County, and then reproduced in slightly abbreviated form by Howe.

Dr. Anderson still maintains that “Hurlbut heavily influenced the individual statements from Palmyra-Manchester,” but he seems willing to admit that Willard Chase’s affidavit contained his own sentiments:

The longest Hurlbut affidavit is that of Willard Chase, in which instances of dishonesty and treasure digging are minimal. In fact, the Chase statement contains more parallels to Mormon sources than any other affidavit. This would lead to the inference that Chase imposed his individuality to a large extent, though many of the Hurlbut stock phrases and formulae are still apparent. The Chase family tradition was later reported by the younger brother of Willard, and he maintained Willard’s statement to Hurlbut genuine; on the other hand, he differed in certain details of recollection from the printed affidavit. Willard Chase ought to have taken more care in his statement than others contacted by Hurlbut, since Lucy Smith recalled him as “a Methodist class leader” in 1827, and his obituary described him as “formerly a Minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and was an earnest and zealous worker for many years. . . .” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1870, pages 205-296)

The following pages, which have been photographically reproduced from E. D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled*, Painesville, Ohio, 1834, contain the affidavits relating to Joseph Smith’s money-digging activities.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

We next present to the reader a few, among the many depositions which have been obtained from the neighborhood of the Smith family, and the scene where the far famed Gold Bible had its pretended origin.

The divine authenticity of the Gold Bible or the Book of Mormon, is established by three special and eight collateral witnesses, making in the whole eleven, without whom there is no pretension to testimony; and if their testimony is probable and consistent with truth, and unimpeached, according to the common rules of jurisprudence, we are bound to believe them.

Upon the principles of common law, we are prepared to meet them; and they are offered to us in no other light.— Under all circumstances, in civil and ecclesiastical tribunals, witnesses may be impeached, and after a fair hearing, on both sides, the veracity and credibility may be adjudged.

If the eleven witnesses are considered, from what has already been said, unimpeached, we will offer the depositions of some of the most respectable citizens of our country, who solemnly declare upon their oaths that no credit can be given to any one member of the Smith family. Many witnesses declare that they are in the possession of the means of knowing the Smiths for truth and veracity, and that they are not upon a par with mankind in general.— Then, according to the common rules of weighing testimony, the eleven witnesses stand impeached before the public; and until rebutting testimony can be produced which shall go to invalidate the respectable host which are here offered, we claim that no credit can or ought to be given to the witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

We have not only testimony impeaching the moral characters of the Smith family, but we show by the witnesses, that they told contradictory stories, from time to time, in relation to their finding the plates, and other circumstances attending it, which go clearly to show that none of them had the fear of God before their eyes, but were moved and instigated by the devil.

*Palmyra, Wayne Co. N. Y. Dec. 2d, 1833.*

I, Peter Ingersoll, first became acquainted with the family of Jopesh Smith, Sen. in the year of our Lord, 1822.— I lived in the neighborhood of said family, until about 1830; during which time the following facts came under my observation.

The general employment of the family, was digging for money. I had frequent invitations to join the company, but always declined being one of their number. They used various arguments to induce me to accept of their invitations. I was once ploughing near the house of Joseph Smith, Sen. about noon, he requested me to walk with him a short distance from his house, for the purpose of seeing whether a mineral rod would work in my hand, saying at the same time he was confident it would. As my oxen were eating, and being myself at leisure, I accepted the invitation.— When we arrived near the place at which he thought there was money, he cut a small witch hazle bush and gave me direction how to hold it. He then went off some rods, and told me to say to the rod, “work to the money,” which I did, in an audible voice. He rebuked me severely for speaking it loud, and said it must be spoken in a whisper. This was rare sport for me. While the old man was standing off some rods, throwing himself into various shapes, I told him the rod did not work. He seemed much surprised at this, and said he thought he saw it move in my hand. It was now time for me to return to my labor. On my



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return, I picked up a small stone and was carelessly tossing it from one hand to the other. Said he, (looking very earnestly) what are you going to do with that stone? Throw it at the birds, I replied. No, said the old man, it is of great worth; and upon this I gave it to him. Now, says he, if you only knew the value there is back of my house, (and pointing to a place near)—*there*, exclaimed he, is one chest of gold and another of silver. He then put the stone which I had given him, into his hat, and stooping forward, he bowed and made sundry maneuvers, quite similar to those of a stool pigeon. At length he took down his hat, and being very much exhausted, said, in a faint voice, "if you knew what I had seen, you would believe." To see the old man thus try to impose upon me, I confess, rather had a tendency to excite contempt than pity. Yet I thought it best to conceal my feelings, preferring to appear the dupe of my credulity, than to expose myself to his resentment. His son Alvin then went through with the same performance, which was equally disgusting.

Another time, the said Joseph, Sen. told me that the best time for digging money, was, in the heat of summer, when the heat of the sun caused the chests of money to rise near the top of the ground. You notice, said he, the large stones on the top of the ground—we call them rocks, and they truly appear so, but they are, in fact, most of them chests of money raised by the heat of the sun.

At another time, he told me that the ancient inhabitants of this country used camels instead of horses. For proof of this fact, he stated that in a certain hill on the farm of Mr. Cuyler, there was a cave containing an immense value of gold and silver, stands of arms, also, a saddle for a camel, hanging on a peg at one side of the cave. I asked him, of what kind of wood the peg was. He could not tell, but said it had become similar to stone or iron.

The old man at last laid a plan which he thought would accomplish his design. His cows and mine had been gone for some time, and were not to be found, notwithstanding our diligent search for them. Day after day was spent in fruitless search, until at length he proposed to find them by his art of divination. So he took his stand near the corner of his house, with a small stick in his hand, and made several strange and peculiar motions, and then said he could go directly to the cows. So he started off, and went into the woods about one hundred rods distant and found the lost cows. But on finding out the secret of the mystery, Harrison had found the cows, and drove them to the above named place, and milked them. So that this stratagem turned out rather more to his profit than it did to my edification.—The old man finding that all his efforts to make me a money digger, had proved abortive, at length ceased his importunities. One circumstance, however, I will mention before leaving him. Some time before young Joseph found, or pretended to find, the gold plates, the old man told me that in Canada, there had been a book found, in a hollow tree, that gave an account of the first settlement of this country before it was discovered by Columbus.

In the month of August, 1827, I was hired by Joseph Smith, Jr. to go to Pennsylvania, to move his wife's household furniture up to Manchester, where his wife then was. When we arrived at Mr. Hale's, in Harmony, Pa. from which place he had taken his wife, a scene presented itself, truly affecting. His father-in-law (Mr. Hale) addressed Joseph, in a flood of tears: "You have stolen my daughter and married her. I had much rather have followed her to her grave. You spend your time in digging for money—pretend to see in a stone, and thus try to deceive people." Joseph wept, and acknowledged he could not see in a stone now, nor never could; and that his former pretensions in

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that respect, were all false. He then promised to give up his old habits of digging for money and looking into stones. Mr. Hale told Joseph, if he would move to Pennsylvania and work for a living, he would assist him in getting into business. Joseph acceded to this proposition. I then returned with Joseph and his wife to Manchester. One circumstance occurred on the road, worthy of notice, and I believe this is the only instance where Jo ever exhibited true yankee wit. On our journey to Pennsylvania, we could not make the exact change at the toll gate near Ithaca. Joseph told the gate tender, that he would "hand" him the toll on his return, as he was coming back in a few days. On our return, Joseph tendered to him 25 cents, the toll being 12½. He did not recognize Smith, so he accordingly gave him back the 12½ cents. After we had passed the gate, I asked him if he did not agree to pay double gatage on our return? No, said he, I agreed to "hand" it to him, and I did, but he handed it back again.

Joseph told me on his return, that he intended to keep the promise which he had made to his father-in-law; but, said he, it will be hard for me, for they will all oppose, as they want me to look in the stone for them to dig money: and in fact it was as he predicted. They urged him, day after day, to resume his old practice of looking in the stone.— He seemed much perplexed as to the course he should pursue. In this dilemma, he made me his confident and told me what daily transpired in the family of Smiths. One day he came, and greeted me with a joyful countenance.— Upon asking the cause of his unusual happiness, he replied in the following language: "As I was passing, yesterday, across the woods, after a heavy shower of rain, I found, in a hollow, some beautiful white sand, that had been washed up by the water. I took off my frock, and tied up several quarts of it, and then went home. On my entering the

house, I found the family at the table eating dinner. They were all anxious to know the contents of my frock. At that moment, I happened to think of what I had heard about a history found in Canada, called the golden Bible; so I very gravely told them it was the golden Bible. To my surprise, they were credulous enough to believe what I said. Accordingly I told them that I had received a commandment to let no one see it, for, says I, no man can see it with the naked eye and live. However, I offered to take out the book and show it to them, but they refuse to see it, and left the room." Now, said Jo, "I have got the damned fools fixed, and will carry out the fun." Notwithstanding, he told me he had no such book, and believed there never was any such book, yet, he told me that he actually went to Willard Chase, to get him to make a chest, in which he might deposit his golden Bible. But, as Chase would not do it, he made a box himself, of clap-boards, and put it into a pillow case, and allowed people only to lift it, and feel of it through the case.

In the fall of 1827, Joseph wanted to go to Pennsylvania. His brother-in-law had come to assist him in moving, but he himself was out of money. He wished to borrow the money of me, and he presented Mr. Hale as security. I told him in case he could obtain assistance from no other source, I would let him have some money. Joseph then went to Palmyra; and, said he, I there met that dam fool, Martin Harris, and told him that I had a command to ask the first *honest man* I met with, for fifty dollars in money, and he would let me have it. I saw at once, said Jo, that it took his notion, for he promptly gave me the fifty.

Joseph thought this sum was sufficient to bear his expenses to Pennsylvania. So he immediately started off, and since that time I have not been much in his society. While the Smiths were living at Waterloo, William visited my



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neighborhood, and upon my inquiry how they came on, he replied, "we do better there than here; we were too well known here to do much. PETER INGERSOLL.

*State of New York, Wayne County, ss:*

I certify, that on this 9th day of December, 1833, personally appeared before me the above named Peter Ingersoll, to me known, and made oath, according to law, to the truth of the above statement. TH. P. BALDWIN,

*Judge of Wayne County Court.*

## TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM STAFFORD.

*Manchester, Ontario Co. N. Y. Dec. 8th, 1833.*

I, William Stafford, having been called upon to give a true statement of my knowledge, concerning the character and conduct of the family of Smiths, known to the world as the founders of the Mormon sect, do say, that I first became acquainted with Joseph, Sen., and his family in the year 1820. They lived, at that time, in Palmyra, about one mile and a half from my residence. A great part of their time was devoted to digging for money: especially in the night time, when they said the money could be most easily obtained. I have heard them tell marvellous tales, respecting the discoveries they had made in their peculiar occupation of money digging. They would say, for instance, that in such a place, in such a hill, on a certain man's farm, there were deposited keys, barrels and hogsheads of coined silver and gold—bars of gold, golden images, brass kettles filled with gold and silver—gold candlesticks, swords, &c. &c. They would say, also, that nearly all the hills in this part of New York, were thrown up by human hands; and in them were large caves, which Joseph, Jr., could see by placing a stone of singular appearance in his hat, in such a manner as to exclude all light; at which time they pre-

tended he could see all things within and under the earth,—that he could see within the above mentioned caves, large gold bars and silver plates—that he could also discover the spirits in whose charge these treasures were, clothed in ancient dress. At certain times, these treasures could be obtained very easily; at others, the obtaining of them was difficult. The facility of approaching them, depended in a great measure on the state of the moon. New moon and good Friday, I believe, were regarded as the most favorable times for obtaining these treasures. These tales I regarded as visionary. However, being prompted by curiosity, I at length accepted of their invitations, to join them in their nocturnal excursions. I will now relate a few incidents attending these excursions.

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 kegs 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, and early in the evening repaired to the place of deposit. 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

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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. We then went into the house, and the old man observed, that we had made a mistake in the commencement of the operation; if it had not been for that, said he, we should have got the money.

At 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 of 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 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, 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. They, however, had around them constantly a worthless gang, whose employment it was to dig money nights, and who, day times, had more to do with mutton than money.

When they found that the people of this vicinity would no longer put any faith in their schemes for digging money, they then pretended to find a gold bible, of which, they said, the book of Mormon was only an introduction. This

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latter book was at length fitted for the press. No means were taken by any individual to suppress its publication: No one apprehended any danger from a book, originating with individuals who had neither influence, honesty or honor. The two Josephs and Hiram, promised to show me the plates, after the book of Mormon was translated. But, afterwards, they pretended to have received an express commandment, forbidding them to show the plates. Respecting the manner of receiving and translating the book of Mormon, their statements were always discordant. The elder Joseph would say that he had seen the plates, and that he knew them to be gold; at other times he would say that they looked like gold; and other times he would say he had not seen the plates at all. I have thus briefly stated a few of the facts, in relation to the conduct and character of this family of Smiths; probably sufficient has been stated without my going into detail. WILLIAM STAFFORD.

*State of New York, Wayne County, ss:*

I certify, that on this 9th day of December, 1833, personally appeared before me, William Stafford, to me known, and made oath to the truth of the above statement, and signed the same.

TH. P. BALDWIN,

Judge of Wane County Court.

## TESTIMONY OF WILLARD CHASE.

*Manchester, Ontario Co. N. Y. 1833.*

I became acquainted with the Smith family, known as the authors of the Mormon Bible, in the year 1820. At that time, they were engaged in the money digging business, which they followed until the latter part of the season of 1827. In the year 1822, I was engaged in digging a well. I employed Alvin and Joseph Smith to assist me; the latter of whom is now known as the Mormon prophet. After digging about twenty feet below the surface of the



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earth, we discovered a singularly appearing stone, which excited my curiosity. I brought it to the top of the well, and as we were examining it, Joseph put it into his hat, and then his face into the top of his hat. It has been said by Smith, that *he* brought the stone from the well; but this is false. There was no one in the well but myself. The next morning he came to me, and wished to obtain the stone, alledging that he could see in it; but I told him I did not wish to part with it on account of its being a curiosity, but would lend it. After obtaining the stone, he began to publish abroad what wonders he could discover by looking in it, and made so much disturbance among the credulous part of community, that I ordered the stone to be returned to me again. He had it in his possession about two years.— I believe, some time in 1825, Hiram Smith (brother of Joseph Smith) came to me, and wished to borrow the same stone, alledging that they wanted to accomplish some business of importance, which could not very well be done without the aid of the stone. I told him it was of no particular worth to me, but merely wished to keep it as a curiosity, and if he would pledge me his word and honor, that I should have it when called for, he might take it; which he did and took the stone. I thought I could rely on his word at this time, as he had made a profession of religion. But in this I was disappointed, for he disregarded both his word and honor.

In the fall of 1826, a friend called upon me and wished to see that stone, about which so much had been said; and I told him if he would go with me to Smith's, (a distance of about half a mile) he might see it. But to my surprise, on going to Smith's, and asking him for the stone, he said, "you cannot have it;" I told him it belonged to me, repeated to him the promise he made me, at the time of obtaining the stone: upon which he faced me with a malignant

look and said, "I don't care who in the Devil it belongs to, you shall not have it."

In the month of June, 1827, Joseph Smith, Sen., related to me the following story: "That some years ago, a spirit had appeared to Joseph his son, in a vision, and informed him that in a certain place there was a record on plates of gold, and that he was the person that must obtain them, and this he must do in the following manner: On the 22d of September, he must repair to the place where was deposited this manuscript, dressed in black clothes, and riding a black horse with a switch tail, and demand the book in a certain name, and after obtaining it, he must go directly away, and neither lay it down nor look behind him. They accordingly fitted out Joseph with a suit of black clothes and borrowed a black horse. He repaired to the place of deposit and demanded the book, which was in a stone box, unsealed, and so near the top of the ground that he could see one end of it, and raising it up, took out the book of gold; but fearing some one might discover where he got it, he laid it down to place back the top stone, as he found it; and turning round, to his surprise there was no book in sight. He again opened the box, and in it saw the book, and attempted to take it out, but was hindered. He saw in the box something like a toad, which soon assumed the appearance of a man, and struck him on the side of his head.— Not being discouraged at trifles, he again stooped down and strove to take the book, when the spirit struck him again, and knocked him three or four rods, and hurt him prodigiously. After recovering from his fright, he enquired why he could not obtain the plates; to which the spirit made reply, because you have not obeyed your orders. He then enquired when he *could* have them, and was answered thus: come one year from this day, and bring with you your oldest brother, and you shall have them. This spirit, he said

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was the spirit of the prophet who wrote this book, and who was sent to Joseph Smith, to make known these things to him. Before the expiration of the year, his oldest brother died; which the old man said was an *accidental providence!*

Joseph went one year from that day, to demand the book, and the spirit enquired for his brother, and he said that he was dead. The spirit then commanded him to come again, in just one year, and bring a man with him. On asking who might be the man, he was answered that he would know him when he saw him.

Joseph believed that one Samuel T. Lawrence was the man alluded to by the spirit, and went with him to a singular looking hill, in Manchester, and shewed him where the treasure was. Lawrence asked him if he had ever discovered any thing with the plates of gold; he said no: he then asked him to look in his stone, to see if there was any thing with them. He looked, and said there was nothing; he told him to look again, and see if there was not a large pair of specks with the plates; he looked and soon saw a pair of spectacles, the same with which Joseph says he translated the Book of Mormon. Lawrence told him it would not be prudent to let these plates be seen for about two years, as it would make a great disturbance in the neighborhood. Not long after this, Joseph altered his mind, and said L. was not the right man, nor had he told him the right place. About this time he went to Harmony in Pennsylvania, and formed an acquaintance with a young lady, by the name of Emma Hale, whom he wished to marry.— In the fall of 1826, he wanted to go to Pennsylvania to be married; but being destitute of means, he now set his wits to work, how he should raise money, and get recommendations, to procure the fair one of his choice. He went to Lawrence with the following story, as related to me by Lawrence himself. That he had discovered in Pennsylva-

nia, on the bank of the Susquehannah River, a very rich mine of silver, and if he would go there with him; he might have a share in the profits; that it was near high water mark and that they could load it into boats and take it down the river to Philadelphia, to market. Lawrence then asked Joseph if he was not deceiving him; no, said he, for I have been there and seen it with my own eyes, and if you do not find it so when we get there, I will bind myself to be your servant for three years. By these grave and fair promises Lawrence was induced to believe something in it, and agreed to go with him. L. soon found that Joseph was out of money, and had to bear his expenses on the way. When they got to Pennsylvania, Joseph wanted L. to recommend him to Miss H., which he did, although he was asked to do it; but could not well get rid of it as he was in his company. L. then wished to see the silver mine, and he and Joseph went to the river, and made search, but found nothing. Thus, Lawrence had his trouble for his pains, and returned home lighter than he went, while Joseph had got his expenses borne, and a recommendation to his girl.

Joseph's next move was to get married; the girl's parents being opposed to the match: as they happened to be from home, he took advantage of the opportunity, and went off with her and was married.

Now, being still destitute of money, he set his wits at work, how he should get back to Manchester, his place of residence; he hit upon the following plan, which succeeded very well. He went to an honest old Dutchman, by the name of Stowel, and told him that he had discovered on the bank of Black River, in the village of Watertown, Jefferson County, N. Y. a cave, in which he had found a bar of gold, as big as his leg, and about three or four feet long.— That he could not get it out alone, on account of its being fast at one end; and if he would move him to Manchester,



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N. Y. they would go together, and take a chisel and mallet, and get it, and Stowel should share the prize with him. Stowel moved him.

A short time after their arrival at Manchester, Stowel reminded Joseph of his promise ; but he calmly replied, that he would not go, because his wife was now among strangers, and would be very lonesome if he went away. Mr. Stowel was then obliged to return without any gold, and with less money than he came.

In the fore part of September, (I believe,) 1827, the Prophet requested me to make him a chest, informing me that he designed to move back to Pennsylvania, and expecting soon to get his gold book, he wanted a chest to lock it up, giving me to understand at the same time, that if I would make the chest he would give me a share in the book. I told him my business was such that I could not make it : but if he would bring the book to me, I would lock it up for him. He said that would not do, as he was commanded to keep it two years, without letting it come to the eye of any one but himself. This commandment, however, he did not keep, for in less than two years, twelve men said they had seen it. I told him to get it and convince me of its existence, and I would make him a chest; but he said, that would not do, as he must have a chest to lock the book in, as soon as he took it out of the ground. I saw him a few days after, when he told me that I must make the chest. I told him plainly that I could not, upon which he told me that I could have no share in the book.

A few weeks after this conversation, he came to my house, and related the following story: That on the 22d of September, he arose early in the morning, and took a one horse wagon, of some one that had stayed over night at their house, without leave or license; and, together with his wife, repaired to the hill which contained the book. He left his

wife in the wagon, by the road, and went alone to the hill, a distance of thirty or forty rods from the road; he said he then took the book out of the ground and hid it in a tree top, and returned home. He then went to the town of Macedon to work. After about ten days, it having been suggested that some one had got his book, his wife went after him; he hired a horse, and went home in the afternoon, staid long enough to drink one cup of tea, and then went for his book, found it safe, took off his frock, wrapt it round it, put it under his arm and run all the way home, a distance of about two miles. He said he should think it would weigh sixty pounds, and was sure it would weigh forty. On his return home, he said he was attacked by two men in the woods, and knocked them both down and made his escape, arrived safe and secured his treasure.— He then observed that if it had not been for that stone, (which he acknowledged belonged to me,) he would not have obtained the book. A few days afterwards, he told one of my neighbors that he had not got any such book, nor never had such an one; but that he had told the story to deceive the d——d fool, (meaning me,) to get him to make a chest. His neighbors having become disgusted with his foolish stories, he determined to go back to Pennsylvania, to avoid what he called persecution. His wits were now put to the task to contrive how he should get money to bear his expenses. He met one day in the streets of Palmyra, a rich man, whose name was Martin Harris, and addressed him thus; “I have a commandment from God to ask the first man I meet in the street to give me fifty dollars, to assist me in doing the work of the Lord by translating the Golden Bible.” Martin being naturally a credulous man, hands Joseph the money. In the Spring 1829, Harris went to Pennsylvania, and on his return to Palmyra, reported that the Prophet’s wife, in the month of

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June following would be delivered of a male child that would be able when two years old to translate the Gold Bible. Then, said he, you will see Joseph Smith, Jr. walking through the streets of Palmyra, with a Gold Bible under his arm, and having a gold breast-plate on, and a gold sword hanging by his side. This, however, by the by, proved false.

In April, 1830, I again asked Hiram for the stone which he had borrowed of me; he told me I should not have it, for Joseph made use of it in translating his Bible. I reminded him of his promise, and that he had pledged his honor to return it; but he gave me the lie, saying the stone was not mine nor never was. Harris at the same time flew in a rage, took me by the collar and said I was a liar, and he could prove it by twelve witnesses. After I had extricated myself from him, Hiram, in a rage shook his fist at me, and abused me in a most scandalous manner. Thus I might proceed in describing the character of these High Priests, by relating one transaction after another, which would all tend to set them in the same light in which they were regarded by their neighbors, viz: as a pest to society. I have regarded Joseph Smith Jr. from the time I first became acquainted with him until he left this part of the country, as a man whose word could not be depended upon.—Hiram's character was but very little better. What I have said respecting the characters of these men, will apply to the whole family. What I have stated relative to the characters of these individuals, thus far, is wholly true. After they became thorough Mormons, their conduct was more disgraceful than before. They did not hesitate to abuse any man, no matter how fair his character, provided he did not embrace their creed. Their tongues were continually employed in spreading scandal and abuse. Although they left this part of the country without paying their just

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debts, yet their creditors were glad to have them do so, rather than to have them stay, disturbing the neighborhood.

Signed, WILLARD CHASE.

On the 11th December, 1833, the said Willard Chase appeared before me, and made oath that the foregoing statement to which he has subscribed his name, is true, according to his best recollection and belief. FRED'K. SMITH,  
*Justice of the Peace of Wayne County.*

## THE TESTIMONY OF PARLEY CHASE.

*Manchester, December 2d, 1833.*

I was acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen., both before and since they became Mormons, and feel free to state that not one of the male members of the Smith family were entitled to any credit, whatsoever. They were lazy, intemperate and worthless men, very much addicted to lying. In this they frequently boasted of their skill. Digging for money was their principal employment. In regard to their Gold Bible speculation, they scarcely ever told two stories alike. The Mormon Bible is said to be a revelation from God, through Joseph Smith Jr., his Prophet, and this same Joseph Smith Jr. to my knowledge, bore the reputation among his neighbors of being a liar. The foregoing statement can be corroborated by all his former neighbors.

PARLEY CHASE.

*Palmyra, December 13th, 1833.*

I certify that I have been personally acquainted with Peter Ingersoll for a number of years, and believe him to be a man of strict integrity, truth and veracity.

DURFEY CHASE.

*Palmyra, December 4th, 1833.*

I am acquainted with William Stafford and Peter Ingersoll, and believe them to be men of truth and veracity.

J. S. COLT.

*Palmyra, December 4th, 1833*

We the undersigned, are personally acquainted with,



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William Stafford, Willard Chase and Peter Ingersoll, and believe them to be men of truth and veracity.

GEORGE BECKWITH.

NATH'L. H. BECKWITH.

THOMAS ROGERS, 2d.

MARTIN W. WILCOX.

## THE TESTIMONY OF DAVID STAFFORD.

*Manchester, December 5th, 1833.*

I have been acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith Sen. for several years, and I know him to be a drunkard and a liar, and to be much in the habit of gambling. He and his boys were truly a lazy set of fellows, and more particularly Joseph, who, very aptly followed his father's example, and in some respects was worse. When intoxicated he was very quarrelsome. Previous to his going to Pennsylvania to get married, we worked together making a coal-pit. While at work at one time, a dispute arose between us, (he having drunk a little too freely) and some hard words passed between us, and as usual with him at such times, was for fighting. He got the advantage of me in the scuffle, and a gentleman by the name of Ford interfered, when Joseph turned to fighting him. We both entered a complaint against him and he was fined for the breach of the Peace. It is well known, that the general employment of the Smith family was money digging and fortune-telling. They kept around them constantly, a gang of worthless fellows who dug for money nights, and were idle in the day time. It was a mystery to their neighbors how they got their living. I will mention some circumstances and the public may judge for themselves. At different times I have seen them come from the woods early in the morning, bringing meat which looked like mutton. I went into the woods one morning very early, shooting partridges and found Joseph Smith Sen. in company with two other

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men, with hoes, shovels and meat that looked like mutton. On seeing me they run like wild men to get out of sight.— Seeing the old man a few day afterwards, I asked him why he run so the other day in the woods, ah, said he, you know that circumstances alter cases; it will not do to be seen at all time.

I can also state, that Oliver Cowdrey proved himself to be a worthless person and not to be trusted or believed when he taught school in this neighborhood. After his going into the ministry, while officiating in performing the ordinance of baptism in a brook, William Smith, (brother of Joseph Smith) seeing a young man writing down what was said on a piece of board, was quite offended and attempted to take it from him, kicked at him and clinched for a scuffle.— Such was the conduct of these pretended Disciples of the Lord.

DAVID STAFFORD.

On the 12th day of December, 1833, the said David Stafford appeared before me, and made oath that the foregoing statement, by him subscribed, is true.

FRED'K. SMITH,

*Justice of the Peace of Wayne Co. N. Y.*

THE TESTIMONY OF BARTON STAFFORD.

*Manchester, Ontario Co., N. Y. Nov. 3d, 1833.*

Being called upon to give a statement of the character of the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. as far as I know, I can state that I became acquainted with them in 1820, and knew them until 1831, when they left this neighborhood.— Joseph Smith, Sen. was a noted drunkard and most of the family followed his example, and Joseph, Jr. especially, who was very much addicted to intemperance. In short, not one of the family had the least claims to respectability. Even since he professed to be inspired of the Lord to translate the Book of Mormon, he one day while at work in my father's field, got quite drunk on a composition of cider,

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molasses and water. Finding his legs to refuse their office he leaned upon the fence and hung for sometime; at length recovering again, he fell to scuffling with one of the workmen, who tore his shirt nearly off from him. His wife who was at our house on a visit, appeared very much grieved at his conduct, and to protect his back from the rays of the sun, and conceal his nakedness, threw her shawl over his shoulders and in that plight escorted the Prophet home. As an evidence of his piety and devotion, when intoxicated, he frequently made his religion the topic of conversation!!

BARTON STAFFORD.

*State of New York, Wayne County, ss :*

I certify that on the 9th day of December 1833, personally appeared before me, the above named Barton Stafford, to me known, and solemnly affirmed according to law, to the truth of the above statement and subscribed the same.

THOS. P. BALDWIN,

*a Judge of Wayne County Court.*

I, Henry Harris, do state that I became acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. about the year 1820, in the town of Manchester, N. York. They were a family that labored very little—the chief they did, was to dig for money. Joseph Smith, Jr. the pretended Prophet, used to pretend to tell fortunes; he had a stone which he used to put in his hat, by means of which he professed to tell people's fortunes.

Joseph Smith, Jr. Martin Harris and others, used to meet together in private, a while before the gold plates were found, and were familiarly known by the name of the "Gold Bible Company." They were regarded by the community in which they lived, as a lying and indolent set of men and no confidence could be placed in them.

The character of Joseph Smith, Jr. for truth and veracity was such, that I would not believe him under oath. I was

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once on a jury before a Justice's Court and the Jury could not, and did not, believe his testimony to be true. After he pretended to have found the gold plates, I had a conversation with him, and asked him where he found them and how he come to know where they were. He said he had a revelation from God that told him they were hid in a certain hill and he looked in his stone and saw them in the place of deposit; that an angel appeared, and told him he could not get the plates until he was married, and that when he saw the woman that was to be his wife, he should know her, and she would know him. He then went to Pennsylvania, got his wife, and they both went together and got the gold plates—he said it was revealed to him, that no one must see the plates but himself and wife.

I then asked him what letters were engraved on them, he said italic letters written in an unknown language, and that he had copied some of the words and sent them to Dr. Mitchell and Professor Anthon of New York. By looking on the plates he said he could not understand the words, but it was made known to him that he was the person that must translate them, and on looking through the stone was enabled to translate.

After the Book was published, I frequently bantered him for a copy. He asked fourteen shillings a piece for them; I told him I would not give so much; he told me had had a revelation that they must be sold at that price.

Sometime-afterwards I talked with Martin Harris about buying one of the Books and he told me they had had a new revelation, that they might be sold at ten shillings a piece.

*State of Ohio, Cuyahoga County, ss :*

Personally appeared before me, Henry Harris, and made oath in due form of law, that the foregoing statements subscribed by him are true.

JONATHAN LAPHAM,  
*Justice of the Peace.*



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*Palmyra, Wayne Co. N. Y. 11th mo. 28th, 1833.*

In the early part of the winter in 1828, I made a visit to Martin Harris' and was joined in company by Jos. Smith, sen. and his wife. The Gold Bible business, so called, was the topic of conversation, to which I paid particular attention, that I might learn the truth of the whole matter.— They told me that the report that Joseph, jun. had found golden plates, was true, and that he was in Harmony, Pa. translating them—that such plates were in existence, and that Joseph, jun. was to obtain them, was revealed to him by the spirit of one of the Saints that was on this continent, previous to its being discovered by Columbus. Old Mrs. Smith observed that she thought he must be a Quaker, as he was dressed very plain. They said that the plates he then had in possession were but an introduction to the Gold Bible—that all of them upon which the bible was written, were so heavy that it would take four stout men to load them into a cart—that Joseph had also discovered by looking through his stone, the vessel in which the gold was melted from which the plates were made, and also the machine with which they were rolled; he also discovered in the bottom of the vessel three balls of gold, each as large as his fist. The old lady said also, that after the book was translated, the plates were to be publicly exhibited—admittance 25 cents. She calculated it would bring in annually an enormous sum of money—that money would then be very plenty, and the book would also sell for a great price, as it was something entirely new—that they had been commanded to obtain all the money they could borrow for present necessity, and to repay with gold. The remainder was to be kept in store for the benefit of their family and children. This and the like conversation detained me until about 11 o'clock. Early the next morning, the mystery of the Spirit being like myself (one of the order called Friends)

was reveal by the following circumstance : The old lady took me into another room, and after closing the door, she said, "have you four or five dollars in money that you can lend until our business is brought to a close ? the spirit has said you shall receive four fold." I told her that when I gave, I did it not expecting to receive again—as for money I had none to lend. I then asked her what her particular want of money was ; to which she replied, "Joseph wants to take the stage and come home from Pennsylvania to see what we are all about." To which I replied, he might look in his stone and save his time and money. The old lady seemed confused, and left the room, and thus ended the visit.

In the second month following, Martin Harris and his wife were at my house. In conversation about Mormonites, she observed, that she wished her husband would quit them, as she believed it was all false and a delusion. To which I heard Mr. Harris reply : "*What if it is a lie ; if you will let me alone I will make money out of it !*". I was both an eye and an ear witness of what has been stated above, which is now fresh in my memory, and I give it to the world for the good of mankind. I speak the truth and lie not, God bearing me witness. ABIGAIL HARRIS.

*Palmyra, Nov. 29, 1833.*

Being called upon to give a statement to the world of what I know respecting the Gold Bible speculation, and also of the conduct of Martin Harris, my husband, who is a leading character among the Mormons, I do it free from prejudice, realizing that I must give an account at the bar of God for what I say. Martin Harris was once industrious attentive to his domestic concerns, and thought to be worth about ten thousand dollars. He is naturally quick in his temper and in his mad-fits frequently abuses all who may dare to

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oppose him in his wishes. However strange it may seem, I have been a great sufferer by his unreasonable conduct. At different times while I lived with him, he has whipped, kicked, and turned me out of the house. About a year previous to the report being raised that Smith had found gold plates, he became very intimate with the Smith family, and said he believed Joseph could see in his stone any thing he wished: After this he apparently became very sanguine in his belief, and frequently said he would have no one in his house that did not believe in Mormonism; and because I would not give credit to the report he made about the gold plates, he became more austere towards me. In one of his fits of rage he struck me with the but end of a whip, which I think had been used for driving oxen, and was about the size of my thumb, and three or four feet long. He beat me on the head four or five times, and the next day turned me out of doors twice, and beat me in a shameful manner.—The next day I went to the town of Marion, and while there my flesh was black and blue in many places. His main complaint against me was, that I was always trying to hinder his making money.

When he found out that I was going to Mr. Putnam's, in Marion, he said he was going too, that they had sent for him to pay them a visit. On arriving at Mr. Putnam's, I asked them if they had sent for Mr. Harris; they replied, they knew nothing about it; he, however, came in the evening. Mrs. Putnam told him never to strike or abuse me any more; he then denied ever striking me; she was however convinced that he lied, as the marks of his beating me were plain to be seen, and remained more than two weeks. Whether the Mormon religion be true or false, I leave the world to judge, for its effects upon Martin Harris have been to make him more cross, turbulent and abusive to me. His whole object was to make money by it. I will give one

circumstance in proof of it. One day, while at Peter Harris' house, I told him he had better leave the company of the Smiths, as their religion was false ; to which he replied, if you would let me alone, I could make money by it.

It is in vain for the Mormons to deny these facts ; for they are all well known to most of his former neighbors. The man has now become rather an object of pity ; he has spent most of his property, and lost the confidence of his former friends. If he had labored as hard on his farm as he has to make Mormons, he might now be one of the wealthiest farmers in the country. He now spends his time in travelling through the country spreading the delusion of Mormonism, and has no regard whatever for his family.

With regard to Mr. Harris' being intimate with Mrs. Haggard, as has been reported, it is but justice to myself to state what facts have come within my own observation, to show whether I had any grounds for jealousy or not. Mr. Harris was very intimate with this family, for some time previous to their going to Ohio. They lived a while in a house which he had built for their accommodation, and here he spent the most of his leisure hours ; and made her presents of articles from the store and house. He carried these presents in a private manner, and frequently when he went there, he would pretend to be going to some of the neighbors, on an errand, or to be going into the fields.— After getting out of sight of the house, he would steer a straight course for Haggard's house, especially if Haggard was from home. At times when Haggard was from home, he would go there in the manner above described, and stay till twelve or one o'clock at night, and sometimes until day light.

If his intentions were evil, the Lord will judge him accordingly, but if good, he did not mean to let his left hand



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know what his right hand did. The above statement of facts, I affirm to be true.

LUCY HARRIS.

*Manchester, Ontario County, Dec. 1st, 1833.*

I, Roswell Nichols, first became acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. nearly five years ago, and I lived a neighbor to the said family about two years. My acquaintance with the family has enabled me to know something of its character for good citizenship, probity and veracity—For breach of contracts, for the non-payment of debts and borrowed money, and for duplicity with their neighbors, the family was notorious. Once, since the Gold Bible speculation commenced, the old man was sued; and while the sheriff was at his house, he lied to him and was detected in the falsehood. Before he left the house, he confessed that it was sometimes necessary for him to tell an honest lie, in order to live. At another time, he told me that he had received an express command for me to repent and believe as he did, or I must be damned. I refused to comply, and at the same time told him of the various impositions of his family. He then stated their digging was not for money but it was for the obtaining of a Gold Bible. Thus contradicting what he had told me before: for he had often said, that the hills in our neighborhood were nearly all erected by human hands—that they were all full of gold and silver. And one time, when we were talking on the subject, he pointed to a small hill on my farm, and said, “in that hill there is a stone which is full of gold and silver. I know it to be so, for I have been to the hole, and God said unto me, *go not in now, but at a future day you shall go in and find the book open, and then you shall have the treasures.*” He said that gold and silver was once as plenty as the stones in the field are now—that the ancients, half of them melted the ore and made the gold and silver, while the other

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half buried it deeper in the earth, which accounted for these hills. Upon my enquiring who furnished the food for the whole, he flew into a passion, and called me a sinner, and said he, "you must be eternally damned."

I mention these facts, not because of their intrinsic importance, but simply to show the weak mindedness and low character of the man. ROSWELL NICHOLS.

*Manchester, Ontario County, Nov. 15th, 1833.*

I, Joshua Stafford, 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 soon after they became indolent, and told marvellous stories about ghosts, hob-goblins, cave~~ns~~, and various other mysterious matters. Joseph once showed me a piece of wood which he said he took from a box of money, and the reason he gave for not obtaining the box, was, that it *moved*. At another time, he, (Joseph, Jr.) at a husking, called on me to become security for a horse, and said he would reward me handsomely, for he had found a box of watches, and they were as large as his fist, and he put one of them to his ear, and he could hear it "tick forty rods." Since he could not dispose of them profitably at Canandaigua or Palmyra, he wished to go east with them. He said if he did not return with the horse, I might take his life. I replied, that he knew I would not do that. Well, said he, I did not suppose you would, yet I would be willing that you should. He was nearly intoxicated at the time of the above conversation. JOSHUA STAFFORD.

*Manchester, Ontario County, Nov. 8th, 1833.*

I, Joseph Capron, became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Sen. in the year of our Lord, 1827. They have, since then, been really a peculiar people—fond of the foolish and

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the marvelous—at one time addicted to vice and the grossest immoralities—at another time making the highest pretensions to piety and holy intercourse with Almighty God. The family of Smiths held Joseph Jr. in high estimation on account of some supernatural power, which he was supposed to possess. This power he pretended to have received through the medium of a stone of peculiar quality. The stone was placed in a hat, in such a manner as to exclude all light, except that which emanated from the stone itself. This light of the stone, he pretended, enabled him to see any thing he wished. Accordingly he discovered ghosts, infernal spirits, mountains of gold and silver, and many other invaluable treasures deposited in the earth. He would often tell his neighbors of his wonderful discoveries, and urge them to embark in the money digging business. Luxury and wealth were to be given to all who would adhere to his counsel. A gang was soon assembled. Some of them were influenced by curiosity, others were sanguine in their expectations of immediate gain. I will mention one circumstance, by which the uninitiated may know how the company dug for treasures. The sapient Joseph discovered, north west of my house, a chest of gold watches; but, as they were in the 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. Meantime, the rest of the company were busily employed in digging for the watches. They worked as usual till quite exhausted. But, in spite of their brave defender, Law-

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rence, and their bulwark of stakes, the devil came off victorious, and carried away the watches. I might mention numerous schemes by which this young visionary and impostor had recourse to for the purpose of obtaining a livelihood. He, and indeed the whole of the family of Smiths, were notorious for indolence, foolery and falsehood. Their great object appeared to be, to live without work. While they were digging for money, they were daily harrassed by the demands of creditors, which they never were able to pay. At length, Joseph pretended to find the Gold plates. This scheme, he believed, would relieve the family from all pecuniary embarrassment. His father told me, that when the book was published, they would be enabled, from the profits of the work, to carry into successful operation the money digging business. He gave me no intimation, at that time that the book was to be of a religious character, or that it had anything to do with revelation. He declared it to be a speculation, and said he, "when it is completed, my family will be placed *on a level* above the generality of mankind"!!

. JOSEPH CAPRON.

*Palmyra, Nov. 28th, 1833*

Having been called upon to state a few facts which are material to the characters of some of the leaders of the Mormon sect, I will do so in a concise and plain manner. I have been acquainted with Martin Harris, about thirty years. As a farmer, he was industrious and enterprising, so much so, that he had, (previous to his going into the Gold Bible speculation) accumulated, in real estate, some eight or ten thousand dollars. Although he possessed wealth, his moral and religious character was such, as not to entitle him to respect among his neighbors. He was fretful, peevish and quarrelsome, not only in the neighborhood, but in his family. He was known to frequently abuse



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his wife, by whipping her, kicking her out of bed and turning her out of doors &c. Yet he was a public professor of some religion. He was first an orthodox Quaker, then a Universalist, next a Restorationer, then a Baptist, next a Presbyterian, and then a Mormon. By his willingness to become all things unto all men, he has attained a high standing among his Mormon brethren. The Smith family never made any pretensions to respectability.

G. W. STODARD.

I hereby concur in the above statement.

RICHARD H. FORD.

*Palmyra, Dec. 4, 1833.*

We, the undersigned, have been acquainted with the Smith family, for a number of years, while they resided near this place, and we have no hesitation in saying, that we consider them destitute of that moral character, which ought to entitle them to the confidence of any community. They were particularly famous for visionary projects, spent much of their time in digging for money which they pretended was hid in the earth; and to this day, large excavations may be seen in the earth, not far from their residence, where they used to spend their time in digging for hidden treasures. Joseph Smith, Senior, and his son Joseph, were in particular, considered entirely destitute of *moral character, and addicted to vicious habits.*

Martin Harris was a man who had acquired a handsome property, and in matters of business his word was considered good; but on moral and religious subjects, he was perfectly visionary—sometimes advocating one sentiment, and sometimes another. And in reference to all with whom we were acquainted, that have embraced Mormonism from this neighborhood, we are compelled to say, were very visionary, and most of them destitute of moral character, and without

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influence in this community ; and this may account why they were permitted to go on with their impositions undisturbed. It was not supposed that any of them were possessed of sufficient character or influence to make any one believe their book or their sentiments, and we know not of a single individual in this vicinity that puts the least confidence in their pretended revelations.

Geo. N. Williams,	H. Linnell,	Thos. Rogers, 2d.
Clark Robinson,	Jas. Jenner,	Wm. Parke,
Lenuel Durfee,	S. Ackley,	Josiah Francis,
E. S. Townsend,	Josiah Rice,	Amos Hollister,
Henry P. Alger,	Jesse Townsend,	G. A. Hathaway,
C. E. Thayer,	Rich'd. D. Clark,	David G. Ely,
G. W. Anderson,	Th. P. Baldwin.	H. K. Jerome,
H. P. Thayer,	John Sothington,	G. Beckwith,
L. Williams,	Durfey Chase,	Lewis Foster,
Geo. W. Crosby,	Wells Anderson,	Hiram Payne,
Levi Thayer,	N. H. Beckwith,	P. Grandin,
R. S. Williams,	Philo Durfee,	L. Hurd,
P. Sexton,	Giles, S. Ely,	Joel Thayer,
M. Butterfield,	R. W. Smith,	E. D. Robinson,
S. P. Seymour,	Pelataiah West,	Asahel Millard,
D. S. Jackways,	Henry Jessup,	A. Ensworth,
John Hurlbut,	Linus North,	Isarel F. Chilson,

*Manchester, Nov. 3d, 1833.*

We, the undersigned, being personally acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, sen. with whom the celebrated Gold Bible, so called, originated, state: that they were not only a lazy, indolent set of men, but also intemperate; and their word was not to be depended upon ; and that we are truly glad to dispense with their society.

Pardon Butts,	James Gee,	Joseph Fish,
Warden A. Reed,	Abel Chase,	Horace N. Barnes,
Hiram Smith,	A. H. Wentworth,	Silvester Worden.
Alfred Stafford,	Moses C. Smith,	

*Harmony, Pa. March 20th, 1834.*

I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr. in No-

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vember, 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. His appearance at this time, was that of a careless young man—not very well educated, and very saucy and insolent to his father. 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. They then became discouraged, and soon after dispersed. This took place about the 17th of November, 1825; and one of the company gave me his note for \$12 68 for his board, which is still unpaid.

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 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. After they had arrived at Palmyra N. Y., Emma wrote to me enquiring whether she could take her property, consisting of clothing, furniture, cows, &c. I replied that her property was safe, and at her disposal. In a short time they returned, bringing with them a Peter Ingersol, and subsequently came to the conclusion that they would move out, and reside upon a place near my residence.

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. He also made arrangements with my son Alva Hale, to go to Palmyra, and move his (Smith's) furniture &c. to this place. He then returned to Palmyra, and soon after, Alva, agreeable to the arrangement, went up and returned with Smith and his family. Soon after this, I was informed they had brought a wonderful book of Plates down with them. I was shown a box in which it is said they were contained, which had to all appearances, been used as a glass box of the common window glass. I was allowed to feel the weight of the box, and they gave me to understand, that the book of plates was then in the box—into which, however, I was not allowed to look.

I inquired of Joseph Smith Jr., who was to be the first who would be allowed to see the Book of Plates? He said it was a young child. After this, I became dissatisfied, and informed him that if there was any thing in my house of that description, which I could not be allowed to see, he must take it away; if he did not, I was determined to see it. After that, the Plates were said to be hid in the woods.

About this time, Martin Harris made his appearance upon the stage; and Smith began to interpret the characters or hieroglyphics which he said were engraven upon the plates, while Harris wrote down the interpretation. It was said, that Harris wrote down one hundred and sixteen pages, and lost them. Soon after this happened, Martin Harris informed me that he must have a *greater witness*, and said that he had talked with Joseph about it—Joseph informed him, that he could not, or durst not show him the plates, but that he (Joseph) would go into the woods where the Book of Plates was, and that after he came back, Harris should follow his track in the snow, and find the Book, and examine it for himself. Harris informed me afterwards, that he



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followed Smith's directions, and could not find the Plates, and was still dissatisfied.

The next day after this happened, I went to the house where Joseph Smith Jr., lived, and where he and Harris were engaged in their translation of the Book. Each of them had a written piece of paper which they were comparing, and some of the words were "*my servant seeketh a greater witness, but no greater witness can be given him.*" There was also something said about "*three that were to see the thing*"—meaning I supposed, the Book of Plates, and that "*if the three did not go exactly according to the orders, the thing would be taken from them.*" I enquired whose words they were, and was informed by Joseph or Emma, (I rather think it was the former) that they were the words of Jesus Christ. I told them, that I considered the whole of it a delusion, and advised them to abandon it. 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!

After this, Martin Harris went away, and Oliver Cowdery came and wrote for Smith, while he interpreted as above described. This is the same Oliver Cowdery, whose name may be found in the Book of Mormon. Cowdery continued a scribe for Smith until the Book of Mormon was completed as I supposed and understood.

Joseph Smith Jr. resided near me for some time after this, and I had a good opportunity of becoming acquainted with him, and somewhat acquainted with his associates, and I conscientiously believe from the facts I have detailed, and from many other circumstances, which I do not deem it necessary to relate, that the whole "Book of Mormon" (so called) is a silly fabrication of falsehood and wickedness, got up for speculation, and with a design to dupe the credu-

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lous and unwary—and in order that its fabricators may live upon the spoils of those who swallow the deception.

ISAAC HALE.

Affirmed to and subscribed before me, March 20th, 1834-

CHARLES DIMON, *J. Peace.*

*State of Pennsylvania, Susquehanna County, ss.*

We, the subscribers, associate Judges of the Court of Common Pleas, in and for said county, do certify that we have been many years personally acquainted with Isaac Hale, of Harmony township in this county, who has attested the foregoing statement; and that he is a man of excellent moral character, and of undoubted veracity. Witness our hands.

WILLIAM THOMPSON.

DAVIS DIMOCK.

*March 21st, 1834.*

Elder Lewis also certifies and affirms in relation to Smith as follows :

“I have been acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. for some time : being a relation of his wife, and residing near him, I have had frequent opportunities of conversation with him, and of knowing his opinions and pursuits. From my standing in the Methodist Episcopal Church, I suppose he was careful how he conducted or expressed himself before me. At one time, however, he came to my house, and asked my advice, whether he should proceed to translate the Book of Plates (referred to by Mr. Hale) or not. He said that God had commanded him to translate it, but he was afraid of the people : he remarked, that he was to exhibit the plates to the world, at a certain time, which was then about eighteen months distant. I told him I was not qualified to give advice in such cases. Smith frequently said to me that I should see the plates at the time appointed.

After the time stipulated, had passed away, Smith being at my house was asked why he did not fulfil his promise,

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show the Golden Plates and prove himself an honest man? He replied that he, himself was deceived, but that I should see them if I were where they were. I reminded him then, that I stated at the time he made the promise, I was fearful "the enchantment would be so powerful" as to remove the plates, when the time came in which they were to be revealed.

"These circumstances and many others of a similar tenor, embolden me to say that Joseph Smith Jr. is not a man of truth and veracity; and that his general character in this part of the country, is that of an impostor, hypocrite and liar.

NATHANIEL C. LEWIS."

Affirmed and subscribed, before me, March 20th, 1834.

CHARLES DIMON, *J. Peace.*

We subjoin the substance of several affidavits, all taken and made before Charles Dimon Esq. by credible individuals, who have resided near to, and been well acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr.—illustrative of his character and conduct, while in this region.

*Joshua M'Kune* states, that he "was acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, during their residence in Harmouy, Pa., and knew them to be artful seducers;"—That they informed him that "Smith had found a sword, breast-plate, and a pair of spectacles, at the time he found the gold plates"—that these were to be shewn to all the world as evidence of the truth of what was contained in those plates," and that "he (M'Kune) and others should see them at a specified time." He also states that "the time for the exhibition of the Plates, &c. has gone by, and he has not seen them." "Joseph Smith, Jr. told him that (Smith's) first-born child was to translate the characters, and hieroglyphics, upon the Plates into our language at the age of three years; but this child was not permitted to live

to verify the prediction." He also states, that "he has been intimately acquainted with Isaac Hale twenty-four years; and has always found him to be a man of truth, and good morals."

HEZEKIAH M'KUNE states, that "in conversation with Joseph Smith Jr., he (Smith) said he was nearly equal to Jesus Christ; that he was a prophet sent by God to bring in the Jews, and that he was the greatest prophet that had ever arisen."

ALVA HALE, son of Isaac Hale, states, that Joseph Smith Jr. told him that his (Smith's) gift in seeing with a stone and hat, was a gift from God," but also states "that Smith told him at another time that this "peeping" was all d——d nonsense. He (Smith) was deceived himself but did not intend to deceive others;—that he intended to quit the business, (of peeping) and labor for his livelihood." That afterwards, Smith told him, he should see the Plates from which he translated the book of Mormon," and accordingly at the time specified by Smith, he (Hale) "called to see the plates, but Smith did not show them, but appeared angry." He further states, that he knows Joseph Smith Jr. to be an impostor, and a liar, and knows Martin Harris to be a liar likewise.)

(LEVI LEWIS states, that he has "been acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, and that he has heard them both say, adultery was no crime. Harris said he did not blame Smith for his (Smith's) attempt to seduce Eliza Winters &c.;"—Mr. Lewis says that he "knows Smith to be a liar;—that he saw him (Smith) intoxicated at three different times while he was composing the Book of Mormon, and also that he has heard Smith when driving oxen, use language of the greatest profanity. Mr. Lewis also testifies that he heard Smith say he (Smith) was as good as Jesus Christ;—that it was as bad to injure him as it was to



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injure Jesus Christ." "With regard to the plates, Smith said God had deceived him—which was the reason he (Smith) did not show them.")

(SOPHIA LEWIS, certifies that she "heard a conversation between Joseph Smith Jr., and the Rev. James B. Roach, in which Smith called Mr. R. a d——d fool. Smith also said in the same conversation that he (Smith) was as good as Jesus Christ;" and that she "has frequently heard Smith use profane language. She states that she heard Smith say "the Book of Plates could not be opened under penalty of death by any other person but his (Smith's) first-born, which was to be a male." She says she "was present at the birth of this child, and that it was still-born and very much deformed.")

## CHAPTER XVIII.

It is asserted in the Mormon Bible, that the engravings upon the plates, were in the "Reformed Egyptian." In conformity to this, the Mormonite preachers, and others of the sect, have frequently declared that the engravings upon the plates were, by some of our learned men, who had a specimen shown them, pronounced to be "reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics," or "ancient short hand Egyptian."—Among others, Professor Anthon, of New York, was frequently mentioned as giving such an opinion. This act of deception and falsehood is only one among hundreds of others, equally gross, which are resorted to by these im-