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MORMONISM, MAGIC AND MASONRY



By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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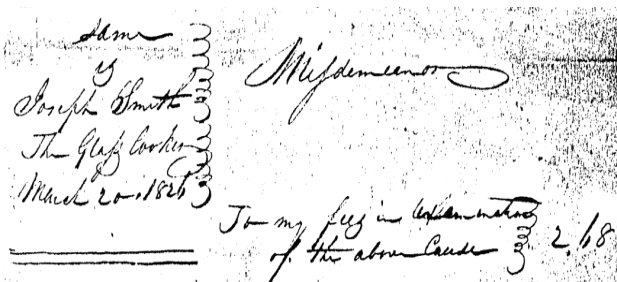
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1. The Smith's Magic Material

Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum are considered by the Mormon people to have been two of the greatest men who ever lived. The *Doctrine and Covenants* says that “their names will be classed among the martyrs of religion; . . . From age to age shall their names go down to posterity as gems for the sanctified” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 135, verse 6). Critics, on the other hand, charge that Joseph and Hyrum led the people astray from the true Gospel of Christ. Among other things, the Smiths were charged with being involved in money digging and magic practices. Recently some new evidence has been discovered which strengthens this charge.

The Smith family's involvement with the occult goes back before the Book of Mormon was “translated.” In 1971 Wesley P. Walters found an original document which proves that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, New York in 1826. This document is Justice Albert Neeley's bill showing the costs involved in several trials held in 1826. The fifth item from the top mentions the trial of “Joseph Smith The Glass Looker.” Below is a photograph of this portion of the document (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 33 for a photograph of the complete document).



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

STATE OF NEW YORK v. JOSEPH SMITH.

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

The 1826 trial proves beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith used a stone which he placed in his hat to try to locate buried treasures. This was, of course, a common practice by magicians and individuals influenced by the occult. As soon as the Book of Mormon was published, there was an attempt by critics to link Joseph Smith with “Walters the Magician, who has strange books, and deals with familiar spirits; . . .” (*Palmyra Reflector*, June 1830 as cited in *A New Witness For Christ in America*, vol. 1, page 273). Walters had been involved with money digging in Palmyra, and it was claimed that “his mantle fell upon the Prophet . . .” (*Ibid.*, page 275). On February 28, 1831, the following appeared in the *Palmyra Reflector*:

It is well known that Jo Smith never pretended to have any communion with angels, until a long period after the PRETENDED finding of his book, and that the juggling of himself or father, went no further than the pretended faculty of seeing wonders in a “peep stone,” and the occasional interview with the spirit, supposed to have the custody of hidden treasures; and it is equally well known that a vagabond fortune-teller by the name of Walters, who then resided in the town of Sodus, and was once committed to the jail of this country for juggling, was the constant companion and bosom friend of these money digging impostors.

There remains but little doubt, in the minds of those at all acquainted with these transactions, that Walters, who was sometimes called the conjurer, and was paid three dollars per day for his services by the money diggers in this neighborhood, first suggested to Smith the idea of finding a book. Walters, . . . had procured an old copy of Cicero's Orations, in the Latin language, out of which he read long and loud to his credulous hearers, uttering at the same time an unintelligible jargon, which he would afterwards pretend to interpret, and explain, as a record of the former inhabitants of America, and a particular account of the numerous situations where they deposited their treasures previous to their final extirpation.

So far did this imposter carry this diabolical farce, that not long previous to the pretended discovery of the "Book of Mormon," Walters assembled his nightly band of money diggers in the town of Manchester, at a point designated in his magical book, and drawing a circle around the laborers, with the point of an old rusty sword, and using sundry other incantations, for the purpose of propitiating the spirit, absolutely sacrificed a fowl, "Rooster," in the presence of his awe-stricken companions, to the foul spirit, whom ignorance had created, the guardian of hidden wealth; and after digging until daylight, his deluded employers retired to their several habitations, fatigued and disappointed. (*Palmyra Reflector* (February 28, 1831) as cited in *A New Witness For Christ in America*, vol. 2, pages 73-74)

Joseph Smith's Magic Talisman

In 1974 Dr. Reed Durham, who was director of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah and president of the Mormon History Association, made a discovery that was so startling that it caused great consternation among Mormon scholars and officials. Dr. Durham found that what had previously been identified as the "Masonic jewel of the Prophet Joseph Smith" was in reality a "Jupiter talisman." This is a medallion which contains material relating to astrology and magic. Dr. Durham, apparently not realizing the devastating implications of his discovery, announced this important find in his presidential address before the Mormon History Association on April 20, 1974:

. . . I should like to initiate all of you into what is perhaps the strangest, the most mysterious, occult-like esoteric, and yet Masonically oriented practice ever adopted by Joseph Smith. . . . All available evidence suggests that Joseph Smith the Prophet **possessed a**

magical Masonic medallion, **or talisman**, which he worked during his lifetime and which was evidently on his person when he was martyred. His talisman is in the shape of a silver dollar and is probably made of silver or tin. It is exactly one and nine-sixteenths in diameter, . . . the talisman, . . . originally purchased from the Emma Smith Bidamon family, fully notarized by that family to be authentic and to have belonged to Joseph Smith, can now be identified as a **Jupiter talisman**. It carries the sign and image of Jupiter and should more appropriately be referred to as the Table of Jupiter. And in some very real and quite mysterious sense, this particular Table of Jupiter was the most appropriate talisman for Joseph Smith to possess. Indeed, it seemed meant for him, because on all levels of interpretation: planetary, mythological, numerological, astrological, mystical cabalism, and talismatic magic, the Prophet was, in every case, appropriately described.

The characters on the talisman are primarily in Hebrew but there is one inscription in Latin. Every letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical equivalent and those numerical equivalents make up a magic square. By adding the numbers in this Jupiter Table in any direction . . . the total will be the same. In this case, on the Jupiter Table, 34. . . .

There is the one side of the talisman belonging to the Prophet Joseph Smith. You can see the Hebrew characters . . . you see on the margins, at the bottom is the Jupiter sign. . . . The cross at the top represents the spirit of Jupiter, and you will see the path of Jupiter in the orbit of the heavens, and then again the Jupiter sign.

I wasn't able to find what this was, for—as I said—two months; and finally, in a **magic book** printed in England in 1801, published in America in 1804, and I traced it to Manchester, and to New York. It was a magic book by Francis Barrett and, lo and behold, how thrilled I was when I saw in his **list of magic seals the very talisman which Joseph Smith had in his possession at the time of his martyrdom**. . . . To the Egyptians, Jupiter was known as Ammon, but to the Greeks he was Zeus: the ancient sky Father, or Father of the Gods. . . .

In astrology, Jupiter is always associated with high positions, getting one's own way, and all forms of status. And I quote: "Typically a person born under Jupiter will have the dignity of a natural ruler. . . . He will probably have an impressive manner. . . . In physical appearance, the highly developed Jupiterian is strong, personable, and often handsome. . . . the Jupiterian influence produces a cheerful winning personality, capable of great development." . . .

So closely is magic bound up with the stars and astrology that the term astrologer and magician were in ancient times almost synonymous. The purpose of the Table of Jupiter in talismanic magis [magic?] was to be able to call upon the celestial intelligences, assigned to the particular talisman, to assist one in all endeavors. The names of the deities which we gave to you, who could be invoked by the Table were always written on the talisman or represented by various numbers. Three such names were written on Joseph Smith's talisman: Abbah, Father; El Ob, Father is God or God the Father; and Josiphiel, Jehovah speaks for God, the Intelligence of Jupiter.

When properly invoked, with Jupiter being very powerful and ruling in the heavens, these intelligences—by the power of ancient magic—guaranteed to the possessor of this talisman the gain of riches, and favor, and power, and love and peace; and to confirm honors, and dignities, and councils. Talismatic magic further declared that any one who worked skillfully with this Jupiter Table would obtain the power of stimulating anyone to offer his love to the possessor of the talisman, whether from a friend, brother, relative, or even any female. (*Mormon Miscellaneous*, vol. 1, no. 1, (October 1975), pages 14-15)

In this same speech Reed Durham told of the close relationship of Mormonism to Masonry. Because of his frank method of dealing with these matters he was severely criticized by Mormon scholars and officials. He was even called in by Mormon President Spencer W. Kimball, and finally found it necessary to issue a letter in which he reaffirmed his faith in Joseph Smith and said that he was sorry for the “concerns and misunderstandings” that the speech had caused. We feel that Dr. Durham's identification of Joseph Smith's talisman is one of the most significant discoveries in Mormon history and that he should be commended for his research.

That Joseph Smith would own such a magic talisman fits very well with the evidence from his 1826 trial. W. D. Purple, who was an eye-witness to the trial, claimed it was reported that Smith said certain talismanic influences were needed to recover a box of treasure:

Mr. Thompson, an employee of Mr. Stowel, was the next witness . . . Smith had told the Deacon that very many years before a band of robbers had buried on his flat a box of treasure, and as it was very valuable they had by a sacrifice placed a charm over it to protect

it, so that it could not be obtained except by faith, accompanied by **certain talismanic influences**. (*The Chenango Union*, Norwich, N.Y., May 3, 1877, as cited in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, vol. 2, pages 366-367)

Dr. Durham was unable to determine just when Joseph Smith obtained his talisman, but the fact that he was recommending “certain talismanic influences”

Both sides of Joseph Smith's Magic Talisman

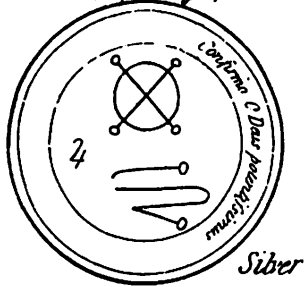
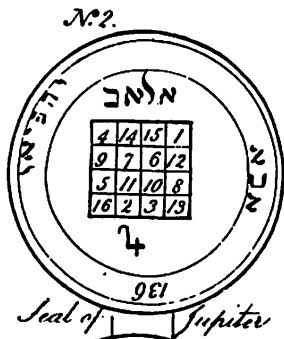


The Table of Jupiter

4	14	15	1
9	7	6	12
5	11	10	8
16	2	3	13

In Hebrew

כ	יך	טז	א
ט	ז	ו	יב
ה	יא	י	ח
יד	כ	ג	יג



A comparison of Joseph Smith's talisman (to the right) with the Jupiter talisman found in Francis Barrett's book *The Magus*. The reader will notice that the markings and characters are the same except for the fact that Joseph Smith's talisman has the numbers in "The Table of Jupiter" written in Hebrew letters. These numbers, however, are shown in Hebrew in another place in Barrett's book (see the two boxes at the top of the left hand side).

around the time of the 1826 trial is certainly interesting. The Jupiter talisman is probably the type of talisman a money digger would be interested in because it was supposed to bring its possessor “the gain of riches, and favor, and power.” Regardless of when Joseph Smith obtained his talisman, we do know that he possessed it up to the time of his death.

Wesley P. Walters says that “Charles E. Bidamon, who sold the talisman to the Wood collection, stated in his accompanying affidavit: ‘Emma Smith Bidamon the prophet’s widow was my foster mother. **She prized this piece very highly on account of its being one of the prophet’s intimate possessions**’ (Charles E. Bidamon Affidavit. Wood Coll. #7J-b-21).”

H. Michael Marquardt has provided us with a typed copy of Charles E. Bidamon’s affidavit. We extract the following from that account:

This is to certify that I have sold to Wilford C. Wood of Woods Cross Utah. A silver piece bearing the inscription. “Confirms O Deus Potentrssimus” and numerous heiroglyphical inscriptions.

This piece came to me through the relationship of my father Major L. C. Bidamon who married the Prophet Joseph Smiths widow, Emma Smith.

I certify that I have many times heard her say. when being interviewed. and showing the piece. That it was in the Prophets pocket when he was martyred at Carthage Ill.

A list of items on Joseph Smith’s body at the time he was murdered does not mention the fact that the piece was in his pocket. Although there may be a question about this matter, there is no reason to doubt Charles Bidamon’s statement that the talisman came from Joseph Smith. According to an article published in the Mormon Church’s *Improvement Era*, September 1937, pages 543, 565 and 573, Mr. Bidamon, who was Emma’s foster son, had “a considerable number” of original Joseph Smith documents, including part “of the original manuscript from which the *Pearl of Great Price* was later compiled.”

The discovery of evidence to prove Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial was certainly a devastating blow to Mormonism, for it proves that Smith was a believer in magical practices. Reed Durham’s find that Joseph Smith possessed a magic talisman is also very significant

because it indicates that Smith continued to hold these ideas until the time of his death.

Hyrum Smith’s Magic Paraphernalia

Recently we were given photocopies of some material which Mormon scholars say was in the possession of Joseph Smith’s brother, Hyrum. We have compared it with the same book Reed Durham used to identify Joseph Smith’s Jupiter talisman (*The Magus*, by Francis Barrett) and found that it is definitely magic material. Pearson H. Corbett, a Mormon apologist, describes these “Relics” of Hyrum Smith on page 453 of his book, *Hyrum Smith—Patriarch*:

Dagger, Masonic ten inch, stainless steel—wooden handle—Masonic symbols on blade.

Emblematic parchments—Masonic—three, original hand painted on heavy bodied paper—on border appears initials “I.H.S.” . . .

Pouch, Masonic cotton fabric 4” x 4” with draw string attached.

Although the relics were supposed to have been in Hyrum Smith’s possession, they (or at least part of them) may have been made by someone else. The handwriting of the English texts on the parchments does not appear to match the style of Hyrum Smith, and Wesley P. Walters feels that the Hebrew characters were penned by someone who was more familiar with writing that language than Hyrum Smith would have been. Since Hyrum’s father, Joseph Smith, Sen., was deeply involved in magic, it is possible that Hyrum obtained the items from him. He could have also obtained them from Walter’s the magician or one of the other money diggers he was acquainted with. It has been suggested that the letters IHS, which appear on one of the parchments, stood for “I, Hyrum Smith.” We feel, however, that it is more likely that they are the Latin letters standing for Jesus. They are widely used by Christians and are also found in magic documents. In Kurt Seligman’s book, *Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion*, page 200, we find the following: “At the bottom of the triangle, write the holy letters IHS, flanked by two crosses.” We have been told that the letters “IHS” also appear on Hyrum Smith’s gun.

End of sample pages.
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