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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>That Old Black Magic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>William J. Hamblin</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC

William J. Hamblin

I find it interesting that an [sic] outside—and fair—observer[s] of the Mormon scene [Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling] would cite Quinn's books. His critics slander Quinn at will and try to tar him with a broad brush—without being able to show a single specific instance in his work that would justify these loose comments—but such petty lies and disparaging remarks will do nothing to diminish the national reputation of this distinguished scholar.

I'm not twisting words. I'm asking for fairness and accuracy. Next time someone who calls himself or herself a Christian launches an assault of Quinn, let's see them link it to evidence rather than unjustifiable prejudice.

I don't think the old legal saw—if you've got the facts on your side, argue the facts; if you got the law on your side, argue the law; if you have neither on your side, yell a lot—works very well before an intelligent audience.¹

Will Bagley

¹ Will Bagley, e-mail posted on lds-bookshelf@lists.xmission.com Sunday, 14 November 1999, 12:27:20 -0700 (MST). This message is archived at http://www.xmission.com/~dkenison/cgi/lwgate.cgi/LDS-BOOKSHELF/archives/v01.n327/date/article-11.html. I would like to thank Sharon Nielsen and Jacob Olmstead for research assistance on this paper. I would also like to thank Daniel Peterson, George Mitton, Matthew Roper, and John Gee for helpful suggestions.

Michael Quinn is one of the best-known historians of Mormonism. His books and articles have won a number of awards. His name and face appear frequently in journalistic accounts of things Mormon. Among some cultural Mormons, Quinn has managed to achieve a reputation approaching that of an infallible demi-god. For many, when Quinn speaks, the thinking has been done. Unfortunately, Quinn’s national reputation is not well merited. Reviewers of his books have increasingly recognized the fundamentally tendentious nature of his work and the fact that Quinn simply cannot be trusted to represent his sources accurately. In his new edition of Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, Quinn’s work again manifests these fundamental flaws. To anticipate my conclusions, Early Mormonism should not be taken seriously as history.

Quinn’s overall thesis is that Joseph Smith and other early Latter-day Saint leaders were fundamentally influenced by occult and magical thought, books, and practices in the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is unmitigated nonsense. Yet the fact that Quinn could not discover a single primary source written by Latter-day Saints that makes any positive statement about magic is hardly dissuasive to a historian of Quinn’s inventive capacity. As we

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2. See the rather inflated self-promotion in the two-page “About the Author” section (pp. 645–46). All parenthetical references are to this edition of Quinn’s book unless otherwise noted.


4. The hidden but fundamental role of the Hofmann forgeries in Quinn’s thesis is striking. Quinn wrote his first edition under the illusion that the Hofmann forgeries—which present forged primary sources in which Joseph Smith and other early Mormons describe themselves as practicing magic—were authentic (see p. 330 n. 14). Note the bizarre gaffe where Quinn berates Rhett James for claiming that Quinn accepted the Salamander letter (see pp. xi–xii), while Quinn himself admits he accepted the authenticity of the letter and wrote the book under the assumption that Hofmann’s forgery was authentic (see p. 330 n. 14).
shall see, Quinn is quite capable of surmounting this dearth of evidence by sheer invention.

I will not attempt an analysis of each of Quinn's claims. Such an effort will require careful study by many historians over a long period of time. At 169 pages, this review is already far too long. Instead, I will examine a limited number of claims in comprehensive detail, hoping to elucidate the many flaws in Quinn's methodology, analysis, and use of evidence. The representative topics I have chosen for discussion are methodological problems, accessibility of occult books, magic artifacts, and Kabbalah.

1. Methodological Problems

Quinn's Idiosyncratic Definition of Magic

Quinn's tendency toward neologisms has been called "Quinnspeak," a term which could even more appropriately be applied to his remarkable insistence on redefining key terms and misrepresenting his primary sources. Many reviewers of Quinn's first edition recognized that his fundamental problem was a failure to accurately define magic and to distinguish between magic and religion. Rather than paying careful attention to his critics and attempting to rectify

5. I feel I should apologize to readers for the length of this "review." Due to Quinn's remarkable tendency to misrepresent even the most straightforward sources, I felt it necessary to quote extensively from the sources Quinn uses and provide a detailed point-by-point analysis of Quinn's faulty methods and misrepresentations. For me to have simply stated that Quinn was in error would not be convincing to many who—like Quinn himself—are predisposed to think the worst of scholars who believe that traditional versions of LDS history are more accurate than revisionist versions. Even so, I could easily have doubled the size of this review with additional examples of the problems, errors, and misrepresentations I have discovered.


this problem, Quinn has chosen to ignore or misrepresent his critics while questioning their integrity. His second edition thus only confuses the matter even further (see pp. xxiii–xxx). Quinn’s attempts to define the term *magic* are remarkably muddled. The fundamental issue is that no understanding of the influence of magic on the thought of Joseph Smith is possible unless we clearly understand what is meant by the term *magic*. This issue has a number of ramifications. First, Quinn is under the delusion that a single “magic world view” exists. There are, in fact, many. Second, we must understand what Joseph Smith and his contemporary Latter-day Saints understood by magic. Quinn completely ignores this basic issue. He never attempts, based on the writings of early Latter-day Saints, to understand how they defined *magic* and related terms. In part this may be because they seldom mention such ideas at all. Third, we must understand how early nineteenth-century Americans in general used the term *magic*. Quinn also essentially ignores this issue. Fourth, we must clearly distinguish between magic and religion. Quinn recognizes that this distinction is problematic, admitting that “many of the above characteristics of the magic world view are also characteristics of the ‘religious’ world view” (p. xxiv), and cites numerous sources that claim that it is almost impossible to create a definition of magic that does not overlap with religion (see pp. xxiv–xxviii). Then why is Quinn writing a book on the “magic world view” of Joseph Smith, rather than on his “religious world view”? Quinn’s working definition (see p. xxiii) certainly does not solve this problem. Finally, we must carefully avoid the “fallacy of the perfect analogy,” which “consists in reasoning from a partial resemblance between two entities to an entire and exact correspondence.”

8 The fact that there might be


similarities between some ideas found in magical thought and some of Joseph Smith's ideas does not demonstrate that Joseph was a magician nor even that he was influenced by magical thought and practice. The problem of defining magic is an extremely complex one. Quinn's reductionism in this matter is a fatal flaw undermining his entire work.

In the present volume John Gee has dealt with this issue in detail.\(^9\) I will therefore respond directly only to Quinn's criticisms of my use of the term *magic* (see p. xxix). However, this brief discussion should be seen in light of the broader issues outlined above. Quinn makes the remarkable assertion that he "consistently accept[s]" the "consensus" view on the relationship between religion and magic (p. xxx). To substantiate this dubious claim of a "wide consensus" among many scholars about religion and magic (p. xxx; cf. 348 n. 81), he cites from John Middleton's interesting article "Theories of Magic."\(^10\) The very title should make us somewhat dubious of Quinn's assertion since it speaks of multiple "theories" of magic rather than of Quinn's purported consensus. Middleton begins his article by asserting, "Magic is a word with as many definitions as there have been studies of it."\(^11\) Does this sound like Middleton is describing a definitional "wide consensus" among scholars, as Quinn claims? Here is the full context of Middleton's view, with Quinn's quoted phrase in bold type:

> Magic is usually defined subjectively rather than by any agreed-upon content. But there is a *wide consensus* as to what this content is. Most peoples in the world perform acts by which they intend to bring about certain events or conditions, whether in nature or among people, that they hold to be the consequences of these acts. If we use Western terms and assumptions, the cause and effect relationship between the act and the consequence is mystical, not scientifically

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9. See his review in this issue, pp. 185–90.
11. Ibid., 82a.
validated. The acts typically comprise behavior such as manipulation of objects and recitation of verbal formulas or spells.¹²

For Quinn's purposes, this paragraph is problematic at a number of levels. First, it should be emphasized that Middleton is not claiming that there is a "wide consensus" among scholars about the definition of magic, since in the preceding paragraph of his article Middleton says just the opposite. What Middleton is claiming, rather, is that there is a "wide consensus" as to the "content" of magic. He does not clarify if he believes this consensus is among scholars or among those who believe in a given system of magic. What is this "content" of magic? Acts by which people "intend to bring about certain events or conditions"; in other words, that certain causes will create certain effects. Like turning on a light switch or baking bread? No, for Middleton, the crucial characteristic is that magical acts are "mystical" (another extremely amorphous term) rather than "scientifically validated." In other words, magical acts are practices for which a cause-and-effect relationship is believed to occur but for which there is no scientific proof that it actually does occur. Does this imply that everything that happened before the rise of modern science was magic? Is prayer thus a magical act? Or the Catholic Eucharist? Or Latter-day Saints giving the gift of the Holy Ghost? If this is the definition Quinn proposes to follow, then most religious acts are magic. By following Middleton, Quinn has not resolved the fundamental problem.

Furthermore, Middleton's definition is based on perception. Magnetism was believed to be a magical power in the Middle Ages. Today it is "scientifically validated." Are we therefore to understand that magnetism was magic in the Middle Ages but that it is now no longer magic? Middleton's definition is problematic to say the least. But, whatever Middleton may mean, and whether he is right or wrong in his ideas, he is emphatically not stating that there is a "wide consensus" among many scholars about religion and magic." In fact, he states quite the opposite. Quinn is misrepresenting his source.

¹². Ibid.
Quinn also insists that I have “not followed [my] fellow FARMS writers in abandoning the category of magic” (p. xxix) and proceeds to reference supposedly “non-polemical” articles where I used the term magic. Quinn feels that my occasional use of the term magic to describe some beliefs and practices is inconsistent with my position that magic is “a highly problematical concept” and “should be abandoned in academic discourse” (p. xxix). He feels that my “inconsistencies are typical of the polemical ‘double standard’” of writers publishing with FARMS (p. xxix) and fantasizes that “the difference is that Hamblin wrote about Jewish mysticism as a historian, but reviewed Owens as a polemicist” (p. 348 n. 79).

Let me explain what is really going on. I believe that a coherent and unproblematic definition of magic as a scholarly intellectual category is impossible. The fact is that, despite Quinn’s unsubstantiated claim of a “wide consensus,” there is simply no unanimity on the matter. If there is no consensus on definition, why should Quinn pretend that there is? And why should we take seriously Quinn’s privileging of his particular definition? Especially when he does not make the slightest effort to define clearly what early Latter-day Saints meant by the word magic in any given context.

On the other hand, many different cultures and individuals have used the term magic (or its semantic equivalents) as a self-description of what they believe and do. I believe it is thus perfectly legitimate to use the term magic within their specific cultural context and period. That is to say, although it is impossible to develop an ideal academic definition of magic that can be universally applied to all beliefs and

13. Is there, by the way, any particular reason that I must follow my “fellow FARMS writers”? Am I not to be permitted to have my own views on this and other matters? Does Quinn agree with everything ever published by his “fellow Signature, Dialogue, or Sunstone writers”? If not, is he operating under a “double standard”?

14. It is interesting to note here that Quinn sees an apparent dichotomy between being a historian and being a polemicist (see below); apparently, true historians are never polemical. This may reflect Quinn’s unfamiliarity with the broader range of historical writing, which is often highly polemical. I suspect that Quinn misses this rich irony: if a historian can’t be polemical, what are the implications of Quinn’s use of highly polemical language in his book?
practices in all cultures and periods of human history, it is nonetheless possible—through careful and sympathetic reading of primary sources—to derive workable definitions of magic that are applicable to specific times, places, and cultures. Thus, when I wrote of medieval and Renaissance magic, I was using the term because it was the self-definition of the practitioners themselves. There were indeed people in medieval and Renaissance times who called themselves magicians. When I advocated that scholars abandon the term magic, however, I was explicitly referring to attempts to provide a universal definition of magic in academic discourse. That is to say, as an academic construct used by an outsider to universally define the beliefs of others, the term magic is problematic. If a Renaissance scholar like Cornelius Agrippa called himself a magician, then I believe it is legitimate for modern scholars to attempt to understand what he meant by the term and to use it to describe Agrippa’s beliefs and practices within the historical context of the European Renaissance. It does not mean that we then have license to take Agrippa’s understanding, mix it with concepts of magic among Chinese, Africans, Polynesians, and Native Americans, and attempt to create an artificial academic definition of magic that we universally impose on all cultures and peoples, especially when no actual believer in any system of magic ever understood it in the way modern academics attempt to define it.

Quinn apparently overtly agrees with this position. In a paragraph not devoid of unintended irony, Quinn claims:

The fundamental problem with this tactic [rejecting the academic definitions of magic] of LDS apologists is that denying the legitimacy of the word “magic” or “occult sciences” also denies the self-definition of people before and during Joseph Smith’s time. . . . To free early Mormon history from association with magic and the occult, Ricks, Peterson, and Gee insist on eliminating the words “magic” and “the occult” from the lives of everyone who embraced those terms. (p. xxviii)

This is really an astonishing claim. Joseph Smith never called himself a magician, sorcerer, occultist, mystic, alchemist, kabbalist, necromancer, or wizard. He did not “embrace” this “self-definition.”
Nor did any of his followers. So why should Quinn do it for him? The fact that hundreds or even thousands of people before, during, or after Joseph Smith's time did, in fact, “embrace” this “self-definition” does not mean that an outsider like Quinn should impose it on Joseph Smith. Rather, I accept Joseph’s self-definition as a prophet, as he understood the term. It is Quinn who attempts to impose an arbitrary outside definition of “magic” on the religious life of the early Latter-day Saints. Quinn’s failure to recognize that “social-scientific approaches tend to privilege etic or outsider discourse rather than insider or emic discourse”15 fundamentally undermines his work.

Despite Quinn’s assertions, I do not object to the use of the term magic in and of itself. It is obviously an English word with a broad range of meanings. My objection, rather, is twofold. First, I believe that magic is such a complex and multifaceted idea—it represents such a wide range of human beliefs and practices over thousands of years of history and in nearly every civilization in the world—that it is impossible to create a neutral academic definition that will adequately encompass all forms of beliefs and activities which, at all times and in all cultures, have been called magic by their practitioners, while at the same time exclude precisely the same or closely related activities and beliefs that their practitioners have just as emphatically denied are magic. Thus it is Quinn’s attempt to create a universal technical term—which will necessarily be simultaneously both too narrow and too broad—that is the problem. It must be recognized that many scholars have made similar attempts and that no such definition has met with universal or even majority acceptance. It is only those who are unfamiliar with the history of the academic study of magic who believe that such an attempt is feasible or even desirable.

Second, I object to Quinn’s imposition of his invented and arbitrary definition on the beliefs and practices of others—in this case, on Joseph Smith and the early Mormons. If Joseph had a “magical”

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(as opposed to religious) worldview, Quinn needs to demonstrate it from Joseph’s own words. He does not. In fact, he does not even recognize that this is an issue. For any part of Quinn’s thesis to be seriously considered, he needs to demonstrate that his definition of magic is superior to all others and that it applies in some way to the thought of Joseph Smith. He has failed to do either.

I would have absolutely no objection if, in studying early Mormonism, Quinn used the term magic in the sense understood by Joseph Smith and his early LDS contemporaries. But, of course, his case would collapse if he did, since the only references to magical activities in early Mormon writings are limited in number and are universally negative; magic is never used by Latter-day Saints as self-description to describe the activities of Latter-day Saints.\(^\text{16}\) I would be delighted if Quinn would carefully analyze the wide range of meanings of the term magic and cautiously distinguish between the various understandings. The problem arises because he creates his own idiosyncratic definition and then attempts to impose it on past understandings. We have absolutely no reason to take Quinn’s definition seriously.

**Quinn Defines Polemics**

Whereas Quinn’s discussion of the definition of magic is highly problematic, his definition of polemics is simply bizarre. One of the remarkable features of Quinn’s book is his relentless attacks on his critics, whom he consistently calls “polemicists.” According to Quinn—again apparently oblivious to the rich irony of this passage—

Polemics is an extreme version of apologetics. Defending a point of view becomes less important than attacking one’s opponents. Aside from their verbal viciousness, polemicists often resort to any method to promote their argument. Polemics intentionally destroys the give-and-take of sincerely respectful disagreement. . . .

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\(^{16}\) Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace,” 16–20; see also below, pp. 251–54.
suasion, LDS polemicists furiously (and often fraudulently) attack any non-traditional view of Mormonism. They don’t mince words—they mince the truth. (p. x)

Quinn’s critics also lack his own “honesty and civility” (p. xi). For him, “polemicists always regard it as a sign of weakness to acknowledge the existence of evidence (no matter how exceptional) that counters the bulk of evidence an author emphasizes, which is why polemicists refuse to do so,” a failing Quinn contrasts with his “own honesty in this regard” (pp. 428–29 n. 214). He concludes that his “study does note instances where polemical writings and arguments have been misleading, distorted, or dishonest. ‘Polemicist’ is a dishonorable vocation, and I use the term only where I believe it applies” (p. xi). Quinn’s personal, subjective views on this matter are apparently definitive.

Of course, the term polemicist means nothing of the sort. Polemic is an English loan word from the Greek polemikos, meaning “warlike,” or “relating to war.” In standard modern English usage, the term is defined as

1a: a controversial discussion or argument; an aggressive attack on or the refutation of the opinions or principles of another . . . b: the art or practice of disputation or controversy . . . 2: one that controverts an opinion, doctrine, or system; an aggressive controversialist . . . 3 polemics . . . the branch of Christian theology devoted to the refutation of errors.”

But, since this standard definition is inadequately negative for Quinn’s rhetorical purposes, he simply invents a new definition of his own. For Quinn, being “a mean-spirited polemicist” means being “eager to use any insult, distortion, mislabeling, deletion, false analogy, semantic trick, and logical fallacy to defend officially approved LDS history” (p. 403 n. 248). Quinn transforms the neutral word polemic—an aggressive refutation—into an ad hominem designation

17. Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged, s.v. “polemic/polemics.”
with which he attempts to label his critics and their arguments as extreme, vicious, fraudulent, dishonest, uncivil, and misleading. 18

Not only that, he imposes his own peculiar definition retroactively on the writings of his critics. While describing the reprehensible nature of "polemics," Quinn claims that "polemical tactics have been fundamental to the self-definition of FARMS" (p. xi), citing two uses of the word by Daniel C. Peterson as self-description (see pp. x–xi). Quinn triumphantly and repeatedly cites Peterson's passing description of a review by Stephen Robinson as "polemical." 19 "For acknowledgement that Robinson is a 'polemical' reviewer, see ..." (p. 328 n. 2); "For an acknowledgement that Robinson is a 'polemical' reviewer, see ..." (p. 403 n. 248); "for acknowledgment that Robinson is a 'polemical' reviewer, see ..." (p. 407 n. 3); "For Robinson as a FARMS polemicist, see ..." (p. 518 n. 303); and Peterson "uses 'polemical' to describe Robinson's review" (p. 576 n. 577). To insure that no one misses this important point, Quinn twice provides cross-references to his other footnotes in which he furnishes precisely the same assertion that Robinson is "polemical" (pp. 403 n. 248, 428 n. 206). 20

For Quinn, Peterson is admitting that FARMS intentionally engages in dishonest and dishonest "polemical" activities as Quinn defines them. Of course, Peterson is saying nothing of the sort. He is

18. In all of this, Quinn somehow missed the fact that the FARMS Review of Books uses the term polemics as a section header in the table of contents under which reviews of Quinn's own books can be found. (See FARMS Review of Books 9/2 [1997]: iv, and 10/1 [1998]: iii.) Does he really think FARMS intended to create a section for book reviews that were somehow particularly prone to "insult, distortion, mislabeling, deletion, false analogy, semantic trick, and logical fallacy"? Actually, the editor assures me, the headings are intended to describe the works being reviewed, rather than the contents or manners of the reviews themselves. It is interesting that FARMS categorizes Quinn's own work as "polemical"—though it should be kept in mind that the FARMS editors use the standard definition of the term rather than Quinn's pejorative redefinition.


20. Quinn does not want anyone to misunderstand his view of Robinson: Robinson is described as "an LDS polemicist" (pp. 60, 67, 93); Robinson uses "polemical defensiveness" (p. 234); "Robinson is another FARMS 'polemical' reviewer" (p. 309); "As a polemical reviewer for [FARMS], Stephen E. Robinson ..." (p. 407 n. 3); "As an LDS polemicist, Robinson withheld ..." (p. 411 n. 22); "As a polemicist, Robinson misled ..." (p. 415 n. 54);
simply using the term *polemic* in its standard modern English sense of "aggressive refutation." He is hardly conceding all of the intellectual baggage that Quinn dumps onto his idiosyncratic definition while reading it *backward* into Peterson's preceding standard use of the term.  

Quinn likewise seems chronically unable to write the name *Hamblin* without compulsively adding the "polemicist" tag:

- Hamblin and "another polemicist" (p. x)
- Hamblin uses "polemics as personal competition" (p. xi)
- Hamblin is "another polemicist" (p. xii)
- Hamblin is a "polemical reviewer" (p. xxix)
- Hamblin indulges in "polemical 'double standard'" (p. xxix)
- "FARMS polemicist William J. Hamblin" (pp. 115, 216, 297, 326, 489 n. 14)
- "Hamblin's polemical dodge" (p. 116)
- "polemicist Hamblin" (pp. 119, 235, 298, 304)
- "LDS polemicist William J. Hamblin" (p. 185)
- "polemical historian William J. Hamblin" (p. 186)
- "this BYU polemicist" Hamblin (p. 186)
- Hamblin's "polemical sleight-of-hand" (p. 187)
- "FARMS polemical Hamblin" (p. 190)
- "Hamblin and fellow FARMS polemicists" (p. 230)
- Hamblin is one of a group of "polemicists" (p. 270)
- "this FARMS polemicist well knows" (p. 299)
- Hamblin's "polemical review for FARMS" (p. 301)
- "this polemicist" Hamblin (p. 302)

21. In personal conversation I asked Peterson if, when he used the word *polemical* to describe some FARMS writings, he was thereby trying to imply that FARMS studies were eager to use any insult, distortion, mislabeling, deletion, false analogy, semantic trick, and logical fallacy, as Quinn claims. He laughed uproariously and at great length before answering emphatically that he did not.
While reading Quinn's book, we should remember that whenever he calls his critics "polemics," what he really means is that they are dishonorable frauds and liars. Having thus unmasked the dishonorable polemics, Quinn expects the worst. In a passage again apparently devoid of intentional irony, he bemoans his perceived fate. Even though he has "tried to avoid engaging in polemics," he

22. Note also that "Hamblin recently demonstrated both the desperation and emptiness of the apologist denial" (p. 89). However, on the rare occasions where Quinn agrees with my position, he does not call me a polemicist. On p. xxix I am said to have written "a non-polemical article"—a claim I find hard to believe (see also pp. xxxii, xxxiii, and 156). There is only one occasion I found (other than bibliographic notices in the notes) where Quinn disagrees with me without calling me a polemicist (see p. xxxvii). I will forgive him this oversight. One can imagine the reaction if I were to use the adjective apostate every time I mention Quinn’s name.

23. As an exercise in futility, one can attempt to find an example of a scholar who has seriously criticized Quinn who is not labeled a polemicist.
fears he will “be accused of engaging in polemics” by “LDS polemists” (p. xi). He would have served his cause much better by paying careful attention to the issues his critics raised and by attempting to correct those problems in his second edition. Having failed to do so, Quinn simply compounds fallacy with folly.

Evidence and Probability

In his discussion of evidence and probability, Quinn misunderstands and misrepresents my position on what I have called the “miracle of the addition of the probabilities.”24 Quinn maintains that I have used a double standard regarding evidence. According to Quinn, I (and by extension others associated with FARMS) accept the impact of cumulative evidence only when it supports our positions. “Only when cumulative evidence runs contrary to the FARMS agenda, do polemists like Hamblin want readers to view each piece of evidence as though it existed in isolation” (pp. 355–56 n. 121).

Quinn has misunderstood. In my original response to Owens, I was discussing the process of the verification of historical evidence. The issue was unproven propositions, not parallel evidence.25 Quinn (followed by Owens) proposed that a series of “magic” artifacts provide evidence that Joseph Smith practiced magic. My position is that, in order for us to accept any particular artifact as a single piece of evidence, we must first accept several unproven propositions, each of which may be true or false, but none of which is proven. The more unproven propositions one must accept to validate a piece of evidence, the greater the probability that the evidence is not, in fact, authentic. Thus, two historiographical processes are under discussion. One is the authentication of a particular piece of evidence: did Joseph own a magical talisman and use it to perform magical rites? The second is the cumulative significance of previously authenticated evidence in proving a particular thesis: does the authentication of the use of the talisman demonstrate that Joseph was a magician who adhered to a

25. See ibid.
magical worldview? Quinn apparently cannot distinguish between these two phases of the historical endeavor, which goes far to account for some of the numerous failings in his book.26

Having confused the process of actually authenticating evidence with that of analyzing the significance of a piece of authenticated evidence, Quinn then accuses me of engaging in a double standard when I reject the cumulative significance of Quinn’s evidence while accepting the cumulative significance of evidence favorable to the Book of Mormon (see pp. 355–56 n. 121). But this is hardly the case. To use Quinn’s two examples, first we must debate whether there are legitimate parallels between ancient warfare or kingship in the ancient Near East and the Book of Mormon, and second we must discuss the implications that arise if those parallels are shown to be valid.

Of course the probative value of evidence is cumulative. The more evidence you have, the greater the probability that your overall thesis is true. Thus, if Quinn can demonstrate that the talisman and the parchment and the dagger all belonged to the Smith family and were used for magical purposes, it would be more probable that his overall thesis is true than if he could establish only that the Smiths owned and used just one of those three items. But my argument is that the authenticity of each of these pieces of evidence rests on half a dozen unproven propositions and assumptions. These unverified propositions undermine the authenticity of each discrete piece of evidence. Thus I am not arguing about the cumulative value of evidence but, rather, about whether what Quinn claims is evidence really is evidence at all or merely a collection of unverified presuppositions and assertions. The greater the number of unverified propositions that one must believe in order to accept the authenticity of a piece of evidence, the greater the probability that the evidence is not authentic. On the other hand, the greater the number of pieces of evidence, the

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26. Many undergraduate handbooks of historiography have a section on the difference between evaluating the authenticity of evidence and evaluating the significance and meaning of evidence. See, for example, Robert J. Shafer, ed., A Guide to Historical Method, 3rd ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1980), 127–70.
greater the probability that a thesis is valid. Quinn is utterly confused on this issue, seriously misrepresenting my position while blaming me for his own confusion.

**Quinn on Languages in Scholarship**

Having confused the difference between authenticating and interpreting evidence, Quinn proceeds to another methodological innovation concerning the importance of studying primary texts in the original languages. Quinn asserts that I have “claim[ed] special credentials to write about the Cabala” (p. 298) because I can read some Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin. In reality I claimed nothing of the kind. Rather, I simply noted that Owens did not read Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin.27 I never explicitly claimed to know those languages, nor did I claim that such knowledge—if I had it—would somehow give me “special credentials.” I simply used those languages where they were relevant in my analysis of Owens’s thesis. I would never claim that the knowledge of these languages provides “special credentials” for studying Kabbalah; on the contrary, they are minimal credentials. Does Quinn “claim special credentials to write about” Mormonism because he knows English? Isn’t knowledge of English a minimal prerequisite for the serious study of Mormonism? What would he think of a Japanese scholar who created a revisionist interpretation of Joseph Smith solely on the basis of primary sources on early Mormonism available in Japanese?

For Quinn, my brief mention—in a footnote—of Owens’s lack of knowledge of these languages is a “condescending ad hominem attack” (p. 569 n. 476). He berates me because “Hamblin listed only the languages he knows, while not acknowledging the fact that Hamblin is unable to read Greek, Egyptian Demotic, Gaellic [sic], Anglo-Saxon, or Romany—also important in ‘the Western esoteric traditions’” (pp. 568–69 n. 476).28

27. See Hamblin, “Everything,” 258 n. 22.

28. In passing I should note that I can read Greek—as Quinn should have known since I provided my own translation of Plotinus in the epigraph to my article (“Everything,” 251 n. 1).
First, my raising the issue of language hardly represents "a condescending ad hominem attack." Owens's fundamental thesis is that Joseph Smith or his mentor Alexander Neibaur read kabbalistic texts in Hebrew (and, tacitly, in Aramaic). As I demonstrate in my article, Owens misunderstands an early twentieth-century English translation of the Aramaic Zohar and then reads his own misunderstanding back into Joseph Smith's King Follett Discourse.29 It is Owens's inability to read Aramaic that in part led to his misunderstanding. My counterargument rests on this misunderstanding and could not be made without reference to Hebrew and Aramaic. Furthermore, it should be noted that Quinn agrees with me in the essential thrust of my critique, which is that Joseph could not have obtained his knowledge of Kabbalah from reading Hebrew and Aramaic texts (see p. 302). Quinn's position is that Joseph obtained knowledge of Kabbalah from English texts (see pp. 297–306).30

Second, the issue in Owens's thesis is the potential influence of kabbalistic thought on Joseph Smith directly from untranslated Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Thus, my inability to read "Egyptian Demotic, Gaelic, Anglo-Saxon, or Romany" is quite as irrelevant as is my inability to read Chinese or Sanskrit since, although numerous interesting and important esoteric texts are written in both these languages, these texts did not have significance in kabbalistic studies in early nineteenth-century North America. Indeed, there is not a major literary language anywhere in the world that does not include important esoteric texts, and I fear I must confess I cannot read most of them in the original languages. The basic issue is, do Quinn, Brooke, or Owens anywhere claim that Joseph Smith was influenced by primary occult texts in "Egyptian Demotic, Gaelic, Anglo-Saxon, or Romany"? Egyptian demotic and Anglo-Saxon were dead languages before the kabbalistic tradition even began. Why should we expect kabbalistic texts in those languages? And why should the fact

30. The details of Quinn's argument will be discussed below on pp. 344–91.
that I cannot read some important languages preclude me from studying texts in languages I can read? And what of Romany—the language of the Gypsies? My inability to read that language surely must undermine my capacity to evaluate the potential impact of kabbalistic thought on Joseph Smith in the early nineteenth century, considering that “there is no tradition of writing in Romany” until the twentieth century.\(^{31}\) Perhaps Quinn could enlighten us as to which esoteric books in Romany he believes influenced early Mormon thought.

Finally, Quinn seems to be arguing that knowledge of the relevant languages of the esoteric traditions is unimportant because English is the modern international language and many primary and secondary texts from esoteric traditions have been translated into English (see p. 569 n. 476). Given Quinn’s observation, I can’t imagine why Near Eastern or Jewish studies programs continue to have language requirements. Moreover, in view of Quinn’s astonishing facility at misrepresenting the English texts he purports to read,\(^{32}\) I suspect that even a basic understanding of English has become unnecessary in Quinn’s new democratized (see p. 569 n. 476) system of scholarship. In reality, of course, Quinn’s absurd claim is in opposition to the policies of all major graduate studies programs.

Quinn may wish to argue that knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic is irrelevant to the study of what Joseph Smith might have learned from kabbalistic texts and summaries available in English. I would agree with this position. But it is nonsense to argue, as Quinn does, that a knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic is irrelevant to the study of Owens’s claims that Joseph Smith learned Kabbalah from untranslated Hebrew and Aramaic texts, and furthermore, that it is “a condescending *ad hominem* attack” if someone has the temerity to point out this obvious fact.

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32. Numerous examples will be given below.
**Translation by the “gift and power of God”**

At times Quinn's desperate grasping for arguments becomes absurd. Objecting to the fact that I believe that the search for possible environmental influences on Joseph should be restricted to accessible books written in languages he could actually read, Quinn writes:

> It is ironic for this LDS polemicist [Hamblin] to stridently insist that Smith could not have understood the Aramaic/Hebrew text of the Zohar, since Hamblin just as stridently insists that Smith understood the “reformed Egyptian” text of the *Book of Mormon*. Neither text was accessible to Smith through his actual knowledge of Near Eastern languages. He could have also understood sections of the Zohar by the same “gift and power of God” which rendered the [Book of] Mormon text into English. (p. 302)

Unfortunately for Quinn, there is a slight difference between the two cases. He is apparently unaware of the important fact that in the case of the Book of Mormon, Joseph actually claimed to have translated by the “gift and power of God.” Furthermore, he also seems to be unacquainted with the fact that Joseph never claimed to have translated the Zohar by the gift and power of God. Indeed, he never claims to have seen or read the Zohar at all! To believe that Joseph could on occasion translate ancient records by divine power is hardly the same as believing that, omnisciently transcending space and time, he could read any book in any language. Quinn's revolutionary new research method will now allow those seeking environmental explanations for Joseph's revelations to claim that Joseph read any book in any language whatsoever—which is precisely what Quinn does, citing books in Latin, German, French, and Spanish as possible sources for Joseph's alleged occult knowledge in the 1820s.

Quinn uses this discussion as evidence for his proposition that

> Arguments for the Mormon faith are undermined by unequal application of the standards of evidence. Aside from

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34. Numerous examples will be given throughout this review.
instances of dishonesty or distortion, this is the next greatest weakness in the writings of the FARMS polemicists I discuss throughout this book. Neither God nor faith is well-served by polemical tricks. (p. 572 n. 515)\textsuperscript{35}

I am literally dumbfounded by the spectacle of Quinn proclaiming that his “standard of evidence”—a standard that requires Joseph to have read books in many languages he never studied—is superior to a “standard of evidence” that insists on allowing only the possibility that Joseph could have translated by divine power those documents which he specifically claims to have so translated.

Bibliographic Blunders

Quinn’s books are often described as “painstakingly documented” and based on “thorough research.”\textsuperscript{36} Unfortunately, there is a difference between merely referring to a book in a footnote and understanding that book. Citing reviewers who have praised the extensive notes and bibliography in his books, Quinn writes:

In contrast, my technique of providing readers with bibliographic source-notes has been the subject of stridently negative comments by polemical reviewers for BYU’s Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. BYU historian William J. Hamblin . . . denounced the source-notes in my Mormon Hierarchy’s first volume for its ‘particularly egregious examples’ of ‘bibliography padding’” (p. 328 n. 3).

Of course, I was not critiquing Quinn’s “technique of providing readers with bibliographic source-notes.” My objection is to a methodological misuse of footnotes, providing the appearance of documentation while denying the power thereof.

Let us suppose that an author writes an essay in which he maintains that Julius Caesar was assassinated on 15 March 44 B.C. in Italy, in the city of Rome, in the hall of Pompey’s theater, at the base of

\textsuperscript{35} This is the only note to the claim Joseph read the Zohar by divine power.

\textsuperscript{36} See, for example, Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, Mormon America: The Power and the Promise (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 265.
Pompey’s statue, by a senatorial conspiracy including Brutus, who used a nine-millimeter handgun. The author then proceeds to cite all major primary and secondary sources on Caesar, including a dozen biographies and dozens of articles, all of which conclusively demonstrate that Caesar was indeed assassinated on 15 March 44 B.C. in Italy, in the city of Rome, in the hall of Pompey’s theater, at the base of Pompey’s statue, by a senatorial conspiracy including Brutus. But none of that was ever in dispute. The only real issue is whether Brutus used a nine-millimeter handgun to kill Caesar. Thus, the extensive citation of a massive bibliography in fact hinders a proper evaluation of the evidence because one does not know specifically where the author claims to have obtained his information on Brutus’s alleged use of a nine-millimeter handgun. Padding the bibliography actually serves to obscure the fact that no evidence, primary or secondary, shows that Caesar was killed by a nine-millimeter handgun. Reviewers could claim that the author’s work on Caesar is “painstakingly documented” and based on “thorough research,” while ignoring the fact that such documentation is a smoke screen.

As I hope to demonstrate throughout this review, Quinn’s book is filled with precisely this type of faulty methodology, where the real issues are obscured in a blizzard of irrelevant bibliography. A proper methodological use of footnotes requires that Quinn carefully cite the specific primary evidence for each individual controversial point. If he wants to include broader background information, it should be in separate notes or clearly marked by transitional phrases such as “for general background on X, see.” Instead, when Quinn cites half a dozen books as general bibliography, a reviewer is required to read through every reference in the bibliography, only to discover, time and again, that the controversial point is nowhere discussed but is Quinn’s bald assertion or misrepresentation, carefully camouflaged in a forest of footnotes.

Another equally significant bibliographic problem Quinn faces, which will be documented throughout this review, is a consistent misrepresentation of the content of the sources he cites. I believe it is far better to read one book, understand it, and present its contents fairly, than to cite in a bibliography ten books that are unread, misunderstood, or misrepresented.
Philological Fantasies: Quinn on the Origin of Book of Mormon Names

Quinn’s claim that some names in the Book of Mormon ultimately derive from magical texts (see pp. 197–200) lacks even the faintest hint of methodological control. For it to be at all significant, he must first exclude all biblical names from consideration. Then he must deal with all the remaining names in the Book of Mormon; Quinn deals with only five out of several hundred (Mormon, Alma, Lehi, Nephi, and Laman, pp. 197–200). Third, he must compare and contrast the relative success of ancient vs. modern sources for the names under consideration. Finally, the overall explanatory power of the differing linguistic models for the ancient vs. magical theories of the origins of the Book of Mormon names must be compared.

Thus, while the name Alma has recently been discovered as an authentic ancient nonbiblical Semitic male name, Quinn prefers to focus on the fact that alma in Spanish means “soul,” which, for Quinn, is obviously a magical idea (see p. 197). (Why the idea of “soul” is magical rather than religious is not made clear.) Is Quinn attempting to argue here that Joseph spoke Spanish? Or that he randomly consulted a Spanish dictionary while writing the Book of Mormon? Even more impressive is the fact that “a seventeenth-century English magic manuscript also used ‘Alma’ as one of the names to conjure a treasure guardian-spirit” (pp. 197–98). Are we to assume that Joseph had access to an unpublished seventeenth-century manuscript from England? Is it impertinent to ask precisely when young Joseph went to England to consult this manuscript? If the assumption is not valid, why is Quinn raising this issue? What in the world does the citation of a seventeenth-century manuscript possibly mean? And which is more significant, that Alma is an authentic Semitic male name precisely as used in the Book of Mormon or that it is the name of a spirit—not a man—mentioned in a magical manuscript to which Joseph could not possibly have had access?

37. The name is found in the Bar Kokhba letters; see Yigael Yadin, Bar-Kokhba (New York: Random House, 1971), 176. This has been observed by many LDS writers. Quinn is aware of this fact (see pp. 197, 507 n. 161) but does not deal with the implications.
But Quinn outdoes himself with the name Nephi. He attempts to see that name as deriving from "Nephiomaoth," from magic books from the 1890s (never mind that they weren't available until after the publication of the Book of Mormon), or from unpublished European manuscripts from the seventeenth century (never mind that they did not exist in the United States). His credibility improves somewhat with reference to a published 1686 German translation of the Key of Solomon, which refers to "Propheten, (Nevijm)," giving "a German pronunciation of 'Neef-eye-eem' for prophets; thus a pronunciation of 'Neef-eye' for a single prophet." Here, at last, is the real source for the name Nephi. All one needs to do is ignore the infinitesimal smallness of the possibility that a seventeenth-century German book got into Joseph's hands before 1827 and the even more fantastic remoteness of the possibility that the young monolingual Joseph would be able to read a book in Renaissance German, or that he would be willing to read enough of it to find the brief passage that mentions this name. And what makes Quinn think that non-German-speaking Joseph would have pronounced the German word nevijm as "Nephi"? (As a matter of fact, the German pronunciation of Nevijm, contrary to Quinn, would have been "Nef-ee-eem," not "Neef-eye-eem.") And why did Joseph spell it differently from his German source? And why did he find this particular name somehow

38. All references in this paragraph come from pp. 198–99. Quinn seems unaware that ancient Semitic versions of the name have been discovered. See John Gee, "Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name Nephi," in Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 1–5, and his "A Note on the Name Nephi," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 1/1(1992): 189–91. If one insists on searching for the name Nephi in sources available to Joseph Smith, the King James Old Testament contains the name Nephusim (see Ezra 2:50), which is certainly as good a match as Quinn's magical names.

39. But even granting that, Quinn is apparently ignorant of the fact that "Nevijm" is simply the Renaissance German transliteration for the plural form of the Hebrew term nevi, which means "prophet." Likewise, Quinn attempts to derive Nephi from nephesh, which he feels "meant the disembodied spirit of men, according to the Cabala—the ancient Jewish system of magic" (p. 198). Quinn does not inform his readers that nephesh is simply the standard biblical Hebrew word for "soul, life, person, living being." See Francis Brown et al., The New Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (London: Oxford University Press, 1907), 659a.
significant enough to use in the Book of Mormon, while ignoring all the other names and information in his German source? If one rejects a divine origin for the Book of Mormon, it is far more reasonable to assert that Joseph simply invented the names Alma and Nephli than that he copied them from an unpublished seventeenth-century English magical manuscript or a seventeenth-century German book.

Quinn’s discussion of the magical origins of Book of Mormon names also raises serious questions about his repeated claim that he believes in the historicity of the Book of Mormon.40 If the Book of Mormon is an ancient text, then the names in the book belong to real ancient people. But, if so, why is Quinn looking for sources for Book of Mormon names in magical manuscripts written over a thousand years after the completion of the Book of Mormon? If the real source for the name Nephli is a German magic book, then there was no ancient prophet named Nephli as described in the Book of Mormon. (Or did Lehi’s browsing in seventeenth-century German books provide the inspiration for the name of his son?) At best, Quinn’s position on the Book of Mormon and its relationship to magical texts written long after the purported date of the book is utterly incoherent; it is possibly disingenuous.

Occult Terms in LDS Scripture?

Quinn’s desperate search for references to the occult in LDS scripture is a very informative failure. He discovers six verses in the Book of Mormon, all of which condemn magic (see p. 201): 2 Nephi 12:6 [Isaiah 2:6]; 3 Nephi 21:16 [Micah 5:12]; 3 Nephi 24:5; Alma 1:32; and Mormon 1:19 and 2:10. Recognizing that “taken alone, six

40. In the second edition he notes that: “I have a personal testimony of ... the Book of Mormon as the word of God” (p. xxxvii); “Joseph Smith did not fabricate the Book of Mormon or falsify its claims” (p. 354 n. 103); “this book does not assume nor imply such fabrication” of the Book of Mormon (p. 488 n. 5). This language does not explicitly state that he believes in the historicity of the Book of Mormon and may represent a subtle shift in Quinn’s position. Given this search for magical origins of Book of Mormon names, one might reasonably ask, is there any portion of the Book of Mormon that Quinn feels is ancient and inspired?
verses in a 500-page narrative [of the Book of Mormon] do not show any preoccupation with magic" (p. 201), Quinn proceeds to rewrite the text to make it more in line with his theories. He rightly notes that if you change the original Book of Mormon words hidden to occult and works of darkness to sorcery, the meaning of 2 Nephi 30:17 becomes much more magical (see pp. 201–2). I quite agree. And if we follow Quinn and add the adjective magically to the verb sealed, the modified text sounds much more magical than the original. On the other hand, if you suffix the phrase with glue to sealed, it sounds much less magical. This is "Quinnsppeak" at its worst.

But what if we were to accept Quinn's rewriting of the text of 2 Nephi 30:17 in a more magical guise? The phrase work(s) of darkness in the Book of Mormon is universally a metaphor for secret sin: "work in darkness, yea, work secret murders and abominations" (Alma 37:22); "the work of darkness, and of secret murder" (Helaman 6:29); the devil "stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness" (2 Nephi 9:9; cf. 2 Nephi 26:10, 22); "I [God] must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations" (2 Nephi 10:15); the Lord will expose "their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations" (Alma 37:23); "works of darkness, and lasciviousness, and all manner of iniquities" (Alma 45:12; cf. Alma 37:21); "he [the devil] doth carry on his works of darkness and secret murder" (Helaman 6:30, 28); the Nephites are involved in "secret works of darkness, and their murderings, and their plunderings, and all manner of iniquities" (Helaman 10:3). If Quinn is right that "work of darkness" should be considered a "euphemism" for "sorcery" (p. 201), then sorcery is placed in a category with murder, abomination, wickedness, lasciviousness, and "all manner of iniquities," whose source is the devil and which God will destroy. If Quinn's rereading is correct, the denunciation of magic in LDS scripture becomes even more pronounced. How can this possibly help his thesis?

41. Note also his claim that "the phrase 'works of darkness' was an obvious parallel to occult traditions" (p. 200).
The implications of the fact that Quinn must change the text of the Book of Mormon in order to find a magical meaning should not be lost on us. But even if we grant Quinn the right to undertake this verbal equivocation, it simply demonstrates, once again, a universally negative attitude toward magic, which is the only attitude found in LDS scriptures and other LDS writings. Quinn himself notes that the Book of Mormon’s “few explicit references condemned magic practices” (p. 201) but blithely ignores the implications of this fact—LDS scripture includes no positive references to magic.

Why does Quinn never deal with the implications of revelations to Joseph Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants? He makes a number of feeble attempts to find “textual echoes” (p. 592a) of occult ideas in the Doctrine and Covenants (see pp. 193, 197, 211–12, 226, 235–36), while ignoring the book’s numerous explicit condemnations of the occult. “Wherefore, I, the Lord, have said that the fearful, and the unbelieving, and all liars, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, and the whoremonger, and the sorcerer, shall have their part in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (D&C 63:17). Sorcerers are also included among those condemned to hell (see D&C 76:103). Is there any way sorcery could be more explicitly condemned in revelations from a man who was supposedly intimately involved in precisely such practices? How could Quinn possibly have missed the obvious implications of such statements?

Quinn also does not explain how, given the fact that Joseph carefully retranslated the entire Bible from 1830 to 1833, he could have ignored the numerous condemnations of magic and the occult found in the Bible: Deuteronomy 18:10–12; Leviticus 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27; 1 Samuel 15:23; 28; Isaiah 8:19; 57:3; Ezekiel 22:28; Malachi 3:5; Acts 8; 13:4–13; and Galatians 5:20. Note, as only one example, that King Manasseh is condemned because he “used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 33:6). Indeed, in the Old Testament, practicing the occult was a capital offense: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (Exodus 22:18). Quinn is certainly under some type of burden of proof to explain the relationship of these ideas to Joseph’s alleged magical practices. The very
magic Quinn claims Joseph Smith practiced at the time he was translating the Book of Mormon is universally condemned in that book, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Bible. If Joseph Smith was a practicing magician, as Quinn claims, why does LDS scripture consistently denounce magic?

The Occultation of the Degrees of Glory

Quinn’s argument for an occult origin of the idea of the three “worlds” in Doctrine and Covenants 76 also collapses under scrutiny. He goes to great lengths to find several obscure references to the phrase *degrees of glory* in eighteenth-century writings (pp. 215–19). He then proclaims that “the phrase ‘degrees of glory’ is nowhere in those biblical verses [1 Corinthians 15:40–42 and 2 Corinthians 12:2]” (p. 216) but is found in his occult books. For Quinn, the implication is that Joseph must have borrowed the phrase *degrees of glory* from occult books. Only one small problem is inherent in this theory. Joseph never uses the phrase *degrees of glory* to describe the three worlds in Doctrine and Covenants 76.42 In fact, the phrase *three degrees of glory* was coined by later Latter-day Saints to describe the three levels of resurrection described in that section. Thus Paul speaks of three heavens (see 2 Corinthians 12:2), as does Joseph Smith (see D&C 131:1). Paul metaphorically speaks of the resurrection paralleling the glory of sun, moon, and stars (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–42), as does Joseph Smith, who repeatedly uses precise Pauline phraseology (see D&C 76:70–71, 78, 81, 96–98). Paul does not use the phrase *degrees of glory* nor does Joseph Smith.43 But the occultists do. Therefore, according to Quinn’s warped logic, Joseph must have borrowed the phrase *degrees of glory*—which he never uses—from the occultists.

42. Quinn is apparently aware of this fact since he speaks of the “commonly called” three degrees of glory (p. 215); he does not, however, inform his readers of how this undermines his argument.

43. Joseph does state that “in the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees” (D&C 131:1). However, this does not have reference to the three levels of the resurrection equated with the sun, moon, and stars in Doctrine and Covenants 76 but rather to subdivisions within the highest or celestial glory.
But the problems get even worse: Quinn is misrepresenting his occult sources. One supposed source for the phrase *degrees of glory* is Sibly,\(^{44}\) who apparently speaks of *seven* (not three) "degrees of glory," referring to the seven positions or offices of the archangels (p. 216), *not* to heavens or degrees of human glory in the resurrection. Quinn also turns to Swedenborg as an indirect source,\(^{45}\) whose three heavens are *not* called "degrees of glory" and are themselves clearly derived from the Pauline passages in question. But Quinn perversely insists (see p. 216) that Joseph was not influenced by the original idea from Paul (whom he certainly read), but rather by Swedenborg—whom Quinn agrees Joseph had not read, claiming instead that Joseph had heard of Swedenborg’s ideas secondhand via Sibly (see pp. 217–18). But, as noted above, Sibly speaks of seven archangelic degrees of glory and not of three heavens as degrees of glory in the resurrection. It is difficult to imagine a more incoherent argument. But, amazingly, such arguments do occur in Quinn’s book.

2. The Accessibility of Occult Books

Books on the Frontier in the Early Nineteenth Century

In order to make his case, Quinn attempts to demonstrate the accessibility of occult books in frontier New York in the 1820s. His argument in this regard is rather slippery. It is never really clear if Quinn is claiming that Joseph actually read the books in question or if he merely learned of their contents through a vague and amorphous oral tradition. His case is flawed by serious misrepresentation and methodological misuse of sources. He discusses a number of occult books he believes could have influenced Joseph Smith (see pp. 17–21). Unfortunately, nearly all of them were published in England or Europe in the eighteenth century or earlier, a generation or more before Joseph lived and an ocean away. Quinn provides no primary


\(^{45}\) For several possible sources, see Quinn, *A Magic World View*, 217–18.
evidence that Joseph Smith owned or read any of these books. The real issue is not the existence of the books but rather the accessibility of the books to Joseph Smith. Here, Quinn relies on assertion and speculation. His fallacious argument runs something like this:

The bookstores in Joseph’s neighborhood sold books.
Occult books are books.
Therefore, the bookstores in Joseph’s neighborhood sold occult books.

Analogously I could argue:

The pet stores in my neighborhood sell reptiles.
Dinosaurs are reptiles.
Therefore, the pet stores in my neighborhood sell dinosaurs.

In reality, each book that Quinn claims influenced Joseph Smith needs to be examined individually; I will deal with a few specific examples of Quinn’s failures in this regard later in this review.

In an attempt to bolster his extraordinarily weak argument regarding the availability of occult books, Quinn provides some details about books for sale in Joseph’s neighborhood in the 1820s. First, he provides a list of several dozen “sophisticated” books that were advertised in newspapers and by bookstores in the area surrounding Joseph’s home (see pp. 180–81). Fair enough. Unfortunately for Quinn’s thesis, none of these books dealt with the occult. Quinn notes that Joseph was remembered as debating “moral or political ethics” and that there was a book on that subject in the Manchester library (p. 181). Does this demonstrate that Joseph ever studied a single occult book? The issue is not whether books were sold in the Palmyra area in the 1820s. The issue is not whether some of these books were “sophisticated” works on politics, literature, or philosophy. The issue is not whether Joseph ever read any of these books, or even any books at all. The only issue is whether Joseph read the specific books Quinn claims as occult sources for Joseph’s ideas. It is not what Joseph could have known. The question for historians is, What did Joseph know and when did he know it?
Indeed, although he has chosen to sidestep the issue, Quinn’s failure to demonstrate the existence of the occult books he claims influenced Joseph among the many volumes he has discovered for sale in frontier New York is quite striking. They weren’t there! So it does not really matter how many thousands of books on nonoccult subjects there were nor how many copies of Homer, Shakespeare, Cicero, Plutarch, or Spencer existed on the frontier. What matters is how many copies of obscure occult books existed. Quinn has read the advertising registers. Yet he is able to provide little proof that any of the dozens of occult books he claims influenced Joseph Smith were in those inventories.

Another critique of Quinn’s work is that many of the books he claims influenced Joseph were several hundred years old or even unpublished manuscripts. Could Joseph Smith have had access to such old and rare books? Here is Quinn’s attempt to deal with the inaccessibility issue. Having demonstrated that a translation of a book by Rousseau, published in Albany, New York, in 1797, was still available for sale in 1821, he triumphantly proclaims: “This is sufficient refutation of apologists and polemical claims that young Joseph did not have ‘access’ to ‘rare books’” (sec. p. 182). Likewise, the fact that during the Nauvoo period Joseph owned a copy of Brun’s Travels, a title that might refer to an eighty-five-year-old travel book, is seen by Quinn as “sufficient refutation of apologists and polemical arguments against the likelihood that Joseph Smith owned any ‘rare’ books” in the 1820s (p. 189). It is? Apparently Quinn has been reading different manuals of historical methodology than I have. How does the fact that a single book on political philosophy, published in New York, was still available for sale twenty-four years after publication demonstrate that all or even any of the occult books Quinn mentions were available to Joseph Smith? And how does it demonstrate that books published in Europe centuries before Joseph Smith’s time were likewise available? The simple fact that a single edition of a book on political philosophy—one of the more popular subjects in the early United States—remained for sale after a quarter of a century in no way demonstrates that many or most books published in the United States were still available a quarter century after publication. And it
certainly does not demonstrate that the occult books published in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which Quinn claims influenced Joseph, were available for sale in frontier New York. The situations are in no way analogous. The availability of each magic book must be dealt with on an individual basis.

Quinn’s critics have noted that, in order for Quinn’s thesis to be true, Joseph must have read dozens of obscure rare books and manuscripts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, published only in Europe, written in Latin, French, or German, often published in single small editions. Or, even worse, Quinn also claims that Joseph was somehow influenced by two- or three-hundred-year-old unpublished European manuscripts. The difference between owning an eighty-five-year-old travel book and reading dozens of obscure magical texts published in Europe hundreds of years earlier in languages Joseph could not read is enormous. Quinn has not provided “sufficient refutation” of this argument. Indeed, he hasn’t even demonstrated that he has understood it.

Failure to Contextualize

Quinn fails to properly contextualize his historical data on prices with the economic realities and wages of the early nineteenth century. If the rare magic books and manuscripts Quinn cites as sources for Joseph’s alleged magical knowledge were available in frontier New York in the 1820s (which is far from demonstrated), could Joseph and his family have afforded to purchase them?

Quinn claims that the cost of books described in the advertisements in upstate New York in the 1820s ranged from “44 cents to a dollar each” (p. 182). In fact, his estimate is on the low side. Taking one of his sources at random, we find that the real range of costs is as follows:16

46. *Ontario Repository*, 10 March 1818, 1, cited by Quinn on 490 n. 27. When a two-volume set is sold for a single price, I have divided the price in half and counted it as two separate books. Thus, if a two-volume set costs $2, I have entered it in my calculations as two books costing $1 each. I selected this passage at random as the first long list of prices I found when reviewing the sources Quinn cited.
The total cost of all these books is $81.62, which, divided by the seventy books on the list, provides an average cost of $1.17 per book. Thus, rather than finding a real average price, Quinn attempts to use the range of prices for books ("44 cents to a dollar each"), thereby substantially underestimating the actual costs, since there are far more books costing a dollar or more than there are costing under a dollar.

Of course, even an average cost of $1.17 per book sounds remarkably inexpensive by late twentieth-century standards. But Quinn provides no context by which to evaluate the costs relative to the economy of the early nineteenth century. At that same time, the Smiths purchased a farm for about $8 an acre. In 1826, at age 20, Joseph made $14 a month (plus room and board) working for Josiah Stowell, or about fifty cents a day, which roughly matches the wages

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<td>$2.25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>$3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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47. Quinn writes that people "could buy a regular-bound, new book for as little as 44 cents" (p. 183, emphasis added), implying that he feels they were inexpensive.

48. See Richard L. Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 48, gives the total cost for their one hundred acres as "between $700 and $900," which I have averaged to $8 an acre; see Bushman's entire discussion on the poverty of the Smiths in the 1820s.

49. See ibid., 68.
of a manual laborer at that time.\textsuperscript{50} For Joseph, then, a book costing a dollar is more accurately described as costing two days’ wages. By modern standards, this book would cost about $80 at the current minimum wage and over two hundred dollars by current average daily wages.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, contrary to Quinn’s claims, books in the early nineteenth century were relatively far more expensive than books today. Paperback novels today are available for about an hour of labor at minimum wage; in Joseph’s period they cost a day’s labor.\textsuperscript{52}

However, the occult books Quinn claims influenced Joseph were not only rare, but outrageously expensive. As far as I can determine, Quinn did not provide the prices for any of the rare magic books he claims Joseph read, even though such information was readily available in at least one important case. When originally published in England in 1801, Barrett’s \textit{The Magus}—which Quinn repeatedly cites as a source that influenced Joseph\textsuperscript{53}—cost one pound, seven shillings for the standard edition and one pound, thirteen shillings for the leatherbound edition.\textsuperscript{54} In the early nineteenth century, the official

\begin{flushleft}
50. See ibid., 47, where Bushman gives the daily wages of workers on the Erie Canal at fifty cents a day.
51. I am roughly calculating $5 an hour at eight hours a day. However, the workday in the early nineteenth century was generally longer than today and was often six days a week instead of five. If Joseph worked ten hours a day, he would be making five cents an hour, or less than one one-hundredth the modern minimum wage.
52. Travel time also needs to be calculated according to contemporary conditions. When I noted that Luman Walter lived “almost a two-day journey (25 miles)” from Joseph Smith (“Everything,” 286), I was basing my calculation on walking distance. Quinn rightly noted that the travel time on horseback, under optimal conditions, could be less than a day (see p. 119). This is assuming that Joseph would have been allowed to take a valuable horse away from the farm for a period of at least three days (one day to Sodus, at least one day learning magic with Walter, and one day to return). But, of course, even one day’s travel in modern terms is a trip anywhere in the continental United States by plane, and in a long day’s trip, anywhere in the world. Thus, claiming that Joseph regularly visited Walter in Sodus to study magic is rather like claiming that someone in Utah regularly visits New York to study magic.
53. Quinn cites Barrett as the source for both the sigils on the dagger and the talisman; see below, pp. 297–344, for a full discussion; Quinn’s index entry for “Barrett, Francis,” 589b, lists forty references.
\end{flushleft}
rate of exchange was $4.44 to the pound, while the actual rate of exchange was closer to $4.87.\textsuperscript{55} Thus in contemporary American currency Barrett's book would cost from $6.57 for the inexpensive edition to $8.04 for the expensive edition,\textsuperscript{56} to which would be added shipping costs from Europe.\textsuperscript{57} Thus, far from costing between "44 cents to a dollar" (p. 182) as Quinn implies, one of the most important magic books in Quinn's argument would have cost between six and a half and eight dollars. In terms of Joseph's daily wage of fifty cents, this book would represent two to three weeks' work. At the modern minimum wage, this would equate to between $400 and $600 for a single book. Or, to put it another way, to purchase Barrett's \textit{The Magus} would have cost the Smiths nearly the value of one month's mortgage on their farm and house.\textsuperscript{58} And in 1825 they lost their farm because they couldn't pay the \textit{annual} $100 mortgage.\textsuperscript{59}

The problem of Quinn's distortion of early nineteenth-century economic reality is further exacerbated because he ignores the extreme poverty of the Smith family during the 1820s. When Lucy arrived in Palmyra, she had nine cents.\textsuperscript{60} Are we to seriously believe that the Smiths were spending their money to buy magic books at the risk of losing their farm? There is absolutely no evidence for this type of extravagant behavior. Indeed, there is no clear evidence that


\textsuperscript{56} These calculations are based on the average actual rate of exchange of $4.87 given by Davis and Hughes. The specific rate of exchange for any given year fluctuated up and down a few percentage points. The pound sterling contained twenty shillings. Thus, one pound, seven shillings = 1.35 pounds, while one pound, thirteen shillings = 1.65 pounds.

\textsuperscript{57} An Ontario bookstore ad noted that "LIBRARIES and SCHOOLS, or individuals who purchase liberally, will be allowed a discount (in general from the New-York prices) which must be acknowledged exceedingly favorable when the expense of transporting Books is duly considered" (\textit{Ontario Repository}, 24 October 1815, 3). The cost of transporting Barrett's book from England would have been added to the costs from New York to Ontario County.

\textsuperscript{58} Bushman, \textit{Joseph Smith}, 48, gives the annual mortgage on their one-hundred-acre farm as $100, which comes to $8.33 a month.

\textsuperscript{59} See ibid., 66-68.

\textsuperscript{60} See ibid., 42.
Joseph had access to a Bible when translating the Book of Mormon,\(^{61}\) let alone Barrett's *The Magus.*

**Of Books and Bookstores**

Quinn engages in a series of egregious misrepresentations when attempting to inflate the numbers and topics of books in upstate New York. First, he claims that "Even though a single advertisement by the Canandaigua Bookstore from 1815 to 1830 might include hundreds of books, this was only a small fraction of an inventory which was competing with other bookstores, one of which claimed up to 14,000 books in 1815" (p. 182).\(^{62}\) Quinn never addresses whether the advertisements are discussing the number of titles or multiple copies of single titles. He simply assumes that the number of titles available is the same as the number of different books available. The "12 to 14,000" books claimed by the Bloomfield store in fact represent the number of copies, not different titles. This is clear from the advertisement Quinn quotes, which specifically mentions "on hand, fifteen sets [sic] Scott's FAMILY BIBLE, coarse and fine copies, in 6 volumes," among the thousands of books in stock.\(^{63}\) That Quinn wants his readers to assume that the store had 14,000 different titles rather than perhaps hundreds of copies of the same title to be used as school textbooks\(^ {64}\) is made clear when Quinn claims "Joseph Smith's hometown library certainly had less than 1 percent of the total number of books available to him through Palmyra's two libraries and two bookstores and through Canandaigua's three libraries and two immense bookstores" (p. 185). J. B. Grandin in Palmyra could have boasted over five thousand books in stock in 1830 when he

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\(^{62}\) Quinn's source actually claims the store had "12 to 14,000" books (p. 179), which for Quinn consistently becomes 14,000 (see pp. 180, 182). Perhaps Quinn is unaware of a tendency among some advertisers to exaggerate.

\(^{63}\) *Ontario Repository*, 24 October 1815, 3. At six volumes a set, this title alone would thus represent ninety books.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., mentions specifically the desire to sell to "schools."
printed the Book of Mormon. Although Quinn is right that several public libraries were within a day's journey of Joseph's home, he does not demonstrate that any of these libraries contained any of the magic books he claims influenced Joseph. Indeed, it wouldn't matter if there were hundreds of thousands of books available to Joseph Smith if the collections did not include Quinn's magic books.

But Quinn's analysis is further flawed. He does not tell us how many different bookstores there were in frontier New York within, say, a two-day radius of Joseph's home. Nor does he describe the inventory of each, nor the average size of the inventory. Rather, he takes the largest inventory he could find (14,000) and consistently presents it as the norm rather than the exception (see pp. 179-81). And note, the Ontario bookstore with the claimed 14,000 volumes went out of business in 1818, before it could have been patronized by Joseph Smith at thirteen years of age (see p. 180). Accordingly, Quinn's best example, the one he consistently uses to demonstrate the availability of books to Joseph is, in fact, irrelevant.

Book-to-Person Ratio

To further bolster his weak case, Quinn attempts to demonstrate an extremely high book-to-person ratio in upstate New York. Thus he claims that a Bloomfield bookstore in 1820 carried "more than three books for every man, woman, and child of Bloomfield" (pp. 179-80). This claim presents several problems. First, as noted before, it tells us nothing of the number of occult books available. Second, the bookstores Quinn mentions were regional bookstores, serving counties, not cities. These frontier bookstores served regional clientele, and, according to the 1820 census, Bloomfield's Ontario County had 88,267 people. Quinn mentions only five bookstores in Ontario County during this period. Since their stock of books fluctuated

65. These records are accessible through fisher.lib.Virginia.EDU/census/.
66. Two in Palmyra (see p. 179), the Ontario bookstore in Bloomfield (see p. 179), which went out of business in 1818 (see p. 180), one in Canandaigua (see p. 180), one in Lyons (see p. 182), and one in Geneva (see p. 183), leaving five bookstores mentioned by Quinn in Ontario County in 1820.
from year to year, it is impossible to obtain an accurate count, but assuming the average stock of books ranged from five thousand to ten thousand books per store (which is probably high), this would give twenty-five to fifty thousand books for sale in a county with a population of eighty-eight thousand people. Thus the actual book-to-person ratio probably ranged from 1-to-4 to 1-to-2, rather than Quinn’s 3-to-1. His claim is inflated six to twelve times over reality.

Continuing his exaggeration, Quinn then makes this extraordinary statement: “The British Museum’s library has never had a 3-to-1 ratio of books to London’s population, yet that was the book-resident ratio of a bookstore in rural New York state in 1815” (p. 180). Here, Quinn is quite simply wrong. In 1976, when the population of London proper was 2,700,000, the British Museum Library contained approximately eight million volumes, with a ratio of 2.96-to-1.68 But, is Quinn seriously claiming that frontier New York had a greater book-to-person ratio than contemporary London? Or that education, book reading, and scholarship were higher in Palmyra than London? Can anyone take this assertion seriously?

By way of comparison, here are some statistics for book availability in contemporary Utah County: Borders, 150,000; Barnes and Noble, 120,000; BYU Bookstore, 100,000; B Dalton, 60,000; Deseret Book, 50,000; Media Play, 50,000; Pioneer, 400,000 (used); and Timp Bookstore, 30,000 for a total of 960,000.69 With about 320,000 people in Utah County,70 the ratio of books to people is about 3-to-1, which is six to twelve times the actual ratio of books to people in Ontario.

67. The highest figure Quinn gives is “12 to 14,000” books (p. 179) in the Ontario Bookstore in 1815 (p. 179), before the Smiths arrived in the area; the bookstore closed in 1818. Quinn never gives the low stock figures for bookstores in the region.


69. These numbers represent rough figures obtained by personal conversations with the bookstore managers. They do not represent precise numbers. I did not contact all the bookstores in Utah County, so the total figures are undoubtedly low.

70. Rough population data from a conversation with the Utah County Registrar’s Office. Current numbers are probably higher. The library of Brigham Young University
County in 1820. Thus, both in the number of books per capita and in terms of the relative cost of books, Quinn has distorted his evidence.

Peddlers of Magical Books?

Quinn’s final argument for the availability of books is that book peddlers further supplemented the supposedly numerous books on the frontier. As his prime example, he notes that one book peddler—the Reverend Mason Locke Weems—sold $24,000 worth of books in North Carolina in 1809–10. Then, based on his low estimates of book costs given in a New York newspaper in 1822, Quinn declares “it is reasonable to estimate that this one peddler was selling about 25,000 books to farmers each year” (p. 21). Quinn then notes that “by the early 1800’s there were thousands of peddlers” (p. 21), giving the impression that each of these thousands of peddlers was selling thousands of books each year.

Once again, even in such a relatively straightforward matter, Quinn seriously misrepresents his sources. First, he does not inform us of the semantic shift from book peddlers to peddlers of all types. It is true that there were thousands of peddlers in the United States during the early nineteenth century, but book peddlers were only a small portion of this number, which—according to Dolan’s book (cited by Quinn as his source)—included every conceivable product and service.71

Second, Quinn’s source for the claim that “one peddler was selling about 25,000 books to farmers each year” (p. 21) is an article by James Purcell. Here is what Purcell actually wrote: “During the years 1809 and 1810 he [Weems] sold $24,000 worth of books for him [publisher Mathew Carey] in the South.”72 Note how the two years’ worth of sales clearly described in Purcell’s article is transformed by

contains approximately four million volumes, providing a book-to-person ratio of over 10-to-1 to the population of Utah County, and over 100-to-1 to the faculty and student population.


Quinn into a single year’s sales: “selling about 25,000 books to farmers each year.” Quinn thus magically doubles the actual book sales.

Third, Quinn claims that $24,000 worth of sales should equate to 25,000 books, the average cost being less than a dollar per book. This is, of course, mere assertion on Quinn’s part. In reality, some of the books Weems sold cost $3.00 each. Others were short pamphlets selling for as little as twenty-five cents. However, Weems preferred to sell the expensive gilt volumes, writing to his publisher asking for “Books—Gilt and all Gilt.” Given Weems’s natural preference for selling expensive books, Quinn’s estimate on the total number of books sold is undoubtedly high. There is no way to know for certain, but taking the average price of $1.17 per book estimated above, the actual number of books sold for $24,000 would be 20,512 or about 10,000 books per year—40 percent of Quinn’s claimed 25,000.

Quinn then asserts that Weems was selling these volumes “door-to-door in the rural areas of the South” to individual “farmers” (p. 21). Nothing could be further from the truth. Does Quinn really think that a single peddler, working door-to-door with nineteenth-century transportation, could carry and deliver 25,000 books to backwoods farmers in a single year? This would require selling nearly 2,100 books a month, or carrying and selling almost seventy books a day by a single salesman going door-to-door in rural farm country. In reality, in modern terminology Weems was a regional sales representative for Philadelphia bookseller Mathew Carey and others. His itinerary largely focused on selling to local booksellers. He optimistically hoped eventually to “establish for the Philadelphia bookseller [Carey] ‘from 2[00] to 300 illuminating, moralizing book stores’” in North Carolina. Furthermore, rather than selling “door-to-door in rural areas of the South” as Quinn claims, Weems worked largely in

73. See ibid., 9.
74. See ibid., 21.
75. Ibid., 10.
76. See ibid., 10, 15.
77. Ibid., 15.
the major cities of North Carolina. His methods included selling subscriptions to the multivolume *Life of George Washington* and working through local booksellers, preachers, schoolmasters, courthouses, and other agents, to whom he sold hundreds of copies of single titles at a time. As Purcell puts it: “North Carolina absorbed copy after copy, under one title or another, of Weems’ perennial *Life of George Washington*. Joseph Gales received 150 copies for his bookstore in 1808. The next year five hundred more copies were sent to Raleigh and one hundred to Fayetteville.” He also sold textbooks to local schools. As a minister, Weems is furthermore said to have “preached in every pulpit to which he could gain access, and where he could recommend his books.”

Finally, the subject matter of the books sold by Weems should be of interest for this discussion. As a minister, Weems preferred to sell books on religion, politics, and morality; he “believed strongly in the moralizing influence of books.” Titles included the Bible, *Life of George Washington*, *God’s Revenge against Murder*, *God’s Revenge against Adultery*, *God’s Revenge against Gambling*, and *The Drunkard’s Looking-Glass*. No books even remotely related to the occult are mentioned in Purcell’s article nor is a minister likely to have promoted that type of book. Though Weems sold thousands of books annually on his circuit, these were hundreds of copies of single titles sold to booksellers, schools, and churches. Furthermore, none of them were the magical books Quinn claims influenced Joseph Smith. So, even if Quinn could demonstrate that there were millions of nonoccult books sold in early nineteenth-century America, it would not support his thesis of the widespread availability of occult books.

Quinn actually claims that occult books were sold by peddlers.

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78. See ibid.; see also list on p. 13 and many other cities mentioned in the article.
79. See ibid., 8–10.
80. See ibid., 15, 17.
81. Ibid., 19; note that this second sale was in precisely the 1809–10 period during which he sold $24,000 worth of books, as mentioned above.
82. See ibid., 17.
83. Ibid., 23.
84. Ibid., 15, quotation on 19.
85. See ibid., 18–21.
He informs us that "some [book] peddlers also stocked clandestine works" and that therefore, "if local stores would not supply occult publications to American farmers, book peddlers were there to fill the need" (p. 21).86 One might reasonably ask, if occult books were as common, widespread, and accepted as Quinn claims, why would they be considered "clandestine"? Is there any indication of what Gilmore (the author Quinn quotes) meant by the term clandestine? Indeed there is. He meant illegal pornography, as is made quite clear in his article.87 Nowhere in Gilmore’s article is there a single mention of a peddler selling occult books.

It has taken hours of work to “deconstruct” just one of Quinn’s paragraphs to demonstrate that his sources do not say what he claims. Here is a chart detailing Quinn’s distortions in a single short paragraph:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quinn</th>
<th>Sources Cited by Quinn</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thousands of book peddlers</td>
<td>Thousands of peddlers of all types; book peddlers were only a small fraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weems sold 25,000 books in one year</td>
<td>Weems sold $24,000 worth of books in two years, probably closer to 10,000 books a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price of books averaged less than $1, based on New York prices</td>
<td>Ignored the fact that Weems’ bestseller was Life of George Washington at $3; real average price of books from Quinn’s New York sources was $1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weems sold door-to-door to rural farmers</td>
<td>Weems sold to bookstores, schools, and churches in large cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implied the sale of occult titles</td>
<td>No occult titles mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clandestine books = occult</td>
<td>Clandestine books = pornography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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87. See ibid., 88.
None of these issues is esoteric, complicated, or ambiguous. Quinn cannot be trusted to accurately understand and cite his sources.

For the sake of argument, I will grant that it is possible that Joseph Smith could have read any book published in English. This has never been denied nor has it ever been the issue. Quinn has demonstrated that books were available in the frontier, but no one has ever argued against that. The real issue is not the general availability of books. Rather it is: (1) Were the occult books Quinn specifically mentions available for sale? and (2) What evidence is there that these occult books were owned or actually read by Joseph Smith?

An Early Nineteenth-Century American Occult Revival?

Throughout his book Quinn asserts that there was an “occult revival occurring in Europe and the United States from the 1780s to 1820s” (p. 187; cf. 20, 84, 185, 187, 287, 493 n. 69). If this is true, he is the first person to have discovered it. Quinn’s imaginary revival was supposedly based on the publication of several books, including Barrett’s 1801 *The Magus* (see p. 20). Quinn maintains, probably correctly, that the Jupiter talisman allegedly owned by Joseph Smith was designed from instructions found in Barrett. Was Barrett’s book the foundation for an “occult revival,” as Quinn claims? How accessible was it in America?

Quinn repeatedly claims, citing Francis King, that Barrett’s *The Magus* “played an important part in the English revival of magic” (pp. 20, 84). But what “revival of magic” is King discussing? The revival of the late, not the early, nineteenth century. This is clear from the fact that the only specific example of Barrett’s influence on a magic revival that King discusses is Frederick Hockley, who reprinted Barrett’s book in 1870. But even if Quinn were correct that Barrett’s book started an “English revival of magic” in the early nineteenth

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88. The dates are given in Quinn’s index under “Magic: revival (1780s-1820s),” 616a.
89. See below, pp. 326–44, for a full discussion of the talisman.
century, how would this help him in his claims of an American revival of magic at the same time?

In contrast to Quinn's imaginary "occult revival," Godwin—one of the sources Quinn cites to support his claims—describes a "silence of the occult sciences during the antirevolutionary fervor after 1793. Barrett's *Magus* of 1801 stands in splendid isolation: nothing else of the kind was printed until the end of the Napoleonic Wars came in sight [in 1815]." Note that Timothy Smith, in his introduction to the 1967 reprint of Barrett, agrees that "Barrett's *Magus* is unique in being the only attempt—at a time when interest was ripe—to revive the mysteries of magic." Thus the real evidence, from the sources Quinn cites to support his position, describes the publication of only one book in the middle forty years of Quinn's supposed occult revival—and that in England, not America.

For Quinn, the impact of Barrett on early nineteenth-century America is a crucial part of his imagined occult revival. In his second edition, he claims that Barrett's *Magus* "created an immediate sensation. . . . Barrett's book and teachings were also widely available to Smith's generation [in America]" (p. 84). Such claims are in distinct contrast to Quinn's position in his first edition, where he rightly noted that "how extensively Barrett's *Magus* circulated in the United States during the early nineteenth century is unknown." Did Quinn discover new evidence of the influence of Barrett in America between the writing of his first and second editions? No. Rather, he simply changed his rhetoric. Both editions cite precisely the same evidence regarding Barrett's influence on early nineteenth-century America. In 1852 an American named W. D. Bellhouse wrote an unpublished manuscript apparently based in part on Barrett (see pp. 84, 424 n. 146). The fact that one American, writing after the death of Joseph Smith, may have owned a copy of Barrett is hardly evidence of its being

94. In fact, Quinn provides no analysis to support his claim, simply asserting that a mere two pages of Bellhouse's manuscript were based on Barrett (see p. 424 n. 146)! And
“widely available to Smith’s generation” as Quinn claims (p. 84). Quinn provides no other evidence for the supposed influence of Barrett on the alleged early nineteenth-century American “occult revival.” Quite the opposite. According to Godwin (who is cited by Quinn as a source for his claims), Barrett’s book “was a success, not in bringing Barrett fame and fortune, but in carrying a numinous reputation for a century or more,” even though it “became a bibliophilic rarity.”95 Quinn further claims that “Antoine Faivre has also emphasized Barrett’s book in the general European revival of magic during the first decades of the 1800s” (p. 20; cf. 187). He has? In reality, rather than emphasizing it, Faivre mentions Barrett’s book in one sentence, in passing: “a compilation destined to be a great success heralds the occult literature to come: The Magus (1801) by Francis Barrett.”96 Faivre is not saying Barrett had influence on his contemporaries, but rather that it was “destined to be a great success” in the occult revival of the mid- and late-nineteenth century, which, in Barrett’s day, was yet “to come.”

Quinn then takes me to task for supposedly intentionally ignoring this nonexistent occult revival (see pp. 185–87), claiming my position—that occult thought was more influential before and after Joseph’s lifetime—is a “polemical sleight-of-hand.” My real argument is as follows:

[1] “before the Enlightenment and after the occult revival of the late nineteenth century, esoteric lore was more accessible than during the period between the Enlightenment and the beginnings of the occult revival [in the late 1840s].”

[2] “the frontier regions of the New World (as opposed to Europe) were the least likely to have books or materials on esoteric subjects.”97

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95. Godwin, Theosophical Enlightenment, 119.
I am only arguing that the early nineteenth century represents a period of less influence of esoteric thought on society as a whole than before or after that period. I am also arguing that the New World, and especially the frontier of the New World, was less influenced by such thought than was Europe. It is a question of relative influence. It is thus faulty methodology to quote—as Quinn does—from books before or after Joseph’s lifetime as indicative of ideas and practices supposedly prevalent during his lifetime.

Quinn claims that I have “deceptively” deleted “contrary evidence” on this issue, noting the publication of esoteric books in the early nineteenth century (see p. 186). But I never claimed that there was absolutely no esoteric thought in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Quite to the contrary, I explicitly said exactly the opposite: “The profile of the typical eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century European hermeticist was that of a wealthy, highly educated, Latin-reading dilettante who was disaffected from Christianity and idled away his time in small cliques of like-minded hedonists.”

Why would I be mentioning a typical profile of an early nineteenth-century esotericist if I was trying to prove that there were absolutely no esotericists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? Thus, the fact that Quinn provides a dozen titles from that period mentioning Hermes or hermeticism in the title (see pp. 185–86) is hardly a demonstration that my overall position is incorrect. But Quinn’s entire argument here ignores the crucial fact, which is that the eighteenth-century hermetic books he mentioned are all in German and French. Thus Quinn’s notice that “Joseph Sr. was ten years old at this publication of the [German] Hermetica” is astonishingly irrelevant. Is he claiming Joseph Sr. read and was influenced by this German book? Rather, Quinn’s little exercise confirms my position, since none of the works he mentions in this section were in English.

Quinn calls my position “a gross exaggeration” (p. 186). Does he really wish to claim that esoteric thought was more (or even equally) influential during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries?
than it was before or after those periods? Can he provide any scholar who makes such a claim? None of the sources he cites does so.99 He attempts to prove his claims by enlisting Antoine Faivre and David Stevenson to his cause. But Faivre is only claiming that esoteric thought survived the Enlightenment100—an idea I have never denied; how else could there have been an occult revival in the late nineteenth century? Indeed, Faivre notes (in the sentence immediately following the one Quinn quotes) that "today esoterics are more present than ever before,"101 which is half my point: Esotericism was more important after Joseph's death than during Joseph's life.

In his attempts to establish an occult revival in the early nineteenth century, Quinn maintains that "historian David Stevenson has also observed that by the 1700s Hermeticism was part of 'the general intellectual climate' throughout Europe" (p. 187).102 He does? One of the first things I teach beginning history undergraduates is the importance of careful chronology, a lesson from which Quinn could apparently benefit. Contra Quinn's assertion that Stevenson is discussing the 1700s, he is actually "tracing the influence of Hermeticism in Scotland, to provide a local context for the work of William Schaw"—who died in 1602. All the people and sources Stevenson discusses date before the early seventeenth century. Thus, when Stevenson states that "such [Hermetic] influences were present in the general intellectual climate there [in Scotland] as in the rest of Europe,"103 he is talking about Europe in the early seventeenth, not the late eighteenth century, as Quinn claims. And he is certainly not describing the state of affairs in early nineteenth-century America. Even the title of Stevenson's book should have made it clear to Quinn that Stevenson was not discussing the eighteenth century, since his study ends in 1710. So apparently my original position stands: Godwin and Faivre

99. Quinn himself notes that "from the 1720s to the 1790s the publication of astrological works was negligible" (p. 23), precisely confirming at least part of my position.
100. See Faivre, Access to Western Esotericism, 74.
101. Ibid., 9.
103. Ibid.
“mention no hermeticists in North America before the beginnings of the Spiritualist movements in 1848.” While proclaiming an American occult revival which I “deceptively” ignored, Quinn cannot cite a single American author or text representative of this supposed revival.

Quinn concludes: “Hermetic texts and ideas were part of the occult revival occurring in Europe and the United States from the 1780s to 1820s, as were astrology, alchemy, the Cabala, and ritual magic. Joseph Smith lived in the midst of this occult resurgence” (p. 187). To support this remarkable claim, Quinn cites only Antoine Faivre, whom he seriously misrepresents. Quinn is asserting that there was an “occult revival” in “the United States from the 1780s to 1820s” (p. 187), a period covered from pages 72 to 87 of Faivre’s Access to Western Esotericism. How many American esotericists does Faivre mention in these pages? None. He does mention two Englishmen: Francis Barrett and William Blake. All the rest of the dozens of authors and books he mentions are European and in continental languages. It is not until 1847 that an American is mentioned: “In 1848[, ] a year after Andrew Jackson Davis’s The Principles of Revelation (a great classic of mesmerist literature in the United States), spiritualism arose.” So where is the evidence for Quinn’s supposed American “occult revival” during the early nineteenth century? He is simply inventing it. If there was an “occult revival occurring in . . . the United States from the 1780s to 1820s,” perhaps Quinn would be so kind as to provide references to the five most important American occultists writing during this period and their five most important books.


105. For an “occult revival” to have occurred in the United States from 1780 to 1820, a decline in esoteric thought must necessarily have taken place before that period. Thus Quinn is agreeing with my overall position but dating the occult revival to 1780 rather than to 1848, as I maintain.

106. See Faivre, Access to Western Esotericism, 75, 80.

107. Faivre, ibid., 78, notes in passing that “Anglo-Saxon Freemasonry is less esoteric in character” than European versions and mentions the importation of the “Illuminated Theosophers” to the United States but gives no date for this (ibid., 79).

108. Ibid., 87.
In fact, he tacitly admits that my position may be correct:

Even if Hamblin's statement had been true for England, Europe, and America generally, his applying it to individuals is an example of the environmental fallacy. An idea's lack of influence on a national population is no proof that it lacked influence on an *individual* within that population. (p. 186)

I quite agree with Quinn on this last point and will soon engage the specific evidence relating to Joseph Smith. On the other hand, the fact that esoterica had less overall importance during Joseph's lifetime than in periods before and after is hardly evidence in favor of esoteric influence on Joseph. Furthermore, the corollary to this idea also needs to be emphasized. "An idea's influence on a national population is no proof that it influenced an *individual* within that population." The mere existence of esoteric ideas and books does not demonstrate that Joseph was influenced by them. Finally, as I have noted before, it must be emphasized that it is methodological suicide to use ideas from a century or more before Joseph—or worse, from after his death—to attempt to demonstrate ideas held during Joseph's lifetime. Yet this is precisely what Quinn repeatedly does, as will be described below.

**Joseph Smith's Occult Library?**

Quinn goes to great lengths attempting to demonstrate the possibility that Joseph owned "hundreds of volumes" in Nauvoo (pp. 187–92). Well, it is indeed possible. But is there any evidence for it? No. Quinn can come up with a list of a few dozen books owned by the prophet, none of them magical texts. A fine example of Quinn's methods in this regard appears on page 188. We know that Joseph donated thirty-four books to the Nauvoo library. A section of the

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109. In a rather bizarre fashion, Quinn makes the same argument, with almost exactly the same phrase: "Even if Hamblin's statement had been true for England, Europe, and America generally, applying it to individuals is an example of the environmental (or ecological) fallacy. Lack of influence of cabalistic ideas in a national population is not proof that they lacked influence on an individual within that population" (p. 567 n. 463).
Nauvoo newspaper Joseph edited mentions 8 books. Only one of those 8 books is also on the list of 34 donated books. Quinn then “appl[ies] that proportion to [Joseph’s] donation-list” (p. 188), meaning we should multiply 34 by 8, giving 272 books supposedly owned by Joseph. Quinn does not mention this specific number, preferring instead to generalize that “the Mormon prophet’s private library contained hundreds of volumes.” Really? Why do we think Joseph owned the eight books mentioned in the newspaper? They could have been owned by other contributors to the paper or loaned to Joseph Smith from friends or a library. Second, why don’t we presume that Joseph kept the books he read and quoted from and donated the books he was not very interested in? If—contra Quinn’s assertion—Joseph behaved in this rational manner, Quinn’s proportion is pure fantasy. In reality we do not know how many books Joseph owned in Nauvoo.

But we do know there is no evidence that Joseph owned any of the occult books Quinn claims he read. When critics of Quinn point this out, Quinn’s response is simply that “according to this argument, the Mormon prophet read nothing” that was not explicitly mentioned (p. 188). Hardly. In reality, it doesn’t really matter how many books Joseph owned or read in Nauvoo. He could well have been a voracious reader. The real issue here is simply that no direct evidence shows that Joseph Smith owned or read any of the occult books Quinn claims influenced him. And furthermore, what really matters for Quinn’s thesis is not how many nonoccult books Joseph might have owned or read in his educated and prosperous period in Nauvoo in the 1840s, but how many occult books Joseph owned in his uneducated and poverty-stricken period of the 1820s.

Joseph and Books in the 1820s

We really have only one piece of direct evidence concerning Joseph’s early reading habits, and that information directly contradicts Quinn’s thesis. His mother Lucy states that Joseph was “a boy eighteen years of age [in 1823] who had never read the Bible through by course in his life. For Joseph was less inclined to the study of
books than any child we had." But Quinn insists that Joseph’s mother was somehow misinformed. Somehow, in her impoverished condition, she simply failed to notice that Joseph was buying dozens of rare and expensive magic books from the local bookstores and “clandestine” book peddlers. What evidence does Quinn provide of Joseph’s voracious reading habits in the 1820s? Here it is: When Joseph initially records his first vision nine years later in 1832, he uses frequent biblical allusions and language (see p. 192).

The implications of Quinn’s logic are a bit obscure. He appears to be arguing as follows: In 1832 Joseph wrote a text with extensive biblical allusions. He therefore must have read the Bible by that time. Fair enough. However, Lucy Mack Smith insists that, nine years earlier, in 1823, Joseph had not read extensively in the Bible. Now, since there is strong evidence that Joseph had read the Bible extensively by 1832, Lucy must be wrong about Joseph not reading the Bible much in 1823. And, if she is wrong about that, she must be wrong about Joseph’s reading habits in general. Therefore, Joseph must have read many books in the early 1820s. And therefore Joseph must have read many magic books.

Unfortunately, Quinn’s absurd argument ignores a few important bits of data. First, the Bible is the one book for which we have direct evidence that Joseph did, in fact, read it in his youth. Lucy herself says Joseph had read parts of the Bible by 1823. Thus, rather than contradicting Lucy as Quinn claims, the fact that his language is filled with biblical allusions confirms Lucy’s account that he had read parts of the Bible. It does nothing, however, to demonstrate that he was a voracious reader of occult books. Second, Quinn apparently expects us to assume that Joseph’s language patterns and reading habits of 1832 were the same as those of 1823. Does Joseph’s involvement with his new translation of the Bible, for example, undertaken


111. See, for example, JS—H 1:11 = *History of the Church*, 1:4.
from 1830 to 1833, have no impact on his knowledge of the Bible? The fact that Joseph was an avid reader of the Bible with a profound knowledge of the text in 1832 in no way contradicts Lucy’s claim that he was not inclined to study books a decade earlier at age eighteen in 1823, just as the fact that Joseph owned dozens of nonoccult books in the 1840s (see p. 189) does not demonstrate that he was an active reader of occult books in his early years. We can ask indirectly if young Joseph was such an active reader as Quinn claims, why did he have such trouble writing? As his wife Emma put it, “Joseph Smith . . . could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon.”

Almanacs and the Occult

Quinn argues that, in the early nineteenth century, “almanacs gave the most widespread access to occult knowledge” (p. 22). Thus, if occult knowledge was accessible to ordinary early nineteenth-century Americans, a careful study of almanacs should be the easiest way to demonstrate this fact. And Quinn attempts to do so (see pp. 22–24). His discussion of the alleged occult content of early nineteenth-century almanacs provides an excellent case study of his methods of obfuscation.

Quinn’s argument runs as follows: Most seventeenth- and some early eighteenth-century almanacs were overtly astrological. There were also almanacs in the early nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century almanacs used astrological signs as shorthand symbols for the planets and zodiacs. Therefore, nineteenth-century almanacs too were overtly astrological. (Note how throughout his discussion Quinn consistently calls these books not simply “almanacs” but “astrological almanacs”—a classic example of substituting adjectives for evidence.) Astrology is a branch of “occult knowledge.” Therefore, almanacs were sources of “occult knowledge.”

113. See, for example, Joseph’s obvious difficulty in writing in his earliest holograph, The Papers of Joseph Smith, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1:3–10.
But were early nineteenth-century almanacs astrological or occult? Whereas seventeenth-century almanacs did have extensive discussions of astrology and other occult ideas, nineteenth-century almanacs, by contrast, simply used the old astrological signs for planets and the zodiac but were devoid of any substantive astrological or occult content.

Here, for example, is a summary of the contents of Longworth's American Almanac of 1817, which Quinn cites as one of his "astrological almanacs" (pp. 23, 377 n. 211):

1. Advertisements, 9 pages
2. Affidavits for patent medicine, 24 pages
3. Tide tables, 2 pages
4. Eclipses and Catholic feast days, 1 page
5. Tables of the rising of the sun, moon, and planets, 12 pages
6. Custom duty laws, 44 pages
7. Postage rates, 2 pages
8. Mail offices, 3 pages
9. Banks of New York, 3 pages
10. Insurance information, 7 pages

Here is another example from the 1825 Christian Almanack:

1. Eclipses, chronological cycles, and table of the solar system, 1 page
2. Preface, 1 page
3. Tide table, 1 page
4. Ephemeris for the planets, 1 page
5. Months, astronomical data, farmer's calendar, and remarkable days, 24 pages
6. Missionary activity and religious periodicals, 11 pages
7. Letters to the almanac, 2 pages
8. Anniversaries and charitable societies, 1 page
9. The courts, 3 pages
10. Tables of interest, postage rates, and distances, 2 pages.  

As a final example, we can look at the contents of *The Methodist Almanac*: 117

1. Key to the frontispiece, 2 pages
2. Message to the public, 1 page
3. Eclipses and names and characters of the zodiac, the aspects, and the planets, 1 page
4. Observable days, farmer’s calendar, and astronomical data for each month, 24 pages
5. Missionary work throughout the world, 8 pages
6. New England Conference, 2 pages
7. Dialogue between negative and positive, 2 pages
8. Class meetings, 2 pages
9. Contented John, 2 pages
10. List of courts, 3 pages
11. List of stages, and mail and road distances, 2 pages

Each of these is among the almanacs Quinn claims “gave the most widespread access to occult knowledge” to early nineteenth-century Americans. But if we actually examine their contents, there is absolutely no reason why anyone would think that this type of book could be a source of “occult knowledge” for Joseph Smith.

In arguing that almanacs were detailed sources of occult knowledge, Quinn cites Marion Stowell as saying:

> Astrology intrigued the common man. The almanac-maker to survive in the new world of free competition could not ignore it [and] the emphasis inevitably switched to giving the readers what they wanted. (p. 22) 118

Here is Professor Stowell’s actual quotation, with Quinn’s excerpt in boldface:

> The eighteenth-century almanac-makers were particularly competitive. **Astrology intrigued the common man.** The al-

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117. See *The Methodist Almanac for the Year 1827*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Boston: Marvin, 1826).
manac-maker, to survive in the new world of free competition, could not ignore it: he could 1) embrace astrology wholeheartedly, 2) reject it, 3) reconcile it with astronomical science and religion, 4) ridicule it, or 5) double-talk so that the reader could believe whatever he wanted.\textsuperscript{119}

Now, notice what Quinn has done here. First, Stowell is clearly discussing colonial almanacs of the eighteenth century. In the subsequent pages nearly every citation is from an almanac before the Revolutionary War— that is what the term colonial means in Stowell’s title. Quinn simply assumes that the astrological content of colonial almanacs will be the same as those written during Joseph’s day, half a century or more later. Second, Quinn seriously misquotes Stowell. He completely drops, without inserting ellipses, the middle of the sentence where Stowell observes that many almanac makers rejected or ridiculed astrology. The full quotation actually undermines Quinn’s claims. Then, in the final sentence, Quinn changes Stowell’s original phrase. Stowell wrote that one response of five possible responses was for almanac makers to “double-talk [on astrology] so that the reader could believe whatever he wanted.” Quinn rewrites this as “the emphasis inevitably switched to giving the readers what they wanted.” Quinn’s edited quotation thus implies that Stowell is claiming that all almanac makers of the early nineteenth century emphasized astrology because that is what their readers wanted. Stowell actually says that some almanac makers of the early eighteenth century sometimes obfuscated about their real position on astrology so as to alienate neither believers nor unbelievers in astrology. It is difficult to understand how such a misrepresentation could have been inadvertent.

Aside from occasional exceptions, the only thing in most nineteenth-century almanacs that is even remotely astrological is the use of old astrological symbols as shorthand for the zodiac and planets. But none of this is in an astrological context. Rather, it is simply an astronomical list of the times of rising and setting of planets in the

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
observable heavens. The old zodiac and constellations are used merely to map out the heavens for observational purposes. They are still often so used today by modern sky charts and books on astronomical observation. Does the fact that modern astronomy classes still use Greek constellations to map the visible heavens demonstrate that all astronomy professors are secret worshipers of the old Greek gods? Zodiac and planetary symbols are shorthand symbols used as place markers designating sections of the sky. That is all. The almanacs Quinn cites have little overt astrology and certainly nothing about the occult.

Quinn’s claim of the continued influence of astrology on Latter-day Saints because Utah almanacs used the old astrological signs (see pp. 279–87 and figs. 16–24) is preposterous for precisely the same reasons, especially so in light of the repeated attacks on astrology found in Mormon almanacs. In 1846, Orson Pratt noted that the zodiac signs included in an almanac were derived from “vulgar and erroneous ideas of the Ancients,”21 while Newtonian physics undermined astrology.22 William Phelps’s 1851 Deseret Almanac also insisted that the astrological signs were “matters of ancient fancy” that “are omitted as useless.”23 Given such explicit attitudes, why should we assume, as Quinn does, that Joseph Smith and early Mormons in general were favorably inclined toward astrology?

120. See, for example, Sky and Telescope’s Monthly Star Charts: 24 All-Sky Charts for Star Watchers Worldwide, by George Lovi and Graham Blow (Cambridge, Mass.: Sky, 1995), which has the charts for each month associated with the corresponding sign of the zodiac, despite the fact that nothing remotely occult or astrological appears in the book.
122. See ibid., 99.
123. Cited in ibid., 100.
3. Magic Artifacts

Magic Circles

"Since antiquity," Quinn writes, "drawing magic circles has been central to the ritual magic of incantation, necromancy, and treasure-hunting. This could be done with chalk, yet most magic handbooks required a specially consecrated sword or dagger for the ceremony" (p. 70). Quinn's basic thesis is that a dagger kept as an heirloom by the Hyrum Smith family originally belonged to Joseph Smith Sr. and that it was used to draw magic circles for treasure hunting in the 1820s (see pp. 70–71). Two issues are pertinent: (1) what is the nature of the primary evidence for the Smiths' use of magic circles for treasure hunting, and (2) what is the evidence for the use of the Mars dagger for drawing magic circles? We shall examine the evidence for and Quinn's analysis of these two issues in detail.

Lucy Mack Smith's Statement on Magic Circles

Quinn provides only very limited evidence, from anti-Mormon sources, that the Smiths were involved in making magic circles. He provides no evidence from LDS sources discussing how to make magic circles, describing their use by early Mormons, or establishing Mormon belief in the efficacy of such things.

Quinn does claim to have found one LDS reference supporting the use of magic circles. This is an ambiguously phrased statement of Lucy Mack Smith in which she denied that her family was involved in drawing "Magic circles" (p. 68; cf. 47, 66). Quinn maintains, because of an ambiguity of phraseology, that Lucy Mack Smith is saying that her family drew magic circles. The issue revolves around how the grammar of the original text should be understood. Here is how I read the text (with my understanding of the punctuation and capitalization added).

124. I am calling the dagger the "Mars dagger" because it is a Mars talisman; Quinn consistently calls it the "Smith family dagger" in order to draw it away from Hyrum's descendants and toward Joseph Smith.
Now I shall change my theme for the present. But let not my reader suppose that, because I shall pursue another topic for a season, that we stopped our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac, drawing Magic circles or sooth saying to the neglect of all kinds of business. We never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation. But, whilst we worked with our hands, we endeavored to remember the service of, and the welfare of our souls.\(^{125}\)

Here is how I interpret the referents in the text.

Now I shall change my theme for the present [from a discussion of farming and building to an account of Joseph’s vision of Moroni and the golden plates which immediately follows this paragraph]. But let not my reader suppose that, because I shall pursue another topic [Joseph’s visions] for a season, that we stopped our labor [of farming and building] and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac, drawing Magic circles or sooth saying to the neglect of all kinds of business [farming and building, as the anti-Mormons asserted, claiming the Smiths were lazy]. We never in our lives suffered one important interest [farming and building] to swallow up every other obligation [religion]. But, whilst we worked with our hands [at farming and building] we endeavored to remember the service of, and the welfare of our souls [through religion].

Thus, as I understand the text, Lucy Smith declares she is changing her theme to the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. In the public mind, that story is associated with claims that the Smiths were lazy and involved in magical activities. By the time Lucy Smith wrote this text in 1845, anti-Mormons were alleging that

\(^{125}\) Luck Mack Smith, 1845 manuscript history transcribed without punctuation, in EMD 1:285.
Joseph had been seeking treasure by drawing magic circles. She explicitly denies that they were involved in such things. She also denies that the Smiths were lazy. She wants to emphasize that, although she is not going to mention farming and building activities for a while, these activities were still going on. Quinn wants to understand the antecedent of “one important interest” as “trying to win the faculty of Abrac, drawing Magic circles or sooth saying” (p. 68). I believe that the antecedent of “one important interest” is “all kinds of business,” meaning farming and building. Quinn maintains the phrase to the neglect of means that they pursued magic to some degree, but not to the extent that they completely neglected their farming. I believe that the phrase to the neglect of means that they did not pursue magic at all, and therefore did not neglect their farming and building at all: they were not pursuing magic and thereby neglecting their business.

Although the phrasing is a bit ambiguous, the matter can easily be resolved by reference to the rest of Lucy’s narrative. Contra Quinn, Lucy Smith’s text provides no other mention of the supposedly “important interest” of magical activities but does deal prominently with their religious and business concerns. If magic activities were such an important part of Joseph Smith’s life and Lucy was speaking of them in a positive sense as “important interests,” why did she not talk about them further in any unambiguous passage? My interpretation fits much better into the context of Lucy Smith’s narrative as a whole, in which she amply discusses farming and family life, as well as religion and Joseph’s revelations—the two important interests of the family—but makes no other mention of magic. As Richard Bushman notes, “Lucy Smith’s main point was that the Smiths were not lazy as the [anti-Mormon] affidavits claimed—they had not stopped their labor to practice magic.” Thus, ironically, Quinn is claiming that Lucy Smith’s denial of the false claims that the Smith family was engaged in magical activities has magically become a confirmation of those very magical activities she is denying!

126. Bushman, Joseph Smith, 73.
Anti-Mormon Evidence for Drawing Magic Circles

Thus Quinn's real sources for his assertion that the Smiths were involved in drawing magic circles are allegations in anti-Mormon affidavits, which claim precisely what Lucy Mack Smith denied in her statement. Quinn provides only a few anti-Mormon statements claiming that the Smiths made magic circles as part of treasure digging. Since he is cavalierly uncritical of these sources, they merit some attention. I will focus here only on allegations from roughly contemporary sources that the Smiths made magic circles, rather than examining recollections from fifty years or so later.

1. Silas Hamilton, 1780s. Only one of Quinn's sources actually describes the details of the process of making a treasure-hunting circle by someone who actually had made one. This comes from Silas Hamilton's personal papers from Vermont in the 1780s, forty years before Joseph Smith Sr. was allegedly involved in making such circles. This manuscript was not available to Smith Sr.; it was published only in 1894, seventy years after the Smiths allegedly made their magic circles. It must be emphasized that it is not a description of the alleged magical practices of the Smith family. Rather, it is used by Quinn as a source describing the type of magic practices associated with treasure hunting. As we shall see, the accounts of alleged magic circles by the Smiths do not match this account.

A method to take up hid treasure (vis.): Take nine steel rods, about ten or twelve inches in length, sharp or spiked, to pierce in to the Earth; and let them be besmeared with fresh blood from a hen mixed with hog dung. Then make two circles round the hid treasure, one of said circles a little larger in circumference than the hid treasure lays in the earth, the other circle some larger still, and as the hid treasure is wont to move to north, or south, east or west, place your rods as is described on the other side of this leaf. (p. 26)\(^\text{127}\)

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2. Abner Cole, 1830. The earliest written allegation that the Smiths were involved in treasure hunting and magic is found in Abner Cole's 1830 satire, the "Book of Pukei." I will cite Cole's entire account of the alleged treasure hunt.

The Book of Pukei,—Chapter I

1. And it came to pass in the latter days, that wickedness did much abound in the land, and the "Idle and slothful said one to another, let us send for Walters the Magician, who has strange books, and deals with familiar spirits; peradventure he will inform us where the Nephites, hid their treasure, so be it, that we and our vagabond van, do not perish for lack of sustenance.

2. Now Walters, the Magician, was a man unseemly to look upon, and to profound ignorance added the most consummate impudence,—he obeyed the summons of the idle and slothful, and produced an old book in an unknown tongue, (Cicero's Orations in latin,) from whence he read in the presence of the Idle and Slothful strange stories of hidden treasures and of the spirit who had the custody thereof.

3. And the Idle and Slothful paid tribute unto the Magician, and besought him saying, Oh! thou who art wise above all men, and can interpret the book that no man understandeth, and can discover hidden things by the power of thy enchantments, lead us, we pray thee to the place where the Nephites buried their treasure, and give us power over "the spirit," and we will be thy servants forever.

4. And the Magician led the rabble into a dark grove, in a place called Manchester, where after drawing a Magic circle, with a rusty sword, and collecting his motley crew of [t]atterdemallions, within the centre, he sacrificed a Cock (a bird to Minerva) for the purpose of propitiating the prince of spirits.

5. All things being ready, the Idle and Slothful fell to work with a zeal deserving a better cause, and many a live long night was spent in digging for "the root of all evil."
6. Howbeit, owing to the wickedness and hardness of their hearts, these credulous and ignorant knaves, were always disappointed, till finally, their hopes, although frequently on the eve of consummation—like that of the hypocrite perished, and their hearts became faint within them.

7. And it came to pass, that when the Idle and Slothful became weary of their night labors, they said one to another, lo! this imp of the Devil, hath deceived us, let us no more of him, or peradventure, ourselves, our wives, and our little ones, will become chargeable on the town.

8. Now when Walters the Magician heard these things, he was sorely grieved, and said unto himself, lo! mine occupation is gone, even these ignorant vagabonds, the idle and slothful detect mine impostures. I will away and hide myself, lest the strong arm of the law should bring me to justice.

9. And he took his book, and his rusty sword, and his magic stone, and his stuffed Toad, and all his implements of witchcraft and retired to the mountains near Great Sodus Bay, where he holds communion with the Devil, even unto this day.128

Although this account does mention making a magic circle to find treasure, it is not the Smiths who make it but "Walters the Magician," whom Quinn equates with Lumen Walters (see pp. 117-21).

3. James Gordon Bennett, 1831. Bennett provides the second earliest written record of the alleged circle making by the Smiths. The account is notable because it is completely devoid of any magical content, mentioning simply digging a hole in search for money. Quinn references this account only in a footnote (see p. 412 n. 26) but doesn’t discuss it in detail, perhaps because it contradicts his thesis.

In excavating the grounds, they [the Smiths and their friends] began by taking up the green sod in the form of a circle of six feet diameter—then would continue to dig to the depth of ten, twenty, and sometimes thirty feet. 129

4. Joseph Capron, 8 November 1833. The Capron account is one of the fullest alleging use of a magic circle to dig treasure. Unfortunately, Quinn neither reads it critically nor cites it fully. His limited excerpt (see p. 46) is in boldface.

The sapient Joseph [Sr.] 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 rods130 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, Lawrence, and their bulwark of stakes, the devil came off victorious, and carried away the watches.131

It should be noted that the legend of the search for the gold watches again appears here. This joke was apparently invented by Abner Cole in his “Book of Pukei” (cited above); the rumor was perpetuated by Capron and Joshua Stafford (see below) as part of the treasure-hunting myth.132

130. One rod equals 16.5 feet.
131. E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed [sic] (Painesville, Ohio: by the author, 1834), 259 (hereafter MU); reprinted in EMD 2:25.
132. See MU 258 = EMD 2:28. The allegations of the Smiths’ search for “gold watches” may be Cole’s satire on early Mormon descriptions of the Urim and Thummim as “spectacles.”
5A. William Stafford, 8 December 1833. Stafford provides two separate accounts of Joseph Smith Sr. allegedly making magic circles to help discover treasure. Quinn chose only to excerpt the one that more closely matches his thesis. Quinn’s excerpt is in bold.

Early in the evening [we] repaired to the place of deposit [of the treasure]. 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 then 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. . . . [They found no treasure because an evil spirit] caused the money to sink. (p. 46)\textsuperscript{133}

5B. William Stafford, 8 December 1833. Quinn failed to mention this text, perhaps because it does not match any of the other descriptions of magic circles.

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. . . . But as there was some mistake in the process, it did not have the desired effect.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{133} MU 238 = EMD 2:60–61. Note that the middle, nonbolded sentences are deleted by Quinn without ellipses from his quotation on p. 46.

\textsuperscript{134} MU 239 = EMD 2:61.
6. Milo Bell, 1888. Milo Bell was a contemporary of Joseph Smith, but his allegations of making magic circles were reported second-hand by his brother Ketchel in 1888.

They would make a circle, and Jo Smith claimed if they threw any dirt over the circle the money chest would leave. They never found any money. (pp. 49, 70)\(^{135}\)

**Accounts Quinn Does Not Discuss**

Unfortunately for his readers, Quinn fails to analyze all the evidence from the Smiths’ neighbors relating to allegations of treasure hunting and magic. When this additional evidence is considered, quite a different picture emerges from the one Quinn depicts. I have grouped the accounts Quinn ignores into three categories.

First, many accounts by the early neighbors of Joseph Smith mention neither treasure hunting nor magical practices.\(^{136}\) For example, a group of eleven Manchester residents, who were “truly glad to dispense with [the Smiths’] society,” failed to make mention of any treasure digging or magic.\(^{137}\) This group totals thirteen people.

Second, by far the largest body of witnesses—sixty-two residents of Palmyra—accused the Smiths of engaging in treasure hunting but included no allegations of magic or divination.\(^{138}\) They had apparently heard that the Smiths had been seeking treasure—and after rumors of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, who hadn’t?—but they did not know of or believe rumors that the Smiths had been engaged in magical practices. To this group perhaps several accounts could be added describing some variation of the traditional story of the discovery of the Book of Mormon without mentioning other treasure digging or the use of magic circles.\(^{139}\) This group totals sixty-

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\(^{135}\) “Mr. Bell’s Statement,” citing *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1/1, January 1888, 3.


\(^{137}\) MU 262 = EMD 2:18–21.

\(^{138}\) See MU 261–62 = EMD 2:48–55; see also Parley Chase, MU 248 = EMD 2:47.

\(^{139}\) See Abigail Harris, MU 253–54 = EMD 2:31–33; Lucy Harris, MU 254–57 = EMD 2:34–36; Nicols, MU 257–58 = EMD 2:37–38.
three witnesses, to which Barrett's account mentioned above should be added, for a total of sixty-four. It should be emphasized that it is perfectly possible to excavate a mine or dig for treasure without using magical practices or magic circles.\textsuperscript{140}

Third, a final group mentions treasure hunting with some form of divination but does not mention the use of magic circles. This category includes Joshua Stafford,\textsuperscript{141} Peter Ingersoll,\textsuperscript{142} David Stafford,\textsuperscript{143} Willard Chase,\textsuperscript{144} and Henry Harris,\textsuperscript{145} totaling five witnesses.

To summarize, thirteen witnesses, while insisting that the Smiths were of low character, failed to state that they were involved in treasure hunting or magic; sixty-four witnesses believed the rumors of treasure hunting, but did not mention the rumors of magical practices; and five witnesses testified of treasure hunting with some form of divination (perhaps based on distorted stories of Joseph's claims of prophetic powers) but without magic circles. Only three contemporary witnesses—Cole, Capron, and William Stafford—claimed that the Smiths were involved in making magic circles to hunt treasure.\textsuperscript{146} It should be emphasized that these are all witnesses for the "prosecution" as collected by the anti-Mormon writers Hurlbut and Howe. But there were dozens, if not hundreds, of area residents who also knew the Smiths but did not sign the affidavits. To these should be added dozens of pro-Mormon witnesses for the "defense," such as Lucy Mack Smith, none of whom describes the Smiths engaged in making magic circles. Why, one might ask, did Quinn not undertake a complete survey of the evidence on allegations of the Smiths' trea-

\textsuperscript{140}. Willard Chase mentions digging for an ordinary silver mine, MU 244 = EMD 2:69; David Stafford mentions digging a "coal pit," MU 249 = EMD 2:56.
\textsuperscript{141}. MU 258 = EMD 2:27–28.
\textsuperscript{142}. MU 232–37 = EMD 2:40–45.
\textsuperscript{143}. MU 249–50 = EMD 2:56–58.
\textsuperscript{144}. MU 240–48 = EMD 2:64–73.
\textsuperscript{145}. See MU 251–52 = EMD 2:75–77.
\textsuperscript{146}. Of the sources Quinn cites, Hamilton is not describing the Smiths; Bennett, although he mentions digging a circle, does not mention a magic circle. This leaves only Cole, Capron, and Stafford (who gives two stories) claiming that the Smiths drew magic circles. To these could be added Bell's 1888 account which Quinn cites, but I am not including it in these calculations since it is secondhand hearsay from over half a century after the events under discussion.
sure hunting? Why did he simply cite those few minority sources that support his thesis, ignoring those that do not?

Not only do the majority of the anti-Mormon witnesses not support Quinn’s position, but Quinn’s own witnesses also do not agree among themselves. The following chart summarizes the similarities and differences among the various accounts Quinn cites. A blank in a box means that item or action is not mentioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim/Version</th>
<th>Hamilton (1780s)</th>
<th>Cole (1830)</th>
<th>Bennett (1831)</th>
<th>Capron (1833)</th>
<th>Stafford A (1833)</th>
<th>Stafford B (1833)</th>
<th>Bell (1888)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was a magic circle drawn?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no?147</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there one or two circles?</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>one</td>
<td>one (not magic)</td>
<td>one (not magic)</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>one</td>
<td>one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was used to draw the circle?</td>
<td>rusty sword</td>
<td></td>
<td>sheep's blood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were stakes used?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were stakes made of?</td>
<td>steel</td>
<td></td>
<td>unknown wood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were stakes ritually prepared?</td>
<td>smeared with hen blood and hog dung</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a rod in the center?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of the circle?</td>
<td>6 feet in diameter</td>
<td>several rods around146</td>
<td>12 or 14 feet in diameter,149</td>
<td>8 or 10 feet in diameter,149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic book used?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice of an animal?</td>
<td>hen</td>
<td>cock</td>
<td>sheep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can dirt be thrown in the circle?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a fear of the treasure moving?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes?</td>
<td>no?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

147. Capron says a circle was formed by stakes but not drawn.
148. I understand “around” to refer to circumference. Recall that a rod is 16.5 feet. Assuming “several” is three rods, the circle is about 49 feet in circumference. Assuming four rods, it is about 66 feet in circumference.
149. Twelve feet in diameter gives 37 feet in circumference; 14 feet gives 44 feet in circumference. Thus Stafford is describing a smaller circle than Capron’s.
Granted that these accounts—if they are anything more than malicious rumor—might be referring to different specific events, they are, nonetheless, each supposedly describing the same overall process. With magical operations it is vital to do things precisely according to the received tradition. Yet these accounts present a wide variety of different practices and beliefs.

Was a magic book used? How big was the circle? Should there be one or two circles? Were stakes to be used to outline the circle? Was a sword necessary? Cole claims a rusty sword was used to draw the circle, while Capron claims a polished sword was obtained after the circle was drawn. Did they use a dagger or a sword? Quinn asserts it was a dagger, but none of his sources makes that claim. Cole claims Walters “sacrificed a cock . . . for the purpose of propitiating the Prince of spirits” in the center of the circle after the circle had been made. Hamilton talks of smearing the steel rods with “blood from a hen mixed with hog dung” before the circle was made. Hamilton uses a hen, which is not sacrificed but rather killed before making the circle, and whose blood is used to smear the steel rods. Cole describes sacrificing a cock after the circle is made; nothing is done with its blood and no steel rods are used. On the other hand, Stafford (58) describes the killing of a sheep whose blood is used to make a circle.

The facts that Mormon witnesses challenge the anti-Mormon witnesses, that most anti-Mormon witnesses do not mention the use of magic circles, and that numerous inconsistencies exist among these different anti-Mormon accounts describing magic circles should lead careful historians at least to question their credibility.\footnote{150} But not Quinn. Without analysis or evidence, Quinn insists that “Cole was not reporting rumors” (p. 117). No? Then are we to assume that Walters’s magic book was actually “Cicero’s Orations in Latin”? How does this help Quinn, who insists that Joseph used real magic books? Did Joseph Smith actually go to Walters to help him find the burial site of the golden plates? Where else did Joseph ever claim that “the mantle of Walters the Magician [has] fallen upon

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150. As will be noted below, all these accounts are also inconsistent with the descriptions of drawing magic circles found in the magic books Quinn claims Joseph used as his sources for making these very magic circles.
me”? Where else does Joseph describe Moroni as wearing “Indian blanket, and moccasins—his beard of silver white, hung far below his knees. On his head was an old fashioned military half cocked hat”? Are none of these things rumors? I actually agree with Quinn that “Cole was not reporting rumors.” It is quite certain that much of what Cole wrote was not rumor but pure fabrication. Cole was not trying to write an accurate history; he was satirizing Joseph’s prophetic claims. To take Cole seriously as a historical source in all of this is like taking David Letterman seriously. It’s supposed to be a satirical joke. It was not meant to be taken as actual history.

But even if we were to accept, for the sake of argument, that Cole, Capron, and Stafford are giving accurate accounts, their reports still undermine Quinn’s case, since Cole and Capron mention the use of a magic sword, not a dagger. Quinn, on the other hand, wishes to link the Mars dagger (to be discussed below) with the drawing of magic circles. After citing a portion of Capron’s account where a circle is described by stakes, Quinn proclaims: “However, an actual participant described in detail how Joseph Sr. drew what is known as a ‘magic circle’ to secure the site of magic-protected treasure (see ch. 3)” (p. 46). If Quinn is right in this claim, Capron’s account is unreliable. So why cite him at all? Unfortunately, Quinn does not name this supposed “actual participant.” Rather, he gives a vague reference to all of chapter 3. The only primary source used by Quinn in chapter 3 that mentions a “magic circle” is Cole. But Cole never claimed to be an “actual participant,” as Quinn asserts. Furthermore, according to Cole, the magic circle was drawn by Walters the Magician, not Joseph Sr.!

Quinn then cites Cole’s account of the use of a “rusty sword” but insists that “there is verified evidence of a dagger, rather than a sword” (p. 70). Once again, if Quinn is right here, why should we think that Cole’s account is reliable? By methodological sleight of hand, Quinn completely ignores what his primary sources actually say, changing a staked circle to a magic circle (which, as will be noted...

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151. These quotations are from Cole’s “Book of Pukei,” chap. 2, EMD 2:235–37.
152. Quinn’s cross-referencing system in this book is exasperating. He repeatedly refers his readers to entire chapters to substantiate a point made in a single sentence. Thus the reader must search the entire chapter to find a single cross-reference.
below, was never staked), and a rusty sword to an inscribed dagger. Thus, the actual sources claim that Walters the Magician drew a magic circle with a rusty sword, while Joseph Sr. staked a circle. For Quinn, this means that Joseph Sr. drew a magic circle with a dagger. But no one ever claims Joseph Sr. drew magic circles with either a sword or a dagger! Quinn’s use of evidence is abysmally muddled and confused.

Finally, Quinn ignores an important issue on which all sources attributing magical acts to Joseph Smith agree: The magic allegedly practiced by Joseph was imposture and fraud. When anti-Mormons contemporary with Joseph Smith label him a magician (or related terms), they are not claiming that he was actually involved in real magic. Rather, they are saying that he was a charlatan—which, remarkably, is the one aspect of the definition of magic that Quinn refuses to consider.153 According to Quinn’s thesis, Joseph’s involvement in magic must have been sincere and serious. But, according to all the primary witnesses Quinn cites as evidence that the Smiths were making magic circles, the Smiths were liars and charlatans: their magic was pure nonsense designed to dupe the yokels.

However one may wish to interpret this evidence, it is clearly impossible that all of these accounts can be simultaneously accurate in all points. Some of them must be mistaken (or lying) in at least some of their claims—and none of them actually alleges that Joseph was performing the type of magic Quinn claims he performed. This fundamental problem of inconsistency undermines the reliability of their testimony, especially when their claims are explicitly denied by Lucy Smith. Their testimony should be accepted only when corroborated by other witnesses, preferably not hostile. Determining which parts, if any, of these anti-Mormon claims are accurate becomes an important and difficult historiographical problem—a problem Quinn never recognizes, let alone comes to grips with.154

153. Quinn writes: “My study incorporates all the above definitions of magic except legerdemain. That old-time word refers to sleight-of-hand trickery” (p. xxiii).

The Mars Dagger

Quinn’s claim that the Smiths used magic circles as part of their alleged treasure-hunting activities is intimately connected with the so-called “magic dagger,” first mentioned in a 1963 description of Hyrum Smith’s heirlooms. According to Quinn, this was precisely “the kind of dagger necessary for ritual magic” (p. 70) and had “everything to do with ceremonial magic” (p. 70). Quinn also claims that this dagger was astrologically connected to Joseph Smith Sr.’s birth year: “it is crucial that [the sigil of] Mars (inscribed on the dagger) was the ‘planet governing’ the year 1771. That was the year of Joseph Sr.’s birth” (p. 71). As will be demonstrated below, in all these claims he is simply and clearly mistaken. There are two separate issues here: (1) What is the significance of the sigils (symbols) found on the dagger? and (2) Was the dagger designed for ritual magic and, more specifically, for making magic circles for treasure hunting?

An Astrological Connection?

Quinn’s claim of an astrological connection between the ceremonial dagger and the Smiths is extremely feeble; it is based on misrepresentation of several sources and fabrication of several ideas. Since traditional astrology is closely connected with birthdays and years, I am providing a list of the Smith family and their birth dates, given in chronological order for reference throughout this and the following section:

_Grandparents of Joseph Smith:_

Solomon Mack, 15 September 1732  
Birth dates for Joseph’s other grandparents are not known

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156. My source for the birth information for Joseph’s parents and grandparents is Bushman, _Joseph Smith_, 11, 14, 20.
Parents of Joseph Smith:

Joseph Sr., 12 July 1771
Lucy Mack, 8 July 1775

Joseph Smith and his siblings:\textsuperscript{157}

Alvin, 11 February 1798
Hyrum, 9 February 1800
Sophronia, 18 May 1803
Joseph Jr., 23 December 1805
Samuel, 13 March 1808
Ephraim, 13 March 1810
William, 13 March 1811
Catherine, 8 July 1812
Don Carlos, 25 March 1816
Lucy, 18 July 1821

Children of Joseph Smith:

Alva, 15 June 1828
Thaddeus and Louisa, 30 April 1831
Joseph and Julia (adopted), 30 April 1831
Joseph III, 6 November 1832
Frederick, 20 June 1836
Alexander, 2 June 1838
Don Carlos, 13 June 1840
David Hyrum, 17 November 1844

Children of Hyrum Smith:\textsuperscript{158}

Lovina, 16 September 1827
Mary, 27 June 1829

\textsuperscript{157}. For Joseph’s siblings and children, see Donna Hill, \textit{Joseph Smith: The First Mormon} (New York: Doubleday, 1977), genealogical chart following page 74 (except that Alvin, contra Hill, was born in 1798, not 1799; see \textit{History of the Church}, 4:189).

\textsuperscript{158}. For Hyrum’s children, see LDS Ancestral File.
John, 22 September 1832
Hyrum, 27 April 1834
Jerusha, 13 January 1836
Sarah, 2 October 1837
Joseph Fielding, 13 November 1838
Martha Ann, 14 May 1841

Quinn’s claim regarding the astrological significance of the dagger is as follows:

Concerning the magic context for this artifact [the dagger] of the Smith family, it is crucial that Mars (inscribed on the dagger) was the “planet governing” the year 1771. That was the year of Joseph Sr.’s birth. It was not the governing (or “ruling”) planet for the birth years of Joseph Jr. (b. 1805), Hyrum (b. 1800), or their oldest brother Alvin (b. 1798) . . . . The astrological sign inscribed on the dagger was Joseph Sr.’s and not Hyrum’s. (pp. 71, 72)\(^{159}\)

But is this really the case? What evidence does Quinn provide to support these assertions? Quinn’s major source of information for the idea of “planets governing” a particular year is Paul Christian’s *The History and Practice of Magic* (p. 413 n. 38).\(^{160}\) A number of serious problems arise with Quinn’s claim and evidence.

First, the only sources Quinn provides claiming that Mars supposedly governed the birth year of Joseph Smith Sr. were first published in English in or after 1870 and were therefore not available to Joseph Smith Sr. (see p. 413 n. 38).\(^{161}\) Quinn provides no contemporary source available to the Smiths from which they could have derived this information. If, as Quinn claims, Joseph Sr. actually believed his birth year was governed by Mars, Quinn should either

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161. Quinn cites Christian (1870) and Poinsot (1939), but does not cite Anderson’s 1892 work, which he also uses for the Joseph-Jupiter connection.
(preferably) provide evidence of this belief from the Smiths themselves for that claim (there is none) or, at the very least, provide a source printed before the 1820s from which the Smiths could theoretically have obtained this information. As it stands, for Quinn’s thesis to be accepted we are forced to believe that the Smiths read a book that would not be published until some decades after their deaths.

Second, Quinn either misunderstands or misrepresents the significance of the sigils on the dagger. Inscribed on the dagger are several sigils—magical symbols or seals. As Quinn himself notes (see p. 71), the dagger has the astrological sigil for Scorpio, a sign of the zodiac for those born from 24 October to 21 November. As the family list given above demonstrates, neither Joseph nor any of his immediate ancestors nor siblings were born under Scorpio. Of his children, two were: Joseph III (6 November 1832) and David Hyrum, who was born on 17 November 1844, five months after Joseph’s death. Both were born too late to be involved with Joseph’s alleged drawing of the magic circles in the 1820s. Furthermore, the dagger was found among the possessions of Hyrum’s descendants, not Joseph’s, and therefore was not connected to Joseph’s sons. Of Hyrum’s children, only Joseph Fielding, later the president of the church, was a Scorpio (13 November 1838). His life is well documented. Perhaps Quinn should examine it for possible use of the Mars dagger. At any rate, it is perfectly clear that Joseph Fielding, born in 1838, could not possibly have been involved in the alleged drawing of magic circles in the 1820s. Whomever the ceremonial dagger was astrologically linked to, it was not Joseph Smith Sr. nor one of his children, the only ones ever allegedly involved in treasure hunting. I should emphasize the importance of this point. If Quinn is correct in his claims that the dagger was astrologically linked to its maker and user, then the original maker and user of the dagger was not one of the Smith family! That can only mean that the dagger passed to the Smith family second-hand. Thus the foundational astrological/magical connection between the Smiths and the dagger collapses, as does Quinn’s argument.

162. Quinn provides very unsatisfactory photographs of the dagger in his figures 43 and 44.
163. Quinn never makes a claim that any of Joseph’s or Hyrum’s children were involved with ritual magic.
Third, what of Quinn's claim that the dagger was particularly associated with Joseph Smith Sr. because Mars was the "planet governing" his birth year? Quinn is correct that the dagger has sigils associated with Mars (see p. 71). However, Quinn has completely misrepresented the nature and purpose of the Mars sigils. He confuses astrological with talismanic signs. The two are completely different and easily distinguishable, with entirely distinct functions in magical thought and practice. The Mars sigils on the dagger do not include the astrological sign of Mars, which is a circle with an arrow pointing out of it. Rather, the signs on the dagger are "the seal of Mars" and "of his [Mars's] intelligence." They are specifically designed to be used for "talismanic magic." They are not astrological symbols for Mars and have nothing to do with birth years, as Quinn claims. Quinn provides no source, primary or secondary, to support this assertion. It is a pure fabrication.

Barrett has an explicit description of the purpose of these Mars symbols on the page facing the plate that Quinn cites as the source for these symbols:

Out of it [the table of Mars on the facing page] is drawn the characters of Mars and of his spirits. These, with Mars fortunate, being engraved on an iron plate, or sword,

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164. Quinn provides a faded copy of the symbols of Mars in his figure 45. It is taken from Barrett, The Magus, but he does not give the page reference. It is the plate facing 1:143.

165. This is Barrett's name for the section in which the symbols are discussed: 1:71; see also the running head for Barrett's entire section.

166. That is to say that the seal of Mars is derived from the five-by-five magic square associated with Mars. The method for deriving the seals from the tables is not given by Barrett in The Magus; he cryptically notes that "how the seals and characters of the planets are drawn from these tables, the wise searcher, and he who shall understand the verifying of these tables, shall easily find out" (1:145). The method is explained by Donald Tyson in his commentary on Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Three Books of Occult Philosophy (St. Paul, Minn.: Llewellyn, 1993) (which is Barrett's primary source of information), 733–51, especially 744 and 748.

167. This means being made when Mars is in a fortunate astrological position. The sigils have a different effect when made when Mars is "unfortunate"; see Barrett, The Magus, 1:144. Note that Barrett is clearly stating here that the talismans should be made under the influence of Mars but not necessarily by someone born under the planet Mars.
makes a man potent in war and judgment, and petitions, and terrible to his enemies; and victorious over them.\textsuperscript{168}

In other words, Barrett explicitly states that the purpose of engraving these Mars sigils on a sword (and presumably by extension, a dagger) is to give victory over one’s enemies in war or litigation. The Mars sigils are not related to birth months or years, ceremonial magic, or treasure hunting, none of which is mentioned by Barrett in this section. Quinn attempts to convince his readers that both the Mars dagger and the Jupiter talisman (see below) are astrological items specifically designed to be used by people who are born under the respective planetary signs (see pp. 71-72). They are not. Rather, they are talismanic devices whereby anyone—no matter what astrological sign he was born under—can obtain the cosmic planetary influences in various aspects of his life. This can be done by making the talismans during times when the proper planets are in astrological ascendancy. If he desires victory in battle, he will use the Mars seals. If he is seeking success in love, he will use the Venus seals, and so forth.\textsuperscript{169} Anyone could use the Mars dagger or the Jupiter talisman. They were not specifically designed only for persons born under Mars or Jupiter. Thus, Quinn’s alleged unique connection between the dagger and Joseph Smith Sr. is pure fantasy.

Quinn cites sources that emphasize this distinction between astrological and talismanic signs. On page 413 note 35, he quotes the following passage from Christopher McIntosh: “Barrett does not deal at all with conventional astrology and gives no instructions for the casting of horoscopes. Instead he describes the nature of the various planetary forces and tells how they can be harnessed by the use of talismans and charms.”\textsuperscript{170} In light of this clear statement, which he himself quotes, I do not understand why Quinn insists that the Mars sigils on the dagger are astrological when his source says they are not astrological.

\textsuperscript{168} Barrett, \textit{The Magus}, 1:143-44.
\textsuperscript{169} See ibid. Barrett’s section on this subject provides numerous examples of this practice, \textit{The Magus}, 1:142-47.
\textsuperscript{170} Christopher McIntosh, \textit{The Astrologers and Their Creed: An Historical Outline} (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 88-89.
Fourth, Quinn also misreads Christian's calculations for determining the governing planet. Even if we were to grant Quinn's erroneous claim that the Mars dagger was specifically designed only for someone born under a year that Mars governs, no one in the Smith family was born under a Mars year. Quinn either misunderstands or misrepresents the calculations. As noted above, the only source Quinn cites for these calculations is Paul Christian. Here is Christian's explanation on the pages referenced by Quinn (see p. 413 n. 38):

Periods of time are divided into cycles of 36 years. Each of the seven planetary Geniuses comes, in turn, to open and to close one of the cycles, that is to say, to rule the 1st and the 36th year of each cycle. [He then gives a long list of the beginning and ending years for each cycle and the planet they are associated with] ... In order to find out the planet governing the year, the Magi used a seven-pointed golden star [a diagram of which is found on page 464], on which were engraved the signs of the seven planets. Given for example the cyclic number [year] 1808, they would have discovered, from the preceding table, that this number belongs to one of the cycles of Venus, beginning in 1801 and ending in 1836. Then, taking the seven-pointed star, they would count 1801 at the sign of Venus, and, following the order of the planets, 1802 on Mercury, 1803 on the Moon, and so on. 171

Thus, according to Christian's chart, the order of the sequence of the planetary years in the cycle of Venus is Venus, Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, and Sun. When performing the calculations, the sequence of planets remains the same, but the beginning planet of each sequence is different, depending on which planet dominates the cycle. Thus, in the cycle of Venus, given above, one begins the sequence of planets with Venus. In the cycle of Saturn, one begins with Saturn and follows the same order of planets, which would thus be Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and Moon.

171 Christian, History and Practice of Magic, 2:463–64.
Joseph Smith Sr. was born in 1771. According to the list from Christian on page 463, the thirty-six-year cycle running from 1765 to 1800 was a cycle of Saturn. The cycle from 1801 to 1836 was a cycle of Venus. The following chart gives the birth year for each member of the Smith family and the associated governing planet for that year according to these calculations. Since this is a Saturn cycle, the beginning and ending years are governed by Saturn, with the other planets rotating in the standard sequential order given above. I have placed the years associated with Mars in boldface type and those associated with the birth of members of the Smith family in italics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saturn Cycle, 1765–1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1771, Joseph Sr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775, Lucy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1776</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is quite clear from this chart that neither Joseph Sr. nor any of the other Smiths born from 1765 through 1800 were born in a Mars year.

The thirty-six years from 1801 to 1836 form a Venus cycle. Here is the chart for that period, with the Smith family members' birth years.
These two charts make it clear that none of the Smith family was born under a year of Mars. So, even if Quinn’s misunderstanding of the purpose of the Mars sigils on the dagger were correct, it would simply prove that the Mars dagger was not made for the Smiths!

In conclusion, Quinn has completely misunderstood or misrepresented the purpose of the dagger. The inclusion of the astrological sigil for Scorpio means the dagger was designed for someone born under the sign of Scorpio. None of the Smiths was. Therefore, it was not made for the Smiths. Quinn demonstrates no understanding of talismanic magic. The inclusion of the talismanic sigils for Mars means it was designed to grant victory in battle or litigation. It was not designed for ceremonial magic or treasure hunting, as Quinn claims. Quinn cites sources from after 1870 as evidence for what the Smiths supposedly believed, while completely misrepresenting those sources. The only possible conclusion to draw from all this is that the dagger was made for an unknown person, and, if it somehow came into the possession of Hyrum Smith, it was obtained secondhand.
with the engravings already made. This conforms with the late Smith family tradition that remembers the signs on the blade as “Masonic” rather than magical.\textsuperscript{172}

\textbf{The Mars Dagger and Magic Circles}

Quinn’s related claim is that the Mars dagger was specifically designed for making a magic circle for treasure hunting. He correctly understands that “most magic handbooks required a specially consecrated sword or dagger for the ceremony” of drawing magic circles (p. 70). However, he incorrectly claims that the Mars dagger was precisely “the kind of dagger necessary for ritual magic” (p. 70). He believes that “the inscriptions on the Smith family dagger have nothing to do with Freemasonry and everything to do with ceremonial magic” (p. 70). He repeatedly emphasizes his interpretation that “Hyrum Smith in 1844 possessed an instrument designed for drawing the kind of magic circles that Palmyra neighbors claimed his father was drawing on the ground in the 1820s” (p. 71). For Quinn, “the Mars-inscribed dagger …[was used] for drawing magic circles” (p. 97); it is, quite plainly, “a dagger for drawing magic circles of treasure-digging and spirit invocation” (p. 134).

This claim has two related assertions: (1) the Mars dagger was designed to make a magic circle, and (2) the magic circles mentioned in the occult books cited by Quinn were designed to find treasure. Once again, Quinn is simply wrong on both claims.

It is, however, important to note what Quinn’s sources actually say about his claim that the Smiths drew magic circles with the Mars dagger. These sources have been analyzed above and will only be summarized here. Bennett simply says the Smiths dug for treasure in pits of a circular form. No use of magic is mentioned. Capron says that Joseph Sr. made a circle formed of stakes. This circle was not drawn with a dagger; indeed, it was not drawn at all. A sword (not a

\textsuperscript{172} Quinn notes that the earliest account of the dagger says it was Masonic in purpose (see p. 70); see Corbett, \textit{Hyrum Smith}, 453, where he states explicitly that the dagger was “Masonic.” Quinn found no documentary evidence of the dagger’s existence before 1963, nearly 120 years after Hyrum’s death.
dagger) was used—but not to draw a magic circle; rather, it was carried by Samuel F. Lawrence (not Joseph Sr.) while circumambulating the staked circle to ward off the devil. Stafford describes two types of circles. First, he says that Joseph Sr. “made a circle,” but he provides no description of the process. The circle was, however, staked with sticks. Second, Stafford talks about making a circle with sheep’s blood. No dagger is mentioned in either of these accounts. Only one of Quinn’s sources—Abner Cole—specifically describes making a magic circle with a weapon. But the circle was not made by Joseph Sr. with a dagger but by “Walters the Magician,” who drew “a Magic circle, with a rusty sword.” Thus even if one accepts these reports as accurate (rather than as malicious slander, satire, or village gossip), none of Quinn’s sources ever describes anyone in the Smith family as drawing a magic circle with a dagger. Yet, perversely, this is what Quinn insists was actually going on.

Sources for Drawing Magic Circles

We must begin with something Quinn never undertakes—a careful analysis of his sources for the Smiths’ alleged knowledge of making magic circles. Quinn lists nine sources in his footnote on this subject (see pp. 411–12 n. 25). Of these, however, two are simply modern encyclopedia articles on necromancy. Of the remaining seven, two are brief modern secondary descriptions of magic circles, and one, *The Greater Key of Solomon*, was first published in English in 1889 and therefore was not accessible to Joseph Smith.173 This leaves four possible primary sources that Joseph Smith could have used for information on magic circles: Reginald Scot (last reprinted 1651), pseudo-Agrippa (1655, reprinted 1783), Ebenezer Sibly (1784), and Barrett (1801). I will examine most of these sources relative to

173. Quinn’s citation from R. Campbell Thompson’s *Semitic Magic: Its Origins and Development* (London: Luzac, 1908) is hardly useful for his thesis, since Thompson is discussing ancient Assyrian practices that had not been discovered in Joseph’s day (see pp. Iviii–Ixi); Thompson’s one allusion to nineteenth-century practices is simply a lengthy quotation from Barrett, which Quinn already listed as a separate source in his note (Thompson, *Semitic Magic*, lx).
two questions: (1) what is the description of the sword (or dagger) for drawing magic circles, and (2) what is the description of the magic circle itself? Finally, we will compare and contrast this information with the descriptions of the magic circles the Smiths are alleged to have drawn.

Reginald Scot (1651). Reginald Scot's book is the least likely that Joseph would have obtained. First, Scot's book was originally written in 1584 and last reprinted in 1651. It was thus nearly two hundred years old when Joseph was allegedly engaged in his magical activities. Furthermore, the first edition of Scot's book is extremely rare because it was destroyed by order of King James in 1603 since it denied the power of witchcraft. Scot's purpose is to "ridicule witchcraft in the eyes of the general public." "His whole attitude was skeptical and sarcastically mocking" of the reality of magic and witchcraft. He believed that "spiritualistic manifestations were artful impostures or illusions due to mental disturbance in the observers." It is not a book designed to help someone learn how to be a magician, as Quinn implies, but a book that mocked belief in magic and witchcraft as utter nonsense. Why, if Joseph read this book and took it seriously, would it have inclined him to want to participate in the magical operations which Scot denounces as manifestations of "mental disturbance"?

174. I will not be able to examine Quinn's citations from Ebenezer Sibly. The Sibly book is so rare that, despite repeated attempts, I was unable to get a copy on interlibrary loan. If in the future I am able to examine a copy, I may analyze Quinn's use of this source as well.

175. There is a modern facsimile edition of the 1584 edition of Reginald Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft in The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile, #299 (New York: Da Capo, 1971). Those wishing to have an archival experience should consult the BYU library copy (BF 1565 .S4 1971). Pages 401–33, 451–55, and 498–501 are annotated in the margins with light pencil markings, which I presume are from Quinn's reading of the text (although they may have been made by someone else). If from Quinn, these notes shed some interesting light on his thoughts and methods while researching.

176. All quotations are from Rossell H. Robbins, The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology (New York: Crown, 1959), 454.
Scot describes using a knife for making a magic circle\(^\text{177}\) but insists that it must be of special design (see fig. 1).

You must also have a bright knife that was never occupied [used or marked], and he must write on the one side of the blade of the knife + Agla\(^\text{178}\) + and on the other side of the knife’s blade + [four sigils]\(^\text{179}\) + And with the same knife he must make a circle, as hereafter followeth: the which is called Salomons [Solomon’s] circle.\(^\text{180}\)

The Mars dagger clearly does not match the one described by Scot.

Scot also describes how to draw a magic circle.\(^\text{181}\) According to Scot one must also draw complex forms and write names in the circle;

\(^{177}\) See Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (reprint, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), 345, 349. For the sake of accessibility, I will cite from this 1964 reprint.


\(^{179}\) None of Scot’s sigils match those found on the Mars dagger.

\(^{180}\) Scot, *Discoverie*, 345.

\(^{181}\) See ibid., 328, 336–37, 342.
Fig. 2. "A type or figure of the circle for the master and his fellows to fit in, showing how and after what fashion it should be made" (from Scot, Discoverie of Witchcraft, 349). Despite Quinn's assertions, the circles the Smiths were alleged to have made bear no resemblance to these complex conjuring circles.

detailed diagrams are provided (see fig. 2). The circle described by Scot is nothing like what the Smiths are accused of doing, other than the fact that both are circles. It is quite clear that Scot could be the source for neither the Mars dagger nor the circles the Smiths are alleged to have drawn. The alleged Smith circles are not nearly complex enough.

Quinn’s claims lead one to ponder: if Joseph really used Scot’s books for magical purposes and believed that the spells and practices therein were efficacious, why was he not influenced by any of the

182. See ibid, 344, 349.
other materials in the book? For example, in the section of Scot’s book describing conjurations by the magic circle—which Quinn cites as a source for the Smiths’ practices—Scot mentions numerous spirits that can be conjured. They include Baëll, Agares, Marbas, Amon, Barbatos, Buer, Gusoin, Botis, Bathin, Purson, Eligor, Leraie, Valefar, Morax, Ipos, Naberius, Glasya Labolas, Zepar, Bileth, Amaimon, Stiri, Paimon, Bune, Forneus, Ronove, Berith, Astaroth, Foras, Furfur, Marchosias, Malphas, Vepar, Sabnacke, Sidonay, Gaap, Shax, Procell, Furcas, Murmur, Caim, etc. Moroni is notably absent from this list. What role do any of these spirits play in Mormonism? None.

So, according to Quinn, Joseph read Scot’s book, from which he obtained knowledge of making magic daggers to draw magic circles to summon or control spirits to find treasure. But the dagger described by Scot does not match the Mars dagger, the circle described by Scot does not match the circles the Smiths are alleged to have drawn, and the names of the spirits mentioned by Scot to be conjured do not match the names of any of the angels who visited Joseph. So, why should we possibly think that Joseph had ever read Scot?

_Pseudo-Agrippa_ (1655, reprinted 1783). The magic circles described in pseudo-Agrippa’s _Of Occult Philosophy_ are also much more complex than anything the Smiths are described as doing. Here is one example:

> Therefore when you would consecrate any Place or Circle, you ought to take the prayer of Solomon used in the

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183. See ibid., 316–24.
184. The possible exception might be the spirit “Amon,” who could be correlated with the Book of Mormon Ammon. But, if such a claim were to be made, we would need to ask, why did Joseph Smith get the spelling wrong? And why is Ammon described in the Book of Mormon as an ordinary human being instead of a spirit Joseph conjured? Of course, from an LDS perspective, the names are similar because they both derive from an ancient Near Eastern context.
185. Cornelius Agrippa [pseudonym], _Of Occult Philosophy, Book Four: Magical Ceremonies_ , trans. Robert Turner (1655; reprint, Gillette, N.J.: Heptangle Books, 1985). I will cite from this later edition, since it is much more accessible than the rare editions Quinn cites, although the type has been reset and the pagination changed.
dedication of the Temple [1 Kings 8]: & moreover, you must bless the place with the sprinkling of Holy-water, & with Fumigations; by commemorating in the benediction holy mysteries. . . . And by invoking divine names which are significant hereunto; such as the Place of God, the Throne of God, the Chair of God, the Tabernacle of God, the Altar of God, and the Habitation of God. . . .

And in the consecrations of instruments, & of all other things whatsoever that are serviceable to this Art, you shall proceed after the same manner, by sprinkling the same with Holy-water, perfuming the same with holy Fumigations, anointing it with holy Oyl, sealing it with some holy Sigil, & blessing it with prayer. 186

Another passage requires the following ritual:

Let the man that is to receive any Oracle from the good spirits, be chaste, pure, & confessed. Then a place being prepared pure & clean & covered everywhere with white linen, on the Lord’s day in the new of the Moon let him enter into that place, clothed with clean white garments; & let him exorcize the place, & bless it, & make a Circle therein with a sanctified coal; & let there be written in the uttermost part of the Circle the names of the Angels, & in the inner part thereof let there be written the mighty names of God [given earlier]: & let him place within the Circle, at the four angles of the world, the Censers for the perfumes. Then let him enter the place fasting, & washed, & let him begin to pray towards the east this whole Psalm [Ps. 119]: . . . by perfuming; & in the end depreciating the Angels, by the said divine names, that they will deign to discover & reveal that which he desireth: & that let him do six days, continuing washed & fasting. And on the seventh day, which is the Sabbaoth, let him, being washed &

186. Pseudo-Agrippa, Of Occult Philosophy (1985 ed.), 31–32. The relationship of these rituals to the Catholic mass should be noted. Would young Protestant Joseph have any ritual context for understanding these things?
fasting, enter the Circle, & perfume it, & anoint himself with holy anointing oyl... [and read a Psalm]. Which being said, let him arise, & let him begin to walk about in a circuit within the said Circle from the east to the west, until he is wearied with a dizziness of his brain: let him fall down in the Circle, & there he may rest; & forthwith he shall be wrapped up in an ecstacy, & a spirit will appear unto him, which will inform him of all things. We must observe also, that in the Circle there ought to be four holy candles burning at the four parts of the world. 187

If the Smiths really read pseudo-Agrippa as Quinn claims, we would expect their magic circles to parallel these descriptions by pseudo-Agrippa. Yet where in the anti-Mormon accounts do we find descriptions of sprinkling with holy water, fumigations, anointings with oil, sealing with sigils, prayers, use of white linens, wearing white garments, exorcisms, using a sanctified coal to make the circle, writing the names of angels and God in the circle, washing, fasting, praying to the east, reciting psalms, repetitions for seven days, holy candles, and rapid circumambulation within the circle until the magician collapses from dizziness and has an ecstatic vision? Since none of these things is mentioned in the anti-Mormon allegations of making magic circles, we can safely assume that the Smiths did not use pseudo-Agrippa as their source.

Barrett (1801). Barrett, a source Quinn repeatedly claims Joseph read, gives the following instructions for making a sword (not a dagger) to be used in drawing the magic circle. Quinn references this passage as evidence concerning the types of magic circles Joseph is alleged to have drawn (see p. 412 n. 25).

The operator ought to be clean and purified for nine days before he does the work. Let him have ready the perfume appropriated to the day wherein he does the work; and he must be provided with holy water from a clergyman, or he may make it holy himself, by reading over it the consecration

187. Ibid., 41–42.
of water of baptism; he must have a new vessel of earth, with fire, the vesture, and the pentacle; and let all these things be rightly and duly consecrated and prepared. Let one of the companions carry the vessel with fire, and the perfumes, and let another bear the book, the garment, and pentacle; and let the operator himself carry the sword, over which should be said a prayer of consecration: on the middle of the sword on one side let there be engraven Agla +, and on the other side, + On + Tetragrammaton +. And the place being fixed upon where the circle is to be erected, let him draw the lines we have before taught, and sprinkle the same with holy water, consecrating, &c. &c. 188

Notice that only a sword is mentioned, not a dagger. Additionally, the sword must have a specific inscription. 189 The Mars dagger does not have that inscription. On the other hand, Barrett’s discussion of the Mars symbols that are actually found on the Mars dagger is 140 pages away 190 and, as noted above, has nothing to do with the sword for drawing magic circles. Thus, while the sigils on the Mars dagger were probably based on Barrett’s section on talismans, they are not in any way related to Barrett’s discussion of the sword to be used to draw the magic circle! Quinn is arbitrarily conflating two quite distinct magical practices: talismanic magic and magic circles.

Note also that the purpose of the magic circle as described by Barrett is to protect the magician from the powers of demonic spirits he is trying to summon. Barrett informs us that “the greatest power is attributed to the circles, (for they are certain fortresses).” The circle is a “piece of ground for our defence, so that no spirit whatsoever shall be able to break these boundaries.” 191 Barrett nowhere mentions treasure hunting as a purpose for drawing the magic circle. According to Barrett, the magician stands inside the magic circle, which

189. See ibid., illustration facing 2:106.
191. Ibid., 2:105, 106.
will protect him from the spirits he summons. Treasure circles were
apparently designed to stake down the treasure and prevent spirits
from moving it. Thus, both the Stafford and Hamilton accounts cited
by Quinn mention making a circle of stakes because "the hid treasure
is wont to move" (pp. 46–47). Such stakes are not used in the magic
circles described by Barrett.

Furthermore, the number and size of the circles supposedly
drawn by the Smiths do not match the description or diagram in
Barrett, who says the magic circle consists of three concentric circles
with the largest about nine feet in diameter.\(^1\) The circle Stafford
alleges Joseph Sr. drew was a double (not triple) circle, the smaller
8–10 feet, with the larger 12–14 feet.\(^2\) Hamilton’s manuscript calls
for two circles of indeterminate size (see pp. 46–47). Likewise, the
Smiths are never said to have drawn magic words and symbols on
the ground in their circles as Barrett, Scot, and pseudo-Agrippa all
require.\(^3\)

Finally, the Smiths are never described as performing the com-
plex rituals associated with Barrett’s magic circle. Here is Barrett’s
description of what should be done to make a magic circle:

The forms of circles are not always one and the same,
but are changed according to the order of spirits that are to
be called, their places, times, days, and hours; for in making a
circle it ought to be considered in what time of the year,
what day, and what hour, what spirits you would call, and to
what star or region they belong, and what functions they
have: therefore, to begin with, let there be made three circles
of the latitude of nine feet, distant one from another about a
hand’s breadth. First, write in the middle circle the name of
the hour wherein you do the work; in the second place, write
the name of the angel of the hour; in the third place, the seal of
the angel of the hour; fourthly, the name of the angel that

\(^{1}\) See ibid., 106.

\(^{2}\) Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 46, cites Stafford’s account but inexplicably leaves out
the fact that Stafford describes two circles being drawn.

\(^{3}\) See Barrett, *The Magus*, diagram facing 2:106.
rules the day in which you work, and the names of his ministers; in the fifth place, the name of the present time; sixthly, the name of the spirits ruling in that part of time, and their presidents; seventhly, the name of the head of the sign ruling in the time; eighthly, the name of the earth, according to the time of working; ninthly, and for the compleating [sic] of the middle circle, write the name of the sun and moon, according to the said rule of time: for as the times are changed, so are the names: and in the outer circle let there be drawn, in the four angles, the names of the great presidential spirits of the air that day wherein you would do this work, viz. the name of the king and his three ministers. Without the circle, in the four angles, let pentagons be made. In the inner circle write four divine names, with four crosses interposed: in the middle of the circle, towards the east let be written Alpha; towards the west, Omega; and let a cross divide the middle of the circle. 195

If Stafford, who claims to have been an eyewitness, had seen Joseph Sr. performing such a complex and dramatic ritual, he surely would have mentioned something more about it in his account. Instead, he simply says that Joseph Sr. “walked around three times on the periphery of this last circle, muttering to himself something which I could not understand.”196 The Smiths are never described as doing anything like what Barrett requires. Nor, with the exception of Cole’s claim that Walters (not a Smith) used a “rusty sword,” are the Smiths ever mentioned as using “pentacles, perfumes, a sword, bible, paper, pen, and consecrated ink,” which Barrett says are “necessary hereunto” in making magic circles.197

To summarize, not only are the nineteenth-century anti-Mormon primary sources used by Quinn inconsistent among themselves in describing the magic circles the Smiths are alleged to have

195. Ibid., 2:105–6, emphasis in the original.
196. EMD 2:61.
drawn, they are also inconsistent—in terms of size, number, construction, purpose, materials, inscriptions, paraphernalia, and rituals—with the standard magical handbooks Quinn claims the Smiths used to learn how to make these magic circles. The only similarity is that they both happen to be circles.

“Adonay” on Magic Swords?

Quinn’s obfuscation and equivocation in this matter are further compounded in the following passage:

By Joseph Smith’s time, books and widely circulated manuscripts of ritual magic instructed that “Adonay” or one of the other names of God needed to be written on the blade of the magic sword or dagger. That was one of the requirements for seeking a treasure-trove, an important activity of young Joseph (see ch. 2). Combining the symbols of Mars with the Hebrew “Adonay” conforms precisely to the construction of a Mars talisman in The Magus by English occultist Francis Barrett. (pp. 70–71)

A number of serious problems are inherent in Quinn’s claim. What precisely are the “books and widely circulated manuscripts” Quinn believes support his thesis? He lists only three manuscripts from England (see p. 413 n. 33).198 He does not provide the names

198. Citing British Museum Add. MS 36,674, Rawlinson MS D253, Sloane MS 3851. One of these manuscripts, British Museum Add. MS 36,674, is a collection of thirteen different manuscripts or papers on the occult from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years 1900–1905 (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1907), 183–86. Quinn’s only citation is from “folio 16” (p. 413 n. 33), which would make it from the Key of Solomon or perhaps handwritten extracts from pseudo-Agrippa’s Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy. Far from being “widely circulated,” as Quinn claims, the Key of Solomon was not published before the death of Joseph, while manuscripts are “exceedingly rare.” Charles R. Beard, The Romance of Treasure Trove (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1933), 34. If Quinn is citing the Fourth Book, the printed edition of this book is precisely the very next source Quinn cites in his footnote. So why treat them as two separate sources? Quinn’s haphazard and inadequate citation of sources makes it impossible to understand what he is claiming to cite and difficult to formulate any critical reaction to his claims.
or dates for any of these. He provides no evidence that they were "widely circulated." He gives the names of no American magic manuscripts. It is simply absurd for us to believe that Joseph Smith went to England in the 1820s and consulted these documents.\(^{199}\)

Quinn also refers to a French book published in Rome in 1750. Did any member of the Smith family read French in the 1820s? He then cites Arthur Waite's *Book of Ceremonial Magic*, which does mention putting "Adonay" on magic swords, but only along with Agla and the Hebrew letters YHWH (Tetragrammaton), which do not appear on the Mars dagger.\(^{200}\) However, Waite's book was published in 1911, nearly seventy years after Joseph's death.\(^{201}\) This leaves, as even remotely plausible sources: pseudo-Agrippa's *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, Sibly's *Occult Sciences*, and Barrett's *Magus*, precisely the same sources Quinn cites for the dagger and magic circle. As we have noted above, none of these primary sources mentions writing "Adonay" on the magic sword as Quinn claims. Again, Quinn cites documents that were inaccessible to Joseph as the supposed sources for his magical knowledge.

Barrett instructs his readers to write "Agla," "On," and "Tetragrammaton" on the magic sword but does not mention Adonay.\(^{202}\) While Quinn is quite correct that "combining the symbols of Mars with the Hebrew 'Adonay' conforms precisely to the construction of a Mars talisman in *The Magus* by English occultist Francis Barrett" (pp. 70–71),\(^{203}\) he is citing Barrett's instructions for making a Mars

\(^{199}\) Or, perhaps this incident should be included in a forthcoming book Daniel Peterson and I are preparing, entitled *Joseph Smith: The Cambridge Years*.


\(^{201}\) Waite is also partially dependent on Barrett; see *Ceremonial Magic*, 222 n. 1.

\(^{202}\) Barrett, *The Magus*, 2:110. *Tetragrammaton* is a Greek name for the four Hebrew letters YHWH (Yahweh), translated as *Lord* or occasionally spelled Jehovah in the King James Old Testament. YHWH was not pronounced by the rabbis when reading the Old Testament; they substituted either Adonay (Hebrew for "Lord") or "ha-shem," meaning "the name." However, that Barrett meant to write the actual word *tetragrammaton* rather than its ultimate referent YHWH (or indirectly Adonay) is clear from his illustration, which shows the word *tetragrammaton* on the sword, facing 2:106.

talisman, not for making the magic sword. In other words, from reading Barrett, the inclusion of the word Adonay is what would be expected on the Mars dagger—a talisman made to grant victory in battle—but is not required to be written on the magic sword/dagger for drawing magic circles. The only reasonable conclusion is that the Mars dagger was not designed to draw magic circles.

*Key of Solomon.* Although it was extant only in manuscript in Joseph Smith’s day, Quinn repeatedly cites the *Key of Solomon* as a possible source for Joseph’s alleged magical information, including the magic dagger (see pp. 411–12 n. 25; 85, and index 611a for additional references). Here is the *Key of Solomon’s* discussion of how to make a magic dagger:

> The Knife with the white hilt (see Figure 61) should be made in the day and hour of Mercury, when Mars is in the Sign of the Ram or of the Scorpion. It should be dipped in the blood of a gosling and in the juice of the pimpernel, the Moon being at her full or increasing in light. Dip therein also the white hilt, upon the which thou shalt have engraven the Characters shown. Afterwards perfume it with the perfumes of the Art.  

> But as for the Knife with the black hilt (see Figure 62) for making the Circle, wherewith to strike terror and fear into the Spirits, it should be made in the same manner, except it should be done in the day and hour of Saturn, and dipped in the blood of a black cat and in the juice of hemlock, the Characters and Names shown in Figure 62 being written thereon, from the point towards the hilt. Which being completed, thou shalt wrap it in a black silk cloth.

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204. The text adds “with this knife thou mayest perform all the necessary Operations of the Art, except the Circles.” Yet this is precisely what Quinn claims Joseph Smith did with the dagger.

Even a cursory comparison of the Mars dagger with those illustrated in the *Key of Solomon* (see fig. 3) demonstrates that they are not the same.

Thus, according to all the evidence cited by Quinn as Joseph’s supposed sources, the word *Agla* must appear on the dagger or sword used to form the magic circle.206 That word does not appear on the Mars dagger. The only logical conclusion is that the Mars dagger was not used for making magic circles as Quinn claims. As noted above, it was rather a talismanic device designed to give military victory. Although Quinn is aware that magical daggers require special consecration and design (see p. 70), he does not inform his readers of those requirements nor of the fact that the Mars dagger does not match any of the very precise requirements found in all of his sources.

Magical Ritual for Treasure Hunting

Quinn makes only a halfhearted attempt to document the alleged connection between treasure-hunting circles and the magic swords and circles mentioned in his other sources. He claims “that [a dagger with the word Adonay on it] was one of the requirements for seeking treasure-trove, an important activity of young Joseph” (p. 70). His only source for this requirement is Charles R. Beard, *The Romance of Treasure Trove* (see p. 413 n. 34). Unfortunately, though,
Quinn's misrepresentations again obscure the reality of the sources he cites. It should be noted that Beard's chapter heading is "Treasure Hunting [in England] in the Sixteenth Century"—a quarter of a millennium and an ocean away from Joseph Smith's alleged activities. Could Quinn find no source for America in the early nineteenth century—during his supposed American occult revival? Apparently not. Beard notes that the beliefs and practices of treasure hunting in the sixteenth century did not endure. "Until the end of the seventeenth century the mediaeval and pre-mediaeval conception that every buried treasure possessed its elemental or demoniac guardian ... seems to have persisted." Thereafter there was a "transition to the belief in treasure haunted by a ghost, an earth-bound spirit." Thus Quinn cites evidence from sixteenth-century sources as reflective of beliefs of the early nineteenth century, despite the transition in belief and practice that Beard documents.

Here is a summary of Beard's account of the sixteenth-century treasure-hunting magic circle, which Quinn cites as reflective of early nineteenth-century practice.

One thing, however, would seem certain; they [treasure hunters] made, probably at fourth or fifth hand, very extensive use of the Clavicula Salomonis [Key of Solomon], and the chapter therein entitled—How to Render Thyself Master of a Treasure Possessed by the Spirits. Early copies of this, or for that matter of any of the pseudo-Solomonic books are exceedingly rare.

207. Beard, Treasure Trove, 73.
208. See Mathers, Key of Solomon, 51–52, for a translation of this passage.
209. Compare this with Quinn's unsubstantiated claim that such manuscripts were "widely circulated" (p. 70). Various forms of the Key of Solomon date back to at least the thirteenth century and are found in several manuscripts dating from the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries; Beard, Treasure Trove, 34–35; and Lynn Thorndike, History of Magic (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 2:279–81. Thorndike indicates that Sloane MS 3823 and 3847 are seventeenth-century English manuscripts of the Key of Solomon (see p. 281 n. 1). Mathers, Key of Solomon, is the only English translation of which I am aware; it is apparently not always fully reliable.
It was essential that the Mage and his assistants should be properly garbed.

The sword for the Art of Digging, which makes a frequent appearance in the accounts of treasure hunts of this period [the sixteenth century], was thus prepared. The weapon must be a new one, polished and cleaned. On the one side of the blade were inscribed in Hebrew characters the names Yod He Vau He, Adonai, Eheieh, and Yayai; on the face of the quillons, Elohim Gibor; and on the pom-mel Mikel.

The Sword was then wrapped in silk, duly purified and consecrated.

The Raiment was similarly decorated with words of power and hallowed by prayers. All the garments were either of white silk or linen. [Beard gives a number of magic sigils which are to appear on the clothing. Each robe of the magician and assistant must be] inscribed with the following characters: NOPA [sigil] PADOUS, written in the blood of a dead man who had died in the month of July. [The clothing must be] perfumed and suffumigated, and sprinkled with water and hyssop. When all things were prepared for the attempt, the treasure seeker went to the spot, where the hoard was supposed to lie, before sunrise upon a Sunday between the 10th of July and the 20th of August, and when the moon was in the sign of Leo.

210. Compare this with Cole’s claim of the use of a “rusty sword.” Note that Beard throughout speaks only of the use of a sword, which Quinn conveniently transforms into a “magic sword or dagger” (p. 70).

211. Here the term Adonay is mentioned, which does appear on the Mars dagger. However, none of the other words mentioned by Beard appears on the Mars dagger.

212. Compare this with Willard Chase’s claim that Joseph was ordered by Moroni to wear “black clothes” in order to obtain the plates, cited in MU 242 = EMD 2:66–67.

213. There are no accounts of magic sigils on the clothing of the Smiths while they were allegedly engaged in treasure hunting.

214. Joseph Smith found the golden plates on 22 September 1827 (History of the Church, 1:18 = JSH 1:59); he was therefore obviously not following the procedure outlined here.
Over the spot was suspended a lamp. The oil therein had to be mixed with the fat of the man who had died in the month of July, while the wick had to be made of some threads of his shroud.\textsuperscript{215}

This last passage merits a fuller translation from the \textit{Key of Solomon}:

On a Sunday before sunrise, between the 10th of July and the 20th of August, when the moon is in the Sign of the Lion, thou shalt go unto the place where thou shalt know either by interrogation of the Intelligences, or otherwise, that there is a treasure; there thou shalt describe a Circle of sufficient size with the Sword of Magical Art wherein to open up the earth, as the nature of the ground will allow; thrice during the day shalt thou cense it with the incense proper for the day, after which being clothed in the raiment proper for the Operation thou shalt suspend in some way by a machine immediately above the opening a lamp, whose oil should be mingled with the fat of a man who has died in the month of July, and the wick being made from the cloth wherein he has been buried. Having kindled this with fresh fire, thou shalt fortify the workmen with a girdle of the skin of a goat newly slain, whereon shall be written with the blood of the dead man from whom thou shalt have taken the fat these words and characters (\textit{see Figure} 10); and thou shalt set them to work in safety.\textsuperscript{216}

Since none of these activities is described in the sources Quinn cites to make his claim that the Smiths made magic circles to hunt treasures, the \textit{Key of Solomon} could not have been the source for the alleged magical practices of the Smiths.

\textsuperscript{215} Beard, \textit{Treasure Trove}, 34–38.
\textsuperscript{216} Mathers, \textit{Key of Solomon}, 51–52.
Summary on Magic Artifacts

The big problem for Quinn is that a dagger is usually just a dagger. Everyone in the nineteenth-century frontier had at least one, and most people had many. Some daggers were inscribed; others were not. Daggers were bought and sold just like any other tool and could easily pass from one owner to another. Given the data presented above, we do not know when, where, or how Hyrum obtained his dagger, or even if he really did. Since there is no documentation on the dagger until 1963, it could have been obtained by one of his descendants after his death and later accidentally confused with Hyrum’s heirlooms. We do not know what it meant to Hyrum (assuming he owned it). Was it simply a dagger with some strange marks? Was it a gift to him from a Masonic friend? All of this is speculation—but it is no more speculative than Quinn’s theories. Whatever the origin and purpose of the dagger, though, it is quite clear that, based on the evidence Quinn himself has presented, it does not match the magic daggers designed for making magic circles nor does it match the astrology of any of the Smiths.

In summary, it has become clear that numerous major errors of evidence and analysis remain in Quinn’s discussion of the magic circle and dagger.

1. The most straightforward reading of Lucy Mack Smith’s statement is that she denied that the Smiths were involved in making magic circles.
2. Most accounts of the Smiths’ alleged involvement in treasure hunting do not mention magical practices or circles.
3. Those accounts which do mention making circles do not necessarily describe the circles as magical, apparently understanding that the circles were designed simply to mark the area for digging.
4. The anti-Mormon accounts describing the Smiths as making magic circles are inconsistent in almost every detail.
5. The accounts describing the Smiths making magic circles are also inconsistent in almost every detail with the documents that Quinn claims are the sources from which the Smiths derived their knowledge of making magic circles.
6. No accounts claim the Smiths used a dagger to make a magic circle. In one account “Walters the Magician” (not Joseph Sr.) used a sword (not a dagger) to draw a magic circle.

7. The dagger Quinn claims was used for making magic circles is not, in fact, designed for making magic circles or treasure hunting. The Mars sigils on the dagger are designed for granting victory over enemies in battle or litigation.

8. Quinn confuses a circle designed to stake treasure with the classical magic circle of ceremonial magic for protection from conjured spirits.

9. The astrological sigil on the dagger is for Scorpio, not for Mars.

10. Contrary to Quinn’s claim, Joseph Smith Sr. was not born under the “governing planet” of Mars. Rather, he was born under the Moon. None of the Smiths was born under Mars.

11. The only evidence Quinn provides as a source for the idea of a “planet governing the year” dates to 1870, long after the death of Joseph Smith Sr.

12. Nothing in the sources Quinn cites states that the magic circle dagger should have a sigil for the “planet governing the year” on the dagger.

13. The Mars dagger was not designed to draw magic circles.

From a careful examination of the evidence, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. The Smiths may have been involved in treasure hunting in the 1820s.217

2. They may have believed in some of the superstitions and folklore surrounding treasure hunting.

3. There is no evidence of the practice of the sophisticated type of high magic that Quinn claims they used; the fact that they are never described as properly performing the rituals is strong indication that they did not read the books Quinn claims they read.

217. For a careful and intelligent discussion of the subject, see Anderson, “The Mature Joseph Smith,” 489–560. The entire issue of BYU Studies in which Anderson’s article appears has a number of helpful articles on the topic.
4. The dagger in the possession of Hyrum Smith's descendants was not designed for drawing magic circles nor was it astrologically connected to Joseph Smith Sr. nor any of the Smith family. There is no evidence that it was used for treasure hunting.

5. If the anti-Mormon accounts Quinn cites describing the Smiths making magic circles are accurate, then it is quite clear that the Smiths did not consult the high magic books Quinn claims they were voraciously reading at this very time. Much of the rest of Quinn's case, which depends on Joseph's having read these high magic books, therefore collapses. If the anti-Mormon accounts are not accurate, then there is no evidence for the Smiths making magic circles. Either way, Quinn's flimsy structure of speculation is seriously weakened.

Only someone fundamentally unfamiliar with the primary sources for ceremonial magic would be impressed by Quinn's case.

The Jupiter Talisman

Quinn's discussion of Joseph's alleged use of the Jupiter talisman rests on equally dubious foundations. Once again he presents absolutely no primary reference in Joseph Smith's writings, nor in the writings of his close contemporaries, nor even in those of anti-Mormons, to suggest that Joseph practiced, believed in, or even knew anything about talismanic magic. Quinn's entire argument rests on an extremely feeble set of coincidences mixed with exaggerations and misrepresentations of the evidence.

The alleged astrological connections between Joseph Smith and the Jupiter talisman rest at the foundation of Quinn's case for Joseph's use of the talisman (see pp. 71–72). Since no primary references in Joseph's writings indicate a belief in or practice of magic or astrology, Quinn must resort to drawing inferences. I have already discussed the dubious connection between the Mars dagger and Joseph Smith Sr. Quinn's discussion of the connection between Joseph Smith and the astrology of the Jupiter talisman is equally weak.

218. See pp. 297–306 above.
Quinn repeatedly claims that Jupiter was the “ruling planet of his [Joseph’s] birth” (pp. 72, 81, 143). Is this really the case? In fact, as Quinn admits in passing, according to the standard contemporary interpretations of astrology, Joseph was born under Saturn, not Jupiter (see pp. 71, 414 n. 42). Whereas Quinn provides several contemporary sources confirming the standard astrological interpretation (see p. 414 n. 42), he provides no contemporary sources that claim that Joseph was born under Jupiter.\(^1\) Instead, he tells us—in a note—that Jupiter is Joseph’s governing planet when “calculated according to instructions” from Paul Christian in his 1870 book *History and Practice of Magic* (see 414 n. 43).\(^2\) This is precisely the same book used by Quinn to attempt to connect the Mars dagger with Joseph Smith Sr. Whereas in Joseph Sr.’s case Quinn miscalculated or misrepresented, he does have the calculations for Joseph Jr. correct. Joseph Jr. was born under the governing planet of Jupiter according to Paul Christian’s 1870 calculations.\(^2\)

We thus know where Quinn derived his information supposedly connecting Joseph with Jupiter. But, it seems fair to ask a very simple question: From what contemporary source does Quinn believe Joseph obtained the idea that he was born in a year governed by Jupiter? Quinn provides none. Let me repeat: Quinn provides no contemporary primary source from which Joseph could have learned of his supposed astrological connection with Jupiter. In reality, it doesn’t matter what planet Quinn thinks Joseph was born under. It

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\(^1\) Quinn rightly notes that, according to alternative methods of astrological interpretation, the planet ruling the first decan of Capricorn is Jupiter (see pp. 71–72). For astrologers, the sky is divided into 360 degrees of a circle. This is divided into twelve signs of the zodiac of 30 degrees each and is also divided into 36 “decans,” or units of ten degrees. Thus each sign of the zodiac is divided into three decans. See Rupert Gleadow, *The Origin of the Zodiac* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 182–86, and Fred Gettings, *Dictionary of Astrology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 91. Quinn provides no contemporary source from which he believes Joseph obtained a knowledge of the decans.

\(^2\) Unfortunately for his readers, Quinn does not provide the publication dates for two of the three sources in his note 43. Rather, they are given in note 38 on page 413. Thus, the discrepancy in dating is effectively hidden from the average reader. Quinn also refers us to books published in 1892 and 1939 (see p. 414 n. 43), which were equally inaccessible to the Smiths in the 1820s.

\(^2\) See pp. 304–6 above for a discussion.
matters what planet Joseph thought he was born under (assuming he ever had any such thought at all). The fact that Joseph never mentions astrology or his birth planet would lead most historians to conclude that Joseph either didn’t know his planetary sign or didn’t care about such things. Thus it is only through a serious sleight of hand that Quinn can assert that Joseph was born under Jupiter. Without this subterfuge—citing sources deriving only from after Joseph’s death as the only proposed source for an astrological interpretation that supposedly guided Joseph’s life—there is no astrological or magical connection between Joseph Smith and the Jupiter talisman.

The second problem with Quinn’s analysis is that the Jupiter sigil on the talisman was not meant to indicate the birth month (or year) as Quinn claims but was designed to draw down the magical powers of Jupiter upon anyone—whatever their astrological sign—who wanted “to gain riches and favour, love, peace, and concord, and to appease enemies, and to confirm honours, dignities, and counsels.”222 Quinn claims that it is designed specifically for someone born under the sign of Jupiter. In reality, the talisman was to be made at an astrological time “with Jupiter being powerful and ruling in the heavens.”223 The sigils of Jupiter refer not to the birth astrology of the user but to the astrological time when the talisman should be made. This does not demonstrate that Joseph did not make or use the talisman, since it could have been used by anyone, born under any astrological sign. But it does demonstrate that Quinn’s repeated claims that the talisman was uniquely astrologically linked to Joseph are flatly wrong. Quinn simply doesn’t know what he is talking about.

At this point it is worthwhile to examine carefully the assumptions surrounding the interpretation of the Jupiter talisman. There are really only two issues: (1) did Joseph own the Jupiter talisman? and (2) if so, did he ever use it for magical purposes? There is no

222. Barrett, The Magus, 1:143. Unlike the dagger, the Jupiter talisman does have the standard astrological sign for Jupiter (which looks vaguely like a handwritten number four) on both sides of the talisman. However, the larger sigils that Quinn discusses (see pp. 71–72 figs. 27–30) are for the talismanic power, not for the astrological power of Jupiter.

contemporary evidence whatsoever that allows us to answer either of these two questions. Any interpretation rests on assumptions about the talisman's meaning to Joseph Smith, rather than on firm evidence. Only one late source—Charles Bidamon—claims that Joseph owned the talisman (see pp. 82–83). Quinn provides no source indicating that any early Mormon understood the silver piece within its original magical context.

Thus the only evidence we have linking Joseph with the talisman is the thirdhand account of Charles Bidamon, who claimed to have heard about the talisman from Emma.

This [silver] piece came to me through the relationship of my father Major L. C. Bidamon who married the Prophet Joseph Smith's 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 Prophet's pocket when he was martyred at Carthage. (p. 82)

There are two ways in which Bidamon's story could be corroborated. First, Bidamon claimed that Emma Smith talked about the talisman "many times . . . when being interviewed." If this is true, why is the talisman never mentioned in any of the published interviews of Emma Smith? Second, Bidamon claimed that the talisman "was in the Prophet's pocket when he was martyred." Yet "a detailed inventory" of the Prophet's personal effects upon his death "names no item like the Bidamon talisman." Thus, despite ample opportunity, there is no corroboration for Bidamon's story.

224. Quinn provides different versions of Bidamon's claims, one from 1902 and one from 1938, but they each tell variations on the same story. Of course Bidamon was able to sell the talisman only because of his claim that it had once belonged to Joseph Smith.


226. Anderson, "The Mature Joseph Smith," 541. See Quinn's feeble attempted response to Anderson (see p. 86). Quinn claims the inventory list of the Prophet's possessions was incomplete because it did not include the pistol Joseph had in Carthage Jail. Of course, the pistol was dropped when Joseph was shot and fell through the window and would not have been on his person, and therefore would not have been inventoried among his personal possessions. Quinn's second objection is that the talisman would have been missed in the inventory because it was "concealed under his shirt next to the
Furthermore, no evidence indicates that either Bidamon or any early Mormons understood or described the metal disk as a magical talisman. Rather they understood it as a "medal," a "pocketpiece," or a "jewel," which was repeatedly noted for its Latin invocation to God (pp. 82–83) rather than its supposed magical potency. If Bidamon and all early Mormons did not know of the magical background of the talisman, why should we assume that Joseph Smith uniquely did? If Emma—the earliest source we have as reported indirectly through Bidamon—thought it was simply a pocketpiece, why should we assume that Joseph did not also believe it was simply a pocketpiece, especially since the talisman was expressly said to have been found in Joseph's pocket, while the hole in the talisman indicates it was to be worn around the neck for magical purposes (see Quinn, figs. 27–28). If Bidamon is accurately reporting Emma's statements about the talisman, then the only direct evidence we have indicates that Joseph did not use the talisman for magical purposes. If Bidamon is mistaken about Emma's account, the connection between Joseph and the talisman is severely undermined, if not completely shattered.

Richard Anderson's analysis still stands as the best interpretation, grounded firmly on the evidence: "Joseph's possession of the talisman at any point of his life cannot be proved, nor can the talisman's meaning to him be explained, if he used it... If he ever favored the coin, it could be for its divine names and the prayer alone."227 The silver piece had pious invocations of God in Latin and Hebrew. Joseph may have found it interesting for that reason. The astrological sigils may simply have been strange squiggles. Perhaps it was given to him by his Masonic friends as an emblem to be worn in Masonic ceremonies.228 Since the talisman is silver, for all we know Joseph may

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228. Wilford Wood believed that the talisman was a "Masonic Jewel" (p. 83). I am not here arguing that the original purpose of the talisman and dagger was Masonic; the origin and original purpose of the silver piece was for talismanic magic. However, this does not mean that Joseph, if he owned it, understood it in magical terms.
have been given the piece only a few days before the martyrdom as payment by someone who owed him some small change but had no cash. Of course, this is all mere speculation, but, once again, it is no more speculative than Quinn's elaborate theories requiring Joseph's intense reading in arcane and obscure magic books.

Quinn objects that if we question the possible authenticity of the Jupiter talisman, we must necessarily reject the authenticity of all the other Bidamon artifacts (see p. 89). Quinn lists a number of Joseph Smith's artifacts that Bidamon had. He then concludes, "the authenticity of all the other items in Bidamon's transfer also gives overwhelming support to the authenticity of the Jupiter talisman" (p. 89). If Quinn really believes this, I've got a bridge in Brooklyn I'd like to sell him. From time immemorial the first step in the confidence game is to gain the confidence of the "mark." A certain Mark Hofmann is somewhat noted in Mormon circles for having sold authentic items along with his forgeries. By Quinn's historical methodology, all of Hofmann's forgeries must be authentic simply because some of the things he sold were authentic.²²⁹

Quinn then attempts to link the Jupiter talisman with the ceremonial magic the Smiths were supposedly practicing in the 1820s. "The influential manuscript 'Key of Solomon' defined a Jupiter talisman's use strictly in terms of ceremonial magic: 'This defendeth and protecteth those who invoke and cause the Spirits to come'" (p. 85).²³⁰ But, as anyone who makes an even cursory glance at the Jupiter talisman in the Key of Solomon (see fig. 4, p. 332) can tell, it is different from the one described in Barrett's book (see fig. 5, p. 333), which Bidamon said was the same as the one that once belonged to Joseph Smith.²³¹ The Jupiter talisman Joseph is said to have owned is never described by Barrett as being used in ceremonial magic. The different

²²⁹. Since I will no doubt be misinterpreted, let me clarify my position. Personally, I suspect that Joseph did, in fact, own the talisman. However, it is possible that some of the Bidamon artifacts, including the talisman, might not be authentic; this issue merits further investigation.

²³⁰. Citing Mathers, Key of Solomon, 69 [actually on p. 63]. Two of the sigils are related, but the inscriptions are different and the magic square is not found on the Key of Solomon version.

²³¹. See Mathers, Key of Solomon, 63 and 65 fig. 20.
Jupiter "pentacle" of the Key of Solomon is used for ceremonial magic. For Quinn this is somehow evidence that the Barrett talisman was used for ceremonial magic. Quinn is fabricating this connection in an attempt to bolster his feeble case.

Amulets, Charms, and Talismans

Quinn further attempts to support his case by citing what he maintains is a positive reference to amulets, charms, and talismans in Joseph's writings (see pp. 269–71). A careful examination of the evidence, however, shows that Quinn is exaggerating—at best. His source for his only alleged positive reference to the occult in early Mormon writings is a short article in the Times and Seasons. Because I will argue that Quinn is misreading this source, I will present the entire article here for the reader's evaluation. The article is a reprint from Josiah Priest's American Antiquities,232 which in turn is comprised largely of quotations from Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews.233

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232. See Josiah Priest, American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West (Albany, N.Y.: Hofmann and White, 1835), 68–70, emphasis in the original. There were six printings between 1833 and 1842; it is not clear which edition the Times and Seasons is quoting.

From Priest’s American Antiquities.

If such may have been the fact, that a part of the Ten Tribes came over to America, in the way we have supposed, leaving the cold regions of Assareth behind them in quest of a milder climate, it would be natural to look for tokens of the presence of Jews of some sort, along countries adjacent to the Atlantic. In order to [do] this, we shall here make an extract from an able work: written exclusively on the subject of the Ten Tribes having come from Asia by the way of Bering’s Strait, by the Rev. Ethan Smith, Pultney, Vt., who relates as follows: "Joseph Merrick, Esq., a highly respectable character in the church at Pittsfield, gave the following account: That in 1815, he was leveling some ground under and near an old wood shed, standing on a place of his, situated on Indian Hill.

He ploughed and conveyed away old chips and earth to some depth. After the work was done, walking over the place,
he discovered, near where the earth had been dug the deepest, a black strap as it appeared, about six inches in length, and one and a half in breadth, and about the thickness of a leather trace to a harness.

He perceived it had at each end a loop of some hard substance, probably for the purpose of carrying it. He conveyed it to his house, and threw it into an old tool box. He afterwards found it thrown out of doors, and he again conveyed it to the box. After some time he thought he would examine it; but in attempting to cut it found it as hard as a bone; he succeeded, however in getting it open, and found it was formed of two pieces of thick raw-hide, sewed and made water tight with the sinews of some animal; and in the fold was contained four folded pieces of parchment. They were of a dark yellow hue, and contained some kind of writing. The neighbors coming in to see the strange discovery, tore one of the pieces to atoms, in the true Hun and Vandal style. The other three pieces Mr. Merrick saved, and sent them to Cambridge,—where they were examined, and discovered to have been written with a pen in Hebrew, plain and legible.

The writing on the three remaining pieces of parchment, was quotations from the Old Testament. See Deut. vi. chap. from the 4th to the 9th verse, inclusive—also, xi. chap. 13—21, and Exodus, chap. 13—13—11,—16 inclusive, to which the reader can refer, if he has the curiosity to read this most interesting discovery. These passages as quoted above, were found in the strap of raw hide; which unquestionably had been written on the very pieces of parchment now in the possession of the Antiquarian Society, before Israel left the land of Syria, more than 2,500 years ago.

Dr. West of Stockbridge, relates that an old Indian informed him, that his fathers in this country had not long since, been in the possession of a book, which they had for a long time, carried with them, but having lost the knowledge of reading it, they buried it with an Indian chief—View of the Hebrews, p. 223.
It had been handed down from family to family, or from chief to chief as a most precious relic, if not as an amulet, charm, or talisman, for it is not to be supposed, that a distinct knowledge of what was contained in the strap could have long continued among them, in their wandering condition, amid woods and forests.

"It is said by Calmet, that the above texts [referring to the biblical passages mentioned above] are the very passages of Scripture, which the Jews used to write on the leaves of their phylacteries. These phylacteries were little rolls of parchment whereon were written certain words of the law. These they wore upon their forehead, and upon the wrist of the left arm”—Smith's view of the Hebrews, p. 220.

For Quinn, the significance of this passage is that "the LDS president [Joseph Smith] selected quotes that introduced his Mormon readers to Indian artifacts with occult meanings" (p. 269), thereby demonstrating Joseph's "affinity for the occult" (p. 270).

This is arrant nonsense. First, we cannot be certain that Joseph actually made the decision to excerpt this passage. Although he was the editor-in-chief of the paper in June 1842, John Taylor was the actual managing editor on a day-to-day basis. So, did Joseph select this article for publication? Or was it John Taylor? We cannot know for sure. But let's give Quinn the benefit of the doubt and assume for the sake of argument that it was Joseph who selected this text.

Second, it must be emphasized that, contra Quinn, even if Joseph did select this passage for reprinting, the use of the phrase amulet, charm, or talisman does not represent Joseph Smith's own language, but rather a quotation from Priest. It cannot, therefore, be taken to represent Joseph's ideas or his description of the artifacts.

Third, the only real issue is this: why did Joseph (if it was Joseph) choose to include this excerpt? What was the goal of reprinting this article? As noted above, Quinn claims that “the LDS president selected quotes that introduced his Mormon readers to Indian artifacts with occult meanings” (p. 269). For Quinn this passage demonstrates that “Joseph Smith . . . had affinity for the occult” (p. 270). Is this what is really going on?

As anyone reading the entire article can tell, the passage is not really “about ‘amulet,’ ‘charm,’ and ‘talisman,’” (p. 271) as Quinn claims. Rather, this passage was excerpted because it describes the discovery of Hebrew biblical texts among the Indians, paralleling the discovery of the Book of Mormon and possibly supporting its authenticity. It is an early attempt to provide archaeological support for the Book of Mormon. The focus of the article is surely not the importance of an amulet, which is mentioned only in passing. The focus is on Hebrew writing among the Indians. This is quite clearly manifest by the typographical emphasis put on the word book in the excerpt from the Times and Seasons. In Priest’s original, the word is written in normal font, while in the Times and Seasons version it is written in italic font for emphasis. Care was taken to write all other words in precisely the font in which they appear in Priest’s original.236 Thus the editor of the Times and Seasons wanted to emphasize the idea that a Hebrew book had been found among the Indians. The words “amulet,” “charm,” and “talisman”—which Quinn believes were the real point of the article—were not italicized by the editor.

What, then, is Priest’s real attitude towards the “amulet, charm, or talisman”? Why are these words mentioned? Quinn insists that there is “the absence of even an editorial hint [by Joseph Smith] of disapproval about the magic artifacts” (p. 271).237 This, however, is simply wrong. Quinn can claim there is no hint of disapproval only

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236. All words in Priest’s passage are in Roman font except Indian Hill (see p. 68), four (p. 69), Hebrew (see p. 69), View of the Hebrews (see p. 69), and Smith’s view of the Hebrews (see p. 70). The same words are italicized in the Times and Seasons extract. The only word italicized in the Times and Seasons extract but not italicized in Priest’s original is the word book.

237. But then, there are no editorial comments of any kind by Joseph.
because he chose not to quote it to his readers. Here is Priest’s original passage, with the phrase quoted by Quinn in bold type:

> It [the Hebrew writing] had been handed down from family to family [among the Indians], or from chief to chief as a most precious relic, if not as an amulet, charm, or talisman, for it is not to be supposed, that a distinct knowledge of what was contained in the strap could have long continued among them [the Indians], in their wandering condition, amid woods and forests.

Why did Quinn leave out the last half of this sentence? Priest is clearly stating that the Indians had lost knowledge of the original contents and purpose of their Hebrew writings and that it had therefore been reduced among them to the status of a talisman or amulet. For Quinn, the point of the whole passage is that the discoveries were “magic artifacts,” and that is why Joseph was interested in the passage: here is a discovery of a talisman just like the one Joseph allegedly had. But, as the full article makes clear, the artifacts are not actually magical talismans all, but Hebrew phylacteries (Hebrew *tefillin*), which the Indians, in their ignorance, *mistakenly believed* were magical talismans because they had lost “a distinct knowledge” of their original purpose. This is made perfectly clear by the last paragraph of the article in the *Times and Seasons*, which Quinn also chose to ignore:

> “It is said by Calmet, that the above texts [Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21; and Exodus 13:11–16 found in the excavation] are the very passages of Scripture, which the Jews used to write on the leaves of their phylacteries. These phylacteries were little rolls of parchment whereon were written certain words of the law. These they wore upon their forehead, and upon the wrist of the left arm.”

238. “From Priest’s American Antiquities,” *Times and Seasons* 3 (1 June 1842): 814; the passages mentioned are indeed three of the four written on phylacteries, the other being Exodus 13:1–10. See Yaakov Gartner, “Tefillin,” in *ODIR*, 679–80.
Thus, when read in context, without benefit of Quinn's selective quotation and commentary, the point of the passage is clear. Ancient Jewish phylacteries had been discovered among the Indians. This was seen as evidence of Jewish contacts or descent among the Indians, precisely as stated by the Book of Mormon. The point is not that "magic artifacts" were found, as Quinn claims, but that Jewish phylacteries with Hebrew writing had been discovered, which the Indians mistakenly thought were "magic artifacts."

The X-ed Files: Paranoia and Conspiracy Theory

For Quinn, this discovery of the word talisman in a passage from a book reprinted by Joseph Smith is somehow a grand vindication of his theory. Without any apparent sense of irony, he spends much of his discussion of this issue accusing me of previously suppressing this vital new evidence. For a review of John Brooke's Refiner's Fire, my colleagues and I conducted a computer word search for some of the key occult terms that Brooke claims were foundational in the origin of Mormonism.239 Quinn maintains that:

As editor of the church's periodical Joseph Smith published a reprint about "amulet," "charm," and "talisman" that did not support their [Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton's] conclusions. At best (from the FARMS point of view), the LDS president's attitude in this example was neutral toward these magic artifacts. At worst, this Times and Seasons reference actually seemed approving in two ways: first, in Smith's choice of this "extract" from all others he could have selected, and second in the absence of even an editorial hint of disapproval about the magic artifacts emphasized by his selection. (p. 271)

As he typically does, Quinn attacks his critics as dishonest. "Why did the FARMS study," he asks rhetorically, "not acknowledge the existence of 'charm' and two other common terms of magic and the oc-

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cult \textit{[amulet and talisman]} in one sentence from a publication included in this 'computer search'" (p. 270). Rather than paying attention to what we actually wrote, Quinn attempts to read our minds:

I think the answer lies in the intent of William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson and George L. Mitton to present only the evidence which supported their generalization: "on the infrequent occasions when ['early Mormons'] mentioned the occult, it is without exception viewed negatively." (pp. 270–71)

Quinn insists that we presented only those findings which supported their effort to disassociate magic practices and beliefs from Joseph Smith and early LDS publications. If their key-word search did not actually include "amulet," "charm," and "talisman" at some point, this oversight occurred because these FARMS authors did not want to find those terms in early LDS publications. If those terms were included, these FARMS authors deceived their readers. (p. 271)

But the diabolical plot goes even deeper:

There was an even more compelling reason why this 1994 study did not refer to the Mormon prophet's 1842 reprint.... For a decade before this computer study's publication, various FARMS authors had denied that Joseph Smith possessed a Jupiter talisman.... It would not be helpful for the FARMS agenda to alert readers to the founding prophet's use of this amulet-talisman-parchment reference in \textit{Times and Seasons}. (p. 271)

Quinn thus evokes a fantasy world with FARMS authors quaking in terror that the truth might get out, scurrying about trying to suppress any evidence supporting his thesis.\footnote{One wonders why Quinn himself suppressed this valuable piece of evidence in the first edition of his book. (This material, on pp. 269–71 in the second edition, is not found at the corresponding location in the first edition, p. 211.) Was there a secret plot by "Signature authors" to suppress this important evidence?}
Quinn cites three sources representing this alleged decade-long FARMS plot to suppress the truth, maintaining that "FARMS authors had denied that Joseph Smith possessed a Jupiter talisman" (p. 271, emphasis added). The first participant in this plot is Richard L. Anderson in a 1984 article published by BYU Studies—which in Quinn's magic worldview is apparently a fully owned subsidiary of FARMS. While highly skeptical that Joseph owned the talisman, Anderson nevertheless states, "Joseph's possession of the talisman at any point in his life cannot be proved, nor can the talisman's meaning to him be explained, if he used it. . . . If he ever favored the coin, it could be for its divine names and the prayer alone. 241 This is hardly the denial Quinn claims. Rather it is a cautious and sound conclusion solidly based on evidence rather than speculation.

The second author, Stephen Robinson, also wrote in (the FARMS publication?) BYU Studies. Does Robinson deny that Joseph owned the talisman? No. Again he is merely skeptical. "There is insufficient evidence to prove that the artifact ever belonged to the Prophet. . . . The real empirical evidence here is just too weak to prove that the coin was really Joseph's." 242

Finally, Quinn raises the specter of the abominable Louis Midgley, 243 who penned a wonderfully entitled article, "Playing with Half a Decker," which (for once) actually appeared in a FARMS publication. 244 Surely Midgley must make the denial Quinn claims all three made. But here Quinn doesn't even get the page right, citing Midgley's page 117 note 1 (see p. 553 n. 252), which doesn't mention the talisman at all. Later in the article—which is a critique of an anti-Mormon's dissertation—Midgley does note in passing that "Quinn

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243. "In my opinion," Quinn informs his readers, "Midgley is an LDS polemicist without scruples, willing to say anything to attack whomever he regards as an opponent" (p. 401 n. 228).
takes for granted, for example, that Joseph Smith owned a Jupiter talisman and so forth, which is iffy at best. Once again, this is not a denial that Joseph owned the talisman, only a healthy skepticism. For Quinn, it appears that if you are even skeptical of his methods and conclusions, you are denying the truth.

It further appears that if you have ever written an article for FARMS, you are forever tainted as a "FARMS author." Not only that, but all of your scholarly writings, even works written before receiving the mark of the Beast, have now miraculously become FARMS publications. This is cultural Mormon McCarthyism at its finest: "Are you now writing or have you ever written an article for FARMS?" Throughout his book Quinn is seemingly obsessed with criticisms of his work that have appeared in FARMS publications. In these two pages alone (see pp. 270-71), he speaks of "writing on behalf of FARMS," the "FARMS article," "FARMS authors" (four times), the "FARMS point of view," and a "FARMS agenda." Quinn's paranoia rises to the point where he insists on the existence of a FARMS editorial plot to attack him: "Every time FARMS reviewers quote me in support of a faith-promoting position," he insists, "the FARMS format requires putting the statement in a footnote and attaching a disclaimer" (p. 330 n. 13, emphasis added). It is quite clear that he is using the label FARMS as a term of opprobrium: an ad hominem

245. Ibid., 143 n. 55.
246. Quinn notes that Robinson has written one book review for FARMS (see p. 553 n. 252), thereby justifying his repeated description as a "FARMS author" (pp. 271, 309, 407 n. 3, 518 n. 303).
247. Quinn cites only two examples of this supposed "FARMS format," which is used "every time" his name is mentioned. One is by me, and I can definitively state that I included the phrase not under pressure of any FARMS editorial policy, but for rhetorical effect, by noting that even someone who is widely known for his strong opposition to traditional LDS doctrine and history agrees with the proposition in question. Quinn's other example comes from Daniel C. Peterson who, in a personal conversation, assured me that his phrase that Quinn "can scarcely be dismissed as an apologist for the Church" was used for precisely the same reason. As chairman of the board of FARMS and editor of the FARMS Review of Books, Dr. Peterson also informs me that there is absolutely no FARMS editorial policy regarding the necessity of using disclaimers when mentioning the name of D. Michael Quinn in FARMS publications in a faith-promoting context.
moniker. Hence his insistence that Anderson and Robinson are "FARMS authors," even though their statements were not published in a FARMS publication. While he graciously acknowledges—in a footnote—that "not all FARMS reviewers write polemically" (p. 352 n. 98), his overall attitude is that if an article is published by FARMS, it should not be taken seriously.  

To return to the original issue: In reality, Peterson, Mitton, and I did not discover Quinn's passage mentioning an Indian "talisman" because we did not search for the terms *amulet*, *charm*, or *talisman*. This should have been obvious to Quinn. We stated quite clearly that our search was "not exhaustive" but rather "admittedly incomplete."  

We did not claim to have searched for every conceivable occult term. Furthermore, we provided a list of the specific terms we searched for, and *amulet*, *charm*, and *talisman* were not among them.  

Why did we not do a computer search for Quinn's three terms? Was it because we "did not want to find those terms" (p. 271), fearing to "alert readers to the founding prophet's use of" the words (p. 271)? Hardly. Rather, it is because we were reviewing Brooke's book, not Quinn's. We therefore searched for keywords that were important to Brooke's argument, not Quinn's. And none of those three terms occurs in Brooke's index nor are they fundamental to his argument.  

To demonstrate that I am not concerned about the results of a broader computer search in early Mormon documents for the words *talisman* and *amulet*, I have now made such a search. As before,
I searched History of the Church, Journal of Discourses, Times and Seasons, Messenger and Advocate, Evening and Morning Star, and the Elder's Journal. In fact, to show my confidence, I'll add a few more of Quinn's key terms. The following table presents my findings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>talisman(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Times and Seasons 3:814²⁵²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amulet(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Times and Seasons 3:814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magic circle</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hex</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lamen</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sigil</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus the only reference to talisman and amulet is the passage in question from the Times and Seasons. This is hardly supportive of Quinn's case.

There was also a reference to "divining rod."

The High Council, with my brother Hyrum [Smith] 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. On hearing the case, the council decided to confirm the decision of Bishop Evans.²⁵³

In other words, a wayward member of the church was ordered by Hyrum Smith to stop using a divining rod—hardly what you would expect from the man with the magic dagger.

What are we to conclude from this? That it demonstrates the great interest of Joseph and the other early Mormons in the occult? Or that it demonstrates that they were not interested in those subjects at all? By comparison, in the Times and Seasons alone the name Jesus

²⁵². There was a passing mention of a steamboat named Talisman, Evening and Morning Star (June 1832): 7.
²⁵³. History of the Church, 5:311–12.
occurs 1,165 times. Which should we presume was more significant in understanding the beliefs and practices of Joseph Smith: one reference to a talisman—from a quotation with a negative perspective—or 1,165 to Jesus?

Instead of fantasizing about nefarious evidence-suppressing plots at FARMS, Quinn should have done such a computer search himself and clearly presented the results. I believe he actually did, which is how he obtained this reference to amulets in *Times and Seasons*, which reference does not appear in his first edition. If he didn’t do this type of search, why didn’t he? If he did do it, why did he not clearly present the overwhelmingly negative results of such a search?

Thus, in reality, that this is the best reference Quinn could discover for Joseph’s supposed approval of the occult actually demonstrates quite the opposite of the conclusion he would like his readers to draw: the occult was not important for Joseph Smith and his associates.

### 4. A Test Case: Kabbalah

Claims of possible kabbalistic influences on Joseph Smith are of very recent origin. Although Quinn’s first edition (1987) mentions Kabbalah in passing, no claim was made that Kabbalah had a major influence on the ideas of Joseph Smith. Likewise, Brooke’s 1994 *Refiner’s Fire* gives only passing notice to kabbalistic ideas, again positing no major influence on Joseph. This situation changed, however, with the publication of Lance Owens’s article, “Joseph Smith and Kabbalah,” in the fall 1994 issue of *Dialogue*. Quinn immediately and uncritically accepted Owens’s thesis. According to

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254. Throughout my analysis I will follow the standard modern scholarly spelling of Kabbalah. Alternate spellings include: Qabalah, Cabala, Cabbala, etc., which may appear in quotations.


Quinn, in the King Follett Discourse Joseph “begins the discussion by interpreting the Hebrew for ‘In the beginning, created God,’ in a manner only extant in the opening paragraphs of the Zohar. . . . Smith undoubtedly has learned this from the Jewish convert Alexander Neibauer.” In 1996 I published an extensive critique of Owens’s thesis, causing Quinn to reconsider his position. Now, in his second edition of Early Mormonism, Quinn agrees with my fundamental position “denying that the Mormon prophet examined those previously published [Hebrew and Aramaic] texts of the Cabala” (p. 302), as claimed by Owens. This is real progress.

Unfortunately, Quinn refuses to give up the battle. Following my methodological recommendation that people seeking kabbalistic and, by extension, other occult influences on Joseph should seek English “primary sources [which] were available” to Joseph, Quinn makes an attempt to prove that Joseph was influenced by kabbalistic thought, but from English sources (see pp. 296–306) rather than the obscure non-English sources originally proposed by Owens. Because I am acquainted with the various aspects of this ongoing debate, I will use this topic as a detailed test case to examine Quinn’s methodology and reliability. Since this section of Quinn’s book was added to the second edition, it should have benefited from his mature consideration, study, and revision and should therefore represent his best thinking on the subject of occult influences on early Mormonism. I will therefore examine nearly all of Quinn’s points in his section on Kabbalah in some detail.

258. Ibid., 643. Although Quinn provides no source for this passage, he is clearly summarizing Owens’s article, which he cites on 265 n. 1.
260. Ibid., 318; Quinn notes that he “agree[s] with Hamblin” on this issue (p. 302).
261. I have skipped a discussion of Quinn’s claim that Joseph’s understanding of Elijah/Elias came from the kabbalists (see p. 300); that the idea of the light of Christ filling the immensity of space came from the kabbalists (see pp. 301–2)—where, one might reasonably ask, do the Jewish kabbalists talk of Christ?—and kabbalistic influences on that all-important Mormon idea of transmigration of souls (see pp. 302–3), both because of the trivial nature of the claims and because of the increasing risk of terminal boredom from writing this article.
English Kabbalistic Sources Available to Joseph Smith

Quinn provides only three possible English-language documents that he believes were Joseph's sources of kabbalistic knowledge. First, he refers to Stehelin's and Eisenmenger's *Traditions of the Jews*, a book that was last published in London in 1748 (see pp. 296–97). It had been out of print for over seventy years before Joseph allegedly began his magical activities in the 1820s and was nearly a century old by the Nauvoo period. Quinn provides no evidence of an American edition nor that the book was available to Joseph Smith. Although it is possible that Joseph had access to this book, it is hardly plausible.

Second, Quinn notes that William Enfield's *History of Philosophy* has a short section on Kabbalah. Quinn insists that this book was available for sale at Canandaigua "near Smith's home from 1804 to 1828" (p. 297). But this distorted claim requires some clarification. What the sources Quinn cites actually state is that the book was advertised for sale once in 1804 and again in January 1828 (see p. 567 n. 461). For Quinn, this is proof the book was on sale continuously during the intervening years. But the book was out of print during much of this period: the first edition was printed in 1791, and the second in 1819 (see p. 567 n. 460). Thus in reality, Quinn has demonstrated only that the book was advertised in 1804, before Joseph was born and while the Smiths were still in Vermont, and again in January 1828, after Joseph had moved over one hundred miles away to Harmony, Pennsylvania, in December 1827. Now, I will grant that Joseph still had possible access to this book. No doubt the book remained for sale for some time after it was first advertised. Nonetheless, Quinn has again seriously misrepresented his evidence.

Quinn's third possible source of kabbalistic information is John Allen's *Modern Judaism*, published in London in 1816 and 1830. Here we have a book with a brief (thirty-page) discussion of Kabbalah, which actually could have been read by Joseph (although, again, there is no evidence that he actually read it). So what type of overall im-

pression of Kabbalah would Joseph have gained from reading Allen? Allen concludes his essay on Kabbalah with the following remarks:

The discordances of the Cabbalist system with the representations of the inspired writers [of the Bible] are too numerous and obvious to be overlooked: their [the kabbalists'] perplexed and grovelling speculations present a mean contrast to the simplicity and dignity of Moses and the Prophets. The fundamental principle, that all existencies are emanations from God, the evolution and expansion of whose essence constitutes the universe,—is of heathen origin.\footnote{263}

Thus, even if Joseph had actually read his book (which has by no means been demonstrated), his overall impression would be that kabbalism was inferior to scripture and was filled with “grovelling speculations” based on pagan religious ideas. Why would any of this have encouraged Joseph to adopt kabbalistic thought into his worldview?

Quinn certainly exaggerates when he calls Allen’s book a “study of the Cabala” (p. 297). As its title clearly states, it is a study of Modern Judaism, of which an essay on Kabbalah is only 30 pages, or 6.6 percent of the book’s 450 pages.\footnote{264} Enfield, on the other hand, has 13 pages on Kabbalah, a mere 2 percent of his volume 2. In reality, neither of these books is actually a “study of the Cabala” as Quinn maintains. Rather, they are general books on Judaism or philosophy that have sections on Kabbalah.

Having discovered these three books, Quinn concludes that their existence “certainly does not support the claim of FARMS polemicist William J. Hamblin that the Mormon prophet lived in ‘the period of kabbalism’s least influence’” (p. 297).\footnote{265} I must beg to disagree. Quinn seems to think that my overall position is disproved if he can find a single mention of Kabbalah in any English language source. But, as my statement makes clear, my position is that, relatively speaking, Kabbalah was less influential during Joseph’s lifetime than

\footnote{263. John Allen, Modern Judaism, 2nd ed. (London: Seeley and Burnside, 1830), 96.}
\footnote{264. There are other passing references to Kabbalah scattered throughout the text.}
\footnote{265. Citing Hamblin, “Everything,” 295.}
before or after. Is kabbalism ever mentioned in the early nineteenth century? Rather, is kabbalism more influential during the early nineteenth century than during the earlier seventeenth century and late nineteenth century? Despite all his extensive efforts, Quinn has been unable to discover a single English book exclusively on Kabbalah published during, or even within a few decades of, Joseph's lifetime. Instead, he has found only a few pages summarizing Kabbalah from a negative perspective in an anti-Semitic book. Which precisely proves my point: Kabbalah was not an important idea during Joseph's lifetime.

Quinn's desperation to find any evidence that Joseph was influenced by Kabbalah reaches preposterous proportions when he summons up Joseph's 1835 interview with Robert Matthews (aka "Joshua the Jew" and "Matthews"). Matthews apparently discussed the idea of "transmigration of soul or spirit" or reincarnation, to which Joseph responded that "his [Matthews's] doctrine was of the Devil" (p. 297). Matthews was not preaching kabbalism to Joseph but rather was claiming that he, Matthews, was the reincarnation of "Matthias, the Apostle, who was chosen in the place of Judas." But even if we grant that Joseph somehow understood that this idea was kabbalistic, what does Joseph's reaction to this idea indicate? It indicates that Joseph thought a kabbalistic idea was "of the devil." Why should we assume, therefore, that Joseph would have been favorably disposed to absorb kabbalistic thought into his own belief? The most straightforward conclusion would be that Joseph thought kabbalism was demonic, precisely confirming my earlier position that all LDS references to things magical or occult are uniformly negative.

The Three Degrees of Glory

Quinn goes on to imply that Joseph's ideas on the three degrees of glory were influenced by kabbalistic thought. According to Quinn, a Times and Seasons article "referred to the 'Cabala' and to the teach-

266. See ibid., 266–70, esp. 269.
ings of the 'Sohar' (Zohar) about the 'three degrees'" (p. 297). Here is the actual passage from the *Times and Seasons*:

On the Trinity he [Ewald, a non-LDS London missionary] says "I opened the Sohar [Zohar] Parsha Ackremoth [tractate Achare Motli], I read the mystery of Eloheim, in this there are three degrees, and every one of them subsists by itself and yet all of them are one, and united together in one, nor can they be separated from one another."

Rabbi Judedea said, "This is a mystery about which I am not permitted to speak."269

Since Ewald is paraphrasing the Zohar from a Christian perspective, it is impossible to determine for certain the passage he has in mind. He does say that the idea comes from the tractate Achare Motli, which is a portion of the Zohar's commentary on Leviticus.270 The passage in question may be 3:65a–65b, which reads:

Hence it is written [in Ps. 50:1]: "God [El], even God [Elohim] the Lord [YHWH] hath spoken and called the earth", etc. The first "God" here (El) refers to the light of [the second sefirot] Wisdom which is called Lovingkindness; the second "God" (Elohim) to [the fifth sefirot] Might: and "the Lord" [YHWH] to [the sixth sefirot] Mercy.271

Even if this is not the passage in question, Ewald explicitly states that he is discussing the question of "the [Christian] Trinity." Ignoring this pertinent fact, Quinn cross-references this passing reference to the LDS concept of "three degrees" of glory in his chapter 6 (pp. 216–18).272

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269. *Times and Seasons* 3 (2 May 1842): 780; quotation marks added to clarify the passage.


271. Ibid., 5:56. The esoteric discussion continues in the Zohar for almost two pages. It was not uncommon for Christian kabbalists to use discussions of the emanations of the sefirot in attempts to convince Jews of their understanding of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Such attempts are found at least as early as Pico della Mirandola in the late fifteenth century; see Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

272. I discussed this issue earlier, pp. 254–55 above.
Anthropomorphism

Quinn then moves to the issue of anthropomorphism in kabbalistic thought, including a critique of my earlier review of Lance Owens. Here again, he sadly misunderstands both my arguments and the other sources he cites, while maintaining that I have misunderstood and intentionally misrepresented standard modern scholars on the metaphorical nature of anthropomorphic statements in kabbalistic writings (see p. 298). My position, quoted by Quinn, is "Although kabbalistic literature uses anthropomorphic language extensively, the kabbalists were insistent that such language was strictly metaphorical and did not literally describe the nature of God" (p. 298).\footnote{Citing Hamblin, “Everything,” 311.} I must emphasize that my position is not that anthropomorphic language does not exist in kabbalistic texts but that such language was metaphorical. Quinn believes that I “did not acknowledge that they [scholars Scholem, Idel, and Wolfson, whom I cite to support my position] specifically contradicted Hamblin’s claim” (p. 298). In other words, Quinn believes that Scholem, Idel, and Wolfson each explicitly state that kabbalistic anthropomorphic language was literal. Quinn gives one brief out-of-context quotation from each of these authors to support his position. Let us examine each in detail.

First, Quinn informs us that “Gershom Scholem wrote of the Cabala’s ‘almost provocatively conspicuous anthropomorphism’” (p. 298).\footnote{Citing Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), 141.} Is Scholem here saying that such anthropomorphic language is literal? Does Scholem think that the kabbalists agreed with Joseph that God has “a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s,” as Quinn claims (p. 298)? A contextual reading of Scholem makes it perfectly clear that he is describing metaphorical anthropomorphism. Scholem notes that mystical descriptions of the body of God “[do] not imply that God in Himself possesses a physical form, but only that a form of this kind may be ascribed to ‘the Glory.’”\footnote{Ibid., 17.} “Thus, the ten Sephirot first took shape in the Adam Kadmon in the...
form of concentric circles" that "rearranged themselves as a line, in the form of a man and his limbs, though of course this must be understood in the purely spiritual sense of the incorporeal supernal lights." This metaphor "accounts for the strong anthropomorphic coloring" of some kabbalistic writings. God's relationship to man and creation "was frequently dramatized in the Kabbalah by means of anthropomorphic symbols, though the latter are nearly always accompanied by warnings that they are only to be understood 'as if.'" Elsewhere, Scholem notes that the anthropomorphic manifestation is "like a body for that soul"; it "is a more external manifestation of an inner soul that dwells within him and which is itself in no way identical with the First Cause (God) but represents ... the third sefi­rah, binah"—which is to say, it is not God but an emanation of God. Rabad, followed by later kabbalists, "undoubtedly maintained the absolute spirituality of the First Cause." As Rabad's grandson put it, on the authority of his grandfather, "the Cause of causes did not appear to any man and no left or right, front or back [can be predicated of it]." And note: "It is clear from the extant fragments (of the Shi‘ur Komah tradition) that this extreme form of anthropomorphism was not really meant to describe the Divine Being as corporeal. The description here is of a visionary apparition, however exotic, but not the appearance of God Himself." In other words, I agreed precisely with Scholem when I stated that kabbalists understood their anthropomorphic language as strictly metaphorical. It is rather bizarre that, after misrepresenting both the evidence and my analysis, Quinn accuses me of intentional dishonesty because I didn't happen to misunderstand things just the way he has.

276. Ibid., 137.
277. Ibid.
278. Ibid., 153.
280. Ibid., 210-11.
281. Ibid., 211.
282. Ibid., 212, brackets are Scholem's.
283. Gershom Scholem, "Anthropomorphism (In the Kabbalah)," in Encyclopedica Judaica, 3:57.
Quinn’s understanding of Idel is equally feeble. He maintains that “Moshe Idel wrote that the Zohar ‘is manifestly anthropomorphic’” (p. 298).284 I will cite the entire passage in question, placing Quinn’s quoted phrase in boldface, so that readers may judge if Quinn is accurately summarizing his source.

The latter [the lower sefirot] is an obvious anthropomorphic symbol, which in the Zohar refers to the second and lower divine head, that consisting of the Sefirah of Tiferet alone or of the Sefirot between Hokhmah and Yesod, whereas in the works of R. David [ben Yehudah he-Hasid, late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries]285 it includes ten Sefirot or, as in the diagram, nine.286 In other contexts of R. David’s thought, this configuration [of the diagram] is manifestly anthropomorphic; the fact that the concept appearing in the diagram differs from that of the Zohar does not obliterate its anthropomorphic character. . . . The process of [the mystical] visualization [of God] includes not only divine names, colors, and a circle or circles but also an anthropomorphic configuration symbolizing an aspect of the divine realm.287

It should first be noted that, according to Quinn, “Moshe Idel wrote that the Zohar ‘is manifestly anthropomorphic’” (p. 298). Quite the opposite. The diagram in question was made by Rabbi David ha-Hasid—a contemporary of Moses of Leon, the author of the Zohar—and Idel explicitly states that David’s diagram “differs from that of the Zohar.” But, most important, Idel is discussing “an anthropomorphic configuration symbolizing the divine realm.” In other words, the anthropomorphism is a symbolic metaphor; I agree precisely with Idel, whom Quinn has misunderstood.

285. Date provided by ibid., 104.
286. Idel, Kabbalah, 106, describes Rabbi David’s diagram: “The circle consists of a diagram containing ten concentric circles, each one representing a Sefirah whose name is inscribed on it and beside which is the name of the color corresponding to the Sefirah and a vocalized Tetragrammaton.”
287. Ibid., 107.
Quinn finally claims that my position on the metaphorical nature of kabbalistic anthropomorphic language is contradicted by "Elliot R. Wolfson [who] insisted that 'in the Kabbalah we are dealing with a full human form' of God" (p. 298).288 Once again, Quinn has completely misunderstood and misrepresented the context and meaning of Wolfson’s discussion. First, it is quite clear that Wolfson is not talking about Kabbalah but is discussing the Sefer Yetzirah, an "ancient Hebrew treatise on cosmogony and cosmology dating from the third or fourth century CE."289 Although the Sefer Yetzirah is a very important mystic text, widely read and commented on by kabbalists, it is almost a thousand years older than the rise of kabbalism. It is rather part of the Merkabah and Hekhalot mystical traditions of the early first millennium A.D.

Why, then, does Wolfson state, according to Quinn’s quotation, “that ‘in the Kabbalah we are dealing with a full human form’ of God” (p. 298, emphasis added)? He doesn’t. Quinn added the italicized phrase to his quotation. But even if we were to grant that Quinn’s misreading thus far is merely sloppiness on his part,290 he compounds his negligence with egregious misrepresentation. According to Quinn, this passage is discussing the “full human form’ of God.” It is not. Rather it is discussing the mystical visualization of the sefirot (the emanations of God) in an imagined human form. A fuller quotation will make this clear, again with Quinn’s misquoted passage in boldface.

290. It is unclear how this phrase was interjected into Quinn’s quotation. Throughout Quinn’s book, he consistently prefers the early nineteenth-century spelling “Cabala” (p. 336 n. 52), but in this passage Quinn uses the spelling “Kabbalah,” which is both Wolfson’s and the standard preferred modern academic spelling. If it were simply a mistake on Quinn’s part—an accidental shifting of the quotation mark—one would expect Quinn to have retained his preferred spelling “Cabala.” Another egregious example of adding words to quotations can be found in Quinn’s discussion of the heirlooms of Hyrum Smith as described by Corbett, Hyrum Smith, 453. Corbett calls these objects “relics,” meaning simply an object from the past of historical interest, a keepsake, memento, or heirloom. Quinn sometimes correctly quotes Corbett (see p. 103), but often describes “sacred relics” (pp. 66, 67, 104), adding the word sacred to Corbett’s original “relics.”
I will present here only the essential features relevant to the imaginative visualization of the divine form. In the first passage [from the Sefer Yetzirah] the ten sefirot are described in terms of anthropomorphic imagery.\textsuperscript{291} It does not appear to me that this imagery indicates a simple rhetorical analogy, that is, that to comprehend the numerical sum of the ten sefirot one should think of the ten fingers on one's hands. The reference to the covenant of unity or oneness (berit yihud) set in the middle, corresponding to the tongue and phallus, indicates that we are dealing with a full human form. With this in mind one can appreciate the mandate to know, contemplate, and imagine the sefirot: one gains gnosis of these sefirot through a process of visual contemplation by forming an image in the mind.

But what precise image is thus formed? It seems that the first passage provides the answer, namely, the anthropomorphic shape assumed by these entities [the sefirot]. The reference here is not simply to the form of the mortal human, for if that were the case the consequent statement, that by means of this contemplation one can "establish the matter clearly, and set the Creator in His place," would make little sense. If, on the other hand, the anthropomorphic imagery is applied to the sefirot, and the latter are presumed to refer to the divine realm, then this statement is completely intelligible.\textsuperscript{292}

Wolfson's overall position on the symbolic nature of this anthropomorphism is clear. At the beginning of this section of his book, Wolfson describes "the symbolic form through which God is apprehended, the protos anthropos [first man], [which] both generates and is generated by the mystical consciousness within Judaism."\textsuperscript{293} He

\textsuperscript{291} Wolfson gives the relevant passage for the Sefer Yetzirah on p. 70: "Ten sefirot belimah: The number of the ten fingers, five corresponding to five. The covenant of unity is set in the middle, in the circumcision of the tongue and mouth and the circumcision of the foreskin."

\textsuperscript{292} Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{293} Ibid., 67.
also notes that "the specific issue [in this type of mysticism] is mentally imagining the divine form in an anthropomorphomorphic shape." The purpose of the entire mystical experience is "conjuring a mental image of the sefirotic entities in an anthropomorphomorphic shape." In other words, for Wolfson, the Jewish mystics' attribution of human form to God is understood as "symbolic" or metaphorical, precisely as I described it.

Thus Quinn has either grotesquely misunderstood or perhaps even intentionally misrepresented three modern scholars on the question of whether kabbalistic anthropomorphism is literal or metaphorical, while accusing me of failing to "acknowledge" that these scholars "specifically contradicted" my position (p. 298). I am rather awed by his ability to get it so completely wrong.

Maimonides the Anti-Kabbalist?

Quinn again berates me for intentional dishonesty, claiming at one point that "Hamblin also willfully ignored Scholem's emphasis that medieval Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides rejected the Cabala because it described God as having a body" (p. 298). For me to have "willfully ignored" Maimonides' rejection of Kabbalah is especially egregious when we remember that Maimonides died in 1204, before the rise of kabbalism and almost a century before the composition of the Zohar.

294. Ibid., 71 n. 69.
295. Ibid., 72.
296. Referencing Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, 211.
297. See Jacob I. Dienstag, "Maimonides, Moses," in ODJR, 436–37, for a brief background and bibliography.
298. The "earliest work of kabbalistic literature" is the Sefer ha-Bahir, "written by an unknown author in northern Spain or Provence at the end of the twelfth century" (Joseph Dan, "Sefer ha-Bahir," in ODJR, 615a), precisely when Maimonides was nearing death in the Near East. The Zohar is now generally thought to have been "written toward the end of the thirteenth century by Mosheh de León, a Castilian kabbalist who died in 1305" (Y. Lachower, "Zohar," in ODJR, 763a). For a more detailed study, see Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah.
Of course, Scholem says nothing about "Maimonides reject[ing] the Cabala," as Quinn claims. Quinn simply has no idea what he is talking about. Here is what Scholem really says about Maimonides:

When Maimonides says that whoever believes the Creator has a body is a heretic [in The Guide of the Perplexed],299 and Rabad [Rabbi Abraham ben David, d. 1198, an ardent critic of Maimonides], in a celebrated gloss objects that "many, and his betters" have believed just that, it seems clear to me that behind this criticism [i.e., Rabad criticizing Maimonides] stands the doctrine of the Jewish mystics in France concerning the cherub who is the demiurge.300

In reality, Maimonides, in his Guide for the Perplexed, is rejecting anthropomorphic conceptions of God held by most orthodox Jews of his day; indeed "in his lifetime Maimonides' orthodoxy was suspected because of his opposition to anthropomorphic beliefs."301 Maimonides' anti-anthropomorphic position has nothing to do with his rejection of kabbalists, who didn't exist at the time. Rabad, in rejecting Maimonides' anti-anthropomorphic stance, is simply affirming the era's majority Jewish position.

Thus several points are quite clear. (1) Maimonides is not critiquing kabbalistic anthropomorphism as Quinn claims. Therefore, my failure to note this can hardly be "willful." (2) Rabad is critiquing Maimonides for his anti-anthropomorphism. (3) Kabbalism is just emerging in Provence during the later part of Rabad's life. He is perhaps best described as a protokabbalist. "One type of literature, the kabbalistic, which came into prominence during his [Rabad's] lifetime, is not represented in his writings. It is known, however, that he exerted formative influence upon it through his children, who, having learned mystical teachings from him, became literary leaders and

300. Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, 211.
guides in the emergent Kabbalah,” as Scholem describes in detail in his book.

Allen on Anthropomorphism

Quinn provides us with what he believes is the real source for the literal anthropomorphism of Joseph Smith.

[John] Allen’s book [Modern Judaism] gave the scholarly assessment of the early 1800s concerning the cabalists: “They represent Deity—as existing in a human form . . .”. Hamblin emphasized his own view of the Cabala’s content, while English-language scholarship of the Cabala in the early 1800s anticipated Joseph Smith’s statement in 1843: God “the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also . . .” (D&C 130:22). Modern scholars (at least the reputable ones) do not disagree with Allen’s statement, nor would they regard Smith’s statement as inconsistent with the Cabala’s view. (p. 298)

Once again Quinn has completely misrepresented his source. First, this passage from Allen does not refer to “cabalists,” as Quinn claims. The chapter heading reads: “Rabbinical Traditions concerning God.—Remarks on their Profaneness.—Some Traditions filthy, and some obscene.” Allen nowhere discusses kabalists in this chapter but refers explicitly to “Talmudical and rabbinical writers,” whose views Allen describes as “replete with irreverence, impiety and blasphemy.” It is quite true that—based on the numerous explicitly

303. See Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah.
304. Citing Allen, Modern Judaism, 143. Despite Quinn’s claim that all “reputable” “modern scholars” agree with his claim, he provides not a single modern source to support his position.
305. Allen, Modern Judaism, 143.
306. Ibid.; however, a few kabbalistic sources are mentioned in the footnotes on pages 144 and 145. At the end of this chapter (see ibid., 147–48), Allen writes, “As the traditions stated in this chapter are horribly profane; so there are multitudes in the Talmud, of which some cannot but disgust by their filthiness, and others must excite detestation by
anthropomorphic texts in the Bible—many rabbis of the talmudic age (the Amora‘im, c. a.d. 200–500) believed in an anthropomorphic God, which is all Allen is really stating. My point is that kabbalists, a millennium later in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, allegorized such anthropomorphic language. The two phenomena are hardly contradictory. Here is a standard summary of the issue:

Generally one may discern three main trends of thought [regarding anthropomorphism in the Jewish Middle Ages] . . . : (1) Allegorization: every anthropomorphic description of the Deity is explained simply as a metaphor. This approach developed chiefly through the influence of Greek and Arabic philosophy [such as Maimonides]. (2) Talmudic orthodoxy: a well-nigh literal understanding of the [anthropomorphic] sayings of the rabbis [which is what Allen is describing here] . . . (3) The mystical view: there are intermediate beings between God and the world . . . and all anthropomorphic expressions refer to these emanations from the Deity [which is the position of the kabbalists].

Thus Quinn’s quoted passage, “they represent Deity—as existing in human form,” if taken out of context and applied not to the talmudic scholars whom Allen is discussing but to the kabbalists of a millennium later, might seem to lend support to Quinn’s thesis. But in historical study, context is everything. Here is the full passage, with Quinn’s selective quotation in boldface.

They [the talmudic rabbis] represent Deity—as existing in human form, of a certain number of millions of miles in height, which they have undertaken to specify, together with

their obscenity. I shall not offend the chaste reader by any specimens of the latter; neither shall I refer to the places where they may be found.” It should be noted that Allen’s book is extremely anti-Semitic; this is hardly the type of language that would encourage Joseph to borrow kabbalistic doctrines for his own. It is rather like expecting someone to be converted to Mormonism by reading anti-Mormon books.

the particular dimensions of his respective members: —as circumscribed, since the destruction of the temple, within a space of four cubits.308

Are we really to suppose that Joseph's belief that "the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (D&C 130:22) derives from this passage? Where, precisely, does Joseph describe the Father as being "millions of miles in height"? Allen goes on to describe the God of the Jews as "studying . . . the Mishna," "playing with Leviathan," "reading the Talmud," and "putting on the tephillin and taletah"309—hardly well-known descriptions of God in Mormon scriptures. Furthermore, Joseph's anthropomorphism is unrepentantly literal. God's body is literally "of flesh and bones as tangible as man's." According to Allen, however, this is not the Jewish view: "the apology [among modern Jews] for these representations [by ancient rabbis of an anthropomorphic God is] that they were not intended to be literally understood, but are altogether figurative and parabolical [metaphorical]."310

But this entire discussion on anthropomorphism ignores the real point: if you want to posit a nonrevealtory origin for Joseph's ideas about God, you need not go beyond the Bible, which is filled with anthropomorphic descriptions of God,311 descriptions which were

308. Allen, Modern Judaism, 143. Allen probably has reference to the doctrines of the macanthrop as found in the Shi'ur Qomah. Martin S. Cohen, "Shi'ur Qomah," in ODJR, 638a.

309. Allen, Modern Judaism, 144.

310. Ibid. Allen personally doesn't believe these protestations of the Jews. Modern Judaism, 145.

themselves the cause of medieval Jewish disputations about anthropomorphism and of the massive allegorization of such language by philosophers like Maimonides and the later kabbalists. Does Quinn really want to argue that it makes more sense for Joseph to have obtained his ideas about anthropomorphism from a single phrase in an anti-Semitic book on Judaism—which he may not even have read—rather than from his extensive reading of the ubiquitous anthropomorphic language of the Bible?

Plurality of Gods

Quinn next maintains that Joseph's ideas on the plurality of gods also derive from John Allen.

Likewise concerning polytheism, Quinn next maintains that Joseph's ideas on the plurality of gods also derive from John Allen.

Likewise concerning polytheism, John Allen also quoted the same passage about "three degrees" from the Zohar that was in Smith's 1842 excerpt [in the Times and Seasons]. With editions in 1816 and 1830, this book prefaced the same quote by "observing that there are numerous passages in the Cabbalistic writings, which are far more intelligible on the supposition that their authors had some belief of a plurality in the divine being, and that plurality a trinity, than they are upon any other supposition."... English-language scholarship in the early 1800s maintained that the Cabala promoted the idea that there was more than one God. (p. 298, emphasis added) 313

Quinn's point here is apparently that Joseph Smith was obviously attracted to this particular passage of the Zohar (which, paradoxically, Quinn never actually cites), which therefore served as the source


312. Although anti-Mormons often call the LDS concept of God "polytheistic," that is neither accurate nor scholarly. There is no excuse for Quinn using this term.

313. Citing Allen, Modern Judaism, 91.
both for Joseph's ideas on the three degrees of glory (see pp. 297–98)\textsuperscript{314} and for his ideas on the plurality of gods.

Once again, it is necessary to carefully dissect Quinn's confused misreading to discover what is really being said in these passages. Although Quinn's grammar is muddled, he strongly implies that Joseph Smith, in the *Times and Seasons*, made an excerpt from the Zohar and that this same passage is quoted by Allen. This is simply untrue. First, Joseph himself never made any excerpt from the Zohar. Rather, the editor of the *Times and Seasons* (whether Joseph Smith or John Taylor) selected a passage from a non-Mormon publication, the *Jewish Intelligencer*, which included an allusion to the Zohar made by a Mr. Ewald, a non-Mormon missionary from the London Society in England.\textsuperscript{315} Furthermore, the passage was not quoted in the *Times and Seasons* in a positive context referring to the marvelous things that can be learned from the Zohar. Quite the contrary, according to an editorial comment at the end of the passage, “it is very difficult to ascertain which of the above [Ewald or the Jewish rabbi] have displayed the most ignorance.” Given this negative attitude, one can hardly expect this passage from the *Jewish Intelligencer* to have been used as a basis by Joseph Smith for the development of Mormon doctrine. Yet this is precisely what Quinn proposes.

Next, Quinn claims that the passage from the Zohar paraphrased by Ewald in the *Jewish Intelligencer* extract in the *Times and Seasons* is the same passage quoted by Allen. Again, Quinn is quite plainly wrong. To understand what is really going on we need to look at the context of Allen's discussion. Allen is discussing “the origin and value of the Cabbala” (88).\textsuperscript{316} He notes that there are “very different opinions” on the issue among “learned Christians” (88). Some believe it originated in Old Testament times and that

several of these divine truths [about the Messiah], mingled, it is admitted, with many errors, are to be found in cabbalistic

\textsuperscript{314} See my discussions, pp. 254–55 above.

\textsuperscript{315} See *Times and Seasons* 3 (2 May 1842): 780.

\textsuperscript{316} Parenthetical notes in this and the following paragraphs refer to Allen, *Modern Judaism*, unless otherwise noted.
writings:—that the three superior Sephiroth denote the three Persons of the sacred Trinity; and the seven inferior ones, the attributes of the divine nature, or seven spirits that stand before the divine throne, or seven orders of angels. (88–89)

Some Christians also think the sefirot “to be an emblematical description of the person and attributes of the [Christian] Messiah” (89). Others, however, think that any truths found in kabbalistic writings are simply derived from fragments of the Old Testament. The kabbalists “exchanged the sound principles of their fathers [the Old Testament writers] for the dreams of a fanatical imagination,” retaining “the sacred phraseology [of the Old Testament], . . . adapt[ing] it to the impious system [Kabbalah] they had espoused:—that the reveries of the Cabbala are altogether at variance with the dictates of [biblical] revelation” (90). These scholars believe that “the books of the Cabbalists are written in a style so elliptical, abrupt, and often unintelligible, and abound with such foolish allegories and absurd symbols, that they deserve to be treated as the ravings of madmen” (91). This from a book Quinn believes is Joseph’s major source for ideas borrowed from the Kabbalah.

Allen is unwilling to commit himself on the issue of the origins of the Kabbalah (see 91), although his overall approach is quite negative. His most positive statement is the one quoted by Quinn, which I will give here in full context, again with Quinn’s extract in boldface.

I cannot help observing that there are numerous passages in the Cabbalistic writings, which are far more intelligible on the supposition that their authors had some belief of a plurality in the divine being, and that plurality a trinity, than they are upon any other supposition. Let the following quotations from the Zohar serve as specimens. “Jehovah, our God, Jehovah: these are three degrees with respect to this sublime mystery, In the beginning God, or Elohim, created”—"There is a unity which is called Jehovah the first, our God, Jehovah: behold! they are all one, and therefore called one: lo! these three names are as one; and although we call them one, and they are one; but by the revelation of the holy spirit
it is made known, and they are by the sight of the eye to be known, that these three are one; and this is the mystery of the voice that is heard; the voice is one; and there are three things, fire and wind and water, and they are all one, in the mystery of the voice, and they are but one: so here, Jehovah, our God, Jehovah; these three modes, forms, or things are one.” (91–92, emphasis in the original)

There are actually two quotations from the Zohar, cited by Allen, which Quinn believes are the same one referred to by Ewald and reprinted in the Times and Seasons. (Quinn never tells us which of the two is the same as Ewald’s.) Although Ewald does not provide an actual quotation or reference, he does tell us that he is paraphrasing “Sohar [Zohar] Parsha Ackremoth [tractate Achare Mot]”. As noted above, the Achare Mot is from the Zohar’s commentary on Leviticus, found in 3:56a–80a (= translation 5:34–89). In order to determine if Quinn is correct in claiming that the Allen passage is the same as the Ewald passage, we need to carefully identify each quotation. Allen’s first quotation from the Zohar reads, “Jehovah, our God, Jehovah: these are three degrees with respect to this sublime mystery, In the beginning God, or Elohim, created.” Here is the full context with Allen’s extract in bold.

What is this seed [of creation]? It consists of the graven letters, the secret source of the Torah, which issued from the first point. That point sowed in the palace certain three vowel-points, holem, shureq, and hireq [names of Hebrew vowels], which combined with one another and formed one entity, to wit, the Voice [of God] which issued through their union. When this Voice issued, there issued with it its mate which comprises all the letters; hence it is written Eth ha-shammaim (the heavens) [from Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens], to wit, the Voice and its mate. This Voice, indicated by the word “heaven”, is the second Ehyeh [Hebrew word for “I am”] of the sacred name [ehyeh asher ehyah = “I am that I am” from Exodus 3:14], the Zohar which includes all letters and colours, in this manner. Up to
this point the words “The Lord our God the Lord” (Yhvh Elohenu Yhvh) represent three grades corresponding to this deep mystery of bereshith bara Elohim [“in the beginning God created,” Genesis 1:1]. Bereshith represents the primordial mystery. Bara represents the mysterious source from which the whole expanded. Elohim represents the force which sustains all below. The words eth hashammaim indicate that the two latter are on no account to be separated, and are male and female together. The word eth consists of the letters aleph and tau, which include between them all the letters, as being the first and last of the alphabet.317

This passage is from the tractate Bereshith (1:15b). It is not Ewald’s passage from Achare Moth, as Quinn claims. In context it is quite clear that the original passage is not referring to multiple gods as Quinn claims, but to the emanation of the sefirot.

Allen’s second quotation from the Zohar (quoted previously on pp. 362–63) is from tractate Ray’a Mehemna, and thus again has no relation to Ewald’s paraphrase of Achare Moth. Quinn is simply wrong. Allen’s translation garbles the original passage from the Zohar to some degree. Here is the Soncino translation of the same passage, in full context, with Allen’s selection in boldface.

The third section, the Shema [“Hear” Deuteronomy 6:4, a Jewish proclamation of faith], contains the mystery of the right side [of the tree of the sefirot], called “The Supernal Grace”, for it effects the union of all things extending unto the four quarters of the universe; and the Holy One, blessed be He, through the medium of this attribute, brings forth order and harmony in the whole universe, a harmony which extends even to the lowest depths. By this attribute of Grace the Holy One created the world, when He wrapped Himself in the garment of light. This Supernal Grace is the Unifier. For this reason the section of the Shema is joined to that of

“And it shall be”; for the act which makes each day a unity and likewise forms the whole sum of separate days into the perfect whole, is the fact of following the Divine Will in knowledge and action; and through this act alone (of concentration on the union during prayer and the recitation of the Shema) can that union of which we have frequently spoken be attained: that is, the union of each day, the union which is expressed in the sentence: “Hear, O Israel, YHWH [the Lord] Elohenu [our God] YHWH is one” [the Shema, Deut. 6:4]. These three are one. How can the three Names be one? Only through the perception of Faith: in the vision of the Holy Spirit, in the beholding of the hidden eyes alone. The mystery of the audible voice is similar to this, for though it is one yet it consists of three elements—fire, air, and water, which have, however, become one in the mystery of the voice. Even so it is with the mystery of the threefold Divine manifestations designated by YHWH Elohenu YHWH—three modes which yet form one unity. This is the significance of the voice which man produces in the act of unification [through prayer], when his intent is to unify all from the En-sof [the first sefira] to the end of creation. This is the daily unification, the secret of which has been revealed in the holy spirit. There are many kinds of unification, and all are appropriate, one involving the other, but the one which is effected on earth by the symbolism of the voice is the most appropriate.318

What all this quite clearly demonstrates is that Quinn is simply making everything up. The connection between the Ewald paraphrase and the Allen quotations is entirely in his mind.

Finally, for Quinn, the point of Allen’s passage is apparently to be understood as evidence that “English-language scholarship in the early 1800s maintained that the Cabala promoted the idea that there was more than one God” (p. 299). In reality Allen is simply citing

excerpts from the Zohar out of context as proof-texts for Protestant Trinitarianism. Allen’s passage is quite clearly a traditional Christian Trinitarian description of the Godhead. Allen himself says this explicitly in the passage Quinn quotes as indicative of a belief in the plurality of gods. Allen speaks of a “plurality in the divine being, and that plurality a trinity.” The mere existence of the word plurality in this passage does not demonstrate that Allen is describing the plurality of gods as understood by Joseph Smith.

Contrast Allen’s position with Joseph’s statement on the matter:

I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods. If this is in accordance with the New Testament, lo and behold! we have three Gods anyhow, and they are plural.319

This is hardly the traditional Trinitarianism one derives from reading Allen, who—by distortions and quotations out of context—claims that traditional Christian ideas about the Trinity are found in kabbalistic writings. The bizarre result of Quinn’s speculations is that he claims that Joseph Smith derived his ideas on the non-Trinitarian plurality of gods not from traditional Christian ideas on the Trinity—which were ubiquitous in his culture—but from an anti-Semitic book on Judaism which misinterpreted kabbalistic ideas about the sefirot as referring to the very same traditional Christian Trinity. But if Joseph could have obtained his ideas on plurality of gods from Allen’s trinitarian language in this passage, why couldn’t he simply have gotten it from the standard Christian trinitarian sermons of his day?

Of course, the biblical basis for Joseph’s doctrine of the plurality of gods is quite explicit. The language of Doctrine and Covenants 76:58 quotes Psalm 82:6 and John 10:34. Joseph’s description of gods in the King Follet Discourse is based on his Hebrew study, reading

the Hebrew word *elohim* as a plural term meaning, literally, “gods.”

How is Allen’s interpretation of kabbalism as three-in-one Trinitarianism of any help in understanding the origins of Joseph’s ideas?

**Council of the Gods**

Quinn next misunderstands the essence of a disagreement between Lance Owens and myself. He writes

Regarding the King Follett Discourse, Hamblin relentlessly attacked the claim of Owens that Joseph Smith derived the following statements from the Cabala: “The head God called together the Gods and sat in grand council to bring forth the world,” and: “In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted [prepared] a plan to create the world and people it.” Instead, Hamblin claimed that these ideas and phrasing were Smith’s unique contributions, yet based on the Bible. Hamblin asserted: “The ideas that Joseph allegedly borrowed from kabbalism are also found in biblical texts,” but this FARMS polemicist well knows there is no biblical reference to “council of the Gods.” (p. 299)

Quinn is here fabricating a nonexistent argument. In reality, Owens raised only four issues relating to possible kabbalistic influences on the King Follett Discourse: “men can become gods; there exist many gods; the gods exist one above another innumerably; and God was once as man now is.”

Neither of the passages from the King Follett Discourse quoted by Quinn was ever cited or discussed by either Owens or me. Owens’s citation of the King Follett Discourse ends with the phrase, “the Head God brought forth the Head

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321. Citing Hamblin, “Everything,” 320; squared brackets are Quinn’s. I have italicized the phrases from the King Follett Discourse which Quinn believes Owens and I debated.

Gods in the grand, head council," which is similar to the phrases quoted by Quinn. The two lines Quinn claims we debated come from later in the discourse and were not referenced by Owens. Then, more important, Owens never argues that the idea of the "council of the gods" derives from kabbalistic sources. So, naturally, I never responded to the idea. Why, then, does Quinn insist that "Hamblin claimed that these ideas and phrasing [on council of the gods] were Smith's unique contributions, yet based on the Bible"? I never said anything about it at all.

But Quinn goes ever further. After inventing a nonexistent debate about the "council of the gods," Quinn berates me for my supposed dishonesty in this fantasy debate, insisting that "this FARMS polemicist [Hamblin] well knows there is no biblical reference to 'council of the Gods'" (p. 299). I do? It is amazing how much I can learn about what I do and do not know from reading Quinn. Quite the contrary—ever since I read E. T. Mullen's *The Assembly of the Gods* years ago, I have become quite convinced that the idea of a council of the gods is widespread in the Old Testament.

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324. The Owens citation ends at Cannon and Dahl, 37 = *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 348, last sentence of the next-to-the-last paragraph. The phrases Quinn claims we debated occur in Cannon and Dahl, 39 and 43 = *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 348, last paragraph, and 349, last paragraph.

325. Quinn cites pages 303, 304, 309, and 320 in "Everything" as pages where I allegedly discuss the idea of the council of the gods (see p. 569 n. 486). The idea is mentioned on none of those pages. I do mention the phrase on page 299, but only in a brief introduction to ideas found in the King Follett Discourse. It is never an issue in the debate.

I suppose what Quinn really meant to say was, "this FARMS scholar [Hamblin] well knows there is no biblical reference in the King James translation to 'council of the Gods." But this is quite a different idea from Quinn's original statement. On the other hand, it is only partly true. It is correct that the exact phrase council of the gods does not appear in the King James translation. It should first be pointed out, however, that Joseph had studied some Hebrew by the time he gave the King Follett Discourse in the spring of 1844, so he could have studied the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Therefore, whether the phrase occurs in the King James Bible is hardly a conclusive argument.

However this may be, I believe Joseph obtained his knowledge of the council of the gods from revelation. I strongly suspect that Joseph's use of the exact phrase council of the gods in the King Follett Discourse is in some way related to the March 1839 revelation of Doctrine and Covenants 121:32, which discusses things that were "ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was." I also suspect it may be related to the ideas in Abraham 4:26 and 5:2, which describe the gods counseling together at the time of creation.327 If one accepts the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Abraham as revelation, these passages are undoubtedly the background for Joseph's use of the phrase in the King Follett Discourse. If one rejects Joseph's revelations, then the question is not, Where did Joseph get the idea in the King Follett Discourse (as Quinn frames the question) but, Where did Joseph get the idea in the Doctrine and Covenants? 328

That the exact phrase council of the gods does not occur in the King James Version, while true, also ignores the fact that the idea can be found in the King James Old Testament. Jeremiah alludes to the council of God when asking, "For who hath stood in the counsel

327. "And the Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image" (Abraham 4:26); "And the Gods said among themselves: On the seventh time we will end our work, which we have counseled" (Abraham 5:2).

328. Once again, Quinn exhibits a fundamental incoherence in his worldview, claiming the Book of Abraham is a "translation/revelation" (p. 299) while simultaneously claiming that many of its ideas derive from Joseph's environment.
(sôd) of the LORD (YHWH), and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?” (Jeremiah 23:18). It is also alluded to in Psalm 82:1–7; the first verse states that “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.” The phrase *congregation of the mighty* in Hebrew is *adat el*, or the assembly/congregation of God. Deuteronomy 10:17 states that “the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords,” and Daniel 11:36 also describes God as the “God of gods.” These passages could be interpreted as meaning that God is the head god of other gods, just as Joseph describes in Doctrine and Covenants 121:32 and in the King Follett Discourse.329

But, of course, Quinn will have none of this. He insists that, if the exact phrase *council of the gods* is not found in the Bible, the Bible could not have been a possible source for Joseph Smith’s ideas on this matter. On the other hand, his own standard for trying to find the *real* source of Joseph’s ideas in magical literature is far less rigorous. Here is his argument on the matter:

Joseph Smith apparently borrowed this idea [of the council of the gods] directly from Eisenmenger’s *Traditions of the Jews* (last published in 1748). In his discussion of the seventy angels who figure so prominently in the Cabala, Eisenmenger wrote: “The Seventy Princes are called *Elohim*, i.e. Gods... They are also called God’s Council; [...]” Smith adopted this polytheistic [*sic*] use of Elohim and the concept of God’s Council of Gods [from Eisenmenger]. (p. 299)330

Is this a reasonable explanation at all for the origin of Joseph’s ideas? Eisenmenger’s book was printed in England and had been out of print for nearly eighty years by the time Joseph first began translating the Book of Mormon, and for almost a century by the Nauvoo period. Is it really plausible that Joseph had access to such an old

329. The concept of the council of the gods is also alluded to in Psalm 89:7, which says that “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints,” which in Hebrew reads *bih-sod qadoshim = in the assembly/council of the Holy Ones*, which generally refers to angels or, sometimes, *elohim*.

330. The first ellipsis is Quinn’s; the second, in square brackets, is mine.
book? But, for the sake of argument, let us assume that Joseph did read it. There are several indications that it was not the source for Joseph’s idea of the council of the gods.

In reality, Eisenmenger is talking about seventy angels, as the full context of his book makes clear. He begins describing traditional Jewish ideas about the “seventy nations” descended from Noah (1:171–72).331 “These Seventy Nations are provided with Seventy Angels, which they call Sarim, i.e. Princes” (1:172; cf. 1:172–74). These Seventy Angels “are above, and encompass the Throne of Glory, which Angels, together with the Lord, the God of Israel, make Seventy-one; and are called his council” (1:174); they are “Holy Angels, and the Council of God, encompassing the Throne of Glory” (1:185). Each land and nation is assigned one of these angels (1:174–76), and “these Angels are regarded as Gods of the respective Nations over which they are set” (1:176, emphasis added). “Every Country and People [of the seventy nations was] assign’d to their respective Prince [one of the Seventy Angels]; and these Princes are called the Gods of the World” (1:177). In other words, they are worshipped as gods by the pagans. Quinn’s quoted passage is found in this context. Unfortunately, Quinn chose not to add the final part of the paragraph he cited: “They (the Angels) are the Council of the holy and blessed God” (1:178).

A full, contextual reading makes it clear that for Eisenmenger the word elohim—although literally meaning “gods”—should, on occasion, be translated as angels, precisely as the King James Version does in Psalm 8:5. For Joseph, “Eloheim is from the word Eloi, God, in the singular number; and by adding the word heim, it renders it Gods. . . . The word Eloheim ought to be in the plural all the way through—Gods.”332 For Joseph the elohim are literal gods; for Eisenmenger, they are angels, who are called gods by the pagans. Joseph’s idea of God’s council composed of gods is quite different from Eisenmenger’s idea of God’s council composed of angels.

331. All parenthetical notes in this paragraph refer to Johann A. Eisenmenger, The Traditions of the Jews (London: Smith, 1742).
Furthermore, the preferred spelling among early Latter-day Saints was *Eloheim* or *Eloheem*, not Eisenmenger's *Elohim*.

If Eisenmenger’s book was Joseph’s crucial source for the idea of plurality of gods, why did the early Mormons not use Eisenmenger’s spelling of the word?

Finally, Eisenmenger himself does not use Quinn’s crucial phrase, *council of the gods*. Rather, Eisenmenger speaks of “God’s council” of angels. If lack of the explicit use of the phrase *council of the gods* disqualifies the Old Testament as a possible source for the idea, as Quinn argues, then it should also disqualify Eisenmenger as well, who does not use the phrase either.

Creation *ex Nihilo*

Quinn rightly notes that the mysteries of creation have been of interest to kabbalists (see pp. 300–301), as they have been throughout history to many other theologians, prophets, and philosophers in all cultures. He then claims that the kabbalists believed in creation *ex nihilo*:

In a clear misrepresentation of the English-language understanding of the Cabala in [the] early 1800s, Hamblin has also written: “Although the Zohar has a complicated understanding of creation by emanation, its fundamental under-

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333. See, for example, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 371–72; *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1994), 198, 221, 229, 356, 358, 379 (using *Eloheem*). None of these sources represents Joseph’s actual spelling, since the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* was published after Joseph’s death, and the WJS represents journal records of Joseph’s public speeches. As far as I am aware, we have no source written or edited by Joseph using the spelling *Elohim*. The fact that none of the early Mormon authors writing *Elohim* uses Eisenmenger’s spelling is a strong indication that it was not known to early LDS writers.

334. It should also be noted that Eisenmenger, too, is highly critical of kabbalism, making it unlikely that Joseph Smith would be encouraged to adopt kabbalistic ideas from this source. “A Christian, we conceive, must renounce both his Reason and his Faith, before he can entertain a Notion, that an Art which carries so extravagant an Air as does the *Cabala*, and which is, in great Measure, directed to praeternatural, unjust, & ridiculous Purposes, was either a Discovery from Heaven, or the Invention or Study of either the Patriarchs or the Prophets” (*Eisenmenger, Tradition of the Jews*, 1:149–50).
standing of *bara* is ‘to create’ *ex nihilo.*” By contrast, Allen’s study of the Cabala explained this matter to English and American readers of Joseph Smith’s generation: “1. From nothing, nothing can be produced.—This is the foundation or principal point of the whole Cabbalistic philosophy, and of all the emanative system... 2. There is no essence or substance, therefore, which has proceeded from nothing, or been created out of nothing.” It was the concept of creation *nihil ex nihilo.*

We should briefly examine the background and context for these issues. Owens originally argued that Joseph got his ideas on creation from non-English kabbalistic texts. I responded that Owens had misunderstood the Kabbalah on these matters. No one had raised the issue of “English-language understanding of the Cabala in the early 1800s,” as Quinn claims. I did suggest that Owens and others seeking possible kabbalistic influences on Joseph Smith should consult English texts available to Joseph rather than Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Quinn then berates me for misrepresenting the English-language texts on Cabala. But the Allen text was never part of the discussion between Owens and myself. How could I possibly misrepresent a source that I never mention? Quinn never notes that when I discussed creation in my article, I was analyzing the understanding of the Zohar and Jewish kabbalists, as summarized by the eminent kabbalistic scholar Isaiah Tishby. Allen’s Christian and anti-Semitic understanding of kabbalistic ideas of creation does not invalidate Tishby’s analysis.

So, in reality, Quinn is introducing an entirely new argument: Joseph derived his understanding of creation from preexistent matter from Allen’s *Modern Judaism.* From the quotations Quinn has conveniently taken out of context, he might seem to have a point. But, as I’ve said before, context is everything. Here is Allen’s full passage, with Quinn’s extracts in boldface.

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1. From nothing, nothing can be produced.—This is the foundation or principal point of the whole Cabbalistic philosophy, and of all the emanative system; which therefore pronounces that all things have emanated from the divine essence, deeming it impossible that being can by any means be produced from nonentity, something from nothing.

2. There is no essence or substance, therefore, which has proceeded from nothing, or been created out of nothing.

3. Hence matter cannot have proceeded from nothing, but must have had some other origin.

4. Matter is too mean in its nature to have been self-originated, or self-existent.

5. Hence it follows, that there is no such essence as matter, properly so called, in the universe.

6. The conclusion deducible from these premises is,—that all that exists is spirit.

7. This spirit is uncreated, eternal, intellectual, sentient, possessing inherent life and motive power, filling immensity, and self-existing by necessity of nature.\(^{337}\)

8. This spirit is the infinite being, or Deity, the cause of all other causes and beings.

9. From this infinite spirit, therefore, all things must emanate and proceed.

10. This being the true spiritual source of all things, all things must necessarily have emanated from it, and therefore must also subsist in it.

11. The universe, therefore, is an immanent offspring of Deity, in which the divine essence has in various degrees unfolded and modified its attributes and properties.\(^{338}\)

Allen goes on to describe the emanation from God of the sefirot, the Azaluthic world, and the material world;\(^{339}\) none of these ideas is

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\(^{337}\) Quinn cites items 5–7 on page 301.

\(^{338}\) Allen, Modern Judaism, 80–81.

\(^{339}\) See ibid., 81–86.
found in Mormonism. It is quite clear that Quinn has again taken his quoted passages out of context and, in the process, has changed their meaning and ignored a great deal of evidence that contradicts his position. If we compare and contrast the actual ideas of kabbalism as described by Allen with the teachings of Joseph, we find that they disagree on every major point.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Joseph Smith</th>
<th>Allen on Kabbalism</th>
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| The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's. (D&C 103:22) God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! ... If you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man.  
(340) There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure. (D&C 131:7)  
What does [the Hebrew word] BARA mean? It means to organize... Hence, we infer that God Himself had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter—which is element and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from  
3. Hence matter cannot have proceeded from nothing, but must have had some other origin.  
4. Matter is too mean in its nature to have been self-originated, or self-existent. | 7. This spirit [God] is uncreated, eternal, intellectual, sentient, possessing inherent life and motive power, filling immensity, and self-existing by necessity of nature.  
8. This spirit is infinite being, or Deity, the cause of all other causes and beings.  
5. Hence it follows, that there is no such essence as matter, properly so called, in the universe.  
6. The conclusion deducible from these premises is,—that all that exists is spirit.  

341. On the bottom of page 301, Quinn perversely maintains that the kabbalistic claim that all matter is spirit is cognitively the same as Joseph's "all spirit is matter." In fact, they are precisely opposite ideas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joseph Smith</th>
<th>Allen on Kabbalism</th>
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<td>the time He had. The pure principles of element are principles that never can be destroyed. ... They never can have a beginning or an ending; they exist eternally.</td>
<td>8. This spirit is infinite being, or Deity, the cause of all other causes and beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end. ... There never was a time when there were not spirits; for they are co-equal [co-eternal] with our Father in heaven.</td>
<td>9. From this infinite spirit, therefore, all things must emanate and proceed.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Why should we possibly think that Joseph got any of his ideas on the nature of God or creation from Allen's brief summary of kabbalistic thought on these matters? What, then, does Allen mean when he describes the kabbalistic ideas cited by Quinn: “From nothing, nothing can be produced” and “There is no essence or substance, therefore, which has proceeded from nothing, or been created out of nothing.” Contra Quinn, the kabbalistic doctrine is *creatio ex deo*, an emanation of all things from God.

Having thus completely misrepresented Allen on the subject of *ex nihilo* creation, Quinn compounds his already befuddled thinking by misinterpreting his modern secondary sources on the issue, ironically blaming me for the entire mess:

Worse, Hamblin also misrepresents current scholarship on this matter. Scholem wrote of the Cabala's "radical transformation of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* into a mystical theory stating the precise opposite of what appears to be the literal meaning of the phrase." This modern Jewish scholar explained that creation in the Cabala involved "the primor-

dial element behind the nought and underlying all existence.” Hamblin had read Schollem’s study before this BYU historian wrote his polemical review for FARMS. (p. 301) Once again, a careful examination in context demonstrates Quinn’s egregious misreading. In the original passage in which I briefly discussed the kabbalistic doctrine of creation, I wrote, “Although the Zohar has a complicated understanding of creation by emanation, its fundamental understanding of bara is ‘to create’ ex nihilo.” Note, first, that I am merely discussing the meaning of the verb bara and comparing it to Joseph’s translation of that verb. I was not providing a complete discussion of kabbalistic ideas on creation. I noted that kabbalists have a “complicated understanding of creation by emanation” but was responding only to Owens’s specific argument that Joseph derived his ideas on creation from reading the Aramaic Zohar. I provided a bibliographic reference to a detailed description of this process by Tishby but did not want to waste time rehashing what could be read in that reference. Unfortunately, Quinn chose not to read Tishby. Instead he chose to misread Schollem.

Here is Schollem’s actual position on this topic. He wrote that “the first step in [creation is] the manifestation of Ein-Sof [the first sefira and true essence of God] as ayin or afisah (‘nothing,’ ‘nothingness’).” This “Nothing” is a “realm which no created being can intellectually comprehend” and which “cannot be defined in any qualitative manner.” Schollem then uses the phrase which Quinn cites, describing kabbalistic ideas on creation as a “radical transformation of the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo into a mystical theory stating the precise opposite of what appears to be the literal meaning of the phrase.” According to Schollem, this “creatio ex nihilo may be interpreted as creation from within God Himself.” This is precisely the creatio ex deo that I discussed above. Schollem maintains that kabbalists did use the phrase “creatio ex nihilo in its literal sense as the free

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346. This type of view is often called “apophatic theology.”
creation of the primeval matter from which everything was made.” In other words, everything was made from primordial matter, but matter itself was created *ex nihilo.* “The true mystical meaning of the text [Genesis 1] is the emergence of all things from the absolute nothingness of God.” This is precisely the “complicated understanding of creation by emanation” I mentioned in my review of Owens. The kabbalists speak consistently of *creatio ex nihilo* but mystically interpret this to mean creation from God, who is called “Nothing” since he cannot be described or comprehended. This is, in fact, an attempt at harmonizing Neoplatonic doctrines of *creatio ex deo* with traditional medieval Jewish and Christian doctrines of *creatio ex nihilo.* It is not, however, a rejection of *creatio ex nihilo,* nor is it an affirmation of matter’s coeternal existence with God, since the primordial matter was created not only by, but also emanated from, God. These are not Joseph’s teachings on matter and creation.

Quinn cites a second passage from Scholem as evidence that the kabbalists rejected *creatio ex nihilo:* “This modern Jewish scholar [Scholem] explained that creation in the Cabala involved ‘the primordial element behind the nought and underlying all existence’” (p. 301). First, Scholem is not summarizing all kabbalistic thought but is discussing the ideas of Moses Nahmanides (A.D. 1194–1270), who died before the writing of the Zohar, which I was discussing in my article. Therefore, even if Nahmanides did not accept *creatio ex nihilo,* it does not contradict my statement about the Zohar. Once again, Quinn is not reading his source in its proper historical context.

But, in fact, Nahmanides did accept *creatio ex nihilo,* but with his own mystical twist. Here is Scholem’s full account of Nahmanides’ interpretation of creation, with Quinn’s quoted, out-of-context phrase in bold type:

He [Nahmanides] explains that God created in the beginning from the absolute Nought [*‘ayin*], as also indicated

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347. All quotations in this paragraph are from Scholem, *Kabbalah,* 94–95.
348. Scholem identifies nought with the Hebrew “*‘ayin*” or “nothing” earlier in his discussion in *Origins of the Kabbalah,* 421. It is thus the same idea he is discussing in the other passage cited by Quinn from *Kabbalah.* According to ibid., 426, “the absolute Nought corresponds exactly to the concept . . . [of] a supreme determination of God himself.”
by the verb *bara*[^349], a very subtle immaterial element. … This element, he says, is disposed in a manner to assume forms and to assure the transition to actual being. It is, in fact, the primordial matter that the Greeks called hyle and from which everything emerged. … Nahmanides immediately goes on to explain, in what is evidently a purely exoteric line of reasoning, that the matter of heaven as well as of earth or the sublunar world were both directly created out of Nothing. But then, reverting to the aforementioned hyle [Greek for primordial matter], he identifies it with the *tohu*,[^349] whereas the form that causes it to appear is the *bohu* of Genesis 1:2, for which he refers to *Bahir*, section 2.[^350] *Tohu*, according to Nahmanides, is not an actual existent, but the *primordial element behind the nought and underlying all existence*—his authority for this view being [Sefer] *Yessirah* 2:6. This primordially created element, the hyle, which comes from the nought and is differentiated in some way into two distinct matters—that of the higher and that of the lower world—is compared by him [Nahmanides] to a "very subtle and immaterial point" that, however, already contains everything it can become. … The verb *bara*, which on the exoteric level means "create from nothing," signifies, on the esoteric level, "emanate."[^351]

A careful contextual reading of this passage demonstrates that my description of the kabbalistic views of creation was accurate: "although the Zohar has a complicated understanding of creation by emanation, its fundamental understanding of *bara* is 'to create' *ex nihilo.'" In this passage Scholem twice states that *bara* means to create *ex nihilo": "God created in the beginning from the absolute Nought, as also indicated by the verb *bara*, a very subtle immaterial element"

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[^349]: The phrase *Tohu wa-bohu*, here discussed by Nahmanides, comes from Genesis 1:2 and is translated in the King James Version as "without form, and void."

[^350]: The *Sefer ha-Bahir* is the "earliest work of Kabbalistic literature, written by an unknown author in northern Spain or Provence at the end of the twelfth century," Dan, "Sefer ha-Bahir," 615a.

and "the verb barat, which on the exoteric level means 'create from nothing,' signifies, on the esoteric level, 'emanate.'" Whereas Quinn quotes his out-of-context phrase from Scholem as evidence that the kabbalists believed in creation from preexistent matter, Scholem explicitly states in the very next phrase that "this primordially created element, the hyle, . . . comes from the nought," or, in other words, is created from nothing. For the kabbalists this means that it emanated from God. This "nought" is described as a "very subtle and immaterial point," an excellent description of nothing. From nothing is created the primordial matter, from which is created the rest of creation. Quinn has completely misconstrued both my argument and Scholem’s discussion, citing passages that actually support my position in an attempt to prove my polemic deceit.

Coeval

At this point in his discussion, Quinn’s utter contempt for historical contextuality degenerates into absurdity. He claims that:

Another evidence for the influence of John Allen’s book is Smith’s use of the technical word “coeval.” . . . In 1816 and 1830 Allen used “coeval” in his discussion of the nature of God in the Cabala and Zohar. . . . Joseph Smith in October 1842 used the phrase “coeval with their existence.” (p. 302)352

Here is Allen’s actual passage, with Quinn’s single word in boldface:

[Some Christian scholars maintain that] the reveries of the Cabbala are altogether at variance with the dictates of revelation: that the doctrine of the Zohar, for instance, respecting the superior Sephiroth, or three principal emanations from the Deity, bears no analogy to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity: that those three principles [the first three sefirot] are neither coeval nor coequal with the infinite Deity, but having originated from it, are consequently inferior to it.353

353. Allen, Modern Judaism, 90. Quinn attempts to demonstrate that reports of Joseph’s use of the term coequal in the King Follett Discourse were mishearings of coeval
So, Quinn would have us believe that Allen's brief discussion of the kabbalistic doctrine that the first three sefirot were not coeval with God is the source of Joseph's teaching that the intelligences of mankind are coeval with God, simply because both use the term coeval. At the very best all Quinn could argue is that Joseph learned the vocabulary item coeval from Allen. How does this demonstrate the influence of kabbalistic or magical thought upon Joseph Smith?

**Gematria and Adam-God**

Owens claimed that Brigham Young (and by association, Joseph Smith) might have derived his theories about Adam-God from kabbalistic gematria where the name ADM equals 45 and the name YHWH —by a "filling" or "extended" gematria—also equals 45. I objected that Owens provided no primary source available to Joseph Smith that made this kabbalistic equation. "To demonstrate that Joseph did a 'filling' gematria on the name of Adam, it is not sufficient to find a modern secondary source that briefly describes it." Quinn attempts to solve this problem by searching for English language sources on Kabbalah that mention the equation of YHWH with 45. He provides three possible sources: Barrett's *The Magus* (1821), Buchan's *Witchcraft Detected and Prevented* (1823), and Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*, published in 1651, which Quinn claims—but does not demonstrate—was "still-circulating" in Joseph's day (see p. 305). Barrett's *The Magus* not only gives 45 as "Jehovah extended,"

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354. I am skipping a rather bizarre and utterly irrelevant paragraph in which Quinn disagrees with Owens's claim that Orson Pratt was influenced by a 1617 Latin book. Quinn thinks a better source is a 1635 English book (see p. 304). I agree that Quinn's theory is slightly less absurd than Owens's. The entire paragraph has nothing to do with kabbalism and seems randomly inserted into the text.

355. Owens, "Joseph Smith and Kabbalah," 127; Owens, however, does not note that two different forms of gematria are required to make this equation.


357. Quinn also does not inform us that "Barrett's book [The Magus] is made up of large blocks of plagiarized material from [Agrippa's] Occult Philosophy"; see Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, which is a reprint (but not a facsimile) of James Freake's 1651 English translation, with many helpful notes, etc.
but also gives 45 as “Agiel, the Intelligence of Saturn,” and “Zazel, the Spirit of Saturn.” No connection is made with Adam. In this, Barrett is simply copying, verbatim, from Agrippa’s *Occult Philosophy.* Quinn’s two sources are thus actually only one. And neither source provides any explanation of how to do the “extended” or “filling” gematria, nor even of how to do gematria at all.

But Quinn is entirely missing the actual thrust of my argument. “The real question here is what primary sources were available in the early 1840s—to which Joseph [and Brigham Young] had access—that expounded this idea” not only that YHWH equaled 45, but that YHWH and Adam were the same being because both had a gematria equaling 45. To find an accessible source that equates YHWH with 45 is only a third of the issue. The other two-thirds is to find an accessible English language source that equates Adam with 45 and furthermore equates YHWH with Adam on the basis of the similarity of these two numbers. Quinn provides neither of these.

But even if Quinn could do this, it would still be supremely irrelevant. Since Jehovah and Michael/Adam are clearly two separate individuals in the LDS temple endowment, it seems hardly likely that Brigham Young would have tried to equate the two through gematria! Rather, if one wants to engage in this silly game, one should search for a gematria that equates *Elohim* with Adam.

Quinn claims that he has demonstrated that “the mid-1820s popular English-language handbooks of the occult used the ‘special system of gematria’ that Hamblin assured FARMS readers was unknown to Joseph Smith’s generation” (p. 305). But this is untrue. First, none of the sources Quinn cites actually explains how to do

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358. Barrett, *The Magus,* 1:146. Quinn does not explain why Joseph would have been interested in equating Adam with Jehovah instead of Agiel or Zazel, as found in the famous nonexistent Adam-Zazel theory.


360. Tyson makes up for this lack in Agrippa by providing an explanation in an appendix, 762–72.


362. A possible alternative is to find a source which describes the “filling” method of gematria in detail. None of Quinn’s sources provides this either.
gematria at all, let alone the “filling” system of gematria. Second, I made no claim that this form of gematria was “unknown to Joseph Smith’s generation.” Quinn has again misrepresented my position. Rather, I pointed out that Owens provided no early nineteenth-century source whatsoever for his assertions that Adam and God were equated by Brigham Young or Joseph Smith based on the gematria of YHWH and Adam. I suggested that Owens search for accessible English-language books on the subject. Quinn has made the attempt and failed, providing no accessible English sources that describe how to do the “filling” gematria, equate Adam with 45, or equate YHWH with Adam because both have a gematria of 45. If such sources exist, they need to be found and documented before this nonsense should be given the slightest credence.

Adam Kadmon

In “Joseph Smith and Kabbalah,” Owens proposed that the kabbalistic doctrine of Adam Kadmon—the “primordial man”—could also have been a source for Brigham Young’s Adam-God speculations.364 In my critique, I objected that this made no sense because “Adam Kadmon, the Primordial Man of kabbalism, is not Adam the first man of the Garden of Eden.”365 Quinn, on the other hand, insists that the equation of Adam Kadmon with Adam of the Garden of Eden “was what readers could reasonably conclude from pre-1844 English-language publications about the Cabala” (p. 305).

But Quinn’s discussion of this issue obscures several important points. First, it should be noted that Owens was claiming that Joseph used Hebrew and Aramaic books as his sources for knowledge of

363. Quinn naturally feels compelled to question my honesty again, charging that “Hamblin was unaware of John Allen’s book (or at least did not cite it for the benefit of FARMS readers)” (p. 304). I did not cite Allen’s book because I was reviewing Owens’s claims that Joseph was influenced by kabbalistic literature in the original Aramaic and Hebrew. At the time I wrote my review, no one had made any claims of major influence on Joseph Smith from reading about kabbalism in Allen or any other English-language books.


Adam Kadmon, not English-language books. Second, I was describing what kabbalists really teach about Adam Kadmon, not how secondary English sources of the early nineteenth century may or may not have misunderstood or misrepresented this teaching. Third, Quinn is not arguing that I have misunderstood or misrepresented the authentic kabbalistic teachings about Adam Kadmon nor the modern secondary scholarly sources describing those teachings. He is only claiming that English-language sources available to Joseph Smith equated Adam Kadmon with Adam of the Garden. This is an entirely different argument from the disagreement between Owens and myself. Thus, even if Quinn is correct, he has not supported Owens's original thesis nor has he demonstrated that my position was wrong.

But is Quinn correct in his claim that Adam Kadmon was equated with Adam of the Garden in English-language sources on Kabbalah from the early nineteenth century? Quinn provides three sources that he feels make this equation: Basnage’s 1708 History of the Jews, Allen’s 1816/1830 Modern Judaism, and Enfield’s 1819 History of Philosophy. The last two were possibly accessible to Joseph, but Basnage’s book—120 years old by Joseph’s time—is quite a stretch. But let us grant, for the sake of argument, that Joseph could actually have read each of these three books. What would he have learned about Adam Kadmon?

Basnage makes the following statement about Adam Kadmon, as cited by Quinn:

The first Emanation, more perfect than the rest, is called Adam Kadmon, the first of all that was created in the beginning. His name is taken from Genesis, where God said, Let us make man, or Adam, in our Image, after our likeness; and this Name was given him... As Man holds the first rank upon Earth, so the Celestial Adam enjoys it in Heaven. (p. 305)366

366. Citing Jacques Basnage, The History of the Jews, from Jesus Christ to the Present Time..., trans. Thomas Taylor (London: Bever and Lintot, 1708), 300. I was not able to obtain a copy of Basnage’s work. I am therefore forced to quote Quinn’s extraction. It would be worth obtaining the original and examining the materials left out by ellipses.
Quinn cites this passage as evidence that earthly Adam is the same as Adam Kadmon, or "Celestial Adam." But the text, in fact, says precisely the opposite. "As Man [equated with Adam of the Garden in the previous sentence] holds the first rank upon Earth, so the Celestial Adam [Adam Kadmon] enjoys it in Heaven." In other words, there are two Adams, one in heaven, and one on earth, precisely as I have stated. That they are distinct is further emphasized in this text. Adam Kadmon was "the first of all that was created in the beginning." Adam of the Garden was, of course, the last of God's creations in the Garden on the last day of creation (see Genesis 1:26-30). Adam Kadmon is said to have derived his name from Adam of the Garden. This is hardly necessary, or even possible, if the two are one and the same.

Quinn's second source supposedly equating Adam Kadmon with Adam of the Garden is Allen, who is cited as writing "the first emanation of Deity [is] called Adam Kadmon" (p. 305). How this equates Adam Kadmon with Adam of the Garden is obscure. Where, precisely, does Joseph describe Adam of the Garden as "the first emanation of Deity"? Reading the entire source in context makes the distinction between the two Adams abundantly clear. Here is Allen's full statement on the subject, with Quinn's out-of-context quotation in boldface.

The last and remotest production of emanative energy is matter; which is rather a privation of perfection, than a distinct essence; being found where the light, by its distance from the primordial source, is so attenuated, that it exhibits a mere residuum of divine emanation, very little above nonentity.

Sometimes the first emanation of Deity, called Adam Kadmon, is represented under the emblem of a human figure, on the different parts of which are inscribed the names of the Sephiroth:—on the top of the head, Supreme Crown; on the right side of the head, Wisdom; on the left, Understanding... 

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Allen goes on to associate the other sefirot with various parts of the body. He never mentions Adam of the Garden. If anything is implied by this passage it is that Adam of the Garden, belonging to the world of matter which is the “remotest production of emanative energy,” must necessarily be different from Adam Kadmon, which is the “first emanation.” Furthermore, this passage informs us that Adam Kadmon is not really a man but rather is only “represented under the emblem of a human figure.” The kabbalists use a human form to symbolize the emanation of the sefirot from the head (the first sefira) to the feet (the final sefira). Quinn seems to think that the mere fact that Allen mentions the name Adam Kadmon somehow proves his case. It does not.368

Quinn’s final source is Enfield’s 1819 History of Philosophy. Here he fares no better. He cites Enfield as stating, “ADAM KADMAN [sic], the First Man, the first production of Divine Energy, or the Son of God” (p. 305).369 Here is Enfield’s complete statement, with Quinn’s selection again in boldface:

Before the creation of the world, all space was filled with the OR HAEN SOPH, or Infinite Intellectual Light. . . . [emanations of the divine light flowed from this “Eternal Fountain”]. . . . From this luminous channel streams of light flowed, at different distances from the center, in a circular path, and formed distinct circles of light, separated from the Concave of Light, or from each other, by portions of dark or empty space. Of these circles of light, ten were produced, which may be called SPHERAE, or SPLENDORS.

The rectilineal beam of light, which is the First Emanation from the Eternal Fountain, and is itself the source of all other emanations, may be distinguished by the name ADAM KADMAN, the First Man, the first production of Divine Energy, or, the Son of God. The Sephiroth are fountains of

368. See ibid., 218–20, mentions other rabbinic traditions on Adam and Eve, none of which mentions Adam Kadmon.

emanation subordinate to Adam Kadman, which send forth rays of divine light, or communicate essence and life to inferior beings. The ten Sephirae are known, according to the order of emanation, by the names, Intelligence or the Crown, Knowledge, Wisdom, Strength, Beauty, Greatness, Glory, Stability, Victory, Dominion. These are not the instruments of the divine operations, but media, through which the Deity diffuses himself through the sphere of the universe, and produces whatever exists. They are not beings detached from the deity, but substantial virtues or powers, distinctly, but dependently, sent forth from the eternal source of existence through the mediation of Adam Kadman, the first emanating power, and becoming the immediate source of existence to subordinate emanations.\textsuperscript{370}

Initially, we need to clarify what this text is really saying. Adam Kadmon is a Hebrew phrase: Adam means simply “man,” while Kadmon (qdmon) means “ancient.” It is usually translated into English by modern scholars as “primordial man.” Enfield, when he says that Adam Kadmon is the “First Man,” is simply translating the name. Next, Enfield clarifies what this “First Man” signifies: it is “the first production of Divine Energy,” or, in other words, the “first emanation,” precisely as described in Basnage and Allen. Finally, Enfield gives the interpretation of Christian kabbalists, that Adam Kadmon is the “Son of God.” In other words, he is equating Adam Kadmon with the logos, or premortal Christ. The best Quinn could argue is that Joseph, reading this phrase, might confuse Adam Kadmon with the “First Man” Adam, as Quinn has apparently done. However, reading the entire passage in context makes this highly unlikely. And note, again, that Adam of the Garden is never mentioned in this passage.

We should also note that, while not as rabidly anti-Semitic as Allen’s book, Enfield also takes a largely negative attitude towards Kabbalah. Enfield believes that kabbalistic narratives “bear the evident marks of fiction.”\textsuperscript{371} He believes that the Kabbalah’s ideas were “not

\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 217–19.
\textsuperscript{371} Ibid., 212.
of Hebrew origin," based on the "total dissimilarity of its abstruse and mysterious doctrines [when compared] to the simple principles of religion taught in the Mosaic law." Moreover, "the Cabbalistic system is fundamentally inconsistent with the pure doctrine of Divine Revelation" in the Bible. After briefly summarizing kabbalistic doctrines, Enfield writes, "it is impossible to review the mass of conjectures and fictions, called the Jewish Cabbala, without perceiving that it could not be derived from the pure source of divine revelation." He concludes that "it must be confessed, that the history of this system is chiefly valuable, as it furnishes an example of the folly of permitting reason, in its search after truth, to follow the wild reveries of an unbridled imagination." It is difficult to understand why someone would be interested in adopting kabbalistic ideas from this kind of discussion.

Finally, none of these three sources equates Adam of the Garden or Adam Kadmon with God himself. So why this is in any way relevant to the original argument—that Brigham Young derived the Adam-God theory from kabbalism—is obscure. All Quinn has demonstrated is that Adam Kadmon was mentioned in three English sources; the name could therefore have been known to Joseph Smith. For Quinn, the fact that neither Joseph nor other early Mormons ever mention Adam Kadmon is apparently irrelevant.

Neibaur's Kabbalistic Books

In a rather bizarre concluding tirade, Quinn again accuses me of intentional dishonesty in my critique of Owens. In the original debate, Owens maintained that Alexander Neibaur had a large collection of Hebrew and Aramaic kabbalistic books that he studied with Joseph Smith. I maintained that there was absolutely no evidence of such books. As Quinn sees it, I

372. Ibid.
373. Ibid., 214.
374. Ibid., 221.
375. Ibid., 223.
misrepresented the facts when [I] insisted that [Neibaur's] cabalistic books, "despite their undoubtedly great value and bulk, . . . are not mentioned in Neibaur's estate." The Owens article specified that "documents relating to his estate do not list personal effects such as books." (p. 306)376

Why Quinn claims my position is a "misrepresentation" of Owens is impossible to fathom. I said that kabbalistic books are not mentioned in Neibaur's estate. Owens says precisely the same thing. Indeed, Owens was my source for this information.

But, of course, this is only the beginning of my dishonesty. Quinn goes on:

Hamblin misled his readers into concluding that the estate inventory itemized Neibaur's books, which booklist allegedly did not contain any cabalistic works. Hamblin made this explicit: "Thus, only one book need have been misplaced or overlooked in Neibaur's estate, rather than an entire kabbalistic library." (p. 306, emphasis added)

Once again, only the most strained reading of what I wrote and the most negative interpretations of my motives could possibly lead one to suspect that I was "misleading my readers." First, I nowhere claimed that any books were mentioned in Neibaur's estate inventory or booklist. Quite the opposite, my position is that no books existed at all. Second, when using the word estate, I was not referring to an "estate inventory" or "booklist" as Quinn claims. I never used those terms. They are Quinn's invention. Estate, in standard English, means "the assets and liabilities of a dead or bankrupt person."377 It does not mean a list of those assets. Whether the estate inventory included a list of books or not, the estate itself did not include any surviving

376. Citing Hamblin, "Everything," 296–97, and Owens, "Joseph Smith and Kabbalah," 176 n. 127. The ellipsis points represent the deletion of the word they, which didn't fit Quinn's sentence construction.

kabbalistic books. That this is my point is clear when my argument is read in context. I wrote:

What evidence does Owens present that Neibaur had this alleged kabbalistic library? No kabbalistic books have survived. No one in Nauvoo ever saw or mentioned these alleged books. Despite their undoubtedly great value and bulk, they are not mentioned in Neibaur’s estate. Neither Neibaur nor anyone else ever quoted from them before or after the Times and Seasons article. . . . For all intents, these rare valuable books . . . simply vanished off the face of the earth.\textsuperscript{378}

My point is simply that there is no evidence of the physical existence of these books. I am not talking about an estate inventory, but all types of possible evidence that the books existed, especially the books themselves.

Quinn’s third claim is equally inaccurate. He maintains:

To limit the possibility that his readers might check the accuracy of his two statements about Neibaur’s estate, Hamblin did not acknowledge Owens’s explanation nor cite a source for Hamblin’s claims about the estate. Devout Mormons do not deserve such tactics from a FARMS polemicist. (p. 306)

Quinn cites Owens, page 176 note 127, as the reference for Owens’s statement about the lack of mention of kabbalistic books in Neibaur’s estate (see p. 573 n. 546). This is the note Quinn claims I nefariously “did not acknowledge.” It is true that I did not specifically cite this passage from Owens in my discussion of the lack of evidence for kabbalistic books. However, on the very same page in the very next paragraph I twice cite precisely this page and footnote from Owens: once in the body of the text and once in a footnote.\textsuperscript{379} If I were really intentionally attempting to hide the existence of this footnote from my readers, why would I cite precisely this footnote twice on the very same page?

\textsuperscript{378} Hamblin, “Everything,” 296–97.

\textsuperscript{379} See ibid., 297 n. 132.
The bizarre irony of all of this is that Quinn apparently agrees with me that Neibaur did not have a large library of rare kabbalistic books: "I have no special interest in arguing that Alexander Neibaur had a personal 'library' of multiple books about the Cabala" (p. 306). Quinn believes—even though the evidence supports my position—that I was forced to go to extremes of lying and deceiving my readers to prove a point which is, in fact, correct. Apparently he believes I am so depraved that I will lie even when telling the truth.

Conclusions

I remember as a high school student going to an amusement park fun house, standing before the warped mirrors, and laughing at the distorted images of myself they reflected. Reading Quinn's remarkably distorted rendition of history reminds me vividly of that experience. Knowing the original, one must simply laugh at the warped, twisted, and distorted image of the past in his book. Here is a summary of the types of errors and distortions found repeatedly in Early Mormonism, as documented in this review:

- Failure to understand the significant problems surrounding the definitions of magic.
- Failure to distinguish between magic and religion.
- Failure to ascertain early LDS understandings of magic.
- Misunderstanding and misrepresenting other scholars because of idiosyncratic use of language.
- Use of coincidence as evidence.
- Fallacy of the possible proof.
- Failure to understand his critics and deal with their criticisms.

380. Cf. Quinn's statement, "Hamblin is probably correct in denying that the Mormon prophet examined those previously published texts of the Cabala," mentioned by Owens (see p. 302).

381. I once used Quinn's first edition of Early Mormonism as an assigned reading in my undergraduate senior seminar in history as an example of how not to write history. Even those undergraduate students were easily able to discover the flaws of evidence and analysis that abound in Quinn's book.
Endless *ad hominem* attacks on his critics as dishonest polemics.

Failure to distinguish between unproven propositions and evidence.

Failure to deal with his primary sources in the original languages.

Claims that Joseph Smith read books in languages he couldn’t read.

Claims that Joseph Smith read books written centuries before he was born.

Claims that Joseph Smith was influenced by ideas that originated only after he died.

Claims that Joseph Smith had access to unpublished manuscripts from Europe.

Bibliography padding.

Failure to adequately document his primary sources.

Misreading primary texts to match his theories.

Misquotation by removing words without ellipses.

Misquotation by removing key words by ellipses.

Misquotation by adding words to quotations.

Misquotation by removing single words or phrases from their context.

Misquotation by changing phrases.

Selective quotation.

Double standard of evaluating evidence.

Ignoring obvious biblical parallels.

Failure to contextualize economic data.

Failure to contextualize geographies of scale.

Failure to contextualize the grammar of his sources.

Failure to contextualize sources in the proper historical period.

Claims that authors describing centuries-old ideas from Europe were discussing Joseph Smith’s era in the United States.

Suppression of evidence that contradicts his thesis.

Ignoring both anti- and pro-Mormon accounts that do not support his thesis.

Using unique or unusual examples as if they were normative.

Obfuscation by semantic equivocation.
• Repeated assertions without evidence.
• Invention of nonexistent historical phenomena (e.g., the occult revival).
• Fallacy of the perfect analogy—that because two things are similar in one characteristic they are therefore similar in all characteristics.
• Focusing only on similarities while ignoring vastly more widespread differences between LDS ideas and magical sources.
• Misrepresentation of the contents of scholarly books.
• Misrepresentation of the ideas of his critics.
• Misrepresentation or distortions of his primary sources.
• Overreliance on early anti-Mormon sources.
• Mind reading.
• Faulty citations of sources.
• Failure to distinguish between various aspects of magic.
• Confusing astrology with talismanic magic.
• Oversimplification of the complexities of magic.
• Falsely claiming that ideas appear in primary sources.
• Use of numerous logical fallacies.
• Assertion in place of analysis.
• Assertion in place of evidence.
• Using adjectives as evidence.
• Reliance on second- or thirdhand accounts rather than firsthand accounts.
• Ignoring contradictions in his various primary accounts.
• Attributing ideas to Joseph Smith that really derive from his associates.
• Falsely attributing ideas to people, both historical and contemporary.
• Use of "guilt by association" tactics.
• Paranoia and conspiratorial fantasies in response to his critics.
• Extensive exaggeration.
• Failure to recognize subtle nuances of texts and ideas.
• Errors in dating people, events, and sources.
• Failure to properly evaluate biblical antecedents.
• Little control over philological or linguistic issues.
I recognize, of course, that all historians make mistakes. There are undoubtedly errors in this article and other things I have written. Furthermore, I am not saying that Quinn is completely wrong on everything. Even a broken clock is right twice a day. However, errors and misrepresentations of this magnitude simply transcend the usual limits of the mortal condition. Something is seriously amiss. Without careful checking, it is impossible to be sure than Quinn has accurately read and represented any of his sources.

In a very real sense Quinn's book is an academic version of the Hofmann forgeries. It is an attempt to foist a fabrication upon the scholarly community as authentic history. It is a travesty whose labyrinth of misrepresentation will require years of work for scholars to unravel. I can only advise, in the strongest terms, that scholars use Quinn's work with the greatest caution, if at all. All of his references and citations need to be examined for accuracy. None of his conclusions should be taken at face value.

For Quinn, disagreements with his interpretation of Mormon history are caused by a Manichean struggle between history and faith:

Hamblin and I [Quinn] obviously see faith and its defense in very different ways, both as historians and as believers. According to his published comments about me, Hamblin thinks that my commitment to historical analysis has subverted my LDS faith. Having read many of his writings, I think Hamblin's commitment as "a defender" has subverted his historical training. (p. 351 n. 98)

It is no wonder that Quinn fails to provide a single reference to my supposed view that his "commitment to historical analysis has subverted [his] LDS faith." I have never said such a thing nor do I believe it. Although I do think Quinn is a bad historian, it is not because he has gone to graduate school, nor because he is a revisionist, nor because he has been excommunicated from the LDS Church. I think Quinn is a bad historian solely because he writes bad history. For

382 While writing this conclusion I was referred to a recent issue of BYU Studies, which contains an excellent critique of Quinn's claims (see pp. 35–36) that Joseph Smith
me the struggle is not between history and faith, but between authen-
tic history and false history. Even if I were an unbeliever, I would
find Quinn's history unbelievable, not because of faith—or lack
thereof—but because of evidence and analysis. Quinn's revisionist
history offers no alternative to traditional Mormon history, New
Mormon history, nor even anti-Mormon history. All scholars of the
Mormon past—whether faithful Latter-day Saints or agnostic, secu-
lar, skeptical, or evangelical individuals—should be able to agree on
at least one thing. Quinn has monumentally failed to make his case
for the influence of magical thought on Joseph Smith and early
Mormonism.

Sr. and William Cowdery (Oliver's father) were involved in the Wood Scrape incident in 1802: Larry E. Morris, "Oliver Cowdery's Vermont Years and the Origins of Mormonism," BYU Studies 39/1 (2000): 113–18, documents numerous additional examples from Quinn of precisely the same types of errors and misrepresentation I have discussed in this article.