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The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Searching

Richard Lloyd Anderson

Joseph Smith turned twenty-one at the end of 1826 and the following year began adult responsibilities as he married and set up his small farm. Contemporary records are available after that time, since he obtained the plates late in 1827 and recorded revelations in 1828. In 1829 there are written revelations, important letters, the surviving Book of Mormon manuscript, and newspaper articles on the new faith. Before these years there is a kind of prehistory, a term normally applied to early cultures without written sources. Such a term could be misused, for the Prophet's recollections of youthful religious experiences are early and impressive in detail. Yet the analogy of prehistory is useful in areas not later noted, for his teen years have few contemporary documents and thus invite speculation.

The past year intensified the study of the Prophet's early life because of the release of two "treasure letters" seeming to illuminate the pre-Book of Mormon period. But the coming year and more will be needed to clarify charges of fraud against the main dealer associated with these manuscripts. The questionable letter of Joseph Smith to Josiah Stowell in 1825 has a "clever spirit" guarding a treasure hoard.¹ The questionable 1830 letter from Martin Harris to William W. Phelps claims that Joseph spoke of a salamander and "old spirit" at the hill in 1827, though Joseph's real experience could be obscured by such a singular secondhand report.² Publicity on these documents has stimulated research and reevaluation, some of it asserting a lifelong interest of the Prophet in paranormal discovery of riches. This paper examines the basis of such claims after 1827 and finds them wanting.

Most sources on Joseph Smith's early treasure digging are historically flawed because of late recollection, extreme bias, or remote hearsay. But there are some early correlations in Mormon and non-Mormon versions of the 1825 excavations of Josiah Stowell and the 1826 trial of Joseph Smith. Most researchers will not contest young

Joseph's treasure involvement then, but some are confident that Joseph never abandoned mystic methods for finding buried wealth. Their argument rests mainly on two Doctrine and Covenants revelations plus a newly found revelation sold by the same dealer whose early treasure letters are legally suspect. The purported revelation of 1838 contains treasure language with close parallels in the Old Testament, Joseph Smith's blessings, and revelations to the Church. This problematic Missouri document raises the question of several meanings of *treasure* in the Prophet's pre-Nauvoo language. Moreover, Joseph's published history of that time furnishes a deceptive reference to buried treasure in Missouri, a reference which is important to clarify.

The length of this paper is justified by the importance of the subject and the attention it has recently attracted. This study collects available references relevant to Joseph's mature views on treasure digging. But each Joseph Smith source must be examined in careful context, for mere verbal associations can gloss over historical realities. There may be distinctly different applications of such catchwords as *treasure*, *earth*, or *rod*. Before we look closely at the main Joseph Smith documents that include such terms, his public reactions to the first exposure attempts will be studied for clues to his own perspectives. In Ohio the Prophet and his chief spokesman Oliver Cowdery established an official position downgrading the New York money-digging practices. This study probes whether the Prophet's private views and acts are consistent with that self-definition. The concluding sections come back to Joseph's youthful environment and early revelations with the theme of transition. Every phase of this study strongly discloses the seriousness of a mission transcending the false starts of Joseph Smith's teens.

PUBLISHED STATEMENTS

Reevaluation can be overreaction. Thus, the supposed treasure letters have caused some to reinstate the 1833 Palmyra–Manchester affidavits as accurate recollections. So a review of why these affidavits are tainted is important, and that old story will be told here with some new material. And another critical purpose is served, for Joseph Smith's and Oliver Cowdery's responses can be understood only in terms of particular charges of the affidavits. These are tempting but dangerous to use; since they claim too much to be credible, selection from them is generally a subjective exercise. Therefore, the Prophet's

early life must be synthesized mainly from later autobiographical summaries, a pattern he shares with numerous public figures who came up from obscurity. If Joseph later underplayed his youthful involvement in treasure digging (by admitting imperfections without giving details), it is equally obvious that the intense denunciations from the most negative neighbors are grossly overdone.

Such exaggerations are historical satire, not history, as if an estimate of Lincoln could be based on the crude cartoons of the opposition press. The 1833 affidavits labeled the Smith family as lazy, though detailed family history proves the contrary, backed up by sixty acres of cleared land with improvements. The warnings of a New York historian about the affidavits' overstatements on this major issue remain a wholesome caution to historians reexamining the early sources on the Prophet:

Every circumstance seems to invalidate the obviously prejudiced testimonials of unsympathetic neighbors (collected by one hostile individual whose style of composition stereotypes the language of numerous witnesses) that the Smiths were either squatters or shiftless "frontier drifters." Many an honest and industrious farmer followed their identical experience, pursued by bad luck or poor judgment, and sought a new fling at fortune farther west. No doubt the Smiths, like many of their fellows, wasted valuable time hunting gold at the proper turn of the moon. One of the potent sources of Joseph's local ill repute may well have been the jealousy of other persons who failed to discover golden plates in the glacial sands of the drumlins.³

Since the 1833 statements miss the mark on laziness, they demand similar caution on money digging. The Prophet described working on a treasure project but did not say that he actively directed others where to dig. Thus this author earlier admitted the possibility of "aggressive treasure seeking" on the part of the Smith family but left the question open: "If it took place, they participated in a passing cultural phenomenon, shared widely by people of known honesty."⁴ A year after that statement appeared, the reimbursement of costs was discovered in an 1826 misdemeanor case against Joseph Smith involving treasure digging. Oliver Cowdery had noted such a trial before 1827, saying Joseph was "honorably acquitted" after being charged "as a disorderly person . . . before the authorities of the county."⁵ When the constable's billings for such a hearing were discovered in 1971, the trial date and amounts corresponded to the published summary testimony, suggesting its authenticity. But fairness to Joseph Smith is another question, since these sketchy notes

were quite clearly taken by a skeptic who indulged in mild ridicule of the youth's claims. In this framework Joseph is reported as admitting

that he had a certain stone, which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures . . . were . . . and had looked for Mr. Stowell several times . . . that at Palmyra . . . he had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was . . . that he has occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up . . . that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.⁶

In an 1859 interview, Martin Harris recalled that Joseph could find a lost object through his stone and that the older Smith men were involved in a money-digging company. Both Joseph and his mother refute treasure-searching accusations without total denials, and Lucy Mack Smith comments that Josiah Stowell came from Pennsylvania to enlist Joseph's help in his excavations because he heard the youth "possessed certain keys by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye."⁷ Yet the extent of such activity is hard to reconstruct, so these particularized reports certainly do not validate all the tall stories of anti-Mormon folklore or the extensive hearsay in county histories.

Responsible investigation will not jump from Harris and the Stowell involvement to the neighborhood certificates. It should first ask how Joseph Smith answered the 1833 certificates. Indeed, he spoke not only of their content but of the character, motivation, and methods of the man who gathered them, Doctor (his given name) Philastus Hurlbut. Mormon histories easily prove Hurlbut's bias and impeach his motives, but unpublished sources also verify the defects noted by virtually every person who mentioned him. Ironically, his own character appears to be worse than the worst he gathered about Joseph Smith.⁸

Joseph's journal notes Hurlbut's appearance in Kirtland as a new member on 13 March 1833, when the Prophet "conversed with him considerably about the Book of Mormon."⁹ Within the week, Hurlbut was ordained an elder and returned to the mission field to preach. But three months later he was tried by "the Bishop's Council of High Priests in a charge of unchristian conduct with the female sex," and he was granted an appeal to the Kirtland higher council, then presided over by Joseph Smith. His "liberal confession" moved the court to mercy: "This council decided that the Bishop's Council decided correctly before, and that Bro. H's crime was sufficient to cut

him off from the Church, but on his confession, he was restored.” Two days later the decision was reversed when evidence surfaced “that Bro. D. P. H. said that he had deceived Joseph Smith, God, or the Spirit by which he is actuated, etc.”¹⁰ But Hurlbut insisted on the last word. E. D. Howe was then editor of the *Telegraph*, which he had earlier founded in Painesville, Ohio, a dozen miles from Mormon Kirtland. He remembered Hurlbut’s next moves:

In 1833 and 34 . . . many leading citizens of Kirtland and Geauga Co. employed and defrayed the expenses of Doctor Philastus Hurlbut . . . and sent him to Palmyra, N.Y. and Penn. to obtain affidavits showing the bad character of the Mormon Smith Family. . . . Hurlbut returned to Ohio and lectured about the county on the origins of Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. I heard him lecture in Painesville. He finally came to me to have this evidence he had obtained published. I bargained to pay him in books.¹¹

Since Hurlbut’s support came from those who sought to expose Joseph Smith, a balanced picture would not be expected. The Prophet was apprehensive even before Hurlbut gathered his New York evidence. Hurlbut had been “expelled from the Church for lewd and adulterous conduct, and to spite us he is lying in a wonderful manner, and the people are running after him and giving him money to break down Mormonism.”¹² His New York affidavits were gathered in November and December 1833, and his employers were happy with the result. Early the following year they advertised that they had “employed D. P. Hurlbut” and that his evidence proved that Solomon Spaulding really wrote the Book of Mormon and that Joseph Smith could now be stripped “of all claims to the character of an honest man.”¹³

Joseph Smith soon took successful legal action against Hurlbut’s physical threats, but the point here is the Prophet’s response to the negative testimonials. The First Presidency warned Missouri leaders that unreliable material was circulating:

Doctor Hurlbut, an apostate elder from this Church, has been to the state of New York and gathered up all the ridiculous stories that could be invented, and some affidavits respecting the character of Bro. Joseph and the Smith family, and exhibited them to numerous congregations in Chagrin, Kirtland, Mentor, and Painesville, and fired the minds of the people with much indignation against Bro. Joseph and the Church.¹⁴

These first Mormon reactions were defensive but not blanket denials. They are traceable to Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery, who

as a schoolteacher had lived with the Smiths in New York before assisting in Book of Mormon translation. Neither Joseph nor Oliver denied treasure digging, but both said there was serious defamation. Oliver Cowdery, who managed the Church newspaper in Kirtland, claimed that a hostile community had used Hurlbut, fostering “every foolish report that ignorance could believe, or malice could invent.” He also noted the known credibility gap, pointing out that reliable materials would have been collected by “a more respectable agent.”¹⁵ Joseph Smith was sarcastic about the man with “Doctor” as a mere personal name: “A doctor not of physic but of falsehood.”¹⁶ Even Hurlbut’s publisher, E. D. Howe, painted an unfavorable picture of the man. He later commented, “Hurlbut was always an unreliable fellow,” and on another occasion he characterized Hurlbut in these terms: “He was good sized, fine looking, full of gab but illiterate, and had lectured on many subjects.”¹⁷

Editor Howe added long histories of the Book of Mormon and Mormonism, and by October 1834 his copy was ready.¹⁸ On 28 November, he advertised that *Mormonism Unveiled* was “just published” and contained the truth about “the Mormonite imposition.”¹⁹ Joseph Smith reacted quickly, publishing an overview of his early life in the December issue of the Church newspaper. He answered the Hurlbut–Howe affidavits by mentioning his “accusers” and explaining his youth. Oliver Cowdery had begun printing installments on the New York history of the Prophet in October, but in December he specifically mentioned the need of accurate information “to convince the public of the incorrectness of those scurrilous reports which have *inundated* our land.”²⁰ Joseph Smith’s statement admitted an imperfect past but not serious sins—what he outlined was “all, and the worst, that my accusers can substantiate against my moral character.” His remarks specifically applied to his “residence” in the Palmyra area from “the age of ten . . . until I was twenty-one”—the years from 1816, when the family arrived in New York, to 1827, when Joseph married, obtained the plates, and moved from his parents’ home:

During this time, as is common to most or all youths, I fell into many vices and follies. But as my accusers are and have been forward to accuse me of being guilty of gross and outrageous violations of the peace and good order of the community, I take the occasion to remark that . . . I have not, neither can it be sustained in truth, been guilty of wronging or injuring any man or society of men. And those imperfections to which I allude, and for which I have often had occasion to

lament, were a light and too often vain mind, exhibiting a foolish and trifling conversation.²¹

This answer takes shape in the light of the affidavits. “Trifling conversation” is the key, which has nothing to do with speech, for “conversation” in the King James Bible is action or pattern of life.²² So Joseph Smith really confesses “foolish and trivial actions,” though in the religious language of another generation. For instance, the Prophet earlier wrote of the Church member’s obligation of “a godly walk and conversation” (D&C 20:69), strict synonyms. Indeed, in his answer to Howe he went on to talk of “this public confession of my former uncircumspect walk, and unchaste conversation,” reiterative phrases meaning “improper activity.”²³

So what activity was the Prophet confessing? The affidavits are the guide, for the repeated charges were threefold: the Smiths were a “lying and indolent set of men” and “the general employment of the family was digging for money.”²⁴ Lying, laziness, and money digging are woven into the Hurlbut affidavits. In 1834, Joseph Smith stressed that he had not injured the community, which most obviously denies lying. We know historically that neither he nor his family were guilty of indolence or laziness.²⁵ So the major charge left is money digging, which certainly fits Joseph Smith’s acknowledgment of “trifling conversation,” meaning “trivial activity.” Such general language could fit other youthful “follies” as well, but money digging is the glaringly visible charge not expressly challenged.²⁶

Oliver Cowdery’s account of Joseph Smith’s early history continued regularly for ten months after the issue containing the Prophet’s answer to the affidavits. The closing installment suggests finality, since it covers an unusually long time and concludes with gratitude that “thousands” now believe and are members of the Church.²⁷ Here Oliver surveyed the period 1823 to 1827 discussed in Hurlbut’s interviews, the later teens that Joseph spoke about. And these final comments complete his “purpose” stated right after Howe’s book appeared—to combat the slanderous “reports” with a “correct account.”²⁸ Joseph Smith’s response to Howe had only been general. But Oliver was more specific, even mentioning Joseph Smith’s trial and acquittal on the charge of being a “disorderly person” sometime “previous to his obtaining the records of the Nephites.”²⁹ As already mentioned, notations of fees in this case have surfaced, along with later recollections about it. There is also a “record,” a highly condensed selection of Joseph’s testimony. Even if contemporary, it is far

from a balanced statement of his words in court or of his religious views.³⁰ But the point here is the basic credibility of Cowdery's survey of Joseph's 1823–27 personal life, since Oliver includes this charge relating to pre-Mormon money digging, one not even in the Hurlbut–Howe affidavits.

Oliver Cowdery responds to each of the charges most repeated in the affidavits: laziness, lying, and money digging. He introduces his rebuttals “in consequence of certain false and slanderous reports which have been circulated,” for “by some he is said to have been a lazy, idle, vicious, profligate fellow.” Cowdery's refutation rests on his own experience with Joseph's personal and moral “merits” and the “*many* persons with whom I have been intimately acquainted.” Regarding laziness and lying, persons of “unquestionable integrity . . . agree in saying that he was an honest, upright, virtuous, and faithfully industrious young man.” Repeating his rebuttal, Oliver adds, “I have been told by those for whom he has labored, that he was a young man of truth and industrious habits.”³¹ Since the whole Smith family was included in Hurlbut's salvos, Oliver Cowdery also defends their honesty and industry, admitting their poverty and reverses, which he had shared from the time he entered their home as the neighborhood schoolteacher in 1828.

Oliver named the affidavit of Isaac Hale, found in the “productions of those who have sought to destroy the validity of the Book of Mormon,” along with “certain statements of some others of the inhabitants of that section of the country.” These are pointed references to Howe's printing of the Susquehanna Valley affidavits, including that of Joseph's father-in-law, who claimed that Joseph sought treasure through a seer stone for Josiah Stowell. Oliver skirts this issue, claiming exaggeration: because of that project Joseph was “accused of digging down all, or nearly so, the mountains of Susquehanna, or causing others to do it by some art of necromancy.” Here Joseph's apologist does exactly what Joseph had done earlier—he vigorously contradicts the claims of dishonesty and indolence but does not specifically deny treasure hunting. Indeed, Oliver goes into some detail on Stowell's Spanish mine but then trails off with the hint that there is more that could be told: “This, I believe, is the substance, so far as my memory serves, though I shall not pledge my veracity for the correctness of the account as I have given.” Oliver thus avoids a full history of how Joseph's group was “excavating the earth in pursuit of this treasure.” But his point is that detail is irrelevant—Joseph is now “worthy of the appellation of a seer and a

prophet of the Lord," even though he is "a man subject to passion like other men, beset with infirmities and encompassed with weaknesses."³²

This sentence brings the evidence full circle, for Oliver is really paraphrasing what Joseph said about himself in the pre-1827 years. Both stress that the real issue is not what Joseph Smith was, but what he became. Both talk of Joseph's earlier questionable pursuits and equate them with "imperfections" and "weaknesses." Both tacitly admit Joseph's money digging as a past, irrelevant activity. This public position continued through the Prophet's career in Nauvoo, when John Taylor vigorously criticized such practices by the Brewster group, whose young spiritual leader claimed rival revelations. John Taylor was accountable to Joseph Smith in his public statements, and the Prophet allowed the following criticisms to stand without comment:

This said Brewster is a minor but has professed for several years to have the gift of seeing and looking through or into a stone, and has thought that he has discovered money hid in the ground in Kirtland, Ohio. His father and some of our weak brethren, who perhaps have had some confidence in the ridiculous stories that are propagated concerning Joseph Smith about money digging, have assisted him in his foolish plans, for which they were dealt with by the Church. They were at that time suspended, and would have been cut off from the Church if they had not promised to desist from their ridiculous and pernicious ways.³³

Young Brewster soon published an answer, angrily aiming at his real enemy: "I have good reason to believe it was written by Joseph Smith, or at least by his directions." Then he counterclaimed that the Prophet's father and Alva Beaman were the principal movers in getting him "to discover and obtain the treasures which are hid in the earth."³⁴ In fact, Brewster claimed to have been blessed by the elder Smith for the above purpose, although this might not be more than a patriarchal blessing, since similar wording appears in a number of blessings of Joseph Smith, Sr., in surviving Mormon journals. Such language is not always literal, however, and Brewster's one-sided account may be as flawed here as it is at other places.³⁵ For instance, he represents himself as hypocritically condemned for money digging by the Kirtland High Council, which included some others that had engaged in the practice. But that misstates the real issue of his Kirtland trial and the Nauvoo public criticism, which started by warning the Church against Brewster's 1842 publication of his

revelations. The information about money digging was added to portray Brewster's unreliability. Kirtland High Council minutes have nothing on digging but state false revelation as his overriding fault, just as it was in Illinois:

The charge was for giving heed to revelations said to be translated from the Book of Mormon by Collin Brewster, he entering into a written covenant different from the Articles and Covenants of the Church of the Latter-day Saints, and following a vain and delusive spirit.³⁶

John Taylor had exposed Brewster's false revelations and incidentally had condemned his Kirtland money digging. Brewster's answer sidestepped the larger issue of becoming counter-prophet but named others as encouraging money digging at Kirtland. He sought to tar the Prophet with the same brush by sarcastically noting Joseph's trip to Salem for treasure, an incident next to be discussed. But, though attacking the Prophet, Brewster does not implicate Joseph in continuing the mystic searches of early New York. He does accuse Joseph Smith, Sr., and John Smith of encouraging these practices. Yet those two presided over the Kirtland higher council when Brewster was humbled. Since his motive is to blacken them, the truth of his charges is not clear. That cannot be decided here, if at all, but at most Brewster's claims would mean that New York money digging continued with some Mormons in Kirtland. Except for Salem, Brewster only involves the Prophet in retrospective hints, threatening in his pamphlet to give "the history of the money diggers from the beginning," an apparent reference to his mention of Father Smith's conversations about "New York, where the money digging business was carried on to a great extent by the Smith family."

The same format is followed by an early Ohio dissenter, Ezra Booth. Disillusioned by human weakness and the idea of Missouri as Zion, in 1831 he ridiculed his Mormon experiences:

It passes for a current fact in the Mormonite Church, that there are immense treasures in the earth, especially in those places in the State of New York from which many of the Mormonites emigrated last spring. And when they become sufficiently purified, these treasures are to be poured into the lap of their church. And then, to use their own language, they are to be the richest people in the world. These treasures were discovered several years since by means of the dark glass, the same with which Smith says he translated most of the Book of Mormon. Several of those persons, together with Smith, who were formerly unsuccessfully engaged in digging and searching for these treasures, now reside in this county, and from them I received this information.³⁷

Booth also stops short of implicating Joseph Smith in continued belief in treasure digging. Booth published his letters to expose a false prophet, but he merely recites continued commitment of some New York Mormons, not any Joseph Smith example. So Booth's exposés in Ohio and Brewster's in Illinois suggest that many private convictions about money digging did not die suddenly. But the lack of direct accusation of Joseph Smith is striking. Booth and Brewster were but two of a dozen important figures who became disenchanted and sought to rationalize their positions by written exposés of the Prophet. These were generally articulate men who sought their self-interest or who thought their views on doctrine or church management were superior to the Prophet's. These apostasies occurred not only during the Ohio but also during the Missouri and Illinois periods. So far their handbooks of Joseph Smith's weaknesses have anticipated whatever has been said on that question for the obvious reason that they knew their subject firsthand. This negative literature turns out to be an important control on how to assess the Prophet's connection with treasure digging. And these exposures mention only pre-Mormon New York searches and the special trip to Salem in 1836. As just discussed, the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery essentially admitted the former, and Joseph Smith sources also include the Salem incident and verify its purpose. Since the Mormon founder's life is so well illuminated by hostile contemporaries, faithful journals, and detailed personal records, further treasure involvement is not likely beyond early New York and the Salem trip.

THE SALEM VISIT IN CONTEXT

Why did Joseph Smith go to Salem in 1836? The answer is more complex than is generally known. The negative version was given by James C. Brewster seven years later. Stung by John Taylor's criticism of money digging, Brewster accused Joseph Smith of being the real source and struck back: "If he has a good memory, he will remember the house that was rented in the city of Boston, with the expectation of finding a large sum of money buried in or near the cellar." The Boston inaccuracy hints that Brewster's information was not as direct as that of Ebenezer Robinson, who gives his source as the Prophet's brother, with whom he worked in the Kirtland printing office. Brewster's summary and Robinson's negative recollection are the points of beginning, to be corrected by details now available in other historical sources. Since an overview is helpful at the outset,

Robinson's entire narrative of the incident is spliced together here from his memoirs a half-century later:

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

We soon learned that four of the leading men of the Church had been to Salem, Massachusetts in search of the hidden treasure spoken of by Brother Burgess, viz.: Joseph Smith, Jr., Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery. . . .

We were informed that Brother Burgess met them in Salem, evidently according to appointment, but time had wrought such a change that he could not for a certainty point out the house and soon left. They, however, found a house which they felt was the right one, and hired it. It is needless to say they failed to find that treasure or the other gold and silver spoken of in the revelation.³⁸

The Prophet visited a city of past glory and lingering prosperity. That year a patriotic editor observed that "from 1790 to 1800 . . . has always been considered the golden age of Salem."³⁹ By 1836, docks that had once received the goods of the world were being redeveloped.⁴⁰ Fortunes had been made, and rumors of secret wealth had some basis. In 1838, Hawthorne published "Peter Goldthwaite's Treasure," a story of searching for a trunk of money in a Salem house. The author sketched an exciting find with the twist that it turned out to be devalued Continental paper. Hawthorne's plot began with looking for "an immense hoard of the precious metals which was said to exist somewhere in the cellar or walls, or under the floors, in some concealed closet, or other out-of-the-way nook of the house."⁴¹ Joseph Smith went to Salem on a similar rumor, perhaps no more specific than this. Brewster was indefinite—"buried in or near the cellar." But Robinson says only that it was "secreted in the cellar of a certain house in Salem."⁴² So Joseph Smith went east in search of treasure, not necessarily to dig for it. Since neither source is firsthand, the details are not necessarily trustworthy. We shall later see variance with the 1836 evidence on one event.

Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery left for New York and the Boston area on 25 July 1836. Ebenezer

Robinson was sarcastic in hindsight, but any journey must be judged by its prospects at the outset. What is the difference between disreputable money digging and a reasonable mining venture? Only the projected probability of success. On this scale, the justification for going to Salem was proportional to the reliability of information. Were the leaders too eager to believe that a providential find would relieve their heavy personal debts and the related debts of the Church? They talked to a man who claimed to have definite information on a likely city. Any guidebook at that time would have said something about “the commercial prosperity of the place during the . . . active trade with the East Indies and China, some years ago.”⁴³ Indeed, Joseph Smith had family knowledge of such a hoard, for right after the Salem “golden age” his father’s agent had embezzled the profits of his ginseng shipment to China. Before the swindler left for Canada, Lucy’s brother had been shown the proceeds that really belonged to Joseph’s parents—a “trunk of silver and gold.”⁴⁴ In the year the Prophet visited Salem, a local newspaper still listed “wealth” as one of the city’s characteristics.⁴⁵ On arrival, Oliver Cowdery verified his expectations: “The inhabitants as I learned are generally wealthy, and the almost entire business of the place is commercial.”⁴⁶

The month was now August. The Mormon leaders had quickly traveled to New York on Lake Erie, the Erie Canal, and the Hudson. After a short stay in commercial Manhattan, they took the Providence ferry and Boston railroad, arriving in the area the afternoon of 5 August.⁴⁷ Robinson suggests that their Kirtland informant preceded them: “We were informed that Brother Burgess met them in Salem, evidently according to appointment, but time had wrought such a change that he could not for certainty point out the house, and soon left.”⁴⁸ Did Burgess meet them on arrival? Doctrine and Covenants 111 was given the day after the visitors came to the area. Its mood either is prophetic of Burgess’s ineptitude or reflects the frustration of the letdown. This revelation repeatedly emphasizes that the treasure they came to seek is not the treasure they would get. Thus they were not necessarily promised the riches they expected.

This Salem message has been called a false prophecy because its promised wealth was never received. But the definition of riches came in doublets, a scriptural pattern of restating one idea in two aspects. The Salem instruction has this striking parallel:

Concern not yourselves
about your debts,
for I will give you
power to pay them
(D&C 111:5).

Concern not yourselves
about Zion,
for I will deal
mercifully with her
(D&C 111:6).

Such similar phrasing suggests that paying debts and the welfare of Zion were but different forms of the same hope. In fact, the Prophet typically linked them in public statements and in private prayers. Another set of paired phrases relates to this debt–Zion promise:

I have much treasure
in this city for you

for the benefit of Zion
(D&C 111:2a).

and many people
in this city, whom I
will gather out in due time
for the benefit of Zion
through your instrumentality
(D&C 111:2b).

In this literary parallel, “gather” correlates with “treasure,” which in the first half of the revelation is equated with “gold and silver” (D&C 111:4). This verse says that Salem’s “much treasure” and “many people” will each contribute to the same cause—“the benefit of Zion.” These similarities of wording and style strongly point to an equivalence of idea—the gathering of the converts is at the same time a gathering of their resources. This conclusion is reinforced by placement of “in due time” alongside promises of conversions and wealth: (1) there are “many people in this city, whom I will gather out in due time” (D&C 111:2); (2) “this city” and “its wealth” will be given over to Church leaders “in due time” (D&C 111:4). This chronological match also associates the wealth of Salem with conversions from Salem.

These stylistic pointers are verified by other revelations and by the realities of Church finance at that time. Needing strategic non-Mormon land, Presidents Smith, Cowdery, and Williams had prayed in 1834 “that the Lord would send faithful Saints to purchase their farms that this stake may be strengthened and its borders enlarged.”⁴⁹ Church programs at Kirtland heavily depended on special donations from early 1830s converts such as John Tanner and Vienna Jacques. Although its unique circumstances tend to isolate the Salem revelation as a special case, it continues a distinct theme in the early Doctrine and Covenants. In the 1831 apocalyptic language of gathering, enlightened Israel would “bring forth their rich treasures” to Zion (D&C 133:30). And in 1835 came the phrasing that the Lord would “consecrate of the riches of those who embrace my

gospel” to the poor, and by implication to the full needs of the Church (D&C 42:39). So Salem’s gathering “for the benefit of Zion” had clear economic overtones. In the light of Joseph’s earlier revelations on gathering, Salem exemplifies the spiritual and material developments that the Prophet saw synoptically and ultimately: “as fast as ye are able to receive them” (D&C 111:11). Joseph was a developer of programs, for right after the Salem trip the Kirtland Bank was organized. But a year after the bank’s 1837 failure came the successful system of tithing, based on contribution of convert surplus and regular proportionate giving (D&C 119:1–5).

Thus, the Salem revelation is attuned to the reality of increasing numbers and expanding Church economy. Six years after the Prophet’s visit, Erastus Snow raised up a Salem branch of 100 before a number migrated to build Nauvoo and its temple. These included resourceful pioneers Howard Eagan and Nathaniel Ashby, whose Illinois brick home stands as evidence of savings transferred from Salem to Nauvoo.⁵⁰ If the 1836 revelation rebuked the leaders for their “follies” in coming for treasure, the actual wording is more positive: “I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, notwithstanding your follies” (D&C 111:1). There was a New York business phase, to be discussed shortly, so the trip as a whole may have been prudent, with the “follies” being too-eager hopes for an easy find. Or Joseph Smith may have used *follies* in his normal sense of personal transgressions without negative judgment on the Salem visit. According to Robinson, the lead was represented as a solid one, only to vanish on their arrival at Salem. If so, fault lay more on Burgess than the Mormon Presidency. Like David Whitmer, ex-Mormon Robinson wanted an infallible prophet, not merely a responsible leader receiving revelation in the midst of real struggle. So Robinson’s facts are broader than his personal explanation of them.⁵¹

Did the Mormon leaders gain control of the treasure house? Brewster claimed that it was “rented” and hinted at digging.⁵² Similarly, Robinson wrote, “They, however, found a house which they felt was the right one, and hired it.”⁵³ But two weeks after their arrival, Joseph wrote Emma from Salem that they had no immediate hope of getting possession:

Bro. Hyrum is about to start for home before the rest of us, which seems wisdom in God, as our business here can not be determined as soon as we would wish to have it. . . . With regard to the great object of our mission, you will be anxious to know. We have found the house

since Bro. Burgess left us, very luckily and providentially, as we had one spell been most discouraged. The house is occupied, and it will require much care and patience to rent or buy it.⁵⁴

Hyrum left with this letter, apparently feeling that he could not wait longer, and the rest soon came to the same conclusion. Six days after Joseph wrote Emma, a Salem newspaper updated the stories of Latter-day Saint preaching:

Mr. Rigdon, the Mormon preacher, who introduced himself at our Lyceum last week, has since left the city, with his three or four associates. It is said they retain possession of the tenement leased by them in Union Street, and intend to return to this city next spring.⁵⁵

This report that the Mormons had “since left the city” was printed on 25 August. Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter with a Boston dateline the day before—24 August.⁵⁶ On that date, the *Boston Daily Times* reported that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were present in Boston, meeting “the day before yesterday,” which would be 22 August.⁵⁷ So the move of the Prophet, Sidney, and Oliver came within a few days after Joseph’s letter to Emma on 19 August. As quoted, Joseph said that access to the building was not likely then: “The house is occupied, and it will require much care and patience to rent or buy it.” So present evidence contradicts Robinson and Brewster on hiring the house and searching for treasure in it. The editor reporting the move knew of only one residence in the two-and-a-half weeks they were in Salem: “They retain possession of the tenement leased by them in Union Street.” Indeed, “tenement” is normally an apartment, not a whole building—a further indication that they probably failed to gain possession of the “house” mentioned in Joseph’s letter.⁵⁸

But the leaders’ activities in the East had broader scope. There were public speeches in Salem and Boston by eloquent Sidney Rigdon, leadership conferences with Apostles Brigham Young and Lyman E. Johnson, needed recreation, and much instructive sight-seeing in Boston and New York.⁵⁹ This is a reminder that busy people often make trips for more than one reason. The overriding problem of Kirtland in late 1836 was paying for the temple and maintaining credit and cash flow in stores and land operations. Early in the following year, Sidney Rigdon explained publicly that approximately \$13,000 was outstanding on the temple—evidently for purchase of supplies and wages paid by goods charged on accounts.⁶⁰ Large creditors included New York wholesalers, so personal negotia-

tions of the First Presidency there are highly probable.⁶¹ They must have given some time either to maintaining good relations in existing accounts or establishing new ones.⁶² The Salem journey should be called an eastern journey, for there was first a week in New York City, then two weeks in Salem, and about a week in Boston afterward.⁶³

Did these Church leaders stake all on a Salem find? They returned in early September, and in just two months had a finished “constitution” for a Mormon bank; the “constitution” was adopted in a formal organization meeting on 2 November.⁶⁴ Advance planning for this step was necessary, and such is hinted in Cowdery’s shipboard letter written right after an intense week in New York’s business district: “There is money yet in Wall Street, and ‘Draper, Underwood,’ and others ready to help incorporated bodies to plates and dies, to make more.”⁶⁵ Therefore, on their way to Salem the First Presidency seriously investigated the banking business as a means of capitalizing Church debts. Two engraving firms are mentioned here, and on his return Oliver Cowdery “was delegated to Philadelphia to procure plates for the institution.”⁶⁶ His mention of the “Underwood” firm in New York suggests that some tentative arrangement was then made for the bank notes, for its Philadelphia branch later supplied them.⁶⁷

Cowdery’s reference to “money yet in Wall Street” may also mean that lending agents were contacted. But at a minimum, his mention of printing plates for “incorporated bodies” shows that the First Presidency was issuing the first publicity on the bank *on the way to Salem*—in Cowdery’s letter of 4 August. They returned to Kirtland in early September and some six weeks later opened their books, with the first purchase of stock recorded on 18 October.⁶⁸

Thus Salem was really incidental to more substantial attempts to restructure Church debts by (1) creating immediate capital through Mormon banking; (2) establishing credit or extending due dates of wholesalers’ accounts; (3) meeting short-term needs through new loans; (4) insuring long-term resources through regularized contributions of converts and members. This journey investigated and announced the first program, and the Salem revelation shows continued thought given to the last one. It is probable some of the time in New York was devoted to the second program, with a suggestion of the third in Cowdery’s reference to Wall Street money. Responsible managers have contingency plans, and good investors spread the risk. Since Joseph’s Salem visit is one of multiple eastern goals, his phrase

to Emma on the “great object of our mission” perhaps refers only to its Salem phase.

This 1836 trip remains the only known treasure quest of the Prophet after beginning the Book of Mormon translation. But pre-1827 efforts are strikingly different. Salem represents searching for wealth, but the important question is what kind of searching? In the Salem incident, inside information came from an informant claiming knowledge of a location, not from a paranormal process through a stone or a rod. The patterns described in the 1826 trial are not repeated in Joseph Smith’s later pursuit of a New England hoard. Some assume similarities in these two episodes, but differences loom larger. Not every speculative venture is money digging. It is superficial to verbally equate *treasure* in 1826 with *treasure* in 1836 without distinguishing the mystical context of the former from the practical context of the latter.

MISSOURI PROBLEMS AND SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Although Missouri was designated for the Mormon gathering since 1831, Kirtland was a more natural geographical center of the Church for a time. But the collapse of Kirtland precipitated Joseph Smith’s move to Missouri at the beginning of 1838. His exploration for settlement there produced a trivial incident that has been overused in the past year’s preoccupation with treasure sources. The Prophet’s printed history mentions riding by an early earthwork, and these words are put in his mouth: “These mounds were probably erected by the aborigines of the land, to secrete treasures.”⁶⁹ No digging for such treasures is indicated in this history or any known Missouri source. The context is opinion, not divination. But in view of the document behind this incident, the opinion does not even appear to be that of Joseph Smith.

The *History of the Church* for 1838 is based on the “Scriptory Book,” kept by George W. Robinson, whose position as “general church recorder and clerk for the First Presidency” had been reaffirmed at the conference of 6 April 1838.⁷⁰ His record is the manuscript history from March to September of that year and includes official letters and many revelations. Although it begins with first-person dictation of the Prophet, it quickly moves to Robinson’s own style and candid observations. As historian Dean C. Jessee notes, “With the exception of the first two pages, the journal portion of the record was written by Robinson as he observed Joseph’s comings and

goings.”⁷¹ Some of Robinson’s personal comments were later rephrased to appear to be the Prophet’s language. The published *History* is superb in giving facts from contemporary sources, but quoting it as Joseph Smith’s words here is inaccurate.

The preceding 22 May 1838 entry has Joseph’s comment on stone ruins in the vicinity of Adam-ondi-Ahman. But accurate evaluation of this statement depends on identifying the real source. In the “Scriptory Book” Robinson himself speaks about looking for settlement locations by retracing the steps of the Rigdon party:

President Smith and myself followed on in their course, but could not find them and consequently returned to the camp in Robinson’s Grove. We next scouted west in order to obtain some game to supply our necessities but found or killed none. We [found] some ancient antiquities about one mile west of the camp, which consisted of stone mounds apparently low set in square piles, though somewhat decayed and obliterated by the almost continual rains. Undoubtedly these were made to seclude some valuable treasures deposited by the aborigines of this land.⁷²

The whole case for Joseph Smith’s treasure digging in Missouri rests on this source. But it falls short for the following reasons: (1) the treasure comment is speculation—“undoubtedly” prefaces it; (2) since the language is Robinson’s, Joseph Smith’s views are unknown;⁷³ (3) the men were hunting game, not treasure, and were only incidentally interested in the mound; and (4) they evidently did not dig in the ruins, since a guess is made at the underground configuration—“apparently low set in square piles.” Indeed, there is a close similarity of Robinson’s ruin to “the remains of an old Nephitish altar or tower” near Lyman Wight’s cabin a few miles away. But treasure is not among the many traditions of what Joseph said of that site.⁷⁴ A half-dozen journals also record Joseph’s remarks a few years earlier at a burial mound in Illinois, with no recorded comment on treasure.⁷⁵

The real program in that area was laying out the new settlement of Adam-ondi-Ahman in Daviess County and surveying adjacent lands. Robinson clearly described what went on: “We continued surveying and building houses, etc. for some time day after day; the surveyors ran out the city plan, and we returned to Far West.”⁷⁶ These activities are also documented by a short-term convert, William Swartzell, who arrived from Ohio in late May, spent the night at Joseph Smith’s, and traveled north with his party in his new job as surveyor. He was fifty-six years of age and not very flexible in a

new religious and physical environment. He soon renounced Mormonism and published his "private journal" to expose Mormon worldliness. Swartzell's jottings pertain to digging wells and surveying lots in the Daviess County area. He complains of his "mush and milk" diet, Lyman Wight's combativeness, and finally the militarism of the Danite group. Swartzell's journal enlarges to expose all Mormon weaknesses he can find. But digging for riches is not mentioned.⁷⁷ The same is true of others whose faith failed when Mormons began to stand aggressively for their rights. The most persuasive case is Ebenezer Robinson, who perceived the Salem treasure trip as a scandal deserving exposure. Although a clerk and High Council member throughout the Missouri residence, Robinson writes a negative history of Joseph in Missouri without a mention of treasure searching.⁷⁸ John Corrill, Reed Peck, and John Whitmer also wrote up Mormon shortcomings in their justifications for leaving the Church—but without mention of treasure hunting. Nor is this found in the dozen good journals of the faithful who are extremely candid on Mormon military operations.

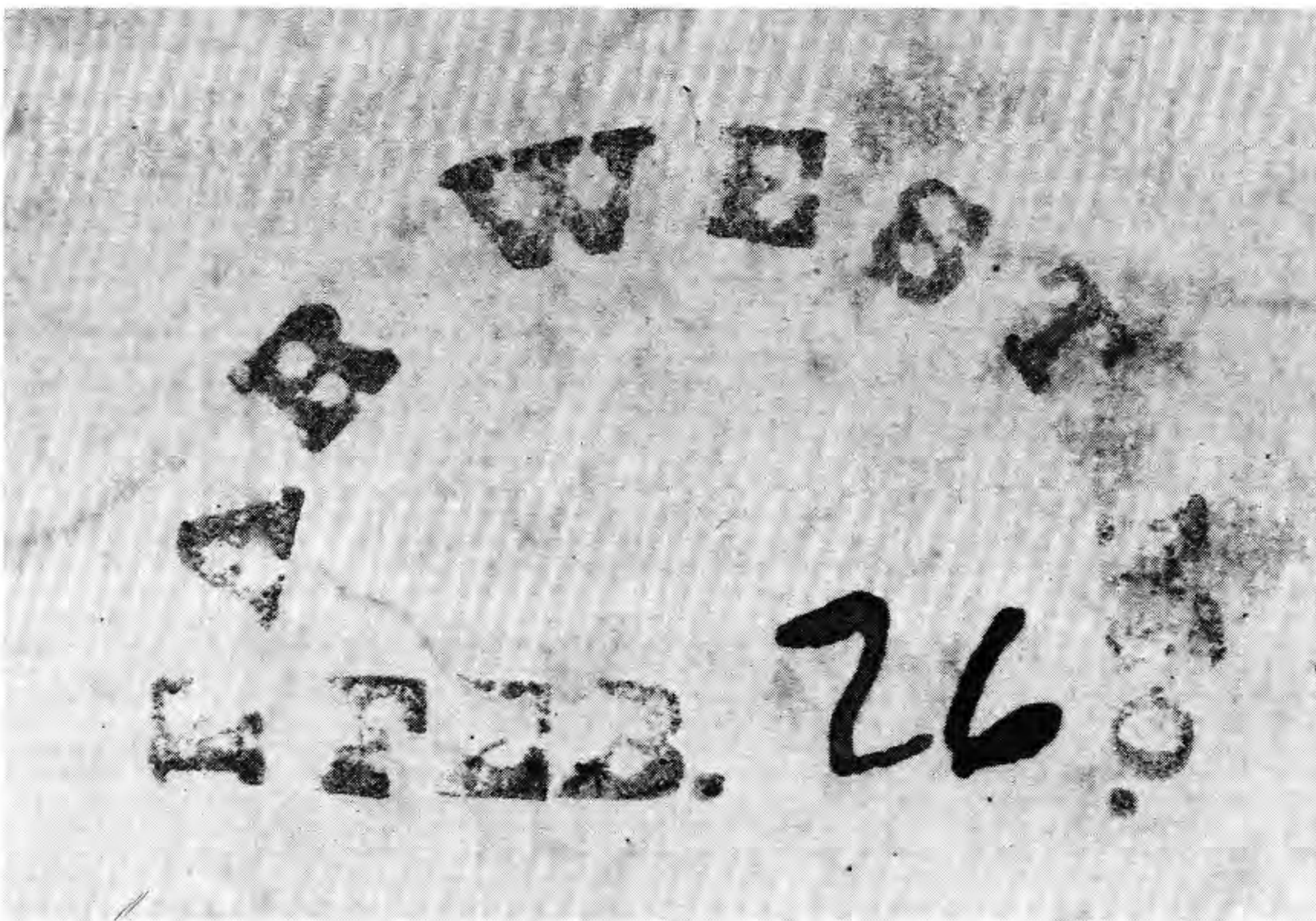
About two years ago a new Missouri treasure document surfaced, was purchased by the LDS Church Historical Department, and published in Dean Jessee's *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*.⁷⁹ On its face it is a revelation in Joseph Smith's handwriting, sent to a way station to encourage the Prophet's brother as he neared the end of a long migration from Ohio to Missouri with his family. But confidence in its authenticity was shaken by the criminal charges of deception against the dealer who sold this treasure revelation to the Church. The handwriting is not wholly satisfactory, though judgment on that question may be subjective, since it is easier to expose a poor imitation than authenticate a historic document by handwriting alone. The Hofmann trial may disclose hard evidence on the questions of source of the document, the origin and treatment of paper on which it is written, and other issues which cannot yet be settled.

But there are a number of observable problems with this supposed Joseph Smith document. It has a Far West postmark with a 25 May date, making 1838 the only year when Joseph Smith could have written from that location. With the help of the LDS Historical Department staff, six Far West postmarks have been located, all of which match in the orange-brown color of ink used in 1838 and 1839, years which do not appear on the handstamps but are indicated within each letter. However, the disputed treasure revelation has an irregular dark red postmark. This Hofmann document is also out of

sequence in its type face. Known postmarks fall into two distinct groups and are reproduced here for comparison. The 1838 marks of 3 February, 3 June, 18 June, and 15 July have a common block-letter design that is symmetrical, with the “Mo.” abbreviation using the lower case *o* and period. But after mid-July a different stamp appears, with more stylized narrow and wide strokes to form unbalanced letters, ending with the “MO” abbreviation in upper case without the period. This face appears in the handstamps of 3 October 1838 and 1 May 1839.⁸⁰ Although the letters in the Hofmann stamp are badly formed, they clearly resemble the broad-narrow strokes of the later postmark, including the capital “MO” abbreviation. But since the revelation’s handstamp of 25 May should fit that used in the first half of 1838, available postmarks indicate anachronism, not confirmation.

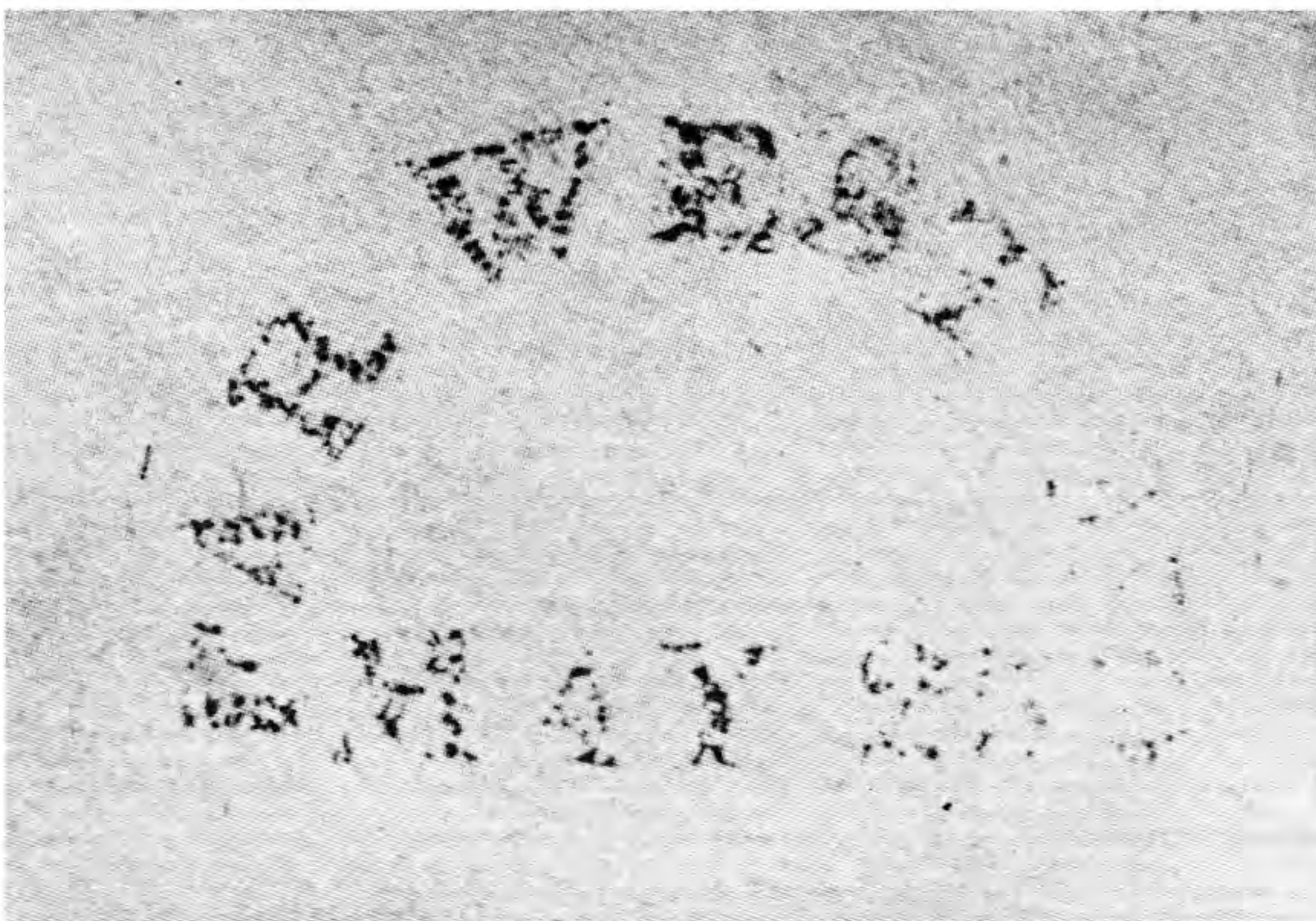
Moreover, a careful examination of the lettering raises the question of whether the treasure revelation merely imitates a postmark. The six authentic impressions are generally more solid than the Hofmann document because of ink saturation of the paper. The handstamps of 15 July 1838 and 1 May 1829 partially resemble the Hofmann document in that the stamp came down hard on the right, leaving a light dotted effect on the left. Under a magnifying glass, this freckling has random dots because the slight contact caught the raised grains of the paper in their uneven combinations. But the same thing is not true of the disputed treasure revelation. When enlarged, its postmark shows regularly spaced dotting and lining. For instance, the front leg of the *R* and right side of the *M* are made by close parallel lines. The conclusion can be phrased negatively and positively. No other handstamp shows heavy dots and lines alternating with even spaces, and every other handstamp shows ink flow and other evidence of the pressure of the printing stroke. But every letter in the disputed 25 May 1838 postmark has characteristics of a freehand sketch. Art designer Carma de Jong Anderson feels strongly that this apparent stamp was “drawn painstakingly by an unskilled person.” The straight edges and geometric clarity of authentic engraving are lacking here. For instance, the Hofmann document offsets the *F*, straightens the top of the leg of the *R*, while exaggerating its bottom thrust, and also displays a misshapen *S*, whose lower curve breaks out of the rectangular frame that can be superimposed on the *S* in the authentic block prints.

Below this postmark is a puzzling address: “Mr. Hiram Smith, Plattesgrove.” Joseph Smith normally wrote the state even in ad-



By permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Postmark of 26 February 1838, letter of Oliver Cowdery to his brothers Warren and Lyman

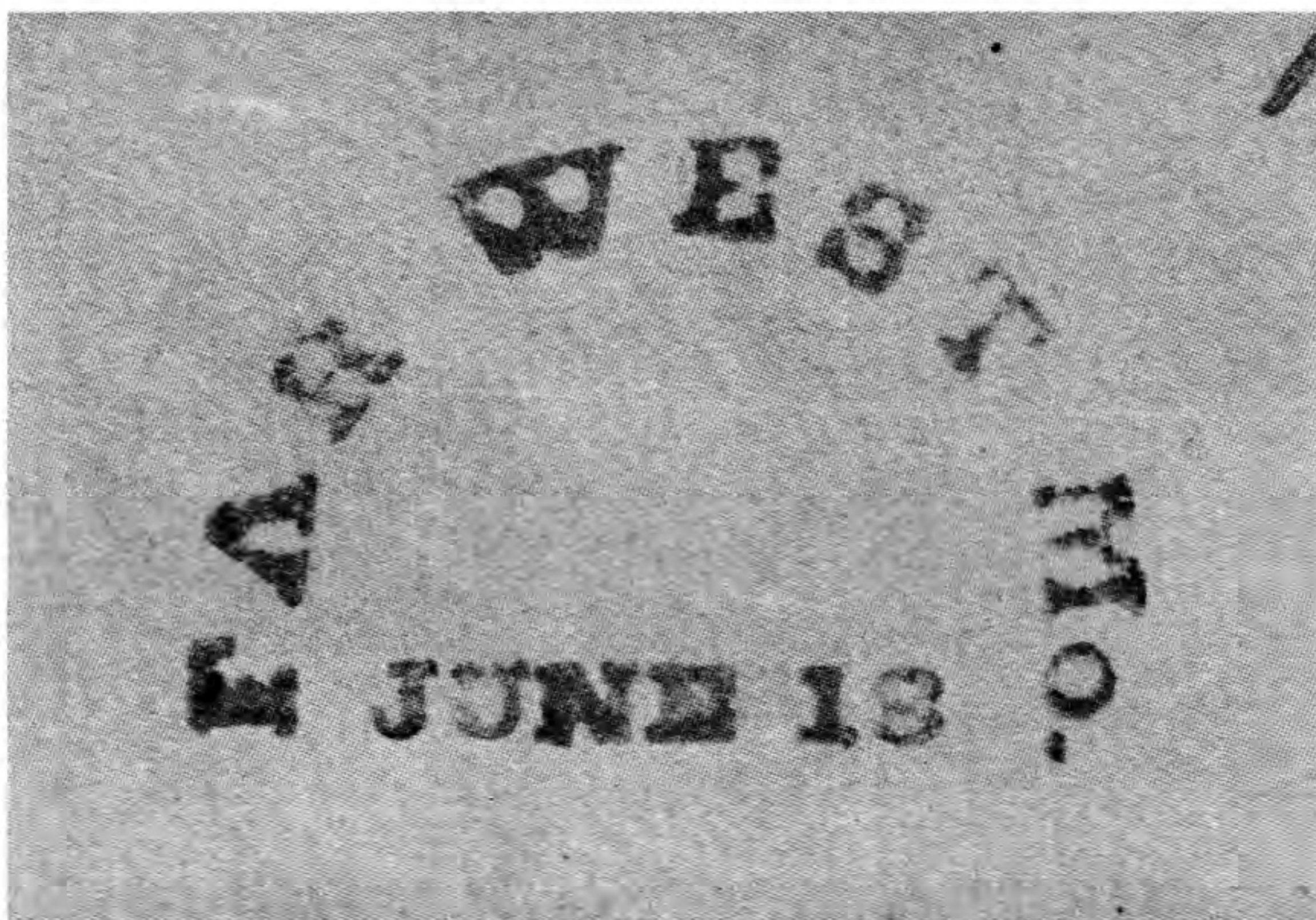


This and subsequent photographs are courtesy of LDS Historical Department.

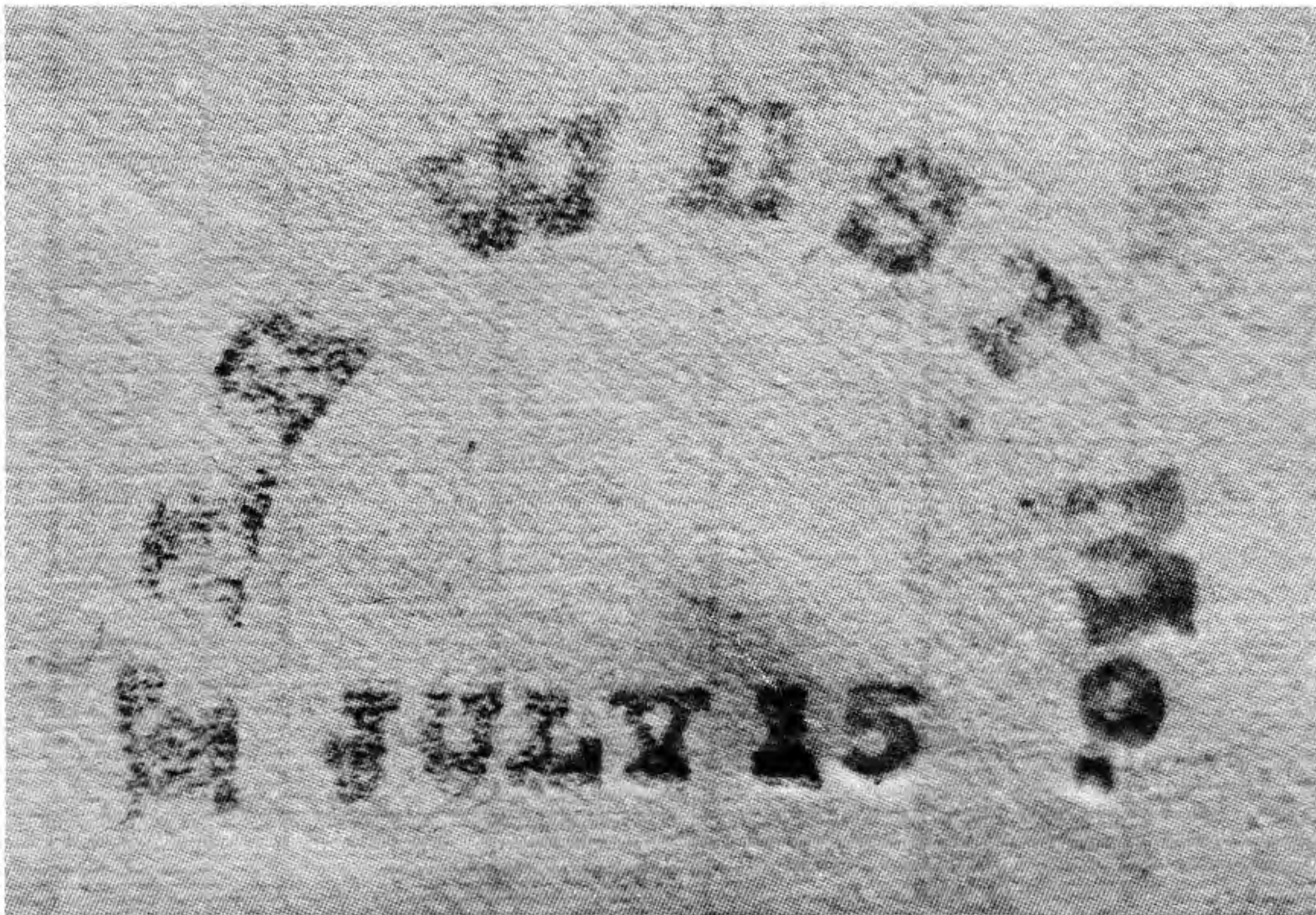
The variant 25 May 1838 postmark on the purported treasure revelation, differing in style from the known marks from February to July of that year



Postmark of 3 June 1838, letter of Oliver Cowdery to his brothers Warren and Lyman, showing only light speckling following the random paper grains



Postmark of 18 June 1838, letter of Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, showing the typically solid ink saturation of an authentic stamp



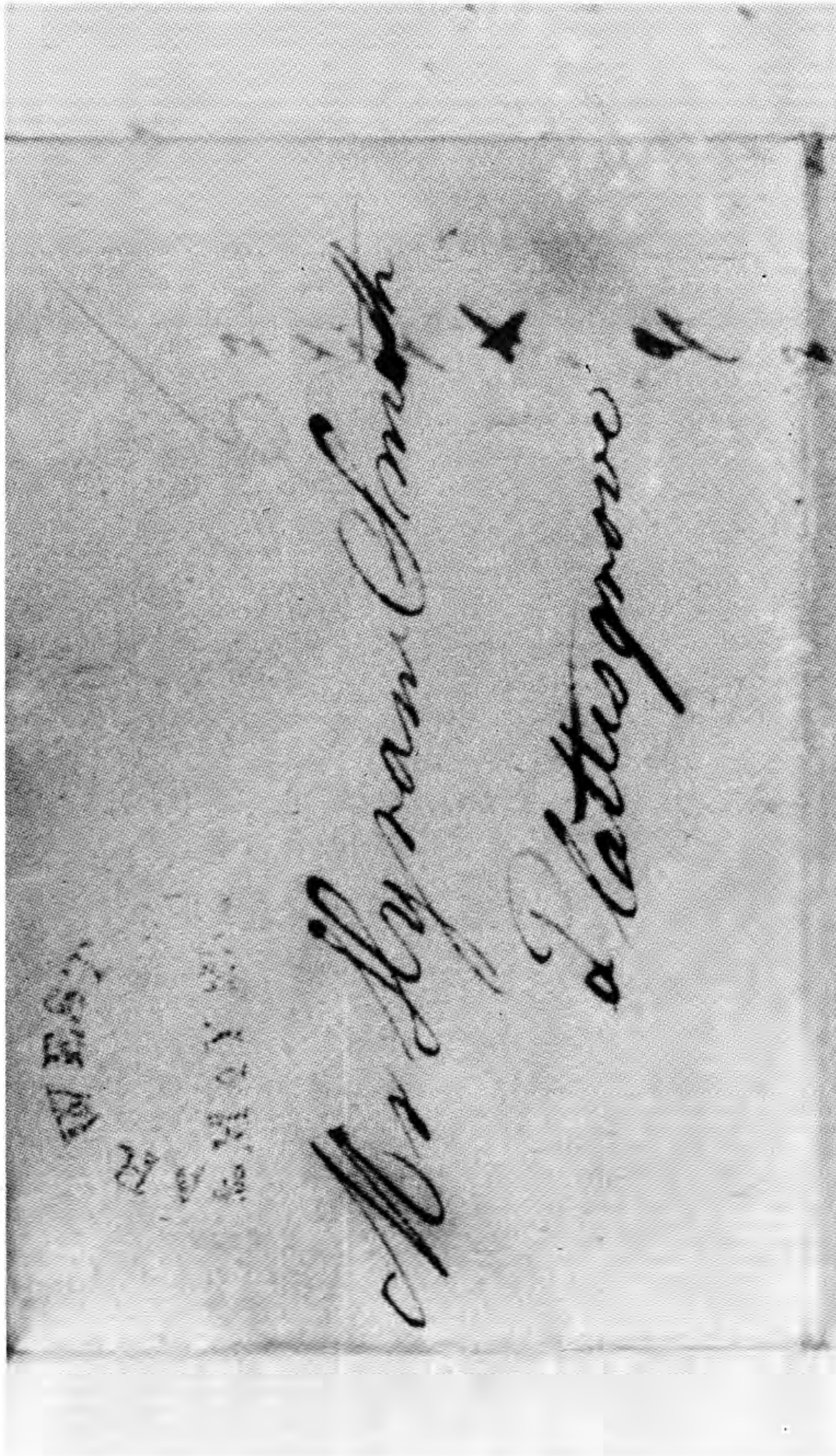
Postmark of 15 July 1838, letter of Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, showing the pressure of the handstamp on the right and also the circular speckling framed by solid ink coating that characterizes the authentic impressions



Postmark of 3 October 1838, letter of Joseph Smith, Jr., and Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, showing the second style of stamp of that year. The stamp of the purported treasure revelation resembles this, but with clear differences in letter formation and quality.



Enlargement of the 25 May 1838 postmark on the purported treasure revelation, lacking ink flow of the known handstamps of that year. Its dot and line pattern is too symmetrical and gross to be caused by paper graining.



Address side of the alleged 1838 treasure revelation, showing the irregular postmark, lack of state on a mailed item, and unidentified city

dressing handcarried letters, and it appears to have been his invariable practice to add the state on posted letters.⁸¹ And the handwritten postage of six cents adds a location difficulty, for it was the statutory amount for a letter sent within thirty miles of origin.⁸² But after careful searches of place names, I have been unable to find a “Plattsgrove” in upper Missouri, or even in the state.⁸³ And there are serious obstacles with sentence construction and spelling. For instance, in documents ranging throughout the 1830s, the Prophet wrote *great* without a known exception. With over two dozen consistent examples, it is jarring to have the treasure revelation appear with the unprecedented *grate*, as though an imitator were aware that Joseph Smith handwriting should have misspellings but only guessed that this word should be incorrectly written.⁸⁴ Since the 1838 treasure revelation fails too many of the checks that historians can make, it should not now be classed as an authentic Joseph Smith document.

The questionable Missouri revelation promises Hyrum Smith “a great treasure in the earth,” but such language broadly resembles promises in revelations and some Joseph Smith blessings. Thus asking the meaning of *treasure* to Missouri Mormons is highly relevant here. Even if the doubtful revelation was authentic, its treasure phrase would fit ancient and modern revelations picturing the resources of the land given by God. Before showing why this is so, I will quote the entire document, followed by a summary of the historical setting at the time defined by the postmark, May 25 [1838].

Verily thus saith the Lord unto Hiram Smith, if he will come strateaway to Far West and inquire of his brother, it shall be shown him how that he may be freed from det and obtain a grate treasure in the earth. Even so, Amen.⁸⁵

Like the 1836 eastern trip, the trip of early summer 1838 has a practical setting: Before Hyrum’s move to Missouri, the Prophet had hammered out a program for supporting the Presidency with an annual stipend.⁸⁶ While his brother journeyed, Joseph gave the main revelation on building Far West, commanding Hyrum as a member of the First Presidency not to “get in debt anymore for the building of a house unto my name” (D&C 115:13). Six weeks after Hyrum’s arrival, financial reforms culminated with the revelation commanding surplus consecration and the continued duty of tithing. This was explicitly to finance ongoing temple and priesthood programs—and also “for the debts of the Presidency of my Church” (D&C 119:2), many of which had been incurred personally for the Church. Thus any

1838 promise to Hyrum on getting out of debt would be independent of “a great treasure in the earth.” Yet the latter language, though questionably Joseph Smith’s, parallels ancient and modern revelations to Israel on their promised land.

The first program of uprooting homes and gathering came as a shock to the Church at the end of 1830 (D&C 37). Then the revelation known as section 38 followed in the early January conference that John Whitmer said was filled with the “solemnities of eternity.” It required great faith to sell farms and relocate, so section 38 has the theme of “the riches of eternity” (D&C 38:39).⁸⁷ The related major subject was the material reward for sacrifice: “And it must needs be that the riches of the earth are mine to give” (D&C 38:39). In the abstract, this could refer to treasure digging, but it does not, for the document defines what God will give: “greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey . . . the land of your inheritance” (D&C 38:18–19). This was originally Moses’ assurance of reward for leaving Egypt (Ex. 3:17). In the 1831 command, “greater riches, even a land of promise” was afterward summarized as the gift of “the riches of the earth” (D&C 38:18, 39).

One must beware of reading the writings of Old Testament prophets or Joseph Smith as simple prose without poetic elements. Emotional language uses symbols, alliteration, and reiteration. It often needs interpretation, a type of translation. The 1838 gathering was the second stage of that aborted in 1833 by the forced exodus from Jackson County; it was temporarily suspended until Caldwell County was created for the Mormons in late 1836. Hyrum had traveled to Independence in 1831 when priesthood leaders met to dedicate the center place. Missouri minutes record his public reading of Psalm 102, one filled with parallelism and the prophecy that “the Lord shall build up Zion.”⁸⁸ From that summer, he knew the modern revelations about the abundance of “the land of Zion”: its righteous inhabitants would receive “the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth in its strength” (D&C 59:3). Saints in Missouri would share in “the fulness of the earth” and “the good things which come of the earth” (D&C 59:16–17). This prophetic–poetic language is repeated in the 1838 “gathering together upon the land of Zion” (D&C 115:6), reiterating Old Testament promises that the “solitary places” would “blossom” and “bring forth in abundance” (D&C 117:7). If Hyrum’s treasure revelation was authentic, there

would be no real difference between his “great treasure in the earth” and “the fatness of the earth” (D&C 56:18).

Economics and rebellion in the Church forced the First Presidency to leave Kirtland suddenly early in 1838. On 12 January the Prophet received a remarkable set of revelations still not well known. The one about leaving Kirtland came to “the presidency of my Church” and declared that “your labors are finished in this place for a season,” adding the call to upper Missouri: “Therefore arise and get yourselves into a land which I shall show unto you, even a land flowing with milk and honey.”⁸⁹ The Prophet and Sidney soon left for Far West, but Hyrum and his family did not arrive until late May. That spring brought the scent of prosperity as the Saints created new cities in a sparsely settled area. An editorial written at the time of Hyrum’s arrival informed the whole Church that Missouri Saints would “turn a solitary place into a fruitful field.” Joseph Smith was nominal editor of the *Elder’s Journal*, and this May article provides a major insight into his thinking because he either helped formulate the ideas or approved their publication. The paper noted that hundreds of acres of wheat and corn were under cultivation and that supplies were “somewhat scarce,” getting good prices. This forecast of high profits is ironic because the military occupation largely destroyed Mormon crops that fall. But optimism was justified as they looked to “an abundant harvest.”⁹⁰ This crop-raising economy was earthly wealth. Sidney Rigdon said so in outlining the Mormon program for building communities, education, and temples. With rich material blessings, the Saints would offer “the sacrifice of our first fruits” to God, “whose worship we esteem of more consequence than we do the treasures of Missouri.”⁹¹

President Rigdon’s speeches and writings were saturated with the Mormon theme of recreated Israel, an important caution on taking “treasure” in a nineteenth-century American sense. The most obvious use of that concept in the Bible and the Book of Mormon is the theme of the riches of the lands of inheritance. For instance, Moses promised Israel the Lord’s “good treasure” (Deut. 28:12). And this meant fertility of herds and of the earth: “The Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, . . . in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee” (Deut. 28:11). Thus the model of Mormon treasure language is the Old Testament assurance of abundant resources of the promised land. Phraseology of riches consistently expresses this exodus–inheritance theme in ancient and modern revelation.

These scriptural precedents are also critical for interpreting treasure language in the personal blessings given by the Prophet, since he restored the role of ancient patriarchs who foretold through symbols and dramatic comparisons. The Mormon historian finds these pronouncements in personal histories of the Joseph Smith period. They contain devotional phraseology above normal biblical narrative. Here is the lofty fervency of the Psalms rather than the descriptions of Genesis or Chronicles. The promises of these blessings have deep meaning, but discernment is required to adapt rhapsodic language to a practical frame of reference. The Prophet typically reapplies terms and metaphors of Old Testament blessings of the tribes of Israel. For instance, he laid hands on his father and promised the “blessings of heaven above . . . and the blessings of the deep that lieth under,” after reciting that he was heir to the prophecies upon ancient Joseph.⁹² These words come from Gen. 49:25, Jacob’s promise to that son.

In his blessings, the Prophet most frequently quotes Deuteronomy 33, Moses’ promises to the twelve tribes. In that reference, predictions upon Joseph’s descendants explicitly relate to “his land” (Deut. 33:13), and Joseph’s favored inheritance is an intense theme: “the precious things of heaven . . . the deep that coucheth beneath . . . the chief things of the ancient mountains . . . the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof” (Deut. 33:13–15). Just as these divine covenants with Joseph are applied to their American land by Book of Mormon descendants, they are reapplied to the Latter-day Saints in early blessings. For instance, the Prophet’s most frequent promise to family and Church leaders is an “abundance of the good things of the earth.”⁹³ In biblical context, this is the assurance of wealth to do the work of the kingdom and restates the “fulness” of the “precious things of the earth” in the blessing of Moses.

Moreover, Joseph Smith uses another Deuteronomy phrase that could suggest money digging until one sees that the Prophet defines it otherwise. The wealth of Zebulun and Issachar was sketched in metaphor: “for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand” (Deut. 33:19). Joseph Smith quoted that passage to William Phelps’s wife Sally to explain the importance of her husband’s long assignment to Kirtland during 1835. In a postscript to one of William’s letters to her in Missouri, the Prophet wrote that her husband would “return and teach you things that have been hid from the wise and prudent, hidden things of old times, as Moses said in Deut. 33d chap., 19th verse: ‘for they shall suck of the

abundance of the seas and of the treasures hid in the sand.' Some of these things have begun to come forth."⁹⁴ Here the treasures from the sand were the recently acquired papyri from Egypt. Joseph's postscript was added to the letter in which William W. Phelps told how the mummies and papyrus rolls came to Kirtland, concluding: "These records of old times, when we translate and print them in a book, will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon. There is nothing secret or hidden that shall not be revealed, and they come to the Saints."⁹⁵

The Abraham Papyri are similarly described in Phelps's blessing two months after Joseph's postscript to Sally. The Prophet then blessed her husband: "He shall have part in that that coucheth beneath: and it shall be revealed unto him things by the hand of the Lord's anointed that have been kept secret from the foundation of the world, concerning the last days." In reality, William W. Phelps was then a scribe writing new knowledge concerning Abraham that had been hidden from the world.⁹⁶ The Prophet also gave similar words to Oliver Cowdery, reciting his heritage of the ancient "blessings that couch beneath, even the hidden things of the ancient mountains, even the records that have been hid from the first ages; from generation to generation shall he be an instrument in the hands of God, and his brother Joseph, of translating and bringing forth to the house of Israel."⁹⁷

Thus in the Prophet's blessings to family and Kirtland leaders, the buried treasure concept has figurative application to newly restored scriptures. Joseph also promised Phelps the resources of the earth, but not on the condition of digging for them:

He shall be filled with a fulness of the good things of the earth: with houses and with lands, with the fruit of the vine and with the fat of the olive, and he shall feed on the finest of the wheat. And because of his liberal soul the Lord will make him rich, even with treasures of gold, silver, precious stones, and with all precious metals.⁹⁸

Here the Prophet outlines a full range of blessings with spiritual metaphor. Translated to life, the fruits of the land are the result of labor, not discovery. And biblical imagery is evident, for the Prophet nowhere encourages olive culture in Missouri. A parallel example is the early revelation using the biblical term *chariots* in reference to Missouri stagecoaches (D&C 62:7). In this figurative context, the "treasures" of precious things are promised with Mosaic phrasing. The discerning reader of these early blessings must sort out the

imagery from the message, for they are clearly patterned after the poetic-symbolic blessings closing Genesis and Deuteronomy.

In 1833, Joseph had given Hyrum a special blessing filled with biblical figures: "The goings of his feet shall ever be by streams of living water." Closing with the theme that Hyrum would have means to serve God, the Prophet gave a panorama of wealth in terms of the cattle, asses, and camels of Genesis and also promised "an abundance of riches of the earth: gold, silver, and treasures of precious stones, of diamonds and platina."⁹⁹ These 1833 words to Hyrum are nearly identical to the imagistic inventory after the "good things of the earth" in the Phelps blessing. In that blessing underground discoveries were equated with new scripture, but general wealth was promised through a figurative list. Since Hyrum's 1833 personal blessing has similar metaphor and lofty language, the inventory of riches also amounts to an assurance of earth's resources. The Prophet's blessings generally give comfort and instruction in specific terms, but promises of wealth are often elaborate with no particulars of when and where and how obtained. In the above 1833 blessing, Joseph promised Hyrum "an abundance of riches of the earth." If it were proved authentic, Hyrum's 1838 revelation would be equally general about "a great treasure in the earth." Joseph Smith gives such assurances as intense metaphor in his personal blessings.

This survey of Joseph Smith's usages of *treasure* shows how that term and its synonyms are predominately applied to the wealth of the land given the faithful. The Prophet's applications of the treasure concept are mostly biblical and refer to natural resources, so much so that the first major exodus revelation promised "riches" that are equated with "a land of promise" (D&C 38:18). Jesus' contrast of earthly and heavenly treasures appears in the revelations, and Joseph Smith's private blessings sometimes use specific figures of precious metals and stones in promising prosperity. Although such riches are from the earth, nothing suggests hoards to be gained by digging. On the contrary, agricultural possessions stand beside mineral possessions in such blessings, showing that both come from practical enterprise. Moreover, biblical symbolism is vivid in these promises. Indeed, the personal blessings given by Joseph Smith describe treasures actually coming out of the earth only in the case of ancient records, and even there the figurative concepts suggest revelation as much as discovery. The Salem revelation (D&C 111) remains the only known document after 1829 in which Joseph Smith used *treasure* in

the sense of a hoard of riches, and that by way of correction, not approval.

"THE GIFT OF AARON"

"The gift of Aaron" first appeared in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, referring to powers of revelation that Oliver Cowdery should use as he began assisting Joseph Smith in Book of Mormon translation (D&C 8:6–7). Both men were later on the First Presidency committee to revise the Book of Commandments when the wording of this 1829 revelation was changed.¹⁰⁰ However, its first printing referred to Cowdery's "gift of working with the rod."¹⁰¹ To some, this means that Oliver Cowdery had used a divining rod to locate buried wealth in pre-Mormon days. If this practice was Cowdery's gift, Joseph Smith apparently approved prior money digging or else asked him to put the rod to a higher use.

Some view Oliver Cowdery as a treasure diviner because of a local historian's theory in Oliver's boyhood area. Around 1801, a bubble of zeal burst for the Wood family and associates in Middletown, Vermont. They had enthusiastically claimed revelation setting up a new Israel and a new Jerusalem by using the Bible and treasure sticks. They were discredited after an intense night of unrest while waiting for God's destructions. About forty years later, the movement was investigated by lawyer Barnes Frisbie, who sought to prove that these money-digging Israelites were "one source, if not the main source from which came this monster—Mormonism."¹⁰² His evidence was their biblical restorationism plus a fugitive counterfeiter named Winchell or Wingate, who had an undefined relationship with Oliver Cowdery's father, William, in nearby Wells, Vermont. Frisbie heard that the stranger "stayed at Cowdery's some little time, keeping himself concealed."¹⁰³ The Wood group supposedly learned their rodding from this faceless individual. But Frisbie gives no reason for including William Cowdery in the Wood group except as host to Winchell/Wingate.

This last point needs emphasis because William Cowdery is the only direct link between Mormonism and the Wood movement. Frisbie mentions him in two very disconnected paragraphs. At first he profiles William's supposed relationship with the counterfeiter. Then William is dropped for fifteen pages while full details of the Wood affair or "scrape" are told. But William Cowdery did not live near the Wood group, did not attend their meetings, nor is he even

mentioned as a distant sympathizer. To repeat, his one relationship was supposedly boarding the pretender, who supposedly taught divining to the Woods and used them as a front for a coining scam. From this loose chain of association, Frisbie draws a strange conclusion: "I have before said that Oliver Cowdery's father was in the 'Wood scrape.'" But William Cowdery's knowing a man who knew the Woods does not make him a participant. Indeed, Oliver's father is absent from all sources preceding Frisbie. An 1828 newspaper history of the Wood episode refers to neither the mysterious counterfeiter nor Cowdery.¹⁰⁴ The main group of Middletown survivors of the 1800 period—"more than thirty old men and women"—were interviewed up to 1860, and they said nothing of a counterfeiter or of Cowdery.¹⁰⁵ The 1867 recollections of a minister who visited the group in the final weeks of their movement include mention of the counterfeiter but not Cowdery—when a disciple was asked where the criminal stayed, he answered: "He keeps himself secreted in the woods."¹⁰⁶ Frisbie's own claims about the Cowdery connection to the Wood group are both unclear and unsupported.¹⁰⁷ This is the patchwork of folklore, not tightly woven history.

Frisbie's summation soars even further beyond his facts: "I have been told that Joe Smith's father resided in Poultney at the time of the Wood movement here, and that he was in it and one of the leading rodsmen." That claim is empty, for family and town sources clearly place the Prophet's father fifty miles away as a young married farmer in Tunbridge, Vermont.¹⁰⁸ Frisbie is here building his picture of a Vermont money-digging team—Winchell/Wingate and the elders Cowdery and Smith—to be later revived in Palmyra with their sons added. But both Oliver and Joseph said they had never seen each other before beginning the 1829 translation.¹⁰⁹ Frisbie also claims, without supporting evidence, that after leaving Vermont the counterfeiter was in the Smiths' New York neighborhood, a contention Frisbie claims "has been fully proven by men who . . . knew him in both places." Hardly so, for the historian's sources associate the counterfeiter with the Woods but not with New York Mormons. In fact, Frisbie admits there is no document linking the counterfeiter to the Mormons: "The name of the counterfeiter, whether it was Winchell or Wingate, does not appear in any account that I have seen, unless he had by this time assumed another name, but he had been at Palmyra for some years and went with them from Palmyra to Ohio."¹¹⁰ Again, after the claim that the elder Smith was a Wood rodsman, Frisbie admits: "Of this I cannot speak positively, for the

want of satisfactory evidence.” While speculating beyond his data, Frisbie overstates William Cowdery’s role as a Wood participant, as already noted, and also makes him and Joseph Smith, Sr., the central characters in his plot of how Mormonism really began:

He then lived in Wells, afterwards in Middletown, after that went to Palmyra, and there we find these men with the counterfeiter, Winchell, searching for money over the hills and mountains with the hazel rod. And their sons Joe and Oliver, as soon as they were old enough, were in the same business, and continued in it until they brought out the “vilest scheme that ever cursed the country.”¹¹¹

This guesswork deserves little notice, but it was apparently taken at face value by Whitney Cross, the analyst of New York revivalism, who shattered chronology by referring to the Wood movement and adding: “One of the two leaders, named Winchell, and a follower, named Oliver Cowdery, moved to Palmyra, New York, where the latter in time became Joseph Smith’s clerical assistant.”¹¹² The Wood movement deflated about 1801; Oliver was born in 1806, so he could hardly have been a “follower” of Wood or Winchell. Further, as we have seen, no Winchell is known in Palmyra or around the Smiths, nor does present evidence make William Cowdery a Wood adherent or a rodsman.

Here a good historian relies on secondary description and does not get his facts straight. Cross cites David M. Ludlum, who says that “Winchell and Oliver Cowdery, *a son of a prominent actor in the Wood Scrape*, subsequently moved from Middleton to Palmyra.”¹¹³ Cross has simply taken the son for the father. But Cross’s source Ludlum carelessly repeated Frisbie’s exaggeration of the elder Cowdery’s affiliation with the Woods. Although Ludlum made this mistake, he realized there were only common cultural roots, not direct relationships, between the Vermont millennialists and Mormon founders a quarter of a century later: “The strands of connection between the Wood Scrape and the Palmyra outcroppings are too tenuous to withstand historical criticism.”¹¹⁴

One can begin to see the real people when the historical ghosts are removed. A newspaper reconstruction of the Wood affair was written forty years before Frisbie’s, nearer the event and not infected with the goal of tying it to Mormonism. This account simply says that the discredited “leaders of the fraternity . . . removed into the county of St. Lawrence, New York, where it is said something of their former delusion stuck by them.” This location is a hundred

miles from Palmyra, and there is no known New York interaction of the Woods and the Smiths.

This best Wood source has the further value of listing multiple uses of the rod:

They claimed also inspired power with which to cure all sorts of diseases, intuitive knowledge of lost or stolen goods, and ability to discover the hidden treasures of the earth, as well as the more convenient talent of transmuting ordinary substances into the precious metals. . . . The instrument of their miraculous powers was a cleft stick, or *rod*, something of the form of an inverted Y. And when this talisman was firmly grasped in either hand by its two points, it was believed to indicate the proper course to be pursued, or point out some substances of medicinal utility, or fix the locality of some valuable mine—whichever of these the agent was pleased to wish.¹¹⁵

As will be seen, this forked branch is not the type suggested by Cowdery's revelation on the "gift of working with the rod." But though the direct Mormon–Wood connection fails historically, the Wood example does show that the divining rod was used for guidance in other matters besides searching for gold. Uncritical historians may report valuable information along with unreliable conclusions. Thus Frisbie quotes the letter of a visiting minister, who describes how the rod pointed to "plants and roots that they used to cure diseases," and also answered yes–no questions on what tribe of Israel an individual was from.¹¹⁶ Frisbie also seems to credit old-timer Jabez D. Perry in picturing the rod as used "whenever they desired any information," not only for the right medicine in sickness "but also to know whether they would live or die," as well as "all their business matters."¹¹⁷ While such answers might be manipulation, superstition, or attempts at true revelation, they show broader possibilities for Cowdery's instructions on the rod. Shortly after meeting Oliver, Joseph Smith commended him on his "gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things."¹¹⁸ Since this suggests general guidance, Joseph Smith's 1829 revelation did not necessarily refer to money digging.

As discussed, the Wood episode is no more than a cultural analogy. Joseph Smith's reasons for approving the rod must be reconstructed from Mormon sources. The rod instruction came in April 1829, soon after the two men met early that month. It is one of two revelations clarifying translation, but the third in this series came earlier. That first message introduced Oliver to the concepts

behind the rod revelation. Thus section 6 defines the scope of approval for the rod in section 8.¹¹⁹

Oliver Cowdery's first revelation commanded him to lay aside the world and build the restored kingdom: "Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich" (D&C 6:7). Whatever prior use Oliver made of his "gift of working with the rod," this revelation directed him to heavenly treasure. Indeed, this first command names but one special power: "Thy gift" is "sacred and cometh from above." It is defined as the ability to "inquire" and "know mysteries which are great and marvelous." Thus Oliver is commanded to "exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries, that thou mayest bring many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, convince them of the error of their ways."¹²⁰ Thus his gift of knowledge of salvation will lead to the "greatest of all gifts," the "gift of salvation" (D&C 6:10–13).

Oliver's initial revelation closes with the command to seek heavenly "treasures" by assisting "in bringing to light, with your gift, those parts of my scriptures which have been hidden because of iniquity" (D&C 6:27). The revelation on the gift of the rod probably followed within a week.¹²¹ It continued the theme of learning ancient truths through translating: "Remember, this is your gift" (D&C 8:5). And it could be exercised by believing "you shall receive a knowledge concerning the engravings of old records" (D&C 8:1). Then a second promise was made:

Now this is not all, for you have another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod. Behold, it has told you things. Behold, there is no other power save God that can cause this rod of nature to work in your hands, for it is the work of God. And therefore whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, will I grant unto you, that you shall know.¹²²

But there were strict limits to this promise: "Trifle not with these things. Do not ask for that which you ought not. Ask that you may know the mysteries of God, and that you may translate all those ancient records."¹²³

So the "rod of nature" in Cowdery's "hands" would be a means of gaining revelation on doctrine. The only known counterpart in early Mormon documents says the same, though reflected in a waffled mirror. One of the strangest witnesses to early Latter-day Saint convictions is Jesse Smith, the hostile brother of Joseph Smith, Sr.

Hyrum had written letters to his grandfather's family similar to Mother Smith's 1831 letter to her brother, announcing that God had "sent forth a revelation in these last days, and this revelation is called the Book of Mormon."¹²⁴ Although Joseph's immediate family believed, his grandfather's family was divided, with the oldest son Jesse as bitter minority leader. Hyrum's correspondence has to be reconstructed through Jesse's replayed words, distorted by scorn:

But alas, what is man when left to his own way? He makes his own gods. If a golden calf, he falls down and worships before it and says, "This is my god which brought me out of the land of Vermont." If it be a gold book discovered by the necromancy of infidelity and dug from the mines of atheism, he writes that the angel of the Lord has revealed to him the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge, even divine revelation which has lain in the bowels of the earth for thousands of years is at last made known to him. He says he has eyes to see things that are not, and then has the audacity to say they are. And this angel of the Lord (devil it should be) has put me in possession of great wealth, gold and silver and precious stones, so that I shall have the dominion in all the land of Palmyra.¹²⁵

Hyrum's earlier message that the record came from the "angel of the Lord" is clear, as is the "gold book," mocked again in the middle and given a closing sneer: "The story is that the gold book proved to be lead." The serious claims of the Joseph Smith family can be seen by Jesse's repeated scoffing at the same things. On the other hand, the "possession of great wealth" is a one-time jibe, possibly Jesse's ironic overstatement that those claiming "the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge" ought to get "gold and silver" in the bargain.¹²⁶

Jesse Smith also speaks of a rod possessed by Joseph's father, but his statement is probably distorted like his version of the Book of Mormon story. The rod information came to Jesse by an intermediary from Joseph Smith, Sr.: "Your father would not be implicated in this place, but for the message he sent by the hands of a fool to my brother Samuel."¹²⁷ The messenger, who "believes all to be a fact," could be Martin Harris, or someone like him who had time and money to make the trip to St. Lawrence County. The month was June 1829, when the Book of Mormon was being finished and printing worries were beginning, so Uncle Samuel might have been approached for help, which would intensify the irony of Jesse's "great wealth" language. Uncle Jesse seems to know firsthand what the Palmyra messenger said about a rod, which is ridiculed not because it leads to treasure, but because it leads to information. Jesse scolds Hyrum,

“He says your father has a wand or rod like Jannes and Jambres, who withstood Moses in Egypt—that he can tell the distance from India to Ethiopia and another fool story, many other things alike ridiculous.”¹²⁸

So there are two rod sources in mid-1829. Cowdery’s revelation names his “rod of nature” in a phrase suggesting simply cut wood, perhaps in contrast to a magician’s wand made of rare materials. Then there is Uncle Jesse’s “wand or rod like Jannes and Jambres, who withstood Moses in Egypt.” Since his rhetoric associates the Smith rod with God’s enemies, a 180 degree correction must be made.¹²⁹ Jesse consistently takes the words of his visionary kinsmen and makes exact reversals. His sarcasm changes their “gold book” to a “lead book” and makes their “angel of the Lord” into one of Satan’s angels.¹³⁰ Jesse regularly changes the good source to an evil one, and the opposite of the wands of Jannes and Jambres would be the rod of Aaron.

As noted, the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants deleted two “rod” references and replaced them with “the gift of Aaron” possessed by Joseph’s new scribe. Although this supposedly shifted meanings, it looks more like clarification. The revision retained words about holding the rod: “You shall hold it in your hands and do marvelous works, and no power shall be able to take it out of your hands, for it is the work of God” (D&C 8:8). Such language does not really remove the rod but identifies it with Aaron. As will be seen, section 8 even implied this in its original form.

A surprising harmony exists between the two 1829 sources on the function of the rod. Uncle Jesse said the messenger claimed that “the distance from India to Ethopia” was discerned through the rod—perhaps more heavy satire, since one expert on magic names these as the best sites for stones of special properties.¹³¹ Yet Jesse ridicules the idea of receiving *information* through the rod, whether or not his sneer correctly represents his source. The bitter uncle could have been expected to make the most of the Smiths’ divining for treasure, but instead he associates a Mormon rod with Pharaoh’s magicians. So his hostile letter pictures that rod as something more than a treasure rod.

In Oliver Cowdery’s revelation, “the gift of working with the rod” is subordinated to revelation, since no Doctrine and Covenants section has a more concentrated theme. The opening lines state the message of translating “by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (D&C 8:1–2). The closing

lines immediately follow the rod references and invite Oliver to “ask that you may know the mysteries of God, and that you may translate all those ancient records.”¹³² Asking for these two reasons refers to the double gifts of the short revelation: the “gift” of “the Spirit of revelation” in translation (D&C 8:3–4), and “another gift” of working with the rod (D&C 8:6).¹³³ But that second gift serves the same purpose as the first: “Whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, that you shall know,” referring to “the mysteries of God.”¹³⁴ Both gifts result in revelation through inner faith, the single subject of the inspired message. Both the rod and translation stones are dependent upon “the Spirit of revelation—behold this is the Spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground” (D&C 8:3). These words call up a biblical epic of revelation and use of the rod. In Exodus, “the Lord spake unto Moses” is the constant means of moving Israel to the Red Sea. Moses’ authority and God’s power were then shown through a physical instrument: “But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea” (Ex. 14:16).

No known source tells whether Oliver did money digging before becoming the Book of Mormon scribe. And American divining does not really fit the inner sources of the new religion. To make a divining rod, the stem was cut just below forked branches. The diviner held one of the branches in each hand and located treasure or water by movement of the center stub under tension. But the forked stick is not the pattern for Oliver Cowdery’s rod, either in purpose or association with Aaron. True, section 8 told Oliver that the rod worked “in your hands.” However, a straight rod may also be held by both hands. In any event, section 8 approves a rod only for sacred information. It also suggests the rod that displayed God’s power in the Egyptian plagues, in striking the rock for life-giving water or in calling down strength on Israel’s warriors. That rod was a straight shaft, the shepherd’s staff possessed by Moses at his call (Ex. 4:2–4). Used by both Moses and Aaron, it was foremost the “rod of God,” also Moses’ rod, but formally called the “rod of Aaron.”¹³⁵ It functioned as a visible sign of authority, just as Judah’s “scepter” was a sign of divine kingship in Jacob’s blessing or Elijah’s staff was held by the servant who went in his name.¹³⁶ Thus the rod of Aaron was a staff of delegated agency, and the 1835 revision to “The gift of Aaron” suggests Oliver’s spiritual power to assist Joseph Smith as Aaron assisted Moses.

Here is a crossroads of method for the interpreter of Joseph's revelations. It is unwise to pursue environmental influences on too narrow a basis, for the Bible is the controlling background for this restorationist Christianity. As discussed, Oliver Cowdery's rod appears right after mention of Moses and the Red Sea miracle. Though "the gift of Aaron" was not substituted for the "rod of nature" until 1835, Oliver's role as spokesman for Joseph was present from the outset of their relationship. In 1830, the authority of the presiding prophet was emphasized, with Joseph receiving revelations "even as Moses" and with Oliver declaring them "even as Aaron" (D&C 28:2–3). This referred to Moses as the presiding prophet and Aaron as "mouth": "And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people" (Ex. 4:16).

Oliver Cowdery's mission to Ohio was soon a main force in converting Sidney Rigdon, who traveled to meet the Prophet and who was named scribe and spokesman in the absence of Oliver (D&C 35:17–23). As the First Presidency developed, Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery both had their place as assistants. When Oliver was heavily involved as Church editor in 1833, Joseph relied principally on Sidney as his counselor. A revelation then declared Sidney "a spokesman unto my servant Joseph," again Aaron's Bible role, since Joseph as the "revelator" was to guide the "spokesman" (D&C 100:9, 11). Two months later, Joseph Smith gave Sidney a patriarchal blessing, severely cautioning him against pride but outlining his call and potential: "A spokesman unto the Lord shall he be all the days of his life; and it shall come to pass that he shall hold the rod as of Aaron in his right hand."¹³⁷

This blessing adds the rod to the image of Aaron as "voice," with one other relevant phrase added about Sidney Rigdon: "For the Lord shall reveal unto the Seer of Israel, and he shall declare it." Since Aaron's rod was really Moses' staff that had been touched by God, "the rod as of Aaron" is here a sign of a delegated representative. In Exodus, God commanded the miracles through Moses, but they generally took place as Aaron raised the rod. Thus the "rod as of Aaron" is probably a metaphor in Rigdon's blessing, but one that reveals the biblical basis of Joseph Smith's thinking. In Joseph's revelations, only two men are titled spokesmen. Because these two are also associated with the rod, Oliver's "working with the rod" suggests that the rod would bring revelation because it signified associate authority. This is the major distinction from Aaron's rod in early magical handbooks. Anyone could read the Bible and attempt

to duplicate any practice—anyone could attach Aaron’s name to magical wands or divining sticks. The name is not the issue but the authentic context of delegated power.

The revelation–authority aspects of Oliver Cowdery’s rod are clues to its method of operation. The Woods’ rods probably chose between alternatives, so the dips of the stem would answer questions on a yes–no basis. But the prophetic authority staff provides a better model, one harmonious with Joseph Smith’s known thinking as the leader of the restored Church. Some associates of the Prophet used a rod in special prayer. In 1841, Orson Hyde wrote from the Near East after dedicating Israel for the Gathering: “On what was anciently called Mount Zion, where the temple stood, I . . . used the rod according to the prediction upon my head.”¹³⁸ He had previously prayed on the Mount of Olives, moving down to the edge of the city, erecting similar stone memorials at both places, and obviously praying again. So he used a rod of petition in some form. What personal prophecy was fulfilled? Perhaps that of Oliver Cowdery in ordaining Orson Hyde an Apostle and promising: “He shall have power to smite the earth with pestilence, to divide waters and lead through the Saints; he shall go from land to land and from sea to sea.”¹³⁹ Did this transatlantic Apostle feel empowered to use a “rod of Aaron” once again to invoke plagues on modern Egypt that prevented Israel from returning? Here the rod of authority would be the rod of prayer. Cowdery’s blessing is the only known source behind Hyde’s “prediction upon my head.” Thus Hyde’s use of the rod in Jerusalem suggests how Oliver might have understood his 1829 revelation.

A staff is also visible in Heber C. Kimball’s biography, where functions of prayer and special authority are blended. Heber recalled dreaming of Joseph Smith during Heber’s 1837 voyage to England. The Apostle stood near the front of the ship and was visited by the Prophet, who said, “‘Brother Heber, here is a rod (putting it into my hands) with which you are to guide the ship. While you hold this rod you shall prosper . . . and the hand of God shall be with you.’” In the dream the promise was fulfilled by the ship’s knifing through all obstacles. Heber’s was a straight staff: “This rod which Joseph gave me was about three and a half feet in length.”¹⁴⁰ The dream must have approximated what Heber C. Kimball knew in reality, for his journal records several prayers answered by this means. His son gives the recollection of capable pioneer Sarah Granger Kimball:

Brother Kimball showed me a rod that the Lord through the Prophet Joseph had given to him. He said that when he wanted to find out anything that was his right to know, all he had to do was to kneel down with the rod in his hand, and that sometimes the Lord would answer his questions before he had time to ask them.¹⁴¹

Heber's son added: "My mother and my sister, Helen Mar, told me the same thing and added to it, that President Young received a similar rod from the Lord at the same time."¹⁴² This description does not fit the Y-shaped rod that the diviners held by both hands.¹⁴³ But it fits the three-foot staff of Kimball's dream as well as the blessing of Sidney Rigdon, who was told he would "hold the rod as of Aaron in his right hand," perhaps a metaphor but one with literal imagery. If answers came to Heber C. Kimball before the questions were asked, then the rod functioned as an aid to faith, a symbol of authority in prayer rather than some physical pointer. As noted, Oliver Cowdery's rod instruction is the middle directive of three messages forming a cohesive context. And they contain classic summaries of the inner process of revelation: "peace to your mind" (D&C 6); "the Holy Ghost . . . shall dwell in your heart" (D&C 8:2); "your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right" (D&C 9:8). Mormon documents on the rod give no hint of an external, mechanical operation.

Heber C. Kimball's journal notes his staff in contexts of solemn prayer. In Nauvoo, after the Martyrdom, "he went home and used the rod. I got a witness Elder Richards would live—that we would overcome our enemies."¹⁴⁴ One cannot be sure, but Kimball's entries suggest more than yes–no questions. In Washington, three weeks before the Martyrdom, Heber detailed the most solemn priesthood prayer, the comfort he received, and then he added: "I inquired by the rod. It was said my family was well, that my wife would come to me in the east, and that Congress would not do anything for us."¹⁴⁵ A similar procedure recurs in the Kimball journal, 25 January 1845, in solving a mosaic of personal concerns:

The same evening I sat down in my house in the presence of my wife and inquired of the Lord by the rod as follows: If we should finish the temple—it was verily, yes. That my sins were forgiven and that I should overcome and get my appointment of my inheritance while in this probation. And that the temple committee were not enemies to the Twelve Apostles.¹⁴⁶

Another complex answer came in the Utah period as the method is tersely noted: "In the evening it was told me by the Lord—rod—that

Congress of the United States would reject the Saints and would not admit us as a state government, and force their officers on us by their power."¹⁴⁷

Jesus' miracles sometimes involved physical aids, but faith was always the basis of God's blessings. Although Paul and Joseph Smith sent handkerchiefs as signs for successful healing, this was exceptional for both prophets.¹⁴⁸ The same thing is true of the Kimball rod authorized by the Prophet; it was used in special cases without establishing a Churchwide pattern. Here is a rod for answer to prayer, matching the context and symbolism of the 1829 directive to Oliver Cowdery. Continued use of the divining rod by any individual Mormon has little bearing on the meaning of Cowdery's gift in section 8. He and Joseph Smith were the parties to an understanding of its meaning, and no line of evidence establishes their use of a rod for material treasure on meeting in 1829. Thus their 1835 change of "the rod of nature" to "the gift of Aaron," apparently came from a desire to make a distinction between Oliver's gift and the divining rod. It also clarified a context present from the beginning. Moreover, actual practice is the check on verbal analysis, and Hyde's use of the rod apparently comes from Cowdery, while Kimball's periodic use traces to the Prophet. In the 1829 "gift of the rod," the original and continuing emphasis was on God's "gift" rather than the "rod," though the latter continued as a sign before God in occasional religious practice.

BEYOND ENVIRONMENT

Religion, science, and magic all have the same broad goal—explaining reality and controlling it. So if the young Joseph Smith crossed borders, would he necessarily lose credibility? He did for biographer Fawn Brodie, who portrayed an early schemer of "cunning and deception" who later put on a religious costume and played his new role with "a highly compensated but nevertheless very real sincerity."¹⁴⁹ One major problem with this theory is that Joseph's immediate family, wife, and major employers knew him in both eras and saw an equally sincere youth in the pre-Mormon period. For instance, Josiah Stowell, the main proprietor of the Spanish treasure dig, was quoted on the 1827 background of the Book of Mormon: "He never staggered at the foundation [of] the work, for he knew too much concerning it."¹⁵⁰ Stowell also specifically reviewed the transition years from 1824 to 1830 and was quoted in a simple testimonial

of the young Joseph Smith: “He has been acquainted with him six years and he never knew anything of him but what was right—also know him to be a seer and a prophet.”¹⁵¹

Fresh investigations of folk magic have made Joseph’s dabblings in money digging more respectable, but at the possible cost of misinterpretation. Descriptive history is highly tolerant of most cultures and world views. Thus it is easy to place occult practices under the umbrella of religion, adopting a rationalization broader than Joseph Smith’s. Community rumor in the Howe affidavits does not reflect Joseph’s limited admissions in the 1825 notes on testimony, where the youth used “frequently” of divining lost objects but “occasionally” of treasure seeking, reinforced by “had always rather declined having anything to do with this business,” which is the orientation of his own history and that of his mother.¹⁵² Will the open-mindedness of analysts of treasure digging suggest scenes broader than Joseph’s realities? His later negative judgments on such searching correlate with the tone of the earliest trial notes and therefore suggest limited involvement. Thus the historian should be cautious about assuming that the later religious years continued a practice about which young Joseph had misgivings, evidently because of his religious experiences.

Abstract definitions separate religion and magic only partially and with great difficulty. Yet Joseph Smith sources show that the restored Church made important choices at several religious crossroads. One is Joseph’s education from self-seeking to God-seeking. He was under condemnation in most of his accounts of first viewing the plates; his mother, Oliver Cowdery, and Joseph Knight all give the reason as covetousness, hoping to acquire some of the ancient objects for the semi-altruistic goal of enriching his family. The period of training that followed is summarized in the artless narrative of the Prophet’s first autobiography:

For now I had been tempted of the adversary and sought the plates to obtain riches and kept not the commandment that I should have an eye single to the glory of God. Therefore I was chastened and sought diligently to obtain the plates and obtained them not until I was twenty one years of age.¹⁵³

One informed popularizer defines magic as the “technique of harnessing the secret powers of nature and seeking to influence events for one’s own purpose.”¹⁵⁴ Most occult money digging did fit such a goal. Water witching is practiced today by hundreds who use it

merely as a mechanistic method.¹⁵⁵ Formerly, supernatural treasure guardians were often appeased, which added ritual to money digging but not a religious purpose. On the other hand, Joseph Smith's revelations from the first insisted that all religious service and ceremony was exclusively for God's purposes. So there was a deep doctrinal tension between the published ideals of the new religion and any paranormal search for enrichment by individual Mormons. In Utah, Brigham Young acknowledged supernatural forces in some New York money digging. But he took the position of Mormon documents from the beginning—that seeking buried treasure was not the business of Latter-day Saints devoted to lives of eternal significance.¹⁵⁶

Several other basics of theology prevented the restored Church from approving magical practices and put individual Mormons in an inconsistent position if there was continuation of the occult.¹⁵⁷ With other major religions, Mormonism holds deep convictions on the sovereignty of God, which traditional magic weakly acknowledges, if at all. Thus invincible procedures are designed to control supernatural forces in standard situations, not bend to the will of a higher power. The pattern of prayer in Gethsemane is not generally found in magical handbooks. But the revelations of the restored Church promised answers to prayer in accordance with God's will, not man's dictation. Thus David Aune, who has conceptual problems in separating religion and magic, finds a central difference when magic deviates from majority religion in methods and "when the goals sought are virtually guaranteed through the management of supernatural powers." In more concise terms, this is the contrast "between manipulative magic and supplicative religion."¹⁵⁸ As discussed, the Prophet came to Salem, Massachusetts, in search of treasure and was told to wait for the "due time" of the Lord. Since his revelation there flatly said wealth would come later, it ruled out the power of any incantation or charm, had one been available to the Prophet. Thus D&C 111 required patient humility and did not fit a magical context of allowing a skilled practitioner to force an immediate result.

On a functional level, magic tends to work with objects and words by themselves, not inner spirituality or moral worthiness of the petitioner. As Aune observes, ancient pagan religions tended to do the same. While classical handbooks of magic mention patterns of worthiness, their amulets, elaborate ritual, and standard formulas monotonously stress the mechanical. Jesus insisted on the general principle of faith as a condition of signs, so scholars who treat his

healing words as ritual patterns are avoiding the real point of why miracles occurred.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, Hugh Nibley notes the similarity of the Book of Mormon Liahona and the little-known practice of arrow divination with the comment: "Religion becomes magic when the power by which things operate is transferred from God to the things themselves."¹⁶⁰ Something of a reverse process was evidently at work as Joseph Smith adapted the seer stone of his environment to the intensely spiritual work of translating the ancient American plates.

There is another striking difference between the mature Joseph Smith and the mystic practitioner. After receiving the plates in late 1827, Joseph bore the burden of worldly survival and the production and publication of a major scripture among world religions. His life is well documented from that time, and all his visible goals were doctrinal and practical. In Ohio, he generated new scripture translations and revelations, shared in weekday instruction for the elders in theology and language, gave regular preaching at the center and in outlying areas. Joseph's practical programs included securing lands for the Gathering, carrying out church businesses and publishing, and planning and building temples. These projects continued during the year of resettlement in Missouri, along with beginning a major history. And the Illinois crescendo left little time for anything else—constant public speaking, the temple, missionary supervision, the Gathering, evading false arrest, major family and social responsibilities, and management of economic, civic, and military affairs. To assume the Prophet had continued interest in treasure digging is to miss his intense devotion to restoring the ancient gospel and reestablishing Christ's church and people. One flirtation with a Salem windfall means little in the light of overwhelming documentation in eternal concerns. If other Salem-like episodes were discovered, they would still be exceptions to Joseph Smith's impressive record of working to capacity for family and God's kingdom.

This is why the criticism of Brewster's money digging during the Nauvoo period speaks clearly. Latter-day Saint spirituality ran in deep channels of prayer, public worship, and restored biblical ceremonies. Folk practices probably expressed religious strivings for some in their pre-Mormon period but were essentially confined to that time. And later temple ceremonies were given a thoroughly biblical and Christian content. Magic rituals and their paraphernalia were foreign to the new religion, perhaps not always suppressed on a private level, but clearly condemned when attempts were made to legitimize them as adjuncts to the faith.

In Joseph's lifetime, the Church acted against arts of divination, with initiative from local officers, evidently without consulting superiors. The two cases here were affirmed by leaders close enough to the Prophet to reflect his views. In 1841, Joseph's Apostle-cousin, George A. Smith, presided over the Staffordshire Conference and made a public report by calling on fellow Apostle Wilford Woodruff to explain the Church position:

The president then brought up the case of a Brother Moumford, who was holding the office of a priest, from whom fellowship had been withdrawn by the council of officers in consequence of his practicing fortune telling, magic, black art, etc., and called upon Elders Woodruff and Cordon to express their feelings upon the subject, when Elder Woodruff arose and spoke briefly upon the subject and informed the assembly that we had no such custom or practice in the Church, and that we should not fellowship any individual who practiced magic, fortune telling, black art, etc., for it was not of God. When it was moved and carried by the whole church that fellowship be withdrawn from Brother Moumford.¹⁶¹

A clear summary of this action was then sent to Nauvoo and published in the *Times and Seasons* by Don Carlos Smith, unchallenged by his Prophet-brother.¹⁶² Another stand against occult practices was taken by Hyrum Smith in his Nauvoo role of Assistant President of the Church. A bishop's court had charged Benjamin Holt with "accusing certain persons of being witches or wizards and endeavoring to cure such as he said was bewitched, by art, and meddling with those things unlawfully." After the trial expanded the issues, Bishop David Evans ruled: "The decision of the court is that Brother Hoyt cease to call certain characters witches or wizards, and that he cease to work with the rod he calls a divining rod, and that he cease to burn a board or boards to heal the sick by art."¹⁶³ The ruling was ratified when the case went to the High Council on appeal: "After investigation, President Hyrum Smith decided that Council confirm the decision of the bishop's court, which was voted by the Council unanimously."¹⁶⁴

There is consistency in disciplining those using rods and stones "by art" or "unlawfully," whereas limited religious uses of similar objects were not challenged. The general issue was sensibly discussed in print when the Prophet was nominal editor of the *Times and Seasons*. Gladden Bishop and others had claimed public revelation, raising the question of the difference between true and false prophecy. The result was a carefully reasoned editorial, "Try the

Spirits.” It reviewed counterfeit prophecy and tongues, including the Kirtland Pentecostal extravagances that were corrected by Joseph Smith, a reminder that similar outward practices may have a godly or ungodly use. Indeed, the gift of tongues had special warnings attached to it. The editorial reasoned that false spirits could be detected by true inspiration, but outward tests were added: true revelation would not produce strange practices overawing others by outward display, by contortion of body or voice, by contradicting God’s commands, or by competing with his appointed leadership.¹⁶⁵

Whereas the New Testament depicts inspired and uninspired expressions of the gift of tongues, the Old Testament emphasizes the tension between right and wrong use of prophecy. For instance, an accurate summary of Old Testament divination notes the “seership aspect of prophecy” as often misused: “The term could be used occasionally in a good sense, as we might speak of a prophet having clairvoyant gifts without thereby approving all forms of clairvoyance.”¹⁶⁶ So the whole Bible wrestles with the problem that a given external pattern may be approved by God at one time and not another. Thus it should pose no religious difficulty that Joseph’s seer stone of his youth was later applied to the higher use of inspired translation of the Book of Mormon. There is even a claim that Joseph discovered the plates through the stone, though his own vision accounts do not hint at this, and in 1829 even scornful Uncle Jesse only knows “that the angel of the Lord has revealed to him the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”¹⁶⁷ No doubt Joseph’s fervent religious strivings were real, as he eloquently recounts them. This general unrest involved him to an unknown extent in money-digging ritual. Here it is easier to sketch a model than round it out in the absence of reliable data. Joseph was also involved in the forms of revival religion and then left them behind after visions came. Magical religion could serve the same function of inquiry, since the credibility of the answer is the real question for Joseph Smith. Early Pennsylvania German culture illustrates the marriage of piety and some magic, where spells and Christian prayers intermingle in trust that God can control supernatural forces.¹⁶⁸ Such an environment tinted young Joseph Smith but did not change the unfailing devotional color of his early life. If Joseph Smith’s early searches brought him to occult frontiers, his final answers were revelatory, biblical, and Christian. Some assume Joseph’s lifetime involvement with stones used in his New York neighborhood for searching out riches or lost objects, but transformation is the core of Joseph’s personality. Oliver Cowdery’s

first revelations show the strictly religious use of the translation stone by 1829. Furthermore, a significant Nauvoo episode emphasizes its higher use.

In 1841, Wilford Woodruff along with the Twelve visited the Prophet. Joseph “unfolded” much and Wilford “had the privilege of seeing for the first time in my day the Urim and Thummim.”¹⁶⁹ That statement may not be technically true, since Brigham Young noted the same occasion and remembered that Joseph “explained to us the Urim and Thummim which he found with the plates” and afterward showed the “seer stone.”¹⁷⁰ Thus Joseph commented on both types of stones, but their common properties may have caused Wilford Woodruff to use the terms interchangeably. In Utah, President Woodruff must have had the same stone that the Twelve saw in Nauvoo, and he called it “the seer’s stone that Joseph Smith found by revelation some 30 feet under the earth, carried by him through life.”¹⁷¹ But this was not the double stone that came from Cumorah just under the surface, which Joseph said was returned to the angel. Concerning the Nauvoo visit of the Twelve, Brigham Young reported that Joseph “showed us his seer stone” and Brigham then explained: “He said that every man who lived on the earth was entitled to a seer stone, and should have one, but they are kept from them in consequence of their wickedness, and most of those who do find one make an evil use of it.”¹⁷² Here is the Prophet’s criticism of the treasure seekers of his environment, for him the most visible possessors of such stones. Moreover, his guarded disclosure to Apostles of seven years shows that the mature Joseph neither taught nor practiced treasure digging or they would have already been familiar with the stone and his views on it.

“Carried by him through life” was Wilford Woodruff’s phrase regarding Joseph and the stone, but “possessed by him through life” is the apparent intent of such language. The Urim and Thummim were the means of receiving most of the formal revelations until June 1829.¹⁷³ That was the time of completing the Book of Mormon, which was translated through the Urim and Thummim and also the seer stone. But no type of stone is involved in receiving revelation or translation after that. Orson Pratt watched the New Testament revision and wondered why the Book of Mormon procedure was not continued:

While this thought passed through the speaker’s mind, Joseph, as if he read his thoughts, looked up and explained that the Lord gave him the Urim and Thummim when he was inexperienced in the Spirit of inspiration. But now he had advanced so far that he understood the operations of that Spirit and did not need the assistance of that instrument.¹⁷⁴

The same logic would apply to the seer stone, which disappears from historical notice, apparently not operational in Joseph's religious activities. The essence of the new religion was the inner experience of revelation, not its means, whether or not aided by objects like the stone.

"Religion" refers to inner strivings toward God, a definition applicable to the Prophet from youth to martyrdom. Yet strident critics deny this, charging that Joseph's use of the seeking stone for translation involved the occult. But even before the Prophet outgrew the stone, he was applying it to higher spiritual goals after early experimentation with more worldly uses. According to Joseph's mother, Oliver Cowdery, and his own accounts, his four-year tutorial at Cumorah instilled commitment and personal sacrifice in carrying out his translation assignment. The Prophet's testimony asks for belief in his spiritual metamorphosis during years of preparation. Because Joseph himself was a new man, neither Bible nor stone was the same object it had been before. The early visions were the sure lights that guided the young traveler out of the dark forests of his culture. Believers in sudden salvation no doubt have trouble with this gradual and sometimes stumbling journey. Is the stone automatically superstition? That raises the question of defining religion by Christian and Jewish precedents. What is the Bible if not a record of the methods of God's direction of men? One who considers that view will see these Joseph Smith issues in the revelation stones of the Old and New Testaments.

The last book of the New Testament was nearly the last written and divides its contents between a remarkable sequence of visions of the future and first-century revelations to the faithful. In the less symbolic contemporary part, the promise is made: "And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it" (Rev. 2:17).¹⁷⁵ Commentators on this verse wrestle with the issue of religion versus cult. Out of many possible meanings, the trend is to see some sort of magic stone here—an amulet or charm to ward off evil, drawing power from a sacred name. The similarity with pagan practices is puzzling to many. The same problem exists in Old Testament analysis of the stones of the Urim and Thummim, for the concept of miraculous stones is avoided by many scholars who propose a drawing of yes–no lots with the two stones or their two faces. Although the lot can be biblical when combined with prayer to God, a more spiritual perception of the Urim and Thummim is available:

Actually, the combining of “dreams, Urim, and prophets” (1 Sam. 28:6) indicates that, even as the first and last terms denote revelations to the mind of the petitioner through a prophetic intermediary, so Urim denotes a correspondingly personal revelation, through the mind of that priestly intermediary who wore the shining stones of the breastpiece in Israel’s sanctuary. . . . And the priestly oracles were not limited to yes–or–no answers . . . but provided detailed explanations (Judg. 1:1; 1 Sam. 10:22; 2 Sam. 5:23). Scripture condemns pagan, mechanical divination (Hos. 4:12).¹⁷⁶

In Revelation, John incorporates past religious symbols into his message. Thus the most internally consistent interpretation of the “white stone” combines with the book’s assurance that the faithful will become “kings and priests” to the Most High (Rev. 1:6). These eternal priests will be in tune with God’s will, like the High Priest with the breastplate of shining stones and the Urim. In Hebrew that term means “light,” corresponding to the “white” stone of John’s Revelation. This correlation should be obvious, but Joseph Smith is virtually alone in confidence that John sees the redeemed as full High Priests: “Then the white stone mentioned in Rev. 2:17 is the Urim and Thummim, whereby all things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms, even all kingdoms, will be made known.”¹⁷⁷ As for genuine religion, Joseph Smith perceived the stone of John’s vision not as a stone of chance but as a conduit of enlightenment and a reward of worthiness of character.

In leaving money digging behind, Joseph Smith also outdistanced the magical milieu of his teens. This fact should warn the careful scholar against making too much of the supernatural charms that were apparently held by the Smiths. Hyrum Smith’s descendants possess what Pearson Corbett called three “emblematic parchments.”¹⁷⁸ In purpose, they somewhat resemble Jewish phylacteries, which were worn in prayer and contained verses reminding the wearer of Jehovah’s covenant promises. These family documents contain Old Testament quotes of prayer and promise, together with cryptic symbols designed to ward off evil and enemies.¹⁷⁹ But what does possession prove? Were they inherited by Hyrum, given to him from the outside, or even owned by him? If they were his, did he keep them as curiosities or use them—and if so, at what points in his life? Until such questions are answered, the objects merely illustrate the occult environment around the Smiths before Mormonism.

And no more than this can be made of the so-called Jupiter talisman, supposedly in possession of Joseph Smith at Carthage.

Mention of this first surfaced in 1937 when Charles Bidamon, who had been reared by Emma, listed items for sale that supposedly came from Joseph Smith. One was listed as “a silver pocket piece which was in the Prophet’s pocket at the time of his assassination.”¹⁸⁰ Wilford Wood, a collector of Mormon memorabilia, purchased it in 1938 and received Bidamon’s certificate that the Prophet possessed it when murdered. But Charles Bidamon was born twenty years after the Martyrdom; he claimed Emma as his source and said that “she prized this piece very highly on account of its being one of the Prophet’s intimate possessions.”¹⁸¹ One might wonder what is sales talk and what is history sixty years after Emma’s death, particularly when one of her own sons should have retained the coin if it meant that much to their father.

Nor does the Jupiter talisman clear the next historical hurdle. James W. Woods was Joseph Smith’s “principal lawyer” at the end. He went to Carthage with him, at Joseph’s request went to Nauvoo the morning of the Martyrdom, and rode back to Carthage the next day to help recover the bodies.¹⁸² Later he gave detailed memories, copying “a receipt from Joe Smith’s wife of the articles I found upon the person of Joe Smith.” It was dated a week after the murder and signed by Emma, obviously at a time when she could begin to handle practical details. But the lawyer evidently collected the Prophet’s personal effects the day after the Martyrdom. Emma signed for “one hundred and thirty-five dollars and fifty cents in gold and silver,” along with the Prophet’s gold ring and a half dozen other pocket items. But this detailed inventory names no item like the Bidamon talisman.¹⁸³ The charm was distinct from money—it was an inch-and-a-half in diameter and covered with symbols and a prayer on one side and a square of sixteen Hebrew characters on the other.¹⁸⁴

To some, the talisman shows that the Nauvoo leader was tainted by traditional magic. But the Jupiter piece does not survive cross-examination any better than the Hyrum Smith family parchments. 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. On one side, the square of Jewish letters is bordered by several Hebrew words for the divine “Father.” The other face has mystical symbols and an unpolished Latin sentence, “confermo O Deus potentissimus,” apparently intended to mean, “Strengthen [me], Almighty God.”¹⁸⁵ Basic studies in both languages gave the Prophet the ability to recognize these Hebrew or Latin devotional terms. If he ever favored the coin, it could be for its divine names and the prayer alone.

The answer in history is so often limited by the structuring of the question. Current concentration on the environment of folk belief may lighten one corner and throw strange shadows elsewhere. Joseph Smith is best served by analyzing “environments” in order to determine the mixture of backgrounds that affected him. Some historians comfortably accept all allegations of money digging/magic on a general impression that where there is smoke there must be fire. Others insist on quality control—conclusions based on rejecting community hearsay and admitting evidence that is closely firsthand and free from intense bias. On this standard, only sporadic and temporary money digging appears. Even if it was proved authentic, the 1831 Martin Harris letter to William W. Phelps might reveal more about Harris’s frame of thinking than what Joseph Smith said to him. Cultural parallels certainly help to formulate questions about the young prophet, but answers about his religious experiences must come primarily from him.

Joseph Smith’s total environment juts higher than folk religion. His self-portrait is the youth with Bible, testing each church by scriptural specifications. This was also the dominating force in his family background and in his religious culture. The revival movement of Joseph Smith’s area highlights rural Americans who were unchurched and considering some type of commitment. This can be somewhat quantified by the astounding number of biblical restorationists among the first Mormon converts. They combine the characteristics of Bible literalism, intellectuality, and spiritual witness. Their vital inner life appears in similar intimations and dreams about renewal of God’s work. Since Joseph Smith is both head and part of this cultural stream, such powerful social and spiritual forces are clearly paramount for him. But divining for treasure is transitory in his life, just as money digging/magic is rare in the autobiographies of the early converts of New England, New York, and Ohio.¹⁸⁶ Although generally written later, these recollections are outpourings of naive candor, revitalizing the main concerns of pre-Mormon life.

Seeking true religion is thus Joseph Smith’s strongest background influence, and his considerable family history sources reinforce this conclusion. Grandfather Solomon Mack was a principled and energetic enterpriser, too busy for religion until poor health gave him time to reflect and be converted at the end of his life. Grandfather Asael Smith was a religious dissenter who deeply believed in God’s universal salvation, held strong restorationist views, and insisted that true religion must meet the tests of “scripture and

reason."¹⁸⁷ Father Joseph Smith followed this tradition, and his mature years were punctuated by symbolic dreams of being religiously lost, finding solutions, and being promised more.¹⁸⁸ Mother Lucy Mack Smith also fits this group of individualists. Receiving deep assurances through her private prayers, she first investigated Methodism and prayed for her husband's soul when he resisted. In mid-life she affiliated with Presbyterianism, again without him.¹⁸⁹ This family illustrates the climate of biblical searching, a more constant influence on young Joseph than patterns of folk magic. Lucy Mack Smith reacted to accusations by considering treasure rites incidental to the deep quest for religion that was their overriding family concern. Noting reports that the Smiths were preoccupied with "magic circles or soothsaying," she bypassed the subject as trivial without affirming or denying: "We never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation." Although the quote often stops there in negative literature, Lucy's next sentence completed her thought that their time was mainly used in religious seeking: "But whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remember the service of and the welfare of our souls."¹⁹⁰

Joseph's autobiographies and Smith histories create a map. His historical terrain is not as important as his route through it. Whatever his trails of investigation, there was a consistently religious destination. In addition to being biased and exaggerated, the neighborhood affidavits address the wrong question. Young Joseph's observable activities could be trivial, but his inner development is the real issue. In reviewing his youth and mature mission in Nauvoo, he insisted, "You never knew my heart."¹⁹¹ Only he and a few near him could speak on that subject. His mother watched his private life and pictured a religious quest: "For Joseph was less inclined to the study of books than any child we had but much more given to reflection and deep study."¹⁹² Likewise, his father compressed Joseph's youth in a sentence, and the search for God was the controlling theme: "Thou hast sought to know his ways, and from thy childhood thou hast meditated much upon the great things of his law." This father's blessing also alludes to stunning answers, as do Joseph's own vision accounts.¹⁹³ The divine responses matched the quality of the young Prophet's pursuit of truth. Indeed, driving inquiry is a core characteristic of his whole life.

Joseph Smith early produced a full review of his youthful searches leading to the First Vision, an intimate sharing of three years

of reading scriptures, questioning religionists, and thinking deeply about contradictions between the Bible and the available faiths: “At about the age of twelve years my mind become seriously impressed with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal soul.”¹⁹⁴ Something far deeper was going on spiritually for him even in the years where evidence shows some involvement with money digging.

Conversion and progression are the themes of Joseph’s early vision accounts, and the first was embedded in the 1830 statement of beliefs. In his 1834 answer to the Hurlbut–Howe affidavits, Joseph protested that he had already conceded human error before his enemies loudly tried to expose it: “But as the ‘Articles and Covenants’ of this Church are plain on this particular point, I do not deem it important to proceed further.”¹⁹⁵ In original usage, “Articles and Covenants” was the title given to what is now section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁹⁶ The First Vision appears there in guarded language, beginning a three-stage sequence. First, a synonym for revealing is used: “It was truly manifested unto this first elder, that he had received a remission of his sins” (D&C 20:5). This is clearly the 1820 appearance of the Father and the Son, since two of the four First Vision accounts give forgiveness as a main message, and Joseph notes no other revelation on this subject in this period. Following this divine communication, Joseph “was entangled again in the vanities of the world, but after truly repenting, God ministered unto him by an holy angel,” who brought the Book of Mormon.¹⁹⁷ So, “the vanities of this world” touched young Joseph between 1820 and 1827; for the time before the angel entrusted the plates to Joseph was also a probationary period.

There is a rough and biased definition of what Joseph probably meant by admitting “vanities of the world” in his 1830 statement on Church doctrine. It comes in the Palmyra *Reflector* series on the “Gold Bible” in early 1831. The paper specialized in broad satire, and its editor was an aggressive lawyer named Abner Cole.¹⁹⁸ The thoroughgoing rationalism of his editorials left little room for religious experience; moreover, he started to print pirated Book of Mormon extracts before its publication but angrily backed off when Joseph Smith threatened to sue. Philosophically and personally, he seems motivated to gather the worst on the Smiths. Yet his 1831 exposure is actually more favorable than the 1833 affidavits, which should rouse suspicion of those who know the mob psychology of a time when political campaigns and public testimonials were intensely

partisan. As earlier noted, the 1833 statements described some Smith family money digging, but the most visible charges added laziness and lying, the last perhaps a raw judgment on Smith claims of the supernatural. Cole's *Reflector* series mentioned no laziness and lying but heaped terse scorn on the family for their poverty, lack of education, lack of church affiliation, and superstitious money digging, which is so harshly attacked that exaggeration is obvious.¹⁹⁹ Since Cole mentioned contacting neighbors, his 1831 accusations probably include all their community could seriously say against Joseph Smith, who is basically vindicated here in his contention that his enemies could show no serious moral wrong in his youth.

Neither the Prophet's 1830 review of the Restoration (D&C 20:1–13) or the 1834 answer to Howe's affidavits came in a vacuum. Because each answered implicit or explicit accusations, Joseph Smith's public statements on his youth essentially label seeking treasure as part of a way of life that he had long left behind. In judging the Prophet's consistency, definition is demanded. The Stowell dig of 1825 and the 1826 trial involve supernatural finding with the aid of a stone. No evidence shows that the Mormon leader returned to such a procedure after beginning translation of the ancient plates in 1827. Indeed, there is but one known attempt to gain treasure afterward. But this 1836 Salem trip started with no occult method—instead with inside information quite like current attempts to find sunken gold by historical inquiry.²⁰⁰ Moreover, Joseph's eastern journey had a double purpose, for it was a major step in Church refinancing, especially through the Kirtland Bank. And even the Salem revelation is practical in the sense of associating future riches with future converts in the gathering from there—and by implication from everywhere.

No document from Joseph Smith shows a continuity of New York divining practices, including Oliver Cowdery's revelation that originally spoke of "the gift of working with the rod" (D&C 8). That message promised knowledge of gospel truths, not locations of earthly hoards. Nor would these be the real topic in the questionable Missouri revelation to Hyrum Smith on "a great treasure in the earth." It clearly claims to be a migration revelation, and in these Joseph Smith consistently followed Moses' statements of the exodus–inheritance theme. Thus the purported message to Hyrum would restate the reward of the first migration command in New York, promising "the riches of the earth" (D&C 38:39), but these

were specifically “greater riches, even a land of promise” (D&C 38:18). Although this newly discovered Missouri revelation is historically suspect, the important conclusion here is that *treasure* has been simplistically used without facing the distinct Joseph Smith applications. In his specific uses of earthly *treasure* and its synonyms, the meaning of “hidden hoard” is the rare exception. Otherwise, Joseph Smith applies Old Testament language in three main meanings: (1) the resources of the land of promise, following the assurance to faithful Israel that the Lord’s “good treasure” would be poured upon them “in the fruit of thy ground” (Deut. 28:11–12); (2) general personal prosperity of individuals, assured mainly in special blessings that reiterate the promises to the tribe of Joseph such as “the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof” (Deut. 33:16); (3) restoration of ancient scriptures through discovery or revelation, using Moses’ phrase to Zebulun and Issachar literally or metaphorically—“treasures hid in the sand” (Deut. 33:19). Thus Joseph Smith’s treasure definitions almost totally serve the deep Restoration concepts to which he gave his energies in manhood.

The fullest scriptural summary of Joseph Smith’s process of development came shortly after the organization of the Church:²⁰¹

Behold, thou wast called and chosen to write the Book of Mormon, and to my ministry. And I have lifted thee up out of thine afflictions and have counseled thee, that thou has been delivered from all thine enemies, and thou hast been delivered from the powers of Satan and from darkness! Nevertheless, thou art not excusable in thy transgressions—nevertheless, go thy way and sin no more. Magnify thine office. (D&C 24:1–3)

The overwhelming theme of Joseph Smith’s life from this time is steady devotion to his calling, culminating in the decision to face martyrdom for the safety of his people. His inner thoughts and goals are spelled out in recorded prayers, extensive journals, a hundred detailed discourses, blessings given by him and to him, and the forthright words of his own revelations. These show mature spiritual purposes that reduce any treasure searching to a transitory exploring function for the Prophet’s life.²⁰² Joseph Smith’s prophetic years tower above the past, as do those of Paul or Moses. Preoccupation with the early surroundings of such men is a barrier to understanding what they became.

NOTES

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¹Joseph Smith, Jr., to Josiah Stowell, 18 June 1825, Canandagua, N.Y. For a convenient transcription, see page 399 of this issue of *Brigham Young University Studies* or see *Church News*, 12 May 1985, 10. Unless otherwise noted, all documents cited are held by the Library–Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives. Historical quotations in this article are occasionally corrected in spelling or clarified through capitalization, punctuation, or writing out abbreviations. Glenn Rowe and Steven Sorensen of the LDS Church Archives assisted in locating Far West, Mo., postmarks. For helpful criticism, I am indebted to colleagues Ron Esplin, Edward Geary, and Dean Jessee. I also express thanks to Ron Walker for sharing Vermont research and to my assistant Barbara Jo Rytting for careful source checking.

²Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps, 23 October 1830, Palmyra, N.Y. For a convenient transcription, see page 403 of this issue of *BYU Studies* or see *Church News*, 28 April 1985, 6.

³Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 141–42.

⁴Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Joseph Smith's New York Reputation Reappraised," *BYU Studies* 10 (Spring 1970): 302. This article featured William Smith's recollections on the real values of the family and his refutation of the 1833 Palmyra affidavits. Although he was born in 1811 and perhaps knew little of Joseph's Pennsylvania life, William is still an important witness to the incidental nature of treasure activity of the Smiths as he became an observant teenager. The specifics of family history remain a critical control on the use of general cultural patterns in attempting to explain Joseph Smith.

⁵For the Cowdery trial summary, see *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2 (October 1835), 202 (commenting on events before getting the plates from the hill); reprinted in Francis W. Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ in America*, 3d. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1960), 1:105.

⁶*Christian Advocate* (Salt Lake City), January 1886. For the various accounts of the 1826 trial and a copy of the constable's bill, see Marvin S. Hill, "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties," *BYU Studies* 12 (Winter 1972): 223–33. Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 2:359, conveniently prints two trial accounts, including W. D. Purple's statement that he "was invited to take notes of the trial, which I did" (Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 2:364). What seem to be Purple's "notes" surfaced in Salt Lake City through a niece of the trial judge and are quoted here in the version of Episcopal Bishop Daniel Tuttle, who prefaced his "exact copy" by indicating that "Miss Pearsall tore the leaves out of the record found in her father's [uncle's] house and brought them to me" (*Christian Advocate*, January 1886). The same document was published by Tuttle in a religious encyclopedia; reproduced in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 2:360–62. See also n. 30.

⁷Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Liverpool: Orson Pratt, 1853), 92; compare 106, which identifies the Urim and Thummim as that "which Joseph termed a key." The last term, applied to the pre-1827 period, suggests the reference quoted in the text refers to the seer stone. Joseph's refutations are discussed in this section of the paper, whereas his mother's most direct comment appears in the last section. The Harris interview appears in *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 (1859): 163–70 and is reproduced in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 2:373–83. A related early document is Isaac Hale's affidavit regarding the Stowell treasure dig. The affidavit appeared in the *Susquehanna Register*, 1 May 1834, before E. D. Howe's publication. Isaac Hale's quotation of the revelation to Martin Harris (D&C 5) shows his mind at work—accurate in general information but placing details in an unfavorable light.

⁸For background, see Max H. Parkin, *Conflict at Kirtland: A Study of the Nature and Causes of External and Internal Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio between 1830 and 1838* (Salt Lake City: Max H. Parkin, 1966), 120–28. Spelling of Hurlbut's name conforms to the Painesville (Ohio) *Telegraph*, vital records, and later documents from him, though consistency is lacking.

⁹Joseph Smith, Jr., Diary, 28 January 1834, cited in Dean C. Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), 26–27. This entry is retrospective; compare the Kirtland Council Minute Book, 18 March 1833: "Ordination of Doctor Hurlbut by the hand of Sidney Rigdon to be an Elder."

¹⁰Kirtland Council Minute Book, 3 June (this excommunication date entered after 18 March), 21 and 23 June 1833, LDS Church Archives. See also Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1902–32), 1:354–55. These volumes have primary value as being dictated or approved by Joseph Smith until 1838, and after that official value as being compiled from good sources by his associates.

¹¹Statement of E. D. Howe, 8 April 1885, Painesville, Ohio, Chicago Historical Society.

¹²Joseph Smith to William Phelps et al., 18 August 1833, cited in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 287.

¹³"To the Public," *Painesville Telegraph*, 31 January 1834.

¹⁴First Presidency to the Brethren in Christ Jesus Scattered from the Land of Their Inheritance, 22 January 1834, Kirtland, Ohio, Letter Book 1, p. 81, LDS Church Archives; also cited in *History of the Church*, 2:475.

¹⁵*The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (April 1834): 150. Paraphrasing the non-Mormon committee's goal for Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery thought their work was incomplete until they did similar investigation on Hurlbut "to expose *his* character, and hold him up to the view of the community in the true light which his crimes merit."

¹⁶Joseph Smith "To the Elders of the Church of the Latter Day Saints," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2 (December 1835): 228.

¹⁷Ellen E. Dickenson interview with E. D. Howe, 1880, Painesville, Ohio, in Ellen E. Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1885), 73; interview date, 62. The characterization is in Statement of E. D. Howe, 8 April 1885. Compare a similar Mormon evaluation of Hurlbut: "He was of a conceited, ambitious and ostentatious turn with a degree of education, but of a low moral status" (Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* [Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing & Publishing Co., 1947], 25).

¹⁸E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), with prefatory "Advertisement" dated October 1834. For the spelling of this title, compare Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), under "veil" and "vail." Webster preferred the latter as more obviously indicating the Latin sound.

¹⁹*Painesville Telegraph*, 28 November 1834.

²⁰*Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (December 1834): 42. See also the other obvious reference to Howe's book on the same page. Speaking of Mormon detractors, Cowdery noted: "They have been giving in large *sheets* their own opinions of the incorrectness of our system, and *attested* volumes of our lives and characters." The latter phrase noticed the affidavits, while "large sheets" was used in the sense of "large books," with no other competitor at that date than Howe's 290 page work. For this archaic usage, see the 1828 edition of Webster, *An American Dictionary*: "5. *Sheets*, plu. a book or pamphlet."

²¹Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (December 1834): 40; also cited in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 336–37.

²²In the King James New Testament, *conversation* generally translates *anastrophē*, a term profiled accurately as "way of life, conduct, behavior" in its uses there (F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965]). Compare Paul's "conversation" as his former life as a Pharisee (Gal. 1:13) and Peter's advice to wives to win over husbands for the gospel by "conversation," not talk (1 Pet. 3:1).

²³*Unchaste* is used without sexual context here. In the 1828 edition of Webster, *An American Dictionary*, there was a neutral sense of "not pure." In the two synonymous phrases quoted here, it corresponds to the previous adjective *uncircumspect*.

²⁴Anderson, "Joseph Smith's New York Reputation Reappraised," 288–89, lists stereotyped repetitions on these three themes in nine of the fifteen affidavits from the Palmyra–Manchester area.

²⁵See William Smith's refutation of the charge of laziness in *ibid.*, 314. The same detailed picture is given in Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches* (Liverpool: Orson Pratt, 1853), and its later printings as the *History of Joseph Smith*. For a reconstruction of the Smiths' farm life, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Reliability of the Early History of Lucy and Joseph Smith," *Dialogue* 4 (Summer 1969): 13–28.

²⁶Compare the social emphasis of the Nauvoo reviews of his youth by the Prophet. His "foolish errors" included "mingling with all kinds of society" (*Times and Seasons* 3 [1 April 1842]: 749). For the edited manuscript, see Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 202. Joseph's clarification note in the first person rules out serious sins and explains: "I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been" (*ibid.*, 666).

²⁷Cowdery's first installment contemplated a narrative "until the time when the Church was driven from Jackson Co., Mo" (*Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 [October 1834]: 13). Yet the series ended where it had begun, at the outset of Book of Mormon translation. Since it closed with an extended answer to the affidavits, that was obviously one major purpose of the whole history.

²⁸*Ibid.* 1 (December 1834): 42.

²⁹*Ibid.* 2 (October 1835): 201; also cited in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 1:105. Cowdery's final installment is printed in full here.

³⁰Compare the text quote at note 6 for the summary of the Joseph Smith testimony, the whole taking up about 200 words in the best transcript. If young Joseph was on the witness stand a moderate time (40 minutes), the surviving abstract would be about five percent of the total testimony, a selection probably not designed to be favorable to him. Furthermore, in the questioning about the narrow legal issues, his broader religious experiences were probably not even mentioned.

³¹This paragraph quotes Cowdery's final history installment, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2 (October 1835): 200–201; also cited in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 1:102–5.

³²Ibid.

³³*Times and Seasons* 4 (1 December 1842): 32.

³⁴James Colin Brewster, *Very Important to the Mormon Money Diggers* (Springfield, Ill., 20 March 1843), 2–3.

³⁵Brewster admits that he and his father did money digging at Kirtland but plays a rhetorical game in claiming the "weak brethren" of the *Times and Seasons* editorial included Joseph Smith, Sr., who supposedly induced him to dig for treasure. But the editorial speaks of those around Brewster who had been disciplined "by the Church," not at all true of the Prophet's father. In Brewster's view, the elder Smith persuaded the Brewster family to engage in money digging. On that side is the more frequent mention of the elder Smith than young Joseph in the Howe affidavits on the subject. Supposedly assisting Joseph Smith, Sr., in the persuading was Alva Beaman, perhaps the reason Brewster adds "others of high standing," since Beaman was president of the Kirtland elders quorum. Beaman is associated with money digging in New York by some source (see the Martin Harris interview with Joel Tiffany, *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 [1859]: 164; also cited in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 2:377). But Brewster's unsupported accusations are unsatisfactory. His claim on the blessing might be based on the treasure language appearing in a small percentage of the blessings given by the elder Smith, though the method of gaining the riches of the earth is not clear. For instance, the Wilford Woodruff blessing says that an angel will "show thee the treasures of the earth" (Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1983], 1:143, entry of 15 April 1837). Since Father Smith uses vivid blessing language, a careful reader is not sure how much literalism was intended either for angelic appearance or for treasure underground. Other blessings show that Father Smith could use such language in the sense of earth's resources, as he did 2 May 1836 for Lyman Leonard: "Riches shall flow unto thee. The great men of the earth shall bring thee treasures" (William Harris, *Mormonism Portrayed: Its Errors and Absurdities Exposed and the Spirit and Designs of Its Authors Made Manifest* [Warsaw, Ill.: Sharp and Gamble, 1841], 26). All these questions are peripheral here to the study of Joseph Smith, Jr.

³⁶Kirtland High Council Minutes, 20 November 1837; summary in *History of the Church*, 2:525–26. See also the earlier minutes of 30 October 1837, where the issue is whether the Brewster vision of Moroni was from God or Satan: "The Presidents John Smith and Joseph Smith, Sr., agreed with the council in this matter of faith, that it was a delusion, a trick of the devil. Brother Brewster spoke and said that as he had got so far out of the way, he would strive to get back as soon as possible." (Compare *History of the Church*, 2:520.)

³⁷Ezra Booth, "Mormonism, No. III," *Ohio Star*, 27 October 1831; also cited in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 187.

³⁸For the shorter version, see Brewster, *Very Important to the Mormon Money Diggers*, 4. For Ebenezer Robinson's longer version, see "Items of Personal History of the Editor," *The Return*, July 1889. These detailed recollections are generally based on skeletal facts but are written up to prove Robinson's theory that Joseph Smith had become a fallen prophet.

³⁹*Salem Gazette*, 30 September 1836.

⁴⁰Ibid., 29 July 1836: "The old Crowninshield Wharf, that former center and heart of business, and now almost dilapidated and useless slip, is certainly and forthwith to be rebuilt."

⁴¹Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), 303. The 1842 edition first contained this treasure story, which was published in *The Token* in 1838 (Nina E. Browne, ed., *A Bibliography of Nathaniel Hawthorne* [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1905], 211).

⁴²Robinson, "Items of Personal History," *The Return*, July 1889.

⁴³William Darby and Theodore Dwight, Jr., *A New Gazetteer of the United States of America* (Hartford: Edward Hopkins, 1833), 495.

⁴⁴Lucy Smith, preliminary manuscript, rephrased in *Biographical Sketches*, 50.

⁴⁵"Census," *Salem Gazette*, 30 September 1836.

⁴⁶Oliver Cowdery to Warren Cowdery, 24 August 1836, Boston, Mass., cited in *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 3 (October 1836): 391.

⁴⁷Oliver wrote to his brother Warren Cowdery while shipboard on Long Island Sound on 4 August 1836, cited in *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2 (September 1836): 373. The date was printed as 3 August but was corrected to 4 August in the following letter (Oliver Cowdery to Warren Cowdery, 24 August 1836, 3:386), which also described taking the train from Providence to Boston early the next day.

⁴⁸Robinson, "Items of Personal History," *The Return*, July 1891.

⁴⁹Joseph Smith, Diary, 28 January 1834, cited in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 27.

⁵⁰In 1841, Erastus Snow was called to Salem by Hyrum Smith and given a copy of the Salem revelation on the "many people in this city" the Lord would gather. The story of his rich harvest is told in Andrew Karl Larson, *Erastus Snow* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971), 67–74. For Nathaniel Ashby's conversion and Nauvoo home, see *ibid.*, 80–82, 751. For newspaper references to Mormon conversions, see Donald Q. Cannon, "Joseph Smith in Salem," *Studies in Scripture, Volume One, The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Sandy, Utah: Randall Book Co., 1984), 436.

⁵¹Ebenezer Robinson's memoirs indicate that when he moved to Missouri in 1837, he had begun to doubt Joseph Smith. After the Martyrdom, he followed Sidney Rigdon for a time and was baptized into the Whitmerite church after David Whitmer's death in 1888. He closed his Salem sketch with "regret," since he portrayed short-term failure and had no belief in the positive results of the trip (Robinson, "Items of Personal History," *The Return*, July 1891).

⁵²Brewster, *Very Important to the Mormon Money Diggers*, 4. Brewster's full sentence is the first quote of this section of the paper.

⁵³"Items of Personal History," *The Return*, July 1891.

⁵⁴Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, 19 August 1836, Salem, Mass. No original can be located today, though the letter was described and copied by Joseph Smith III in 1879, *The Saints' Herald*, 26:257; also cited in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 350.

⁵⁵*Essex Register*, 25 August 1836, closing by observing, "they had been for a week or two in the city."

⁵⁶Oliver Cowdery to Warren Cowdery, 24 August 1836, 3:391.

⁵⁷*Boston Daily Times*, 24 August 1836.

⁵⁸Compare the 1817 language of Daniel Webster about "two tenements . . . under the same roof" (*Oxford English Dictionary* [1933], 11:183).

⁵⁹The composite picture is drawn from Cowdery's *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* letters, Brigham Young's memoirs, Salem newspapers (compare Cannon, "Joseph Smith in Salem," 436), and the *Boston Daily Times*, 24 and 26 August 1836. See also *History of the Church*, 2:463–66.

⁶⁰See the minutes of the 6 April conference in *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 3 (April 1837): 488: "The nature of this debt had been changed, and was now a merchant debt." Compare the Corrill quote, n. 61.

⁶¹Isolating 1836 New York debts needs further work, but two cases are quite clear. Winthrop Eaton is listed as a merchant on Water Street (near Wall Street) at the time of the Prophet's visit to Manhattan (*Longworth's American Almanac, New York Register, and City Directory* [New York: Thomas Longworth, 1836]). He sued through attorneys in Ohio for the amount of an 11 October 1836 note of \$1143.01 plus \$1200 for "money lent and on an account stated" as of 1 May 1837. Since an amount of this size would normally be negotiated in person, probably the Prophet or cosigner Oliver Cowdery called on this businessman in New York, and the note given a month after return may have related to delivery of goods then (Geauga County Court of Common Pleas, Book U, 277–78). Another evidence of New York City negotiation is the note of 12 October 1836 from Joseph Smith to the firm of Bailey, Keeler, and Rensen, in the amount of \$1804.94 (located in LDS Church Archives). They were listed as New York dry goods merchants in the previously mentioned directory. The firm of Smith, Rigdon, and Cowdery is indicated in other Common Pleas cases in 1837, and the LDS Church Archives has a Smith–Rigdon ledger with entries from September 1836 through mid-1837. Although his figures seem extravagant, seceder John Corrill gives the sequence of building the temple (dedicated April 1836) and then trying the "mercantile business" to cover the construction deficit, going into debt for goods "in New York and elsewhere" (*A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints* [St. Louis: John Corrill, 1839], 26–27). A list of Ohio debts survived, apparently made in connection with Joseph Smith's 1842 bankruptcy application, probably about doubled then from interest. About half of approximately \$33,000 owed was due to New York businesses, with most of the rest due to firms in Buffalo (cited in Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946], 201). Some accounts, like those of Eaton and the Bailey firm discussed before, probably go back to the summer of 1836 and are relevant to the New York visit. See also Warren Cowdery's editorial indicating credit buying at this period. Speaking of "one year ago," he reviewed the economy: "A great amount of merchandise was purchased on credit, and sold in this town during the summer, fall, and winter past" (*Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 3 [June 1837]: 521).

⁶²Church member Ira Ames and seceder Cyrus Smalling both give the sequence of establishing credit with Buffalo merchants and on their recommendation extending it to New York suppliers. Both start these events in the spring of 1836 and speak of Hyrum Smith's and Oliver Cowdery's going to New York on store business (see the Ira Ames journal and also the 1841 letter of Cyrus Smalling in E. G. Lee, *The Mormons, or, Knavery Exposed* [Philadelphia: E. G. Lee, 1841], 12–15). Yet the trip with Joseph in July–August is the only known eastern trip for Hyrum at this time, so these references may really reflect the New York–Salem journey. Compare Brigham Young's 1852 reference to the Prophet's store:

"Joseph goes to New York and buys 20,000 dollars worth of goods, comes into Kirtland and commences to trade" (*Journal of Discourses* [Liverpool: F. D. and S. W. Richards, 1854], 1:215). This seems an 1836 recollection, since the Prophet's only other New York trip was 1832, when he accompanied Newel K. Whitney, who selected goods then for his own store. (Statements of Ira Ames and Brigham Young are in Parkin, *Conflict at Kirtland*, 291–95.)

⁶³For the main sequence, see Oliver Cowdery to Warren Cowdery, 4 and 24 August 1836. They left Kirtland 25 July, arrived in New York 30 July, left New York 4 August, arrived in Salem area 5 August, left Salem about 21 August (as discussed previously in this article), and were in Boston until at least 24 August, according to *Boston Times* articles and the 24 August 1836 Oliver Cowdery letter.

⁶⁴Joseph Smith's early *History of the Church* notes his return to Kirtland "some time in the month of September" (2:466). It also notes the first bank organization (2:467), which was redone 2 January 1837 as a business organization without a bank charter (2:470–73). The "constitution" adopted 2 November was printed on a single sheet in December 1836.

⁶⁵Oliver Cowdery to Warren Cowdery, 4 August 1836, 2:375; this corrected date is in Oliver Cowdery to Warren Cowdery, 24 August 1836, 3:386.

⁶⁶*History of the Church*, 2:467–68.

⁶⁷Cowdery's New York letter (4 August 1836) mentions "Draper, Underwood." *Longworth's . . . City Directory* for 1836 lists the former as "Draper, Toppan, Longacre & Co., engravers, 1 Wall." It lists the Underwood firm as "Underwood, Bald & Spencer, engravers, 14 Wall." The name of the latter firm is on the Kirtland bank notes: "Underwood Bald Spencer & Hufty N. York & Philad." (for photographs of Kirtland notes, see Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983], 316).

⁶⁸The surviving stock ledger is held by the Chicago Historical Society but is available on microfilm at the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University. Accounts of Sidney Rigdon, Jared Carter, and Isaac Bishop are opened 18 October 1836, within the first five pages of the book. The purchase of the safe is documented 16 October 1836 (Marvin S. Hill, C. Keith Rooker, and Larry T. Wimmer, "The Kirtland Economy Revisited," *BYU Studies* 17 [Summer 1977]: 462). The note to New Yorker Winthrop Eaton was made 11 October 1836, and its language is apparently quoted as made payable "at the Kirtland Safety Society Bank" (see n. 61).

⁶⁹*History of the Church*, 3:37 (22 May 1838). At the prophet's death, Willard Richards had compiled Joseph's history to late 1838 (see Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 9 [Summer 1971]: 441, 466).

⁷⁰Far West Record, 6 April 1838, LDS Church Archives; also in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 156. Compare *History of the Church*, 3:13–14. The Kirtland Council Minute Book notes Robinson's appointment on 17 September 1837 as "general clerk and recorder of the whole Church"; see also *History of the Church*, 2:513.

⁷¹Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 354.

⁷²"The Scriptorium Book of Joseph Smith, Jr.," 22 May 1838, 45.

⁷³Joseph Smith was not necessarily the source for Robinson's view of treasure, since there was common speculation on mounds. Compare Alphonso Wetmore, *Gazetteer of the State of Missouri* (St. Louis: C. Keemle, 1837), 254: "The mounds are no other than the tombs of their great men."

⁷⁴The quoted phrase is attributed to Joseph Smith in the "Scriptory Book," 19 May 1838, 43. Varied recollections have in common Joseph Smith's view of an ancient altar or structure, not a treasure site. These recollections are conveniently gathered in John Wittorf, *Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, no. 113 (15 April 1969). Henele Pikale there is the adopted Polynesian name of Henry Bigler.

⁷⁵Zion's Camp journals and recollections indicate that Joseph considered the mounds burial places, which he verified by digging a foot in the Zelph mound and finding a skeleton and the arrowhead that evidently caused the death. *History of the Church*, 2:79, is dependent on Heber C. Kimball's journal; other reporters say little more. These include Levi Hancock, Reuben McBride, George A. Smith, and Wilford Woodruff. (Compare Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834, mentioning the "mounds" and finding only "skulls and their bones" [cited in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 324]).

⁷⁶"Scriptory Book," 45–46, the basis for *History of the Church*, 3:37–38. On 28 May, Robinson notes meeting Hyrum and Joseph, who "were going to seek locations in the north." The surveying quote of the text pertains to Hyrum's return trip 21 June. These dates and activities agree with Harrison Burgess, who wrote "1837" but described unique activities of 1838: "We arrived at Far West the 27th of May, 1837. The next day I went to Daviess County with Joseph and Hyrum Smith and some others to look out a new location. I remained there nine days and helped survey the site for a city." ("Sketch of a Well-Spent Life," *Labors in the Vineyard* [Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884], 68.) The Hyrum Smith diary held by Eldred Smith has the isolated notation, "Arrived in the Far West, May the 29th, 1838." However, Robinson's daily record is more likely to be precise.

⁷⁷William Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri from the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838* (Pekin, Ohio: William Swartzell, 1840). His preface reiterates that the pamphlet is "properly my private journal."

⁷⁸Compare nn. 38 and 51.

⁷⁹See Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 359, for a photograph of the letter and address side of the single page document.

⁸⁰Postmarks noted obviously lag behind the letters itemized here. The first is held by the Henry E. Huntington Library, and the postmark is reproduced with their permission: Oliver Cowdery to his brothers Warren and Lyman, 24 February 1838. The rest are from letters held by the LDS Church Archives and appear with their cooperation: Oliver Cowdery to his brothers Warren and Lyman, 2 June 1838; Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, undated but written on an *Elder's Journal* prospectus of 30 April 1838 and reproduced in the July issue of that year; Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, 14 July 1838; Joseph Smith, Jr. and Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 17 September 1838; W. W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, 1 May 1839. For a photocopy of Oliver Cowdery to his brothers, 2 June 1838, see Stanley R. Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), 266 (the postmark page).

⁸¹I have examined about eight hand-delivered letters of Joseph Smith's and all but two have the state or county as part of the address. The suspected Hofmann letters are not figured in this comparison. Posted letters are indicated by postage entered or marks, and all the available Joseph Smith letters in this category have the state written, which would seem obviously necessary for a mailed item.

⁸²See the official publication, *Table of Post Offices in the United States* (Washington City: Post Master General, 1822), 97. This rate continued until the legislation of 1845 (Daniel C. Roper, *The United States Post Office* [New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1917], 61–63).

⁸³For instance, see the list of Missouri post offices in Wetmore's 1837 *Gazetteer of the State of Missouri*. Searches at the LDS Genealogical Society and the State Historical Society of Missouri have likewise failed to verify a "Plattesgrove" or "Plattisgrove."

⁸⁴The following twenty-six examples of *great* show Joseph Smith's long habitual pattern of spelling *great* correctly. His handwritten diary entries or letters all appear in Jessee's *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* in sequence: 1832 history (2); 27 October 1833 diary (2); 21 December 1835 diary; letters of 3 March 1831, 13 October 1832 (5), 18 August 1833 (6), 2 June 1835, 20 July 1835, 12 November 1838, 4 April 1839 (4), 9 November 1839, 18 August 1842. There are also a half dozen more forms of the same adjective or adverb that do not vary from the above pattern. The only known example of *grates* is in the 4 April 1839 letter and correctly refers to the prison bars, with the confusion of *grates* a few lines above, showing the Prophet's observable tendency of writing the *ea* combination in the adjective *great*. Compare n. 85.

⁸⁵For a photo of the original, see Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 359. A transcription of misspellings is made here for evaluation of authenticity. For instance, *det* has not been found elsewhere in Joseph Smith holographs, though *dept* appears once in his journal on 23 September 1835, showing the Prophet's apparent awareness of the correct pattern of spelling *debt*. (For the transcription and photograph of the journal entry, see Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 58, 188. Research assistant Deborah Browning Dixon located this example and a number of other stylistic variations from the problem revelation.)

⁸⁶*History of the Church*, 3:31–32 is the summary of several sources showing that as Hyrum neared Missouri his brother was determined to work out a secure and adequate allowance for the First Presidency. Contemporary documents show that Joseph Smith was convinced that the growing church needed full-time administrators who were not to be subject to the past or future debts of the organization. Compare the 13 May 1838 entry of the *Far West Record*, indicating High Council authorization to pay the First Presidency a fair wage for their services. See also the note in Cannon and Cook, eds., *Far West Record*, 187–88, quoting the "Scriptory Book." Robinson's quoted view that this action was rescinded is not supported by further minutes or John Corroll's report that "it was thought best by the High Council to give them some certain amount each year which would be sufficient to support them" (*Brief History of the Church*, 29).

⁸⁷For John Whitmer on the mood of the January conference, see *The Book of John Whitmer*, chap. 1; also cited in F. Mark McKiernan and Roger D. Launius, eds., *An Early Latter Day Saint History: The Book of John Whitmer* (Independence, Mo.: Herald House Publishers, 1980), 32. Even after section 38 on moving, Whitmer notes "divisions" and anger against the Prophet for requiring so much (*Book of John Whitmer*, chap. 1; also cited in McKiernan and Launius, eds., *Book of John Whitmer*, 34–35). Thus, the context of section 38 is the stress of resettlement on a new land, not treasure digging. It is doubtful if Ohio was ever considered the permanent "land of promise," since earlier that fall the Missouri missionaries were told that Zion would be built "on the borders by the Lamanites" (D&C 28:9).

⁸⁸*Far West Record*, 24 August 1831; also in Cannon and Cook, eds., *Far West Record*, 14. I have quoted verse 16, which was likely read by Hyrum: "Br. Hyrum Smith gave an exhortation, spoke of Zion and the gathering of the Saints into her, etc. and read a part of the 102 Psalm."

⁸⁹“Scriptory Book” 53: “Revelation Given Jan. 12, 1838,” LDS Church Archives; also cited in Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Seventy’s Mission Bookstore, 1981), 332. As noted in the preceding discussion, “a land flowing with milk and honey” is the theme stated in Ex. 3:17, reiterated a dozen times in the Pentateuch, and restated in the first major revelation on the modern LDS exodus west from New York (D&C 38:18–19).

⁹⁰*Elders’ Journal* 1 (July 1838): 33–34. The piece has a dateline: “Far West, May, 1838.”

⁹¹*Oration Delivered by Mr. S. Rigdon on the 4th of July, 1838* (Far West: Journal Office, 1838), 8; reprinted in *BYU Studies* 14 (Summer 1974): 523.

⁹²Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, p. 9, LDS Church Archives; also transcribed in full in Buddy Younggreen, ed., *Program, Joseph Smith, Sr. Family Reunion* (N.p.: Buddy Younggreen, 1972), prefatory section. A summary is given in Joseph’s diary on the date of the blessing, 18 December 1833; see Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 24.

⁹³This phrase appears in the blessings of Samuel H. Smith and Frederick G. Williams, Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, pp. 10, 13, in contexts of Old Testament blessing language. The quoted phrase is slightly modified in the blessings of W. W. Phelps and Hyrum Smith, quoted in the following discussion in the article.

⁹⁴Postscript of William W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, 19 and 20 July 1835, cited in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 340, with facsimile on 342; also cited in Leah Y. Phelps, “Letters of Faith from Kirtland,” *Improvement Era* 45 (August 1942): 529.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶Joseph Smith’s blessing of William W. Phelps, 22 September 1835, Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, pp. 14–15. W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery were aiding in translating the Book of Abraham at this time (Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 60, and *History of the Church*, 2:286).

⁹⁷Joseph Smith’s blessing of Oliver Cowdery, 18 December 1833, Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, p. 12. Several phrases from the blessing are quoted in the summary in Joseph Smith’s diary of this date (see Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 23–24).

⁹⁸Joseph Smith’s blessing of William W. Phelps, 22 September 1835.

⁹⁹Joseph Smith’s blessing of Hyrum Smith, 18 December 1833, Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, p. 10, summarized in Joseph Smith’s diary of that date (see Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 24).

¹⁰⁰First Presidency members were assigned to compile “the items of the doctrine” of the Church from the standard works, including “the revelations which have been given to the Church up to this date or shall be, until such arrangement is made” (Kirtland High Council Minute Book, 24 September 1834; also cited in *History of the Church*, 2:165). This resolution might suggest the correction of former wording through revelation. Present section 8 was section 34 in the Kirtland Doctrine and Covenants, issued in August 1835 with a 17 February 1835 preface signed by the Prophet, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, the revision committee.

¹⁰¹*A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ* (Zion, Mo.: W. W. Phelps and Co., 1833), 7:3.

¹⁰²Barnes Frisbie, *The History of Middletown, Vermont* (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle and Co., 1867), 64. This is the earliest printing of a history that was reissued in Abbie Maria Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazeteer* (Burlington, Vt.: A. M. Hemenway, 1871), vol. 3, with the quote here on 819. An abridgment of these accounts is found in H. P. Smith and W. S. Rann, *History of Rutland County, Vermont* (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason and Co., 1886), 653–60. This history also contains specific dates in Frisbie’s life (889–90), showing how distant he was from the Wood affair. He was born in 1815 and married in 1843 after a late education and reading for law, resulting in bar admission in 1842. Thus his start of collecting serious history was about forty years after the discredited Woods had migrated. In fact, Frisbie’s preface to his 1867 *History* mentions “the labor and attention I have given the matter during the last twelve years” (3), indicating serious collecting about 1855. (Compare n. 105 and the text there for Frisbie’s development of a Mormon connection after 1860.)

¹⁰³Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 46; also cited in Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazeteer*, 3:812.

¹⁰⁴“The Rodsmen,” *The Vermont American* (Middlebury, Vt.), 7 May 1828.

¹⁰⁵Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 43; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazeteer*, 3:810. Frisbie explains here that most survivors knew only of the Wood movement and their local activities, evidently making his Mormon connection the speculation of a few people long after the fact.

¹⁰⁶Laban Clark to Barnes Frisbie, 30 January 1867, Middletown, Conn., cited in Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 57; also cited in Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazeteer*, 3:816.

¹⁰⁷Like some who write today on Mormon origins, Frisbie features dark hints rather than definite information. For instance, the counterfeiter allegedly started his money digging at Wells, obviously an attempt to include William Cowdery, since he lived there. Yet this conclusion is based on no personal knowledge, only the “opinion of some with whom I have conversed” (Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 46; also cited in Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazeteer*, 3:812).

Similar vagueness characterizes a neighboring attempt to bolster Frisbie's evidence. Two years after Frisbie's Middletown history, Hiland Paul and Robert Parks published their *History of Wells, Vermont, for the First Century after Its Settlement* (1869; reprint, N.p.: Wells Historical Society, 1979), 80–82. These two authors had no direct knowledge of the "Wood scrape" of 1800–01 since Parks was born about 1812 and Paul in 1836. Frisbie-like, they review their "considerable pains" to verify William Cowdery's involvement with the Wood movement, concluding: "We find that Winchell did reside with Mr. Cowdery in the winter of 1799 and 1800." Their chief basis for Cowdery's involvement—and that of some other townsmen—is the quoted letter of Nancy F. Glass, writing from Illinois and giving recollections of late childhood: "I was born in the year '90, and it must have been when I was 10 or 11 years old when the rodsman were there; I was about 11 when we moved away from there." She had specific memories of men coming to her house with their "witch hazel" pointers. Yet she had nothing certain to say about the Cowdery family, surmising correctly that Oliver could not have been involved because he was not born, and continuing: "If any one was engaged in it, it must have been the old gentleman; I rather think it was, but won't be positive." Such lack of evidence is propped up by two more names: "As to Mr. Cowdery being connected with the rodsman, as stated by Judge Frisbie, we had it verified by Joseph Parks and Mrs. Charles Gar[d]ner of Middletown." After the authors' enthusiasm for the above nonevidence, one would expect direct quotes if any actual recollection of William Cowdery existed, but the above names are given without a hint as to whether they personally knew or simply repeated community rumor. At the time of the Wood affair, Joseph Parks was sixteen (Paul and Parks, *History of Wells*, 129) and Mrs. Gardner was ten (1850 U.S. Census, Rutland Co., Middletown Township, 343). Thus the *History of Wells* adds nothing historically to Frisbie's weak inference on the supposed involvement of William Cowdery with the Woods. These early Vermont books strain at connections with intense hostility, Paul and Parks introducing William Cowdery by mentioning "the wonderful revelations that many dupes seek to follow" (79). The Woods moved away from Middletown after being discredited. But William Cowdery stayed in Middletown, where births of his children appear on the town records in 1802, 1804, 1806, and 1809 (Grace E. Pember Wood, *A History of the Town of Wells, Vermont* [N.p.: G. Wood, 1955], 86 ff.).

Another example of early community convictions is found in the statement of Ohio Lawyer S. S. Osborn to A. B. Deming, *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1 (January 1888): 2. Osborn visited Middletown, Vt., in 1871, boarding with Hezekiah Haynes, who mentioned "the Wood scrape, and that Mormonism undoubtedly originated in that town." Although Haynes was about twenty when the Wood movement flourished, neither visitor Osborn nor town historian Frisbie quotes any specific recollection from him.

¹⁰⁸Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 62; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 3:819. Town records of Tunbridge, Vt., locate the elder Smith there at his marriage and the births of three children through 1803. He also appears there on the 1800 census and in the land records in these years. Lucy Smith's *Biographical Sketches* verifies the above information with independent family tradition, and she details her husband's regular activities in Tunbridge and the adjoining towns in this period.

¹⁰⁹For Joseph Smith, see *History of the Church*, 1:32: "On the 5th day of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery came to my house, until which time I had never seen him." See note in *History of the Church* for the corrections in printed dates, which conform to the manuscript written during the Prophet's life. For Oliver Cowdery, see *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834): 14: "Near the time of the setting of the sun, Sabbath evening, April 5, 1829, my natural eyes for the first time beheld this brother."

¹¹⁰Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 62; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 3:819. Frisbie's sources may have carelessly assumed that his counterfeiter was the same as the "vagabond fortune-teller by the name of Walters, who then resided in the town of Sodus . . . the constant companion and bosom friend of these money digging imposters" (*Palmyra Reflector*, 28 February 1831; also cited in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 1:291–92). Soon after this local publication, the story was exported by Palmyra anti-Mormons (Painesville, Ohio, *Telegraph*, 22 March 1831). However, the New York magician does not meet the conditions. Walters has the wrong name, lives in the wrong town, and does not fit Frisbie's contention that the man went to Ohio with the Mormons. Frisbie claimed that he relied on those "who knew him in both places" (Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 62; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 3:819). But "knew" for Frisbie includes "knew about" or rumored—his pattern is to name firsthand witnesses when he has them. There is no support for Frisbie's quoted view that Winchell/Wingate accompanied the Mormons "from Palmyra to Ohio." Again, candidates with these names do not fit the conditions required, including Edward Bradley Wingate, a Nauvoo Mormon who married Sidney Rigdon's daughter Sarah. Although the 1850 New York Census indicates his birth in New Hampshire, his birthdate is 7 August 1820, two decades after the "Wood Scrape" (Charles E. L. Wingate, *History of the Wingate Family* [Exeter, N.H.: James D. P. Wingate, 1886], 164). His father, Francis, is not documented as a Mormon and was born 13 August 1784, making him too young for the experienced counterfeiter of Frisbie's story (*ibid.*, 162).

¹¹¹Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 62; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 3:819. Frisbie's quote closely imitates the Laban Clark letter of 30 January 1867 to him.

¹¹²Cross, *Burned-Over District*, 38–39. For Oliver Cowdery's birthday five years after the "Wood scrape," see Mary Bryant Alverson Mehling, *Cowdrey-Cowdery-Cowdray Genealogy* (N.p.: Frank Allaben Genealogical Co., 1905), 172. He also gave this chronology in his Mormon historical work.

¹¹³David M. Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791–1850* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 242; italics added.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.* Despite this caution, recent Joseph Smith books uncritically tend to assume that William Cowdery was a Wood disciple. In the future a related pitfall may be assuming that Mormons with Rutland County origins are committed to treasure-digging beliefs. That is too simplistic, since newspaper comments and literary satire suggest that a minority of Americans ever had faith in the paranormal search for buried wealth.

¹¹⁵"Rodsmen," *Vermont Americana*, 7 May 1828.

¹¹⁶Laban Clark to Barnes Frisbie, cited in Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 54–55; also cited in Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 3:815.

¹¹⁷Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, 49–50; also cited in Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 3:813.

¹¹⁸Book of Commandments 7:3.

¹¹⁹The very similar phraseology of sections 6 and 8 is matched by their close connection in time. Meeting 5 April (see n. 109), Joseph and Oliver began translation 7 April and "continued for some time," after which section 6 was given (*History of the Church*, 1:32–33). This was perhaps a week of work, 15 April or later for receiving section 6. Section 8 then followed "whilst continuing the work of translation during the month of April" (*History of the Church*, 1:36). Perhaps section 8 came about 21 April, but definitely within that month. Joseph's comments on dating were first published in the *Times and Seasons* 3 (1842): 832, 853.

¹²⁰A full concordance to the Doctrine and Covenants shows that Joseph Smith used *mystery* in the consistent sense of a truth pertaining to salvation, often implying God's premortal plan for man. This is also the earliest Christian use of the term.

¹²¹See n. 119.

¹²²Book of Commandments 7:3, present D&C 8.

¹²³Book of Commandments 7:4, also D&C 8:10–11 with slight changes. Compare n. 120.

¹²⁴Lucy Mack Smith to Captain Solomon Mack, 6 January 1831, LDS Church Archives, 1; also cited in Ben E. Rich, *Scrap Book of Mormon Literature* (Chicago: Ben E. Rich, n.d.), 543.

¹²⁵Jesse Smith to Hyrum Smith, 17 June 1829, Stockholm, N.Y., Letter Book 2 (1837–43), 59. Joseph's ancient objects of gold and silver and the translation stones might be behind Jesse's broad comments on wealth (compare D&C 17:1).

¹²⁶Compare n. 125.

¹²⁷Jesse Smith to Hyrum Smith, 17 June 1829, 60. Samuel Smith was then fifty-one, born 15 September 1777, according to Lucy Smith's *Biographical Sketches*, 38. He died "about the second day of May, 1830" (Petition of creditor Samuel Partridge, 20 November 1833, Potsdam, N.Y., in Estate of Samuel Smith, File 304, St. Lawrence County, N.Y., Surrogate's Court; photocopy at Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo).

¹²⁸Jesse Smith to Hyrum Smith, 17 June 1829.

¹²⁹The scriptural source of this language is 2 Tim. 3:8: "Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses," referring to the Egyptian magicians who opposed the miracles of Aaron's rod with their rods (Ex. 7:10–12). Their names were also in common use in English literature.

¹³⁰Jesse Smith to Hyrum Smith, 17 June 1829. In addition to changing Joseph's "angel of the Lord" to one of the devil, Jesse closes his letter quoting the scriptural doom of the "devil and his angels" and adding: "These are the angels that tell where to find gold books."

¹³¹See the reprint of Reginald Scot's 1584 *Discovery of Witchcraft* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), 249, giving traditions on the formation of stones of "certeine proper vertues" through astral influence: "as appeareth by plaine prooffe of *India* and *Aethopia*, where the sunne being orient and meridionall, dooth more effectually shew his operation, procuring more pretious stones there to be ingendred, than in the countries that are occident and septentrionall." The 1584 London edition continued to be reprinted in following centuries.

¹³²Book of Commandments 7:4; also D&C 8:10–11 with slight changes.

¹³³For the context of the quotation, see the text at n. 122.

¹³⁴For the context of the quotation, see the text at n. 123.

¹³⁵The "rod of God" appears in Ex. 4:20 and 17:9. It is described as Moses' rod in Ex. 9:23, 10:13, 14:16, 17:5, and Num. 20:11. Examples of the formal "rod of Aaron" are in Exodus 7 and 8, and Numbers 17.

¹³⁶See Gen. 49:10 and 2 Kgs. 4:29–37. Compare Homer's regular practice of gathering the Greek assembly by the herald with the staff of authority from the king.

¹³⁷Blessing of 13 December 1833, Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, p. 12.

¹³⁸Orson Hyde to Parley P. Pratt, 22 November 1841, Alexandria, *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 2 (January 1842): 135; also cited in *History of the Church*, 4:459.

¹³⁹Blessing of Oliver Cowdery to Orson Hyde, Kirtland Council Minute Book, 14 February 1835; also cited with modification in *History of the Church*, 2:190. Compare Hyde's 1840 vision of divine destructions preceding Israel's gathering: "The destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way" (Orson Hyde to Rabbi Solomon Hirschell, *Times and Seasons* 2 [October 1841]: 553; also cited in *History of the Church*, 4:376).

¹⁴⁰"History of Heber C. Kimball," *Deseret News*, 21 April 1858; also cited in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888), 127.

¹⁴¹Solomon F. Kimball statement, unsigned, undated, LDS Church Archives; also cited in Robert J. Woodford, *The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 1:188–89. Solomon Kimball quotes Sarah Granger Kimball's statement, which he says she signed 21 June 1892. Sarah (1818–98) was prominent in Nauvoo; her husband was Heber C. Kimball's cousin.

¹⁴²*Ibid.* Solomon F. Kimball (1847–1920) was twenty when his mother died. She was Vilate Murray Kimball (1806–67), the sister was Helen Mar Whitney (1828–96) (Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball* [Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1981], 311).

¹⁴³Compare the view of Heber C. Kimball's biographer: "Unlike the cane, there are no family traditions regarding this unusual rod; it has completely disappeared. Perhaps it was an aid to guidance and revelation. There is no evidence that it was a divining stick or 'water witch,' popular at that time" (*ibid.*, 248–49).

¹⁴⁴Heber C. Kimball, Journal, 5 September 1844, LDS Church Archives.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 6 June 1844. Kimball's later autobiography added another detail of the answer, though not identifying it as through the rod in publication: "I inquired of the Lord what we should do, and he revealed to me that Congress had not got it in their hearts to do anything for us, and we were at liberty to go away" (*Deseret News*, 28 April 1858).

¹⁴⁶Heber C. Kimball, Journal, 25 January 1845.

¹⁴⁷"H. C. Kimball's Memorandum," 21 January 1862, LDS Church Archives, pointed out to me by Stanley B. Kimball. "Lord rod" is written without punctuation above the place where I have inserted it, and the entry is initialled "HCK."

¹⁴⁸See Acts 19:11–12 and the same practice for Joseph Smith as remembered by Wilford Woodruff (cited in *History of the Church*, 4:5, n.) and Heber C. Kimball (*Journal of Discourses*, 4:294). Compare Heber C. Kimball's sending a cane or cloak, and his faith that the cane from the wood of Joseph's first coffin could be an instrument of healing (Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball*, 248, 257–58; see also Steven G. Barnett, "The Canes of the Martyrdom," *BYU Studies* 21 [Spring 1981]: 205–11).

¹⁴⁹Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 85.

¹⁵⁰Martha L. Campbell to Joseph Smith "by the request of Brother Stowell," 19 December 1843, Elmira, N. Y., LDS Church Archives.

¹⁵¹Josiah Stowell, Jr., to J. S. Fullmer, 17 February 1843, Elmira, N. Y., LDS Church Archives. The quote comes from the postscript that begins "I now write you for my father."

¹⁵²See nn. 5, 6, and the text for the 1826 trial. For later hints that the venture was questionable, see *History of the Church*, 1:17, and Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 92. Compare n. 202.

¹⁵³Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 7.

¹⁵⁴Nevill Drury, *Dictionary of Mysticism and the Occult* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 161.

¹⁵⁵See Evon Z. Vogt and Ray Hyman, *Water Witching U.S.A.*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 153–55, 222.

¹⁵⁶*Journal of Discourses*, 19:36–39, 49.

¹⁵⁷See John S. Carter, Journal, 27 March 1833, indicating an elders' court trial of a member: "Having lost some property, went to a woman who professes the art of telling secrets by cards." The incident is noted with inexact date in Davis Bitton, *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1977), 62.

¹⁵⁸David E. Aune, "Magic, Magician," in Geoffrey W. Bromley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 3:213–14. Compare J. B. Noss, as quoted in *Merriam-Webster New International Dictionary* 3d ed., s.v. *magic*: "magic may be loosely defined as an endeavor through utterance of set words, or the performance of set acts, to control or bend the powers of the world to man's will."

¹⁵⁹A book that sensationalizes this patternism without religious context is Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978). It is also structured by the form-critical assumption that the Gospels radically evolved. Since it represents a shifting method of scholarship, it is not a trustworthy study of Jesus nor a historically responsible base of comparison for Joseph Smith.

¹⁶⁰Hugh Nibley, "The Liahona's Cousins," *Improvement Era* 64 (February 1961): 106.

¹⁶¹Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 28 March 1841; also cited in Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:75.

¹⁶²George A. Smith to Don Carlos Smith, 29 March 1841, Burslem, England, *Times and Seasons* 2 (June 1841): 434. The Nauvoo paper reported action "for using magic, and telling fortunes, etc." and indicated that the member had been "disfellowshipped," which was ratified at the conference "by a unanimous vote."

¹⁶³Nauvoo High Council Minutes, 11 March 1843, incorporating the Eleventh Ward bishop's court minutes. The following redundant run-on of the quoted sentence was crossed out: "that of heating a board before the fire, to heal the sick by art." The practice seems a form of empathetic magic, intended to influence the condition of a person favorably as the board was warmed.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.* The case is summarized in *History of the Church*, 5:311–12, including ratification of the bishop's ruling that Hoyt "cease to work with the divining rod." This narrative is dependent on High Council minutes, not the Prophet's dictation.

¹⁶⁵"Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* 3 (1 April 1842): 743–48; also cited in *History of the Church*, 4:571–81. Although the latter source is headed by "The Prophet's Editorial," this evidently understates John Taylor's role. "Ed." followed the article on its first publication, and Joseph Smith was then listed as the editor. However, John Taylor was managing editor, and in the monthly issues of this period those items signed "Joseph Smith" are of more certain authorship by the Prophet. In any event, John Taylor explained the official position of the Church under the Prophet's general supervision. For the special caution on tongues, see the related editorial, "Gift of the Holy Ghost," *Times and Seasons* 3 (15 June 1842): 823–26; also *History of the Church*, 4:26–32. For a typical caution of Joseph Smith on tongues, see his Nauvoo Relief Society discourse, 28 April 1842: "You may speak in tongues for your own comfort, but I lay this down for a rule that if anything is taught by the gift of tongues, it is not to be received for doctrine" (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], 119).

¹⁶⁶J. S. Wright, "Divination," in J. D. Douglas, et al., eds., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), 320.

¹⁶⁷See n. 125 for full quote and source. For Joseph Smith's consistent narratives, see Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 6–7, 76–77, 202–6, 213–14. Compare Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Confirming Records of Moroni's Coming," *Improvement Era* 73 (September 1970): 4–8. There is presently a single source close to Joseph Smith that speaks of discovery of the record through the stone. It is the 1859 Martin Harris interview with spiritualist Joel Tiffany, who reported Harris saying: "It was by means of this stone he first discovered these plates." But Harris is also quoted as saying that "Joseph did not dig for these plates," adding, "an angel had appeared to him and told him it was God's work." ("Mormonism, No. II," *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 [1859]: 163–70; also cited in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 2:376–83). Harris later told an editor that Joseph Smith was "directed by an angel" to the hill (*Iowa State Register* [Des Moines], 26 August 1870; also cited in Joseph Grant Stevenson, *Stevenson Family History* [Provo, Utah: J. G. Stevenson, 1955], 1:157). In the questioned letter of Harris to W. W. Phelps, 23 October 1830, Joseph Smith is quoted as telling Harris that he found the ancient record "with my stone." Even if this document was authentic, it raises the problem of whether Joseph Smith was quoted correctly, since Harris is a secondary source on Joseph's private experiences at the hill. And the above Tiffany interview has this same hearsay problem, even if Harris is quoted correctly. The Mormon source saying most about seer stones is Joseph Knight, Sr., and though his opening narrative is not preserved, it reports that the Prophet knew where the plates were on the hill because of "the vision that he had of the place" (Dean Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *BYU Studies* 17 [Autumn 1976]: 31).

¹⁶⁸John George Hohman, trans., "The Long Hidden Friend," ed. Carleton F. Brown, *The Journal of American Folk-lore* 17 (1904): 89–152.

¹⁶⁹Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 27 December 1841; also Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:144.

¹⁷⁰"History of Brigham Young," 27 December 1841, *Deseret News*, 10 March 1858; also cited in Elden Jay Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844* (Salt Lake City: Elden Jay Watson, 1968), 112a. Brigham Young's report of the Prophet's distinction between the "interpreters" and the single "seer stone" is found in numerous informed sources. For instance, Joseph Knight describes Joseph's use of "his glass" before getting the plates at Cumorah, but at that time he received the additional object "the glasses or the Urim and Thummim" (Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection," 31, 33). Describing early translation, the Prophet said, "The Lord had prepared spectacles for to read the book" (Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 8). In 1829 Uncle Jesse Smith sarcastically refers to "your brother's spectacles" (Jessee Smith to Hyrum Smith, 17 June 1829, 59).

¹⁷¹Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 18 May 1888; also Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 8:500.

¹⁷²"History of Brigham Young," 27 December 1841, *Deseret News*, 10 March 1858; also cited in Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 112a.

¹⁷³For additional information regarding the headnotes of the Doctrine and Covenants, see individual headnotes for references to *History of the Church* 1. Section 1 was given later, and sections 2 and 12 report words of angels.

¹⁷⁴Orson Pratt, Discourse at Brigham City, 27 June 1874, *Ogden (Utah) Junction*, cited in *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 36 (11 August 1874): 498–99. Compare Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith to President John Taylor, *Deseret News*, 23 November 1878, reporting Orson Pratt's 12 September discourse at Plano, Illinois; after mentioning "being present on several occasions" of Joseph's revelations, Orson "declared that sometimes Joseph used a seer stone when inquiring of the Lord and receiving revelation, but that he was so thoroughly endowed with the inspiration of the Almighty and the spirit of revelation that he oftener received them without any instrument or other means than the operation of the Spirit upon his mind." Compare David Whitmer's late recollection that Joseph said in early 1830 that the seer stone would no longer be used in revelation, though they would continue to "obtain the will of the Lord" through the Holy Ghost (*An Address to All Believers in Christ* [Richmond, Mo.: David Whitmer, 1887], 32).

¹⁷⁵Rev. 2:17, New King James Version, used for its literalism in word order. This and modern translations correctly describe the name as "on the stone." Rev. 4:1 is the beginning of intense symbolism, with the first three chapters quite direct instructions to the Asian churches.

¹⁷⁶R. Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 1:26.

¹⁷⁷William Clayton, Journal, 2 April 1843, cited in Ehat and Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph*, 169; with slight word changes this is D&C 130:10. For the indecision of Bible commentaries, see Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 99: "There are perhaps a dozen or more plausible interpretations of the 'white stone.'"

¹⁷⁸Pearson H. Corbett, *Hyrum Smith, Patriarch* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1963), 453. There is also a dagger with religious–magical symbols. Association of this and the parchments with masonry is questioned.

¹⁷⁹Old Testament references include quotes from Aaron's blessing on Israel in Num. 6:25, 27. For a facsimile of one parchment, see the *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 August 1985, B–1. The accompanying article contains irresponsible conclusions, including the implication that "Holiness to the Lord" necessitates a magical connection, since it is written around the borders of another Smith family parchment. But that phrase also has biblical prominence, written on the high priest's plate (Ex. 28:36, 39:30) and descriptive of the spiritual power of a restored Israel (Zech. 14:20–21).

¹⁸⁰Charles E. Bidamon to Wilford Wood, 28 June 1937, Wilmette, Ill., cited in Richard L. Evans, "Illinois Yields Church Documents," *Improvement Era* 40 (September 1937): 565.

¹⁸¹Statement of Charles E. Bidamon, 5 January 1938, nearly at the end of microfilm roll 16 of the Wilford Wood collection at the LDS Church Archives. Bidamon identifies the "silver piece" sold and continues: "This 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, Ill. Emma Smith Bidamon, the Prophet's widow, was my foster mother. She prized this piece very highly on account of its being one of the Prophet's intimate possessions." This item appears as 7-J-b-21 in LaMar C. Berett, *The Wilford Wood Collection*, vol. 1 (Provo, Utah: Wilford C. Wood Foundation, 1972), 173. Charles Bidamon was fifteen when Emma died and made the above statement fifty-eight years later. Since there are many shifts of memory association, it is possible that Emma really said that Joseph prized the coin when they first met in Pennsylvania. There is a most serious problem with reconstructing Joseph Smith's viewpoint from a very late secondhand recollection without any verifying contemporary data from his life.

¹⁸²*History of the Church*, 6:612, states he was chief attorney. For his movements, see his review of the Martyrdom in *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 July 1844): 563–64.

¹⁸³J. W. Woods, "The Mormon Prophet," *Daily Democrat* (Ottumwa, Iowa), 10 May 1885; also in Edward H. Stiles, *Recollections and Sketches of Notable Lawyers and Public Men of Early Iowa* (Des Moines: Homestead Publishing Co., 1916), 271. The two copies are nearly identical, and the 1885 printing reads: "Received, Nauvoo, Illinois, July 2, 1844, of James W. Woods, one hundred and thirty-five dollars and fifty cents in gold and silver and receipt for shroud, one gold finger ring, one gold pen and pencil case, one penknife, one pair of tweezers, one silk and one leather purse, one small pocket wallet containing a note of John P. Green for \$50, and a receipt of Heber C. Kimball for a note of hand on Ellen M. Saunders for one thousand dollars, as the property of Joseph Smith. Emma Smith."

¹⁸⁴For a physical description of the talisman see Reed C. Durham as quoted in Mervin B. Hogan, *An Underground Presidential Address* (Salt Lake City: Research Lodge of Utah, F. & A.M., 1974), 10. Hogan's preface discusses the highly speculative explanations of the talisman.

¹⁸⁵For a duplicate of this talisman, see the "Seal of Jupiter," Francis Barrett, *The Magus* (1801; reprint, Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1980), book 1, p. 175, no. 2.

¹⁸⁶As examples, see the conversion discussions in Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), and Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985). The attraction of Bible seekers to Mormonism is highlighted by the similar searches of these two men of different personalities. And theirs is the predominant story of the converts who became the first leaders under Joseph Smith, as well as the rank and file of that period who left conversion memoirs. For the pattern, see Orson Pratt's 1859 reflections. Attendance at the major Protestant groups was unsatisfying: "I had heard their doctrines and had been earnestly urged by many to unite myself with them . . . but something whispered to not do so. I remained, therefore, apart from all of them, praying continually in my heart that the Lord would show me the right way" (ibid., 19).

¹⁸⁷Asael Smith, "A Few Words of Advice," reprinted in Richard L. Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971), 125. Compare p. 119.

¹⁸⁸See Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, chaps. 14–18.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., chaps. 11, 13, 21. Compare Lucy's words in the preliminary manuscript of chap. 11. Her sincere attempts to find spiritual satisfaction in organized churches were frustrated, so she concluded: "There is not on earth the religion which I seek. . . . The word of God shall be my guide to life and salvation, which I will endeavor to obtain if it is to be had by diligence in prayer."

¹⁹⁰Ibid., in the context of the early years on the Manchester farm before narrating Joseph's visions.

¹⁹¹Thomas Bullock report of Joseph Smith's afternoon discourse, 7 April 1844, cited in Ehat and Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph*, 355; also cited in *History of the Church*, 6:317.

¹⁹²Lucy Smith, preliminary manuscript; also cited in *Biographical Sketches*, 84.

¹⁹³Blessing of Joseph Smith, Sr., to Joseph Smith, Jr., Patriarchal Blessing Book, vol. 1, p. 3; also cited in Youngreen, *Program, Joseph Smith, Sr. Family Reunion*, "Joseph" section. Compare the sentence above the one quoted in the text: "The Lord thy God has called thee by name out of the heavens—thou hast heard his voice from on high from time to time, even in thy youth."

¹⁹⁴Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 4; compare Lucy Mack Smith's similar words in the text at n. 190.

¹⁹⁵Joseph Smith, Jr., to Oliver Cowdery, *Latter-Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, 1:40; also cited in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 337.

¹⁹⁶Present section 20 appeared in the 1833 Book of Commandments as section 24, labelled: "The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ." For a brief discussion of the title, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Organization Revelations," *Studies in Scripture: Vol. 1, The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1984), 109–10.

¹⁹⁷Book of Commandments 24:6–7, with slight change D&C 20:5–6. The Kirtland modifications are also autobiographical and intensify the descriptions of the Prophet's repentance. All the major vision accounts emphasize the Prophet's remorse before the Book of Mormon was first revealed in 1823. Yet section 20 reports a manifestation of forgiveness of sins before that. In the First Vision account of 1832, the Prophet wrote that the Lord declared the churches wrong—but he had first opened with personal assurance: "I saw the Lord, and he spake unto me saying, Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way, walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments" (Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 6). In a private 1835 conversation, the Prophet repeated similar words as part of the First Vision (Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 75).

¹⁹⁸For the full story, see Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, chap. 33, which correctly names the *Reflector* publisher as a former justice of the peace named Cole. "A. [Abner] Cole, Esq." appears as business manager in the *Reflector*, 19 March 1831.

¹⁹⁹The "Gold Bible" series in the *Reflector* was an attempt to depart from its normal broad ridicule and give "a plain and unvarnished statement of facts" on the Smiths and the origins of the new religion (*Reflector*, 6 January 1831). Despite this profession, the editor set up false inconsistencies—for example, claiming that the story of an ancient spirit appearing to Joseph was necessarily different from the coming of an angel. Nearly all he said about Joseph Smith is on the theory that the Book of Mormon is a deception arising out of magical fanaticism. But beyond this, the editor criticizes the Prophet only for poor education and subnormal intelligence (*Reflector*, 1 February 1831). The latter point is obviously false to anyone who has studied Joseph Smith's life. The articles from the *Reflector* are reprinted in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 1:283–95.

²⁰⁰For example, see recent Associated Press stories on the private finding of a Spanish treasure ship lost in a seventeenth-century storm: "Investors Hit Riches with Treasure Hunter," *Daily Universe* (Brigham Young University), 12 September 1985; "Treasure Salvor's Lab a Fortress," *Deseret News*, 22–23 October 1985, 10–A.

²⁰¹The exclamation mark after "darkness" is carried over from the first printing in 1833, Book of Commandments, sec. 25.

²⁰²Joseph Smith's direct comments treated money digging as incidental, without going into detail. Admitting that he had been a "money digger," he simply said it was not "a very profitable job to him," referring to the brief Josiah Stowell employment (*Elder's Journal* 1 [July 1838]: 43; also cited in *History of the Church*, 3:29). The remark is in the continuation of the Prophet's first-person letter that began in the previous issue, November 1837. The other direct statement is similar: *History of the Church*, 1:16. In his history the Prophet clearly featured those early events that were relevant to what he became—in other words, what linked with his adult mission. By this standard, his cursory mention of treasure seeking is an index of how little he later valued that youthful experience.