

## Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass- Looker" Joseph Smith

Posted by: steve benson ( )  
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In another thread, RfM poster "whiteandlightsome" asks,

"Who was better at lying Nibley or Joseph Smith?," adding:

"Joe created the religion, and managed to convince people to pay for him even though he never found any treasure. He wrote 500 pages of bullshit and more bullshit prophecies and even more wives.

"Hugh Nibley somehow supported the religion, created fake footnotes straight up lied to interviewers, misquoted sources, and was the king of Mormon apologetics.

"I believe we have quite the competition."

("Who Was Better at Lying, Hugh Nibley or Joseph Smith?," by "whiteandlightsome," on "Recovery from Mormonism" discussion board, 20 November 2015, <http://exmormon.org/phorum/read.php?2,1722014>)

Indeed, we do. In the end, however, Nibley takes no back seat to Smith in the Lying Department. I once happened to spot Nibley at a stake conference in the Provo area. I was sitting close to him in the cultural hall, where he had come in late and perched himself on a folding chair--gangly, unkempt hair and white socks sagging around his ankles, topped off with a rumpled suit--as he leaned forward, appearing to be decidedly detached.

Hardly an impressive-looking champion for the Mormon Cult.

Even less impressive, however, were Nibley's apologetics for Joseph Smith--particularly when it came to his hot-air spoutings about conman Joe's verified arrest/conviction record per the charge of "glass-looking" leveled against him in a court of law.

When it came to credibility, Nibley proved to be nothing but a lying gasbag determined to lie out his garment slits in behalf of Mormonism's founding "prophet."

For the record (and for Mormon apologists known to insecurely lurk here), go-to excuse-maker Nibley had issued supposedly serious warnings about the damning nature of the occult-originating charges against Smith, should (Nibley said) they be prove to be true.

Well, Hugh, they are true. And they serve to validate the devastating nature of the crimes that Smith had committed against his gullible followers who were willing to follow him anywhere, regardless of the facts.

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--Hugh Nibley vs. Hugh Nibley (where the destined loser is . . . drum roll, please . . . Hugh Nibley)

In 1961, Nibley authored a book entitled "The Mythmakers," in which he ventured out to boldly debunk assertions that Joseph Smith had committed--or even been arrested for--the crime of "glass-looking."

Nibley (in words he probably later wished he could retract unless he could somehow employ Smith's occult fetishes in ways to magically make those words disappear like buried treasure moving ever deeper into the bowels of the earth), went so far as to declare that if, truth be told, Smith was actually proven guilty of "glass-looking" activity, it would constitute the most devastating blow imaginable to Smith's claim of divine prophethood.

(The key phrase is "truth be told"--a concept entirely foreign to Nibley).

In an article headlined, "The Arrest Records of Joseph Smith from 1826 to 1830 are Rediscovered and Given to the Mormon Church.," the following inconvenient facts for Nibley are noted:

"It [the discovery of the actual court records of Smith's glass-looking trial] is not a small thing. These are important papers to a major religion . . . 'It's a piece of the historical puzzle that was missing for nearly 35 years.'"

"The documents include arrest warrants, court transcripts and legal bills from four separate charges filed against Smith. . . . [T]he cases [are said to have] involved Smith's involvement in glass-looking, or treasure seeking and being a disorderly person. "

"One of the documents includes a bill from then-South Bainbridge [New York] Justice Albert Neely to the county for services rendered. Included in the bill is a \$2.68 charge for fees in examining the case of 'Joseph Smith, the glass-looker.'"

("Joseph Smith's Arrest Record Surfaces In New York," excerpt from KUTV "top stories" news report, 16 September 2005 , Salt Lake City, Utah)

By way of background, the following is an inconvenient reminder for shameless history rewriters like Nibley of what got Smith hauled into court and convicted of "glass-looking":

"[It] [s]eems [that defenders of Joseph Smith] . . . have forgotten that [he] was a convicted and self-confessed con man who admitt[ed] using the same stones he used to translate the Book of Mormon to cheat people out of money.

"Kind of like reminding Scientologist[s] that [its founder L. Ron] Hubbard said if you want to get rich, start a religion it usually falls on deaf ears.

"On March 20, 1826, Joseph Smith, Jr. was brought before the justice of the peace in Bainbridge, New York. On court records, he is referred to as 'Joseph Smith the Glass looker.' The charge: disturbing the peace.

"Glass-lookers were not uncommon in New York farm country in the 1820s. They were shysters and con men who claimed that by looking into a piece of glass (or sometimes a special stone), they could see things others could not--including the locations of buried treasure. They would then charge poor farmers for this service to aid them in finding these great treasures supposed' buried beneath the ground. Of course none of these 'treasures' were ever found.

"By 1826, Joseph Smith had developed a reputation as a glass-looker (also known as a money-digger). Smith used a seer stone rather than a piece of glass. He would place the seer stone into a . . . hat which he would then cover with his face. By peering at the stone while in the hat, he could see things which were far removed from him, even buried under the ground.

"Early in 1826, a man by the name of Josiah Stowell had come to Smith to hire him for his money-digging abilities. Stowell believed that there was a treasure buried on his land, left by Spaniards long ago. With Smith's great powers, Stowell would be able to find the great Spanish treasure.

"For a month, Smith worked on the Stowell farm, but nothing was ever found. Stowell himself never doubted Smith's abilities, but many of those close to Stowell felt the old man was being taken for a ride by Smith and brought him up on charges.

"Arad Stowell, Josiah's son, testified that he had personally tested Joseph Smith's abilities and saw clearly that it was nothing but a con job. With his testimony and that of two other men involved with Josiah Stowell, Joseph Smith was found guilty of disturbing the peace.

"To those who belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this episode in the life of their founder and first Prophet has been a very embarrassing one that they have fought very hard to deny. The danger lies not just in the fact that Smith was a convicted con man prior to his creation of the Church, but that the details of his confidence trickery are so similar to those of the story of Joseph Smith finding and translating the golden plates which would become the Book of Mormon.

"Sometime between 1823 and 1827, Joseph Smith claimed to have received a vision that there were ancient golden plates buried somewhere on his land. He used the same money-digging techniques he had used for Stowell to attempt to find the plates, without success. Other money diggers in the area began to pick up on the story and started coming and looking for the golden plates themselves. Finally, on September 22, 1827, Smith announced that the angel Moroni had given him a vision which lead him directly to the plates.

"According to Emma Smith, Joseph's wife, David Whitmer (one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon) and many others, the process used by Joseph Smith in translating the Book of Mormon was the exact same as that which he used in money-digging.

"While translating, Smith did not even have the golden plates in front of him. He used the seer stone, once again placed in his stovepipe hat. He would gaze into the hat, wherein he would see the plates in their hidden location, now translated from the 'Reformed Egyptian' in which they were originally written.

"Because of this similarity between the finding and translation of the golden plates and Joseph Smith's money-digging ventures, Mormons have tried to deny the truth of his 1826 trial. Documents found in the archives of the court in Bainbridge in 1971, however, verified that Smith indeed was brought to trial as a glass looker and was convicted for his crime."

("Reminder for Ronnie," by "peddler2," 21 August 2007, [http://answerway.com/viewans.php?pgtitle=Christianity&expid=Mary\\_Susan&category=633&msection=0&quesid=74234&ansid=327075](http://answerway.com/viewans.php?pgtitle=Christianity&expid=Mary_Susan&category=633&msection=0&quesid=74234&ansid=327075))

For not-so-nimble Nibley, it got even worse as the truth continued to spill forth. But what did he care? He was lying for the Lord, gawddammit.

More tales from the conman's crypt:

Derick S. Hartshorn, in his work, "Bearing the Testimony of Truth," reviews the history of apologetic denials uttered by Mormonism's stoutest defenders, then compares those desperate defenses to the actual evidence found--evidence that cuts Smith off at the knees.

Under the sub-section, "Guilty! Next Case!," Hartshorn exposes the alarming nature of the charges against Smith and how they have plunged a dagger into the heart of Smith's corny claims to divine guidance:

"It was charged that Joseph Smith was accused and found guilty of parting a local farmer from his money in a less-than-honest scheme, commonly known as 'money-digging' or 'glass-looking.' It

was reported to have been an activity that brought him rebuke from his soon-to-be father-in-law, Isaac Hale. It is also historically recorded that he was removed from membership in a local Methodist church because of the activity and trial results.

"Joseph Smith skims over the specific event leading to the trial in the Pearl of Great Price, explaining that he was only a day worker for the man so engaged and not personally involved.

"Mormon writers have continually challenged its doubters to find the records (seemingly lost) and prove Joseph Smith a liar or stop the attacks. Mormon writer Hugh Nibley--the most prolific defender of the Mormon faith--used almost 20 pages in his book, 'The Mythmakers,' in an attempt to discredit this 'alleged' court trial.

"On p. 142 we find:

". . . If this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith' and would be 'THE MOST DEVASTATING BLOW TO SMITH EVER DELIVERED.' [emphasis added]

"Of course, when that was first published back in 1961, Dr. Nibley undoubtedly felt that after 130 years no such record would turn up in 1971. Once again, the actual evidence--which the Mormon Church had denied ever existed--came to light in 1971. You can read about how it was discovered as well as the relevance of other historical documents of that time that Joseph used a 'seer' stone to find money, etc. in the 54-page brochure 'Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials.'

"One might wonder why this should be cause for concern among investigators of Mormonism. The fact is the up to then, the Mormon Leaders had denied that there WAS such a trial. Indeed, they claim that the story of Joseph's arrest was a 'fabrication of unknown authorship and never in a court record at all.'

"The charge that Joseph was known to hunt treasure with 'peep' or 'seer' stones, etc., was serious enough that Mormon scholar Francis W. Kirkham stated that if the court record could be found, it would show that the Mormon Church was false:

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

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

"Later, in the same book, Mr. Kirkham states:

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

"Well, in spite of 140 years of silence, the records did surface. Rev. Wesley Walters discovered the documents in the basement of the Chenango County, New York, jailhouse at Norwich, N.Y. in 1971. The records, affidavits and other data show conclusively that Joseph Smith was arrested, went to trial [and] was found guilty as an imposter in the Stowell matter of "glass-looking." It is not

a matter of debate, opinion or religious preference. It is a proven historical fact.

"Initially, Mormons denied that Joseph ever participated in 'money-digging' activities, saying that would invalidate his claim as a prophet. Now that indisputable evidence confirms that Joseph was a convicted 'money-digger,' Mormons have taken a 'so what' attitude. At least, one says, now that the evidence proves that Joseph was a 'money-digger' that it really doesn't matter. (What could a BYU professor say?)

"Mormon scholar Marvin Hill says:

"There may be little doubt now, as I have indicated elsewhere, that Joseph Smith was brought to trial in 1826 on a charge, not exactly clear, associated with money-digging.' [Fawn] Brodie's thesis that the prophet grew from necromancer to prophet assumes that the two were mutually exclusive, that if Smith were a money-digger he could not have been religiously sincere.

"This does not necessarily follow. Many believers active in their churches, were money-diggers in New England and western New York in this period. Few contemporaries regard these money-diggers as irreligious, only implying so if their religious views seemed too radical . . . For the historian interested in Joseph Smith the man, it does not seem incongruous for him to have hunted for treasure with a seer stone and then to use with full faith to receive revelations from the Lord.'

"Marvin Hill's appraisal of the treasure-seeking activities make it appear that contemporaries of Joseph Smith treated this enterprise with a casual air. One such contemporary that was closer to Joseph than most could hardly disguise his disdain. This was Isaac Hale, father of the girl that Joseph would later elope with.

"In an affidavit signed by Hale and published in the 'Susquehanna Register,' May 1, 1834, Joseph's father-in-law said:

"I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr. in November 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called "money diggers"; and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see by what means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way, he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure.

"Smith and his father, with several other money-diggers, boarded at my house while they were employed in digging for a mine that they supposed had been opened and worked by the Spaniards. Young Smith made several visits at my house, and at length asked my consent to his marrying my daughter Emma. This I refused . . . [H]e was a stranger, and followed a business that I could not approve. . . . Smith stated to me, that he had given up what he called "glass-looking," and that he expected to work hard for a living . . .

"Soon after this, I was informed that they had brought a wonderful book of plates down with them . . . The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods."

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REALITY CHECK: Joseph Smith and Hugh Nibley Were Two Prevaricators in the Same Fraud Pod

As RfM poster "Jefferson" observed:

"Dr. Nibley was able to maintain plausible deniability when he made [his] statement in 1961. I wonder what he would say today if he were alive? By the way, what an appropriate name for his book: 'The Myth Makers'!

“Taken from the Tanner’s website:

“The noted Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley published a book in which this statement appeared: ‘. . . [I]f this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.’ (‘The Myth Makers,’ 1961, p. 142) On the same page we read that such a court record would be ‘the most devastating blow to Smith ever delivered.’ Because he could see the serious implications of the matter, Dr. Nibley tried in every way possible to destroy the idea that the court record was an authentic document.”

(“Joe Smith’s Arrest Records,” by “Jefferson,” on “Recovery from Mormonism” discussion board, 16 September [year not noted], quoting “STATE OF NEW YORK vs. JOSEPH SMITH,” by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, “Salt Lake City Messenger,” #68, July 1988, <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no68.htm>)

The Tanners have performed a marvelous work and a wonder in helping unmask and ultimately bury Hugh Nibley as an eager, fact-free apologist for Joseph Smith’s glass-looking caper. Nibley, it turns out, was an excuse-maker of extraordinary proportions who was never serious about admitting that the evidence against Smith’s alleged “divine powers” unquestionably destroyed Smith’s claim to being a “prophet of God.”

The Tanners lay out Smith’s criminal-code road to glass-looking destruction--and along with it--Nibley’s rise to fame as an apologist without shame:

“In 1945 Fawn M. Brodie first published her book ‘No Man Knows My History.’ In Appendix A of that work, she included what she claimed was a ‘Record of the trial of Joseph Smith for disorderly conduct, Bainbridge, New York, March 20, 1826.’ (1971 edition, p. 491). This document, which Mrs. Brodie reprinted from a book originally published in 1883, seemed to link Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church, to the occult. It, in fact, portrayed the Mormon prophet as a man who deceived the public by looking in a stone placed in his hat to find buried treasures.

“The leaders of the Church were incensed by the publication of this document and denounced it as a forgery. The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe bluntly stated:

“‘. . . Joseph Smith is made to confess to all his errors, including treasure hunting, peepstone practices, etc., etc. In fact, it is such a complete self-confession as to throw immediate doubt upon the genuineness of the document. Joseph Smith was not a fool. . . . There is no existing proof that such a trial was ever held.’ (‘Joseph Smith--Seeker After Truth,’ 1951, p. 78)

“The Mormon Church’s ‘Deseret News’ called it a ‘spurious’ record:

“‘But the alleged find is no discovery at all, for the purported record has been included in other books. . . . [A]fter all her puffing and promise, the author produces no court record at all, though persistently calling it such. . . . This alleged record is obviously spurious. . . . It is patently a fabrication of unknown authorship and never in the court records at all.’ (‘Deseret News,’ Church Section, May 11, 1946, as cited in ‘A New Witness For Christ in America, enlarged edition, pp. 430-31)

“Fawn Brodie was excommunicated because of her book on Joseph Smith, and through the years Mormon writers have continued to attack her and the court record which she reproduced in her book. . . . [O]ne supporter of Joseph Smith even went so far as to forge a document in an attempt to discredit the claim that Joseph Smith was tried in 1826.

“In 1971 Wesley P. Walters made a remarkable discovery which verifies the claim that Joseph Smith was a ‘glass looker’ and that he was arrested and brought before a Justice of the Peace for that practice. . . . H. Michael Marquardt [also] found some original documents which throw important

new light on this matter. . . In addition, some Mormon scholars have also added some important observations that have helped us to get a more complete picture of what occurred in 1826.

“ . . . [W]e are printing the court record in its entirety from its earliest known source, 'Fraser's Magazine,' February, 1873, vol. VII, pp. 229–30. . . . ”

“State of New York v. Joseph Smith.

“Warrant issued upon written complaint upon oath of Peter G. Bridgeman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a disorderly person and an impostor.

“Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826. Prisoner examined: Says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowell in Bainbridge most of time since;

“[H]ad small part of time been employed in looking for mines, but the major part had been employed by said Stowell on his farm, and going to school.

“That he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowell several times, and had informed him where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowell had been engaged in digging for them.

“That at Palmyra he pretended to tell, by looking at this stone, where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and while at Palmyra had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was of various kinds;

“[T]hat he had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account of its injuring his health, especially his eyes, making them sore;

“[T]hat he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.

“Josiah Stowell sworn: Says that prisoner had been at his house something like five months; had been employed by him to work on farm part of time;

“[T]hat he pretended to have skill of telling where hidden treasures in the earth were by means of looking through a certain stone;

“[T]hat prisoner had looked for him sometimes; once to tell him about money buried in Bend Mountain in Pennsylvania, once for gold on Monument Hill, and once for a salt spring; and

“[T]hat he positively knew that the prisoner could tell, and did 'possess the art of seeing those valuable treasures through the medium of said stone;

“[T]hat he found the [word illegible] at Bend and Monument Hill as prisoner represented it;

“[T]hat prisoner had looked through said stone for Deacon Attleton for a mine, did not exactly find it, but got a p— [word unfinished] of ore which resembled gold, he thinks;

“[T]hat prisoner had told by means of this stone where a Mr. Bacon had buried money;

“[T]hat he and prisoner had been in search of it;

“[T]hat prisoner had said it was in a certain root of a stump five feet from surface of the earth, and

with it would be found a tail feather;

"[T]hat said Stowell and prisoner thereupon commenced digging, found a tail feather, but money was gone;

"[T]hat he supposed the money moved down.

"That prisoner did offer his services;

"[T]hat he never deceived him;

"[T]hat prisoner looked through stone and described Josiah Stowell's house and outhouses, while at Palmyra at Simpson Stowell's, correctly;

"[T]hat he had told about a painted tree, with a man's head painted upon it, by means of said stone.

"[T]hat he had been in company with prisoner digging for gold, and had the most implicit faith in prisoner's skill.

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

"McMaster sworn: Says he went with Arad Stowell and likewise came away disgusted. Prisoner pretended to him that he could discover objects at a distance by holding this white stone to the sun or candle;

"[T]hat prisoner rather declined looking into a hat at his dark colored stone, as he said that it hurt his eyes.

"Jonathan Thompson says that prisoner was requested to look for chest of money; did look, and pretended to know there it was; and that prisoner, Thompson, and Yeomans went in search of it;

"[T]hat Smith arrived at spot first; was at night;

"[T]hat Smith looked in hat while there, and when very dark, told how the chest was situated. After digging several feet, struck upon something sounding like a board or plank.

"Prisoner would not look again, pretending that he was alarmed on account of the circumstances relating to the trunk being buried, [which] came all fresh to his mind.

"That the last time he looked, he discovered distinctly the two Indians who buried the trunk,

"[T]hat a quarrel ensued between them, and

"[T]hat one of said Indians was killed by the other, and thrown into the hole beside the trunk, to guard it, as he supposed.

"Thompson says that he believes in the prisoner's professed skill;

"[T]hat the board which he struck his spade upon was probably the chest, but on account of an enchantment the trunk kept settling away from under them when digging,



"[T]hat notwithstanding they continued constantly removing the dirt, yet the trunk kept about the same distance from them.

"Says prisoner said that it appeared to him that salt might be found at Bainbridge, and

"[T]hat he is certain that prisoner can divine things by means of said stone.

"That as evidence of the fact prisoner looked into his hat to tell him about some money witness lost 16 years ago, and

"[T]hat he described the man that witness supposed had taken it, and the disposition of the money:

"And therefore the Court find the Defendant guilty. Costs: Warrant, 19 cents. Complaint upon oath, 25 1/2 cents. Seven witnesses, 87 1/2 cents. Recognisances, 25 cents. Mittimus, 19 cents. Recognisances of witnesses, 75 cents. Subpoena, 18 cents--\$2.68."

"The Mormon writer Francis W. Kirkham just could not allow himself to believe that the 1826 court record was authentic. He, in fact, felt that if the transcript were authentic it would disprove Mormonism:

"A careful study of all facts regarding this alleged confession of Joseph Smith in a court of law that he had used a seer stone to find hidden treasure for purposes of fraud, must come to the conclusion that no such record was ever made, and therefore, is not in existence. . . . [H]ad he [Joseph Smith] made this confession in a court of law as early as 1826, or four years before the Book of Mormon was printed, and this confession was in a court record, it would have been impossible for him to have organized the restored Church. ('A New Witness For Christ In America,' vol. 1, pp. 385-387)

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

"The noted Mormon apologist--Hugh Nibley--published a book in which this statement appeared: '. . . [I]f this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.' ('The Myth Makers,' 1961, p. 142)

'On the same page we read that such a court record would be 'the most devastating blow to Smith ever delivered.' Because he could see the serious implications of the matter, Dr. Nibley tried in every way possible to destroy the idea that the court record was an authentic document.

"As we indicated earlier, in 1971 Wesley P. Walters made an astounding discovery which destroyed many of the arguments Mormon writers had used to discredit the 1826 court record. While searching through some old records stored in the basement of the county jail in Norwich, New York, Wesley Walters and Fred Poffarl discovered two documents from Bainbridge which confirmed the authenticity of the printed court record. The most important was Justice Albert Neely's [autographed] bill to the county for his fees in several legal matters he was involved with in 1826. The fifth item from the top mentioned the case of 'Joseph Smith The Glass looker.'

"The fact that Justice Neely said Joseph Smith was a "Glass looker" fits very well with the published version of the legal proceedings. Hugh Nibley and other Mormon apologists became strangely

silent after these documents were discovered. . . .

“At the time he did his research in the basement of the jail in Norwich, New York, Wesley P. Walters found the documents in a 'disorganized state' and some of them 'were so water-stained the entire page was illegible.' Besides the bills which mentioned Joseph Smith, Pastor Walters also discovered other bills and documents which helped to substantiate his major finds. For instance, he found Justice Zechariah Tarble's bill for 1826. This bill provides some important historical evidence concerning Justice Neely's bill because Tarble mentioned that he served with Justice Neely and Justice Humphrey in a Court of Special Sessions to try three men who are named in the Neely bill.

“Wesley Walters found that there were 'four justices of the peace' in Bainbridge, but he was unable to find bills for the other two. He noted, however, that '[i]f the 1826 bills of Justices Bigelow and Humphrey should turn up, there would likewise be cases on those which were tried jointly with Neely as is evident from the constables' notifying them. . . . [W]hen the County Historian has completed the organization of all the bills they may yet show up.' (Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials,' p. 150)

“Wesley Walters encouraged H. Michael Marquardt to do further research with regard to Joseph Smith's encounter with the law. In May 1988, Mr. Marquardt went back to Norwich, New York, and found the missing bills in the Office of History which is located in the Chenango County Historical Society. These 1826 bills provide strong support for the authenticity of the Neely bill. Justice Humphrey, for instance, wrote that he helped try the three men we mentioned above. The bills of Neely, Humphrey and Tarble, therefore, all confirm that they met in a Court of Special Sessions to try these men.

“Michael Marquardt also found the 1826 bill for Justice Levi Bigelow. This bill likewise provides important evidence which helps to substantiate Albert Neely's bill. Neely listed his fees for the trials of Josiah Evans, Robert Darnell and Ira Church. Justice Bigelow also mentioned being in a Court of Special Sessions to try these very men. Moreover, although Neely seems to have accidentally omitted the date for Josiah Evans trial, both documents agree that Robert Darnell was tried on October 3, 1826, and that Ira Church's trial occurred on November 9, 1826.

“Besides locating the bills of Justices Bigelow and Humphrey, Mr. Marquardt also found Justice Zechariah Tarble's Docket Book for civil cases from June 17, 1822 to March 7, 1826. It appears to have two lines and a signature by Albert Neely that can be compared with the handwriting in the 1826 bill which mentions Joseph Smith's case. The reader may remember that Zechariah Tarble was the Justice of the Peace who married Joseph Smith (see 'History of the Church, ' vol. 1, p.17).

“TRANSCRIPT VERIFIED

“Research by Wesley P. Walters' and Michael Marquardt's . . . discoveries combine to establish beyond any doubt that the transcript of Joseph Smith's legal difficulties, which was first published in 1873, is authentic.

“The original pages of this transcript were still in existence in January, 1886, when the 'Utah Christian Advocate' published the following:

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

"While Bishop Tuttle could not remember whether it was Emily Pearsall's father or uncle who was Justice of the Peace in Bainbridge, Stanley S. Ivins solved this problem many years ago when he found that Albert Neely was Miss Pearsall's uncle (see 'History And Genealogy of the Pearsall Family in England and America,' pp. 1143, 1144 and 1151).

"The transcript was published three times by different individuals after it arrived in Salt Lake City. As we have already shown, it appeared first in 'Fraser's Magazine' in 1873. It was printed by Bishop Tuttle in the 1883 'New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia' and finally appeared in the 'Utah Christian Advocate' in 1886.

"Michael Marquardt's study of the text of the three different printings leads him to the conclusion that they were all printed from the original pages rather than one borrowing from another. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the testimony of Horace Stowell, which was very brief, appears to have been accidentally omitted when the document was first published in 1873. The 1883 version could not have been copied from the 1873 printed version because it includes Horace Stowell's testimony. The 1886 version also has Horace Stowell's testimony, but there seems to be evidence that it was also taken directly from the original pages furnished by Justice Neely's niece, Emily Pearsall. If the 1886 printing were borrowing from the 1883 printing, it would not have the court costs at the end of the document because they were not included in the 1883 publication by Bishop Tuttle. The differences, therefore, seem to provide strong circumstantial evidence that three different individuals saw the original pages and copied from them. At any rate, while the existence of the original pages of the transcript was known from 1873 to 1886, there seems to be no evidence that any Mormon apologist tried to question their authenticity at that time.

"The fact that Wesley P. Walters' discovery of the 1826 bill of Justice Neely confirms the accuracy of the transcript can hardly be disputed by anyone who takes a close look at the evidence. We have already shown that the statement on the Neely bill that Joseph Smith was a 'Glass looker' fits very well with the contents of the transcript which has been published.

"Moreover, Neely's bill provides some very specific evidence. It states that the trial took place on 'March 20, 1826,' and this is precisely the date found in the published account of the trial: 'Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826.' ('Fraser's Magazine,' Feb. 1873, p. 229). In Albert Neely's bill the fee for this case is listed as '2.68,' and this is the exact figure found in the printed record: 'Costs: . . . \$2.68.'

"In light of this evidence, it seems impossible to continue to deny the authenticity of the court record.

"In 'Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials,' reprinted by Utah Lighthouse Ministry, pp. 137-138, Wesley Walters shows that the court costs listed by Neely at the end of the printed transcript agree very well with costs found on other bills submitted by justices during that time period.

"We have . . . compared the costs found in Neely's docket book with 'The Justice's Manual; or, a Summary of the Powers and Duties of Justices of the Peace in the State of New-York,' by Thomas G. Waterman, 1825, p. 199.

"Mr. Waterman wrote:

"The fees of a Justice for his services in apprehending, binding, committing, &c. for crimes and misdemeanors, are --for every oath, 12 1-2 cents; warrant, 19; recognizance, 25; mittimus, 19; which are audited and allowed by the board of supervisors as county charges.'

"These charges are in complete agreement with the items found in the pages from Neely's docket book. In the version we have reprinted from 'Fraser's Magazine,' we read that "Seven witnesses" were sworn for a total of "87 1/2 cents." If 87 1/2 cents is divided by 7, we get exactly 12 1/2 cents . This, of course, agrees with the statement in the Justice's Manual that the Justice is to

receive 'for every oath, 12 1/2 cents.' The same manual gives the amount for a warrant as '19 [cents].' The Neely document agrees: 'Warrant, 19¢.' The recognizance is listed in the manual at '25[cents],' and the transcript agrees that Recognisances are billed at '25 cents.' The justices are instructed to charge '19 [cents]' for a mittimus, and 'Fraser's Magazine' likewise lists: 'Mittimus, 19 cents.'

"From this it is very clear that the published transcript is not something that can be easily dismissed.

"In our publication, 'Joseph Smith's 1826 Trial,' printed in 1971, we quoted the following from a letter which Wesley P. Walters wrote to us after studying the transcript's relationship to other documents:

"To my mind there is enough agreement here to make the possibility of the document being a forgery out of the realm of possibility. . . . [F]rom every angle, the whole matter has the ring of genuineness about it.' ( pp. 4–5)

“AN EXAMINATION?

"Michael Marquardt's discovery of the bills of Justices Humphrey and Bigelow has thrown some new light on Joseph Smith's encounter with the law in 1826 and provides additional evidence that the transcript is in reality a report of proceedings before a Justice of the Peace.

"During the past few years, a question has begun to surface concerning the exact nature of what took place when Joseph Smith appeared before Justice Albert Neely on March 20, 1826. From material printed between 1813 and 1829, we conclude that there were two things that could have taken place on that day:

"One: Joseph Smith could have appeared before Justice Neely for what was known as 'an examination' (see 'A New Conductor Generalis: Being a Summary of the Law Relative to the Duty and Office of Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Coroners, Constables, Jurymen, Overseers of the Poor, &c, &c,' Albany, New York, 1819, pp. 141–43). This seems to be like the 'preliminary hearing' we have today, where the accused is bound over for trial at a later date. . . .

"Two: Joseph Smith could have been tried before a Court of Special Sessions (see 'Revised Statutes of the State of New York,' 1829, Part 4, pp. 711–14). This would have occurred after the 'examination.'

"In a Court of Special Sessions, the justice who conducts the original examination is supposed to request 'any two justices of the peace of the same county, and to require them to associate with him to try the persons so charged' (ibid., p. 711). This, of course, means that the case would be tried by three justices. If the case was not heard in the Court of Special Sessions, then it would come up in the next Court of General Sessions. Since Wesley P. Walters found that this court only met in February, June and October, it is obvious that the date of March 20, 1826, would not fit for a trial in the Court of General Sessions. . . .

"In 1985, the Mormon writer Paul Hedengren argued that Joseph Smith's appearance before Justice Neely was indeed an 'examination': '

"'. . . [I]t is clear that the fees assigned by Neely for the case of Joseph Smith are for examination, which would occur prior to any trial before the Court of Special Sessions.' ('In Defense of Faith,' by Paul Hedengren, Provo, Utah, 1985, p. 207)

"The question concerning the exact nature of the Neely docket record was finally answered when Michael Marquardt discovered the bills of Justices Bigelow and Humphrey. We already knew from

Wesley Walters research in 1971 that Justice Tarble's bill did not contain any mention of his helping Neely try the Joseph Smith case in a Court of Special Sessions. Since there were only four justices, this case would have to appear on the bills of both Bigelow and Humphrey if the idea of a Court of Special Sessions had any merit. Because it appears on neither document, it is now obvious that the court record is for 'an examination' before Justice Albert Neely. . . .

#### "JOSEPH SMITH GUILTY?"

". . . [T]he Mormon Church's 'Deseret News' argued that the court record was 'a fabrication of unknown authorship.' In the same article we find the following:

"Then the recital is that the court "finds the defendant guilty." . . . Then, more wonderful still, the record does not tell what the judgment or sentence of the court was. The really vital things which a true record must contain are not there, though there is a lot of surplus verbiage set out in an impossible order which the court was not required to keep.' ('Deseret News, ' Church Section, May 11, 1946, as cited in 'A New Witness For Christ In America, ' vol. 2, p. 431)

"While one might think a sentence would be recorded toward the end of a record of proceedings from a Court of Special Sessions, the fact that this was an examination seems to negate this criticism. This matter would have to be settled by the three justices who would later meet to make the final decision concerning the case. Justice Neely had concluded from his examination of Joseph Smith that he was guilty as charged, and the evidence seems to show that he ordered Smith held for trial before the Court of Special Sessions.

"The Mormon writer Paul Hedengren argues that the use of the words, 'the Court find the Defendant guilty,' in the Neely transcript casts some doubt on the accuracy of the printed text:

"If it is an examination, the guilty judgment given at the end of the testimony poses a problem,... the judgment of guilty... is appropriate only at the conclusion of a trial before the Court of Special Sessions. . . .

"The preponderance of evidence is that the account is at best an account of an examination; yet the judgment of guilt is inappropriate to such proceedings. This is evidence that listing of guilt in the 1873 account does not come [from] the actual legal proceedings but is a later inclusion.' ('In Defense of Faith,' pp. 216-17)

"Actually, the appearance of the word 'guilty' is not a mark against the authenticity of the printed text. In fact, it seems to fit the terminology used in Joseph Smith's time. In 'Acts of a General Nature, Ordered to be Re-printed, at the First Session of the Eighteenth General Assembly of the State of Ohio . . .,' Columbus, Ohio, 1820, we read the following concerning an 'examining court' declaring a prisoner 'guilty':

"Sec. 2. "Be it further enacted, that if the judges upon examination find the prisoner guilty of a bailable offense, they shall recognize him or her. . . . and in case the prisoner fails to give security, he or she shall be remanded to jail, and in all cases where the prisoner is found guilty, it shall be the duty of the judges to recognize the witnesses on the part of the state, to appear at the next court of common pleas, . . . ."

"It is interesting to note that Joseph Smith's own diary refers to an examination in Nauvoo, Illinois, as a 'trial' in which the defendant was found 'guilty':

"Monday Dec[ember] 18[th] . . . Constable Follet returned with Elliot. Trial in the Assembly room for examination. . . [Elliot was] found guilty of Kidnapping and bound over for trial to the Circuit Court in the sum of \$3,000.' ('An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith,' edited by Scott H. Faulstich, 1987, pp. 432-33)

"Some Mormon scholars have recently argued that Joseph Smith was examined before Justice Neely but was exonerated. In a paper entitled, 'It's Time to Halt the Nonsense About Joseph Smith's So-called "1826 Trial,"' p. 4, Gerry L. Ensley wrote:

"The conclusion is, therefore, inescapable that Smith was found "innocent" at the March 20, preliminary examination.'

"We cannot agree with this statement. Besides the Neely transcript which shows that Joseph Smith was found 'guilty,' the earliest known printed statement by A. W. Benton (1831) indicates that Joseph Smith was 'arrested as a disorderly person, tried and condemned before a court of Justice.' ('Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate,' April 9, 1831, p. 120) On March 8, 1842, Joel K. Noble, who had acquitted Joseph Smith of some charges brought against him in 1830 (see 'History of the Church,' vol. 1, pp. 91–96), wrote a letter in which he spoke of Joseph Smith's 'first trial'-- i.e., the case before Justice Neely. According to Noble, Smith 'was condemned' at that time. ('Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials,' by Wesley P. Walters, Part 2, pp. 132–33)

"Wesley Walters gives this information:

"Both before and during the examination Joseph remained under guard, with Constable De Zeng in "attendance with Prisoner two days & 1 night," referring to the day of the examination and the day and night preceding. Since the evidence appeared sufficient to show that Smith was guilty as charged, he was ordered held for trial.' (ibid., p. 139) Walters has also noted that in the summary of Justice Neely's costs at the end of the printed transcript, he listed a 'Mittimus.'

"This provides very strong evidence that Joseph Smith was condemned at the examination and was facing trial before the Court of Special Sessions. Webster's 1828 dictionary gives this definition of the word 'Mittimus': 'In law, a precept or command in writing, under the hand or hand and seal of a justice of the peace or other proper officer, directed to the keeper of a prison, requiring him to imprison an offender; a warrant of commitment to prison. 2. A writ for removing records from one court to another.'

"Constable De Zeng's bill proves that the mittimus related to the imprisonment of Joseph Smith rather than the 'writ for removing records from one court to another.' It plainly states: '10 miles travel with mittimus to take him.' Furthermore, Justice Neely listed a charge for 'Recognisances of witnesses.' This also shows that Neely had found Joseph Smith 'guilty' and was turning him over to the 'next court having cognizance of the offense.'

"In the 'Revised Statutes of the State of New-York,' 1829, p. 709, we read:

"If it shall appear that an offense has been committed, and that there is probable cause to believe the prisoner to be guilty thereof, the magistrate shall bind by recognizance the prosecutor, and all the material witnesses against such prisoner, to appear and testify at the next court having cognizance of the offense, and in which the prisoner may be indicted.'

"Mormon writer Paul Hedengren seemed to be willing to admit that the machinery had been set in motion for 'a trial before the Court of Special Sessions':

"Notice that in anticipation of such a trial, two justices were notified and 12 witnesses subpoenaed, as evidenced by the bill of Constable De Zeng.' ('In Defense of Faith,' p. 216)

"All of the evidence, therefore, indicates that Joseph Smith was in real trouble with the law. In 'A New Conductor Generalis,' 1819, p. 109, we read:

"A justice of the peace may convict disorderly persons,... to the bridewell or house of correction, at hard labor, for a time not exceeding sixty days, or until the next general sessions. . . .

"When a person has been thus committed by a justice, to remain till the next general sessions, if the justices at the sessions adjudge him to be a disorderly person, they may, if they think convenient, order him to be detained, at hard labor, for any future time not exceeding six months, and during his confinement to be corrected by whipping, according to the nature of the offense, as they shall think fit.'

"Joseph Smith seems to have had three choices:

"1. He could face three justices and stand the chance of being "detained, at hard labor" for up to "six months" if convicted.

"2. He could have admitted his guilt and struck an agreement with the county. Many times officials who wanted to cut expenses would be willing to let prisoners go if they would agree to leave the county where the crime took place.

"3. He could have attempted an escape. This was the method Joseph Smith used thirteen years later in Missouri when he was indicted: 'This evening our guard got intoxicated. We thought it a favorable opportunity to make our escape; knowing that the only object of our enemies was our destruction; . . . Accordingly, we took advantage of the situation of our guard and departed, and that night we traveled a considerable distance.' ('History of the Church, ' vol. 3, p. 321)

"The evidence would seem to indicate that Joseph Smith chose either the second or third option, or possibly a combination of the two. We have already shown that Justice Noble claimed that Smith 'was condemned' " at his 'first trial.'

"Wesley P. Walters wrote: 'Mr. Noble succinctly states that the "whisper came to Jo: 'Off, Off!,' and so Joseph "took Leg Bail," an early slang expression meaning "to escape from custody." . . . What is obviously happening is that the justices are privately suggesting to this first offender to 'get out of town and don't come back,' and in exchange they will not impose sentence. . . .

"Judge Nobel's statement agrees precisely with an early account of this 1826 trial published just five years after the trial had taken place. It was written by a young medical doctor who lived in South Bainbridge at the time, Dr. Abram Willard Benton, who like Mr. Noble mentions that Joseph had been involved in glass-lookng, and that he had been "tried and condemned." Dr. Benton adds that because Joseph was a minor at the time, being 20 years old, "and thinking he might reform his conduct, he was designedly allowed to escape." Therefore, the court--though it found him guilty of being in violation of the law--had intentionally not imposed sentence as a way of showing mercy on this youthful offender. Young Joseph, aware that returning to the Bainbridge area might find him suddenly sentenced to jail, was careful to return, as Noble puts it, "in Dark corners' and 'in the Dark.'" ('Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, ] Part 2, p. 123)

"On p. 140 of Part 1 of the same pamphlet, Walters commented: '

"Another possibility, of course, is that Joseph jumped bail and when the Court of Special Sessions met they may have decided not to pursue the matter further, hoping the youth had learned his lesson.'

#### "A DISORDERLY PERSON

"An examination of the law concerning 'disorderly persons' leads to the conclusion that Joseph Smith would have had a very difficult time avoiding conviction if he had remained for his trial at the Court of Special Sessions. According to 'A New Conductor Generalis,' published in 1819, p.108, the following would be 'deemed disorderly persons;'"

"All Jugglers;

"All who pretend to have skill in physiognomy, palmistry, or like crafty science, or pretend to tell fortunes, or to discover where lost goods may be found;. . . 1 R.L. 1813. p. 114.'

"Webster's 1828 dictionary gives this definition for the word 'juggle':

"1. To play tricks by slight of hand; to amuse and make sport by tricks, which make a false show of extraordinary powers.'

"2. To practice artifice or imposture.'

"Joseph Smith's practice of 'glass-looking'-- i.e., using a seer stone to divine things not seen by the natural eye--would certainly be viewed as making a 'false show of extraordinary powers.' The printed transcript says that Smith was charged with being 'a disorderly person and an impostor.' Joseph Smith's practice of 'glass-looking' would also fall into the category of a 'crafty science,' mentioned in the law. Moreover, in the examination before Justice Neely, Smith admitted that he had 'been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years.'

"As the reader can see, the law deemed anyone who used a 'crafty science. . . to discover where lost goods may be found' as a 'disorderly person.' In his docket record, Justice Neely was careful to record the statements concerning Joseph Smith's 'glass-looking' and his claim to find 'lost goods.'

"For example, he recorded the following from Jonathan Thompson, a witness who seemed favorably disposed towards Joseph Smith:

"Thompson says that he believes in the prisoner's professed skill; . . . [H]e is certain that prisoner can divine things by means of said stone. That as evidence of the fact prisoner looked into his hat to tell him about some money witness lost sixteen years ago, and that he described the man that witness supposed had taken it, and the disposition of the money.'

"The fact that the transcript seems to focus in on the very things that would convict Joseph Smith as a 'disorderly person' under the laws of early New York bears witness to its authenticity.

"As we have shown, Apostle John A. Widtsoe argued that in the transcript, 'Joseph Smith is made to confess to all his errors, including treasure hunting, peepstone practices, etc., etc. In fact, it is such a complete self-confession as to throw immediate doubt upon the genuineness of the document.' (Joseph Smith --Seeker After Truth,' 1951, p. 78)

"Actually, Joseph Smith was not under oath, and he did not have to confess to anything. Furthermore, in the publication 'Revised Statutes of the State of New-York,' 1829, p. 708, we find that 'the prisoner shall be informed by the magistrate, that he is at liberty to refuse to answer any question that may be put to him.'

"While Joseph Smith's statements may have seemed rather silly to Apostle Widtsoe, the truth of the matter is that Smith found himself on the horns of a dilemma. Since he knew that there were a number of witnesses who would testify concerning his involvement in the 'crafty science' of 'glass-looking,' he could hardly deny the charge. Moreover, Joseph Smith's own employer, Josiah Stowell was a devout believer in his ability at divination and testified that he 'had the most implicit faith in prisoners' skill.' Jonathan Thompson testified in a similar vein.

"Ironically, it seems that Smith's best friends were his worst enemies as far as his attempt to escape the penalty of the law. The more they defended his ability as a diviner, the less chance he had of being acquitted. If Joseph Smith were to deny that he had ability to see the treasures and lost goods in his stone, he would disillusion his closest followers in the money-digging business. Under these circumstances, the best he could do was to try to minimize his involvement. He, therefore,



claimed that 'of late' he had 'pretty much' given up the practice of divination and 'that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.'

"Wesley P. Walters made this interesting comment concerning the matter:

"Joseph Smith put himself in the position of meriting such punishment by the line of defense he took at his 1826 trial. According to the docket record, Joseph's defense at his trial was that he really could discover where lost goods could be found and was therefore not an imposter trying to sponge off the public as a vagrant might do. Such a defense, however, was a virtual admission that he was in violation of the law against "pretending . . . to discover where lost goods may be found.' The court, therefore, after hearing a few witnesses who corroborated that fact, summarily pronounced Joseph "guilty.'" (Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, ' Part 2, p. 124)

"In Part 1, p. 148, of the same pamphlet, Wesley Walters observed:

"There is therefore neither a legal nor a factual basis for rejecting the Neely trial record as an authentic record of Smith's 1826 trial. The main Mormon objection really seems to rest upon an emotional reaction to the admissions Smith makes in the court record, which seem tantamount to making him a religious fraud. However, at the time of the trial it was the only way he could establish that he was not a fraud. The point of the trial was that while he claimed to be a 'glass-looker,' he actually only pretended to have such powers and was therefore an "Impostor." Smith's only defense against this charge was to claim that he did have such ability, but had never sought customers for it, had used it very little, and really intended to give it up, . . . '

"VERY CONVINCING

". . . While Mormon apologists have labored very hard since 1945 to try to undermine the authenticity of the 1826 court case, their efforts have been in vain. Dale Morgan, Stanley Ivins, Wesley Walters and Michael Marquardt have heaped up a mountain of evidence which seems to be irrefutable.

"THE IMPLICATIONS

: . . . The issue . . . is much more serious than just the transgression of an early New York law which many today would regard as antiquated. What is involved here is the question of whether Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God or merely a man entangled in occultic practices. The implications of this matter are very serious, indeed."

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**CONCLUSION: Driving the Hammer into Nibley's Deliberate and Dedicated Dishonesty over Joseph Smith's Proven Conviction on Charges of "Glass-Looking"**

The Tanners sum it up well:

"The observation which appears in Hugh Nibley's book, 'The Myth Makers' is . . . very close to the truth: '. . . [I]f this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.'

"While Dr. Nibley set out to prove that 'the whole structure of anti-Mormon scholarship rests on trumped up evidence,' . . . the tide has turned against him."

("STATE OF NEW YORK vs. JOSEPH SMITH," by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, "Salt Lake City Messenger," #68, July 1988, <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no68.htm>)

Edited 5 time(s). Last edit at 11/22/2015 01:59PM by steve benson.

Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-  
Looker" Joseph Smith

Posted by: Shummy ( )  
Date: November 22, 2015 10:34AM

I have often wished that someone besides D Michael Quinn would come forth with a deeper examination the influence of a certain Luman Walter(s) in the evolution of Joseph's myth.

>The authors accept Abner Cole's suggestion that it was Luman Walter, who suggested the idea of finding a record about the ancient inhabitants of America.

[http://www.quazoo.com/q/Luman\\_Walter](http://www.quazoo.com/q/Luman_Walter)

Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-  
Looker" Joseph Smith

Posted by: baura ( )  
Date: November 22, 2015 03:32PM

I tend to prefer the publications of Hugh Hefner to those of Hugh Nibley.

Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-  
Looker" Joseph Smith

Posted by: Templar ( )  
Date: November 22, 2015 07:33PM

One lies with women and the other lies with footnotes.

Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-  
Looker" Joseph Smith

Posted by: baura ( )  
Date: November 22, 2015 06:53PM

Us: Joseph Smith was tried as a "glass looker" in 1826.

Mormon: That's a lie. If that were true it would be the most devastating blow to Joseph Smith possible. If that were true then that would prove the Church was false.

Us: Here's proof that it's true.

Mormon: I've known all about this already. It's no big deal.

Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-  
Looker" Joseph Smith

Posted by: randyj ( )  
Date: November 22, 2015 08:45PM

"Mormon: I've known all about this already. It's no big deal."

Every Mormon who concedes that the 1826 trial occurred should ask themselves "How does this information square with Joseph Smith's story that during the 1820s, he was a humble, righteous, Bible-reading young man who had been visited by God and Jesus in 1820, by

Moroni beginning in 1823, and had been told by them about his future mission to restore the true gospel?"

Would anyone who had had those wonderful heavenly visitations and training from God and angels continue to cheat gullible rubes out of their money for several years by pretending to be able to find buried treasure via a magic rock?

Re: [Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-Looker" Joseph Smith](#)

Posted by: Chicken N. Backpacks ( )  
Date: November 22, 2015 08:33PM

One of the first things I read about the "glass looking trail" was that that there was only one page with info on it about the "hearing" (not trial) and that it was basically stolen by being ripped out of a record book in the basement of a church (or library, I can't recall which). And the "thief" was a minister.

Was that Nibley, attacking the messenger?

Re: [Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-Looker" Joseph Smith](#)

Posted by: randyj ( )  
Date: November 22, 2015 09:09PM

"Was that Nibley, attacking the messenger?"

Yep. The minister, Wesley Walters, didn't "steal" the document. It's not like he tried to sell it to make money off of it. He took it because he knew it was valuable historical information which shed a lot of light on Joseph Smith's actual 1820s background and activities.

Mormon apologists' attempts to discredit the court documents are dashed away by Abram Benton's 1831 article which Steve cited above. Benton wrote that article shortly after Mormonism's founding, as a commentary on Joseph Smith's second 1830 trial. You can read Benton's entire article at

<http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/ny/miscnyse.htm>

Scroll down to the Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate for April 9, 1831. Since Benton wrote his article shortly after the 1830 trial, and so many facts in his article are corroborated by known facts from other sources, then Benton's remarks are highly credible. So all of Nibley's, Francis Kirkham's, and other apologists' attempts to challenge the fact that the 1826 trial actually occurred are refuted by Benton's article.

[Nibley also attacked the messeanger--this time Fawn Brodie--in his ...](#)

Posted by: steve benson ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 04:37AM

. . . smarmy assault on both her and her biography on Joseph Smith, "No Man Knows My History."

Nibley titled his counter-punch, "No Ma'am, That's Not History."

I have read both.

Nibley's offering is a superficial flailing exercise in silly ad hom assault and history-insulting duck-and-dodge.

Brodie's work, by contrast, is a tour de force that helped cement her well-deserved reputation as a solid researcher and serious writer.

Edited 5 time(s). Last edit at 11/24/2015 04:10AM by steve benson.

[Re: Nibley also attacked the messeanger--this time Fawn Brodie--in his ...](#) Posted by: Chicken N. Backpacks ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 12:50PM

I could barely get through 'NM,TNH' because the smarmy personal assassination was so creepily blatant.

[I bought and read Nibley's book in 1976...](#)

Posted by: randyj ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 10:43PM

...which was about 20 years before I read Brodie's. I didn't know much about Brodie at the time. I just assumed that she was some uninformed, misguided anti-Mormon whom Nibley set straight. But in just reading Nibley's little book, I found him to be unnecessarily mean and rude, and his writing filled with bloviating and blather. When I read Brodie 20 years later, I learned why Nibley tried so hard to discredit her: his agenda was to prevent church members from reading her book.

Back when I was debating the Mobots on ARM in 2003, I read a statement of Nibley's that was really, really, dumb. I'm copying it, along with my response to it, below. A TBM was trying to explain away Oliver Cowdery's 1823 date for the alleged first vision:

- >For example,
- >the series of letters in which Cowdery tried to explain the First
- >Vision and ended up explaining the visit of Moroni.

I responded:

Cowdery was not in error. He wrote what Smith told him to. The problem was that Smith's stories of his visions were bogus, and he couldn't keep them straight when he related them to various people.

- >That Smith took him
- >aside and put him in possession of actual events seems obvious - the
- >following issue, Cowdery pleads "an error in the type," corrects
- >Smith's age (more or less) and proceeds.

Smith undoubtedly told Cowdery to correct the age later, but that does not mean that the original error wasn't Smith's, and the correction didn't remove all the inconsistencies in the story. The most glaring one being that Smith had told Cowdery that his interest in religious matters originated from the preaching of "Mr. George Lane, a presiding elder in the Methodist church." Since Cowdery didn't even meet Smith until allegedly 1829, the Lane reference had to have come from Smith.

Problem there is that Lane didn't begin preaching in Palmyra until July 1824. That blows the hell out of Smith's 1842 "official version" that sets his "first vision" in 1820.

Furthermore, in Smith's 1832 original version, he didn't even mention any revival as spurring his interest in religion.

Also, where both Cowdery's and William Smith's accounts stated that Lane's preaching inspired Joseph, Smith's 1842 version has him being persecuted by preachers for saying that he had seen a vision (but there isn't a single record from any preachers to support that assertion.)

What this tells us is that Smith invented his visions over a period of time, and as he related them to various people, he couldn't keep his stories straight. Liars have problems like that.

I also find it amusing that where you attempt to blame such errors on Cowdery or others, your hero Hugh Nibley, in his "Censoring the Joseph Smith Story", tries to explain such inconsistencies with this fantastic assertion:

"If William Smith and Oliver Cowdery give confusing accounts of the first vision, we must remember that the Prophet knew from the first that those men were not to be trusted with too much information."

Uhhhh, excuse me, Genius Nibley, but Cowdery was trustworthy enough to supposedly have been led by God to find Smith and help him translate the gold plates; trustworthy enough to be one of the "three witnesses", and to allegedly have an angel show him the gold plates; trustworthy enough to, along with Smith, receive the two priesthoods from angels; trustworthy enough to be named the "second elder of the church" upon its founding; and trustworthy enough for Smith to instruct him to keep the first history of the church.

And brother William was trustworthy enough to be called as one of the twelve apostles, who are supposed to be "special witnesses of Jesus Christ."

But in spite of this, according to Nibley, Smith "knew from the first" neither of them was "trustworthy" enough to be able to relate a credible account of what they heard from Joseph with their own ears. Apparently, Nibley wishes his readers to believe that Joseph told Oliver and William false information about the "first vision" because they couldn't be trusted to know the "real" version!

Nibley's irrational rantings merely demonstrate the desperate measures Mormon apologists go to in order to save Smith's fairy tales. And Nibley thinks he has the room to criticize other scholars such as Fawn Brodie.

[Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-  
Looker" Joseph Smith](#)

Posted by: Dave the Atheist ( )  
Date: November 22, 2015 09:42PM

good stuff

[Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-  
Looker" Joseph Smith](#)

Posted by: Alf Garnett ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 04:09AM

Very good stuff, but why someone as on-the-ball as Steve finds it necessary to include comments on Nibley's scruffy appearance, I don't know. It's completely irrelevant to the otherwise excellent case Steve presents.

My testimony (such as it was) was largely built on Nibley's work during the years I was active. Needless to say, although I still have admiration for much of his commentary on the state of LDS and the wider American culture, his work as an apologist has now to be taken with a large pinch of salt.

[Nibley was erratic, eccentric, disheveled & according his daughter Martha](#)

Posted by: steve benson ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 04:15AM

. . . disconnected and crazy--observations that she later made directly to me as a personal friend.

In that context, I regard his physical persona to have been unsurprising and not unexpected--relevant in the sense that his odd outer presentation was a symbolic reflection of his inner mental messiness and severance from reality. I therefore made note of it here.

Moreover, I'm a professional artist who draws people on a daily basis in ways that strive to capture their physical and psychological footprint, if you will, that is recognizably accurate and reflective of who they are.

Edited 11 time(s). Last edit at 11/24/2015 04:11AM by steve benson.

[Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-looker" Joseph Smith](#)

Posted by: randyj ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 10:48PM

"Very good stuff, but why someone as on-the-ball as Steve finds it necessary to include comments on Nibley's scruffy appearance, I don't know."

Nibley's disheveled appearance furthers his image as the stereotypical nutty professor. It says a lot about his mental state.

[Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-looker" Joseph Smith](#)

Posted by: smirkorama ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 06:40AM

Nibley in action. LYING.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuKb2Hbiihl>

[Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-looker" Joseph Smith](#)

Posted by: Alf Garnett ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 07:02AM

Ok. I won't go into the circumstances, but I was a guest of Nibley in his home one Sunday back in late 1978. At that time I adopted nothing short of a sycophantic attitude toward him. I found him in fairness, humble and patient with my stupid questions. I don't think it was an act on his part. Yes, his front lawn was overgrown, and he was indeed scruffily dressed. But I found that endearing and quite in keeping with the oft portrayed image of an eccentric academic obsessed with his/her passion. Nonetheless, I take your point: good cartoonists arguably need a keen eye for what might be described as the outward expression of the inner world of their subject.

One thing I do recall. All his family were ready to leave for church. He was still wearing casual

clothes; he was wearing (if I remember correctly) carpet slippers. He uttered something to the effect that it was time for him to get ready for church. And then he whispered "hasn't been much fun lately". THAT comment I remember very clearly!

I understand though, that if you are a personal friend of Martha, you are unlikely to have much sympathy with my current ambivalence toward her father (I am at a disadvantage in never having met Martha or read 'Leaving the Saints').

[I don't mind your ambivalence toward him. That may or may not change.](#)

Posted by: steve benson ( )  
Date: November 24, 2015 03:59AM

Nonetheless, he was both nutty and a liar.

[The excommunication of smith](#)

Posted by: fudley ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 08:00AM

"It is also historically recorded that he was removed from membership in a local Methodist church because of the activity and trial results."

Sour grapes anyone?

[Re: The excommunication of smith](#)

Posted by: ificouldhietokolob ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 11:53AM

Why are facts "sour grapes?"

[Re: The excommunication of smith](#)

Posted by: fudley ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 12:28PM

"Nowadays when somebody expresses sour grapes, it means that they put down something simply because they can't have it."

<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Sour+Grapes>

Smith's exing = smith's contempt for Methodists and other religions = primary motivation to start a new church.

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 11/23/2015 12:35PM by fudley.

[Never mnd that the Methodists didn't warm to Juggler Joe's . . .](#)

Posted by: steve benson ( )  
Date: November 24, 2015 04:03AM

. . . well-earned and well-known reputation as a conniving carnival barker who was up to his armpits in the practice of folk magic as he wandered around the local neighborhood digging holes in the ground in search of non-existent buried treasure while being guided by a magic rock.

The Methodists deserve credit for sound judgment in giving him the boot.

Edited 4 time(s). Last edit at 11/24/2015 04:29AM by steve benson.

Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-  
Looker" Joseph Smith

Posted by: Shummy ( )  
Date: November 23, 2015 11:05PM

There's a reason I had to swear off telling lies.

They were getting harder and harder to remember and keep straight.

Or as Mark Twain said . . .

Posted by: steve benson ( )  
Date: November 28, 2015 09:18AM

"If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything."

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/marktwain133066.html#DVEg9wwaBZW7Fdq.99>

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 11/28/2015 09:18AM by steve benson.

Re: Hugh Nibley: The Dedicated Deceiver for "Glass-  
Looker" Joseph Smith (n/t)

Posted by: ^ ( )  
Date: November 28, 2015 09:14AM

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