Joseph Smith's Phony Character Exposed by His Phony "Caractors"

Posted by: steve benson ( )
Date: May 05, 2018 03:11AM

Questioning Joseph Smith's Character: Possible, Examinable Sources of His Copied "Caractors" Supposedly Replicated from the "Book of Mormon" Gold Plates

"'Reformed Egyptian Or Deformed English?'

"There are a number of theories as to what the characters on the transcript sent to Anthon actually represent. Joseph Smith, of course, maintained they were 'reformed Egyptian.' Charles A. Shook, on the other hand, felt that:

"Instead of 'Reformed Egyptian' many of the "Caractors" are deformed English, as any one will observe who will compare them with English letters, figures and signs. I have counted thirty-six different characters in the fac-simile, some of them occurring more than once, which are either identical with, or which closely resemble, the English. . . .Latter-day Saints are very quick to see a resemblance between the 'Caractors' and the letters in the Maya and Egyptian alphabets of Le Plongeon; will they be as quick to see the similarity between the "Caractors" and the English? If similarity proves anything, it proves that the transcript is a bold, bare forgery and one not above the ability of a Smith or a Harris to execute ('Cumorah Revisited,' 1910, pp. 538-39).

"After the discovery of the vertical transcript was announced, Grant Heward suggested that it would be interesting to see if an English message could be conveyed with Joseph Smith's characters. It did not take us too long to find characters on the transcript which could represent every letter and every number in the English language. Below the reader will find the English alphabet, numbers up to ten and an English message written in 'reformed Egyptian' characters. As early as 1834 Professor Anthon suggested that the letters appearing on the transcript had been 'inverted or placed sideways.' We have taken the liberty, therefore, of turning some characters around and in some cases have used the same character to represent more than one letter or number. Nevertheless, all the characters are taken from photographs of the original document and have not been recopied by hand."

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"While we do not feel that our experiment actually proves that the transcript is composed of "deformed English," we think that it should serve as a warning to those over zealous scholars who cannot refrain from making dubious parallels between Egyptian characters and those penned by Joseph Smith.

"'MAGIC CHARACTERS?'

"A former Brigham Young University professor has maintained for a number of years that the characters on the Anthon Transcript are taken from works on magic and astrology. Although we felt that he could demonstrate a few parallels, we have never taken this idea too seriously.

"In recent years some evidence has come forth which definitely proves that Joseph Smith was involved in magical practices. For instance, in 1971 Wesley P. Walters discovered an original document which proves that Joseph Smith was a 'glass looker' and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, New York, in 1826 (see 'The Changing World of Mormonism,' pp. 67-75).

"Three years after Walters made this startling discover (1974), Dr. Reed Durham, who was director of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah and president of the Mormon History Association, discovered that what had previously been identified as the 'Masonic jewel of the Prophet Joseph Smith" was in reality a "Jupiter talisman.' This is a medallion which contains material relating to astrology and magic. Dr. Durham, apparently not realizing the devastating implications of his discovery, announced this important find in his presidential address before the Mormon History Association on April 20, 1974:

"'. . . I should like to initiate all of you into what is perhaps the stangest, the most mysterious, occult-like esoteric, and yet Masonically oriented practice ever adopted by Joseph Smith. . . . All available evidence suggests that Joseph Smith the Prophet possessed a magical, Masonic medallion, or talisman, which he worked during his lifetime and which was evidently on his person when he was martyred. His talisman is in the shape of a silver dollar and is probably made of silver or tin. It is exactly one and nine-sixteenths in diameter, . . . the talisman, . . . originally purchased from the Emma Smith Bidamon family, fully notarized by that family to be authentic and to have belonged to Joseph Smith, can now be identified as a Jupiter talisman. It carries the

sign and image of Jupiter and should more appropriately be referred to as the Table of Jupiter. And in some very real and quite mysterious sense, this particular Table of Jupiter was the most appropriate talisman for Joseph Smith to possess. Indeed, it seemed meant for him, because on all levels of interpretation: planetary, mythological, numerological, astrological, mystical cabalism, and talismatic magic, the Prophet was, in every case, appropriately described.'

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"The characters on the talisman are primarily in Hebrew, but there is one inscription in Latin. Every letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical equivalent and those numerical equivalents make up a magic square:

"'I wasn't able to find what this was, for—as I said—two months; and finally, in a magic book printed in England in 1801, published in America in 1804, and I traced it to Manchester, and to New York. It was a magic book by Francis Barrett and, lo and behold, How thrilled I was when I saw in his list of magic seals the very talisman which Joseph Smith had in his possession at the time of his martyrdom. . . .

"'So closely is magic bound up with the stars and astrology that the term astrologer and magician were in ancient times almost synonymous. The purpose of the Table of Jupiter in talismanic magis [magic?] was to be able to call upon the celestial intelligences, assigned to the particular talisman, to assist one in all endeavors. The names of the deities which we gave to you, who could be invoked by the Table were always written on the talisman or represented by various numbers. . . .

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

"Reed Durham was severely criticized by Mormon scholars and officials for giving this speech. He was even called in by Mormon President Spencer W. Kimball, and finally found it necessary to issue a letter in which he reaffirmed his faith in Joseph Smith and

said that he was sorry for the 'concerns, and misunderstandings' that the speech had caused. We feel that Dr. Durham's identification of Joseph Smith's magic talisman is one of the most significant discoveries in Mormon history and that he should be commended for his research. In 'The Changing World of Mormonism,' pp. 90-91, we show that the possession of a magic talisman by Joseph Smith fits well with evidence presented in his 1826 trial.

"In any case, the recent discovery of the vertical transcript which Martin Harris took to Professor Anthon has revived interest in magic characters and Joseph Smith's talisman. The reader will notice that in the lower right hand corner of the transcript there appears a circular object which bears some resemblance to Joseph Smith's talisman. In both cases we have a circle drawn within another circle with characters running around the edge and within the center circle. While there does not appear to be as many characters on the talisman as on the transcript, a magic work known as The Sixth & Seventh Books of Moses contains 'over One Hundred and Twenty-Five Seals, Signs, Emblems, etc.' which have magical characters and discs which could furnish ideas for creating a document like the Anthon-Harris manuscript. Francis Barrett's book 'The Magus' also contains 'Misterious Characters' and material relating to magical circles. As Dr. Durham pointed out, Joseph Smith's magic talisman is shown in this book.

"Now, although we could make many parallels to magical characters, we do not feel that the case has been proven.

"'Will Nibley Translate It?'

"We have previously quoted Dr. Hugh Nibley as making this comment concerning the recently discovered vertical transcript: "Of course it's translatable" ('The Herald,' May 1, 1980). According to 'The Herald':

"'Nibley also said he counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters in the Demotic alphabet that could be given phonetic value:

"'This offers as good a test as we'll ever get. Nobody could have faked those characters. It would take 10 minutes to see that this is fake.'

For many years Dr. Nibley has maintained that the 'Reformed Egyptian' spoken of in the Book of Mormon was derived from the Egyptian script known as Demotic. Just why the Nephites would chose such a system of writing is certainly a mystery, for Nibley

himself feels that Demotic was 'the most awkward, difficult, and impractical system of writing ever devised by man!' ('Lehi in the Desert' and the World of the Jaredites,' 1952, p. 16)

"For many years Mormon scholars have been trying desperately to link the horizontal 'Anthon Transcript' to the Egyptian language. Ariel Crowley, for instance, photographically compared characters from the Anthon Transcript with those found in 'Recognized Egyptian Works.' Although his parallels appear rather impressive at first glance, Wesley P. Walters has pointed out that they really do not amount to much:

"'The one serious attempt to find similarities with Egyptian characters (A. Crowley, "Improvement Era," February 1942, pp. 76 ff) had to hunt among scripts separated from each other by a thousand years and in some instances much later than the period from which the alleged "Reformed Egyptian" is supposed to date. In addition, Mr. Crowley sought correlations with the Sinai proto-Semetic script . . . rendering the entire attempt a linguist [ic] impossibility, a sort of alphabetic smorgasbord.' ('Joseph Smith Among The Egyptians,' p. 26, footnote).

"In the 'Improvement Era,' Oct. 1960, Stanley B. Kimball wrote the following:

""Several efforts have been made to demonstrate that the Book of Mormon characters are in fact Egyptian. Honorable as such attempts are and fascinating though they may be, the net result is generally a striking comparison of the similar characters and an ignoring of the dissimilar characters. By this very method it may be "proved" that we speak Russian in this country.'

"In 1971 Stanley B. Kimball prepared another article on the Anthon Transcript. At the end of this article he stated:

"'In conclusion, I am forced to say that the research done on the Anthon Transcript to date has accomplished little more than to define the problems connected with it. . . ' ('Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology,' BYU, August 1971, p.4)

"Two Mormon scholars tried to make a translation of the Anthon Transcript in 1973, but the results proved to be disastrous. While one translator felt he found the word 'Mormon' in the first line, the other scholar believed it contained 'Zarahemla.' John Buerger tells about this matter in Appendix I of his unpublished paper, 'A Preliminary Approach To Linguistic Aspects Of The Anthon Transcript.'

"Edward H. Ashment, who has studied Egyptology at the University of Chicago and is now working with the Translation Department of the LDS Church, has been much more cautious with regard to the Anthon Transcript. He worked on it with the noted Egyptologist George Hughes, of the University of Chicago, but was unable to come up with anything concrete.

"Dr. Hugh Nibley now claims that the transcript preserved by David Whitmer looks like it was copied by a baby: 'The first was a sloppy transcript and badly copied, . . . In the earlier transcript, it was copied horizontally which would confuse anybody.' ('The Herald,' May 1, 1980). While Dr. Nibley maintains that the newly discovered document is 'translatable,' so far he has not provided any evidence to verify this statement.

"If the vertical transcript could be translated, we really wonder what Mormon scholars would do should the results turn out to be a copy of a pagan document. As we pointed out earlier, this very thing happened with regard to Joseph Smith's 'Book of Abraham.' Mormon apologists, however, would not accept this devastating evidence and came up with all kinds of excuses as to why Joseph Smith's translation did not agree with that given by Egyptologists. At one time Dr. Nibley even supported the fantastic idea that the papyrus had a secret message unknown to Egyptologists. In more recent studies Nibley has come up with other explanations which are just as far-fetched. The Mormon scholar Dr. Henry Eyring went so far as to say:

"'. . . [T]he essential ingredient in the "Book of Abraham" is whatever the Prophet was inspired to write down. . . . it wouldn't make a bit of difference to me if the scholars, studying the scrolls that led the Prophet to think about the problem of Abraham and write about it--it wouldn't make a bit of difference to me if they discovered that it was a bill of lading for wheat in the Lower Nile ('Book of Abraham Symposium,' the Salt Lake Institute of Religion, April 3, 1970, p. 3).

"John L. Speer, a reporter for the 'Provo Herald,' asked Dr. Nibley what would happen if the transcript which was supposed to have been copied from the gold plates turned out to be something other than the 'Book of Mormon':

"'What if, when it is translated, it turns out to be just an Egyptian shopping list?'

"Countered Nibley, 'Then the question still remains—where did Joseph Smith get it? Demotic Egyptian wasn't discovered until the 1850s and there was no grammar until the 20th century.' ('The Herald,' May 1, 1980).

"It would appear from this that Nibley would maintain faith in Joseph Smith even if the document contained nothing about the 'Book of Mormon.' The statement that 'Demotic Egyptian wasn't discovered until the 1850s' is so far from the truth that we wonder if Nibley has been misquoted. The Rosetta Stone, for instance, was discovered before Joseph Smith was even born. In his monumental work, 'Egyptian Grammar,' p. 12, Sir Alan Gardiner gives this information:

"'Such a clue was at last provided when some French soldiers, working on the foundations of a fortress at Rosetta, came across a trilingual inscription in Greek, demotic, and hieroglyphic (1799) . . . scholars first directed their attention towards the demotic section.'

"Stanley B. Kimball says that '[m]any books had been published by 1828 containing facsimiles of Egyptian characters, . . .' ('Improvement Era,' February .1957, p. 106; see also, 'BYU Studies,' Spring 1970, p. 335).

"In our book 'Archaeology and the Book of Mormon,' we suggested that it was possible that Joseph Smith copied his characters from some book available at that time. Even if this were the case, however, the characters might still be impossible to read. Those who have studied our work, 'Mormonism--Shadow or Reality?,' know that when Joseph Smith made copies of the characters from the Egyptian papyrus he obtained in 1835, the reproductions were so badly done that they were hardly recognizable.

"We must remember, too, about Joseph Smith's method of working with ancient documents. Take, for instance, Facsimile No. 2 of his 'Book of Abraham,' which is published in the 'Pearl of Great Price.' In 'Mormonism--Shadow or Reality?,' pp. 337-341, we photographically demonstrate that while Facsimile No. 2 is published as one circular disc, it is in reality a combination of three documents. The first document was an Egyptian hypocephalus. This is a magical disc which was placed under the head of the mummy. Because it was damaged portions were missing. Joseph Smith proceeded to fill in these areas with material from two other documents—i.e., the 'Book of Breathings' and the 'Book of the Dead.' Hieroglyphic characters were mixed with hieratic, and as if this was not bad enough, portions of the script were actually inserted upside down and backwards to the rest of the writing! Joseph Smith's methods with regard to the 'Book of Abraham' make us very cautious about accepting his 'Book of Mormon' characters at face value. It could very well be that the newly discovered transcript is a composite of several documents. It is true that some of the characters look like Egyptian, but it is also true that they bear a resemblance to magic characters

and an even stronger resemblance to the English alphabet. It should also be kept in mind that while the English alphabet is composed of only 26 letters, the Egyptian language has hundreds of characters from which one could draw parallels.

"Stanley B. Kimball is one of the best authorities on the Anthon Transcript--i.e., the horizontal copy. Writing in 'Brigham Young University Studies,' Spring 1970, p. 350, he cautions:

"'. . . [S]uggestions and attempts have been made to indicate and prove that the characters are some form of Egyptian, Meso-American, or even Phoenician. The strongest argument that can be made for the ingenious and pioneering efforts of those who favor Egyptian origin of the characters is the definite resemblance of the RLDS transcript characters to Egyptian characters. But this does not prove that the transcript is authentic, that the characters make connected thought, or are Egyptian. (Indeed, twelve, almost half of our English-Latin characters, appear in the Cyrillic alphabet, but this fact never has given and never will give anyone insight whatsoever into or understanding of Russian, Serbian, or Bulgarian.) Also it must be pointed out that there are so many variant, hieratic, and demotic characters that the affinity of many other writing systems with Egyptian could probably be proved.'

"'If the case for the transcript characters being Egyptian in origin appears less than absolute, it is, nonetheless, infinitely stronger than any of the other arguments.'

"We would suspect that if any part of the newly discovered document is genuine it would be the circular object in the lower right hand corner. We have previously pointed out that in form it is somewhat like Joseph Smith's own magic talisman, but the reader will also notice that it bears some resemblance to Facsimile No. 2 in the Book of Abraham (see the 'Pearl of Great Price'). As we have already stated, this is a magic disk known as a hypocephalus. The Mormon scholar Michael Dennis Rhodes confirms this when he writes the following:

"'The text of the hypocephalus itself seems to be an address to Osiris, the god of the Dead, on behalf of the deceased, Sheshonk.' ('Brigham Young University Studies,' Spring 1977, pa. 274).

"All of the photographs of hypocephali we have examined have a good deal of their area devoted to drawings, but Claudia Veteto says that '[t]he last stage in the development of the hypocephalus, the Roman epoch, is characterized by the lack of any one scene on the disk, the field being occupied almost entirely by inscriptions.'

('Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.,' May 1, 1967, p. 6). More study in this area might be worth-while.

"In any case, Edward Ashment, the Mormon scholar who worked with George Hughes in an unsuccessful attempt to translate the horizontal transcript, feels that Hugh Nibley jumped the gun when he stated that the newly discovered vertical transcript could be translated. The 'Provo Herald' reported:

"'Will the translation of the new "Anthon Transcript" meet with the same fate as the translation of the Joseph Smith Papyri?

"'Jerald Tanner, author of "Shadows or Reality? ["Mormonism--Shadow or Reality?"], an expose on early Mormonism believes it will. . . .

"'Tanner maintains that there is no connection between the Book of Abraham in the "Pearl of Great Price" and the Joseph Smith papyri from which the book is supposedly translated.

"'Hugh W. Nibley, agrees with Tanner that, on the surface, there is no relationship between the two. However he holds to the theory that the Joseph Smith papyri is a prompt sheet where each word is a clue to what is written in the original "Book of Abraham."

"'Edward H. Ashment, LDS Church Supervisor of Scripture Translation Research, disagrees with both men.

"'I would tend to be more cautious than Nibley and I certainly don't hold to Tanner's views.' he said.

"'The important thing to realize when discussing both the Anthon transcript and the Joseph Smith Papyri is that Smith was not necessarily interested in historical accuracy as much as he was in getting what the Lord wanted him to get.

"'We cannot judge Joseph Smith's work from the viewpoint of twentieth century theory and methodology.'"

"'Ashment warned also against making rash statements or drawing early conclusions that could trap the Church into an embarrassing position.

"""What if the transcript is a translation of Mormon's abridgement of the Book of Lehi (the 116 lost pages)?

"""We've got to slow down and take it easy. We can't have contradictions. There are people like Tanner and 'Former Mormons for Jesus' in California who are just waiting to catch us slipping up."

"'Ashment said that Tanner had called him recently to verify Hugh Nibley's assessment that the Anthon transcript could be translated.

"""I told him I wasn't as convinced as Nibley although I did discuss the characters with Dr. George A. Hughes of the University of Chicago. We agreed that there are some characters that look like demotic Egyptian."

"""The Herald" called Hugh Nibley to see if he was still confident about his earlier assessments.

"""I still say just what I said before. It can be translated. I will take a couple of years to complete though. These things take time". ('The Herald,' May 12, 1980).

"It would now appear that Dr. Hugh Nibley is going into the same type of stall that he used with regard to the 'Book of Abraham' papyrus. In 1968 we were told that Dr. Nibley was going to unfold 'the meaning of the hieroglyphics and illustrations on these valuable manuscripts' ('Improvement Era,' January 1968, p. 40-H). Twelve years have now past and he has still not translated the hieroglyphic writing which is found on the important fragment of papyrus printed as Facsimile No. 1 in the Book of Abraham. Other Egyptologists were able to translate all of the Joseph Smith Papyri in just a short time.

"In the case of the recently found transcript which is purported to contain 'Book of Mormon' characters, Hugh Nibley immediately asserted that 'Of course its translatable.' He claimed, in fact, that he had counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters in the Demotic alphabet that could be given a phonetic value. We would expect, then, that a translation might come forth at any time. Dr. Nibley now tells us, however, that it 'will take a couple of years' to complete the translation. It would appear to us that Hugh Nibley has made a claim that he cannot back up and that he is now stalling for time.

"Klaus Baer, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, was one of 'Hugh Nibley's primary tutors in the art of reading Egyptian characters.'

('Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,' Autumn 1968, p. 109). Although Professor Baer is a good friend to Dr. Nibley, he does not share his views with regard to the recently-discovered transcript:

"'What is it? Probably not Egyptian, even if here and there signs appear that could be interpreted as more or less awkwardly copied hieroglyphs or hieratic signs. . . . I suspect that one would have about the same batting average in comparing this with Chinese or Japanese or other systems that arrange signs in columns.' (letter dated May 10, 1980).

"In a recent television interview the Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment said that the document 'doesn't come very close to being readable as demotic.' He went on to say that 'it's in a script that is entirely unique and it has no relationship, to my knowledge again, of Egyptian or to any American script.'

"'I NEFI'

"As we were about to go to press with this issue of the 'Messenger,' a very sensational story came to our attention. It was claimed that a non-Mormon scholar had translated the transcript and had found the name 'Nefi' in the text. We decided that we would have to delay publication in order to check this matter out. We discovered that the scholar was Barry Fell, and after a great deal of trouble we were finally able to locate and converse with him on the telephone. He confirmed that he had made a translation which contains the name "Nefi." This, of course, reminds one of 'Nephi'--the first writer mentioned in the 'Book of Mormon.'

"Mr. Fell claimed that he had originally been asked by a Mormon man if he could decipher the horizontal version of the 'Anthon Transcript.' He felt that it was a very poor copy and was unable to translate it. When the newspaper published a picture of the recently-discovered document, he examined it and immediately recognized that it contained scripts which he had encountered in North Africa. After translating the first four lines, he sent his work to the Mormon Church for publication. When we asked about obtaining a copy, Mr. Fell indicated that he was giving the Mormon Church first chance to purchase his work. Later, however, Mr. Fell became somewhat disturbed that the Church had not responded and began to release some of his material. We have been able to examine his translation of the first four lines plus a letter to Ali-Akbar Habeb Bushiri, dated May 27, 1980, which contains additional information.

"Mr. Fell's translation is remarkable in that it sounds very much like the first chapter of the 'Book of Mormon.' For instance, in the first line he translates: '. . . I, Nefi, a son born of sagacious parents, . . .' This, of course, sounds like the first eight words of the Book of Mormon: 'I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, . . .' (I Nephi 1:1) In line three Fell finds the words, 'My father, Lehi, was of Salem, . . .' This is similar to I Nephi 1:4: '. . . [M]y father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem. . .' Mr. Fell claims that line two contains the words 'Zedekiah' and 'Judah.' These two names are also found in I Nephi 1:4.

"While at first glance a person would be led to believe that Barry Fell has proven the 'Book of Mormon' to be authentic, a closer examination reveals just the opposite. To begin with, Fell does not read the text as 'Reformed Egyptian,' but rather as an 'Arabic text' (Letter dated May 27, 1980). He claims the first line is 'in Maghrabi script' and that lines 2-4 contain a text 'enciphered in the Belinos alphabet' which he has 'identified as cipher number 19 in in the book of ancient alphabets prepared by Ahmed bin Abu-Bekr bin Washish, a Nabataean scholar who in A.H. 241 presented his work to the Egyptian Caliph Abdul Malik bin Manwan.'

"Notice the date given by Fell is not 241 A.D., but rather 241 A.H. In his book 'Arabic Coins And How To Read Them,' p. 7, Richard Plant informs us that '[d]ates are nearly always "Anno Hegirae" . . . A.H. rather than A.D. The Hegira was the "Flight," Mohammed's flight from Mecca on 16th July 622 A.D.' This would mean that the text could not have been written before the ninth century A.D. Barry Fell's interpretation, therefore, not only would give the wrong language but also a date centuries too late to fit Joseph Smith's story of the 'Book of Mormon.' Fell makes the matter even more difficult for the Mormons to accept, however, when he claims that the circular object in Joseph Smith's document is 'what purports to be a gold dirhem issued by the Al-Muwahid, or "Almohad" . . . Dynasty in Andalusia . . . in Libyan (Numidian) script.' This would tend to date Joseph Smith's 'Caractors' to the 12th or 13th century A.D.! Barry Fell, then, would have us believe that instead of making a copy of 'Reformed Egyptian' from gold plates, Joseph Smith copied a gold coin and characters from an old Arabic manuscript known as the 'apocryphal book of Nefi.'

"Mr. Fell's thesis would lead a person to conclude that Joseph Smith saw a book or manuscript which contained a copy of a page from the 'book of Nefi' together with a translation in English, and that this became the basis for his 'Book of Mormon.' While we would really like to accept Barry Fell's work, we feel that there are a number of things that cast considerable doubt upon it.

"To begin with, Mr. Fell's translation requires that the text of the manuscript be read sideways--i.e., according to his theory, the left side of the manuscript should be the top and the text reads from right to left. Since Joseph Smith copied some Egyptian characters upside down in his 'Book of Abraham,' we could probably accept this idea without too much trouble. From that point, however, Mr. Fell's work becomes more difficult to accept. Instead of working from just one language he claims that there are five different forms of writing on the document--i.e., 'Maghrabi,' cipher number 19, Hebrew (one word), Egyptian (one word) and Numidian. While it could be true that there is more than one script involved, this claim could also be used to produce an inaccurate translation. If the script did not read as the translator wanted at some point, then it could be claimed that this portion was written in another language. Because Mr. Fell works from several different scripts and uses 'cipher,' we feel that it makes his 'translation' very questionable. His rendition of the very first character which appears on the transcript gives an interesting example of his questionable methods of operation. This character, which looks like a small bowl in a larger one, is supposed to be the n in 'Nefi.' We find this same character written seven times in the first four lines. Below is a photograph of the way it appears each time together with Mr. Fell's transliteration and translation of the word in which it appears.

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"The reader will notice that in the first three examples Fell transliterates the character as n, but in example number four he has moved into 'the Belinos alphabet' and transliterates it as y. (This character is separated by a break in the paper in the fourth example, but it is obvious that it is the same character.) In the fifth example Fell renders the same character as two letters, u and d. In the sixth example he transliterates it as f, and in the seventh it makes two letters, w and m. It would appear, then, that Mr. Fell can make almost anything he wants out of the same character. An examination of our examples shows that Fell uses the same character in making the names 'Nefi,' 'Zedekiah' and "Judah." (As we have already indicated, the names "Zedekiah" and 'Judah' appear in the 'Book of Mormon,' I Nephi 1:4). It is obvious, then, that much of Fell's case is based only on his wishful-thinking with regard to one character. The reader will also notice that the second and third characters (f and i) which Fell uses in making 'Nefi' are almost completely different in examples one and two.

"Because Mr. Fell claimed that those who knew how to read Arabic would support his translation of the first line, we decided to consult someone who was qualified to pass

judgment. We were referred to Adel Allouche of the Department of Middle East Studies at the University of Utah. Mr. Allouche, who teaches Arabic and reads both ancient and modern script, examined photographs of Joseph Smith's 'Caractors' to see if Mr. Fell's thesis is correct. He consulted others at the University concerning this matter, and after carefully comparing the characters with many ancient scripts came to the conclusion that it was no known form of Arabic nor any other language that he was aware of. He felt, in fact, that Barry Fell's translation was only a work of the imagination.

"Mr. Fell's statement that he found 'cipher number 19' in the book of ancient alphabets prepared by Ahmed bin Abu-Bekr bin Washish has been questioned by at least one scholar who is critical of his work. David Persuitte, however, has obtained access to a copy of this book and has made photocopies. It was printed in London in 1806 under the title, 'Ancient Alphabets and Hieroglyphic Characters Explained, With An Account of the Egyptian Priests, Their Classes, Initiation, and Sacrifices.' It not only has Ahmad Bin Abubekr Bin Wahshish's work in the Arabic language, but also a translation into English by Joseph Hammer. We feel that this book furnishes devastating evidence against Fell's work. The 'alphabet of Belinos, the philosopher' (the alphabet which Fell claims is used in three lines of Joseph Smith's translation) appears on page 23 of the Arabic section. As the reader can see in the photograph below, it bears little resemblance to the writing found in the recently-discovered transcript (under each character is its equivalent in the Arabic script).

http://www.utlm.org/images/newsletters/43belinosalphabetp9.gif

"While Barry Fell seems to be completely wrong in his identification of the script, it is interesting to note that according to the Translators Preface, this book contains 'eighty alphabets.' In looking over the other alphabets we find some interesting parallels to Joseph Smith's 'Caractors,' and we feel that more time should be spent in examining this matter. This is the type of book that would have really appealed to people like Joseph Smith who were involved with talismans, magic and money-digging. Pages 6 and 7, for instance, contain this information about some of the scripts:

"'Section XI. The alphabet of Costoodjis . . . He wrote in this alphabet, three hundred and sixty books on divinity, talismans, astrology, magic, influence of planets and fixed stars, and on the conjuration of spirits, . . .

"'Section XII. The alphabet of Hermes Abootat . . . He constructed in upper Egypt

treasure chambers, and set up stones containing magic inscriptions, . . .

"'Section XIII. The alphabet of Colphotorios . . . He was deeply learned in the knowledge of spirits and cabalistic spells, in talismans, astrological aspects, and in the magic and black art. . . .

""Section XIV. The alphabet of Syourianos . . . He wrote in this alphabet on astronomy, and the secrets of the stars; on talismans, and their qualities; on magic alarm-posts; on the effects of planet-rings; and on the invocation and conjuration of spirits.

"'Section XV. The alphabet of Philaos . . . He invented miraculous fuminations, marvellous compounds, talismans, and astrological tables ('Ancient Alphabets and Hieroglyphic Characters Explained . . .' , 1806, pages 6-7).

"Although Mr. Fell is certainly incorrect about the Belinos script, his work has brought an interesting old book to light. When speaking of Mr. Fell's work, we should probably mention the fact that he has stirred up a great deal of controversy with the publication of the book, America B.C. in 1976, and this year he has come out with a new volume entitled 'Saga America.' His work is of special interest to the Mormons because of his attempt to prove contacts between the Old World and America in ancient times. In his new book 'Saga America,' p. 83, he even includes a photograph of Professor Paul Cheesman of the Church's Brigham Young University. 'Newsweek,' May 26, 1975, stated that while 'Fell has his defenders,' his 'translations bring snorts from some critics. . . . "He is doing too much cross-country running," argues Frank M. Cross, professor of Semitic languages at Harvard.' Ives Goddard and William W. Fitzhugh of the Department of Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution wrote a criticism which was published in 'Biblical Archeologist, September,' 1978, pp. 85-88, which contains the following:

"'The Department of Anthropology of the Smithsonian Institution occasionally receives inquiries regarding the book America B.C. . . . The statement below has been prepared to explain briefly why Smithsonian specialists in linguistics and New World prehistory consider the conclusions reached in this book to be incorrect.'

"'None of the inscriptions mentioned in America B.C. can be accepted as genuine ancient inscriptions carved in the New World. Some appear to be accidental or random markings, while others have been created by hoaxers. . . .

"'No prehistoric loanwords of Old World origin have been found in any North American

Indian language. The contention is made in America B.C. that there are words of Egyptian, Semitic, Celtic, and Norse origin in certain Indian languages of the Algonquian family, but the alleged evidence is seriously flawed. The discussion does not distinguish clearly among the separate Algonquian languages; ignores basic facts of Algonquian grammar, linguistic history, and etymology; makes many errors on specific facts; miscopies and misinterprets words [or impossible fragments of words] and their translations; and shows no awareness of the basic scientific linguistic procedures that have been used by specialists for over a hundred years to study the history of languages. . . . The claim is made in America B.C. that songs in the Pima dialect of Papago, a language of the Uto-Aztecan family spoken in southern Arizona, can be read using a "Semitic" dictionary. But the analysis that is presented (p. 172) is not consistent with the grammars of either Papago or any Semitic language: the Papago words have been arbitrarily divided or rearranged; the free translation given in the source used has been ignored; and some of the phonetic symbols in the original publication have been misinterpreted. . . .

""In sum, it must be said that the discussions in America B.C. show no knowledge of the correct grammatical analysis of the American Indian languages considered. There is no understanding of the grammars of the Algonquian languages, Pima, or Zuni, and no conception of the existence of strict rules governing the permissible order and shape of elements in those languages. To Smithsonian linguists, the arguments presented in America B.C. are therefore of no value.'

"Mr. Fell's work on Joseph Smith's 'Caractors' leads us to believe that he first read the 'Book of Mormon' and then tried to slant his translation in that direction. He wanted the Mormon Church leaders to print it and was disappointed in their lack of response. We have been told that Mr. Fell finally submitted his work to 'BYU Studies' but those in charge decided it should not be printed. The thing we cannot understand is why Fell did not try to derive the text from Egyptian since it is claimed that he has a working knowledge of 'Egyptian hieroglyphics' (see 'Saga America,' Forward). This would certainly have been more enticing to the Mormons. In claiming that the text is from Arabic and Libyan writings dating from the ninth to the thirteenth century A.D., Mr. Fell will, no doubt, alienate his Mormon friends. While we would like to accept his thesis, we feel that his work on the first four lines is completely unconvincing.

"'MICMAC?'

"Some scholars have noticed a resemblance between some of Joseph Smith's 'Caractors'

and a script used by the Micmac Indians. In his book America B. C., Barry Fell published photographs of Micmac and related it to the Egyptian language:

"'The Micmac language has evidently acquired much of its technical and astronomical vocabulary from ancient Egyptian, . . . ' (p. 278).

"Ives Goddard and William W. Fitzhugh criticized Mr. Fell for this conjecture:

"'The claim is made in "America B.C." that the so-called hieroglyphics of the Micmac Indians are derived from Egyptian hieroglyphics. However, general resemblances between some individual signs, some of which have been misinterpreted or misdrawn (pp. 254-58), do not prove a relationship between the two writing systems, because there is no explanation of their very different structures. The Micmac writing system is a purely mnemonic system used to aid in the reciting of Christian prayers; it cannot be used to write new messages. It was developed by Roman Catholic missionaries inspired by the use of pictographic mnemonics among the Indians, but its principles have never been explicated in detail. . . ('Biblical Archeologist,' September 1978, p. 86)

"In his latest book, 'Saga America,' p. 223, Fell seems to have changed his opinion somewhat:

"'In America B.C. the hieroglyphic system of writing used by the Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia was attributed to influence from Egypt, and the similarity of the signs to hieratic letters was illustrated in tables. . . . this was taken as evidence of an ancient contact with Egyptian writers of the ancestors of the Micmacs of modern times. More recent studies have led to the conclusion that the Micmac contact was not so much with ancient Egyptian writers directly, as rather with eastern Libyans, from the border of Egypt and Libya: . . . Thus Micmac script is probably to be attributed to east Libyan influence.'

"'In "Saga America," pp. 224-225, Barry Fell has reproduced two pages of 'a handwritten copy of portions of the hieroglyphic version of the Catholic mass, translated by the Abbe Maillard in the eighteenth century.'

"After making a superficial examination of Micmac characters, we were not too impressed with the idea that they are related to Joseph Smith's work. Even if a case could be made, however, it would not provide evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Despite Barry Fell's attempts to show that Micmac was an ancient written language, the evidence stems to show just the opposite. Garrick Mallery claimed that

what has been 'erroneously' called 'Micmac hieroglyphics . . . do not partake of the nature of hieroglyphics, and their origin is not Micmac.' ('Picture Writing of the American Indians,' p. 666)

"If any connection between Micmac and Joseph Smith's work could be established, it would lead us to suspect that Smith had access to a copy of a Christian text produced in the 18th or 19th century A.D. It is possible, of course, that Joseph Smith could have acquired a sample of this writing. Wesley P. Walters has pointed out that Smith's uncle, Jason Mack, lived in "New Brunswick" (Joseph Smith's History by His Mother, page 52), and, according to Mallery, 'the northern part of New Brunswick' was occupied by Micmacs. We tend to doubt, however, that there is any connection between the two scripts.

'IMPORTANCE OF CIRCLE'

"We are inclined to believe that the circular object in Joseph Smith's transcript could hold the key to its origin. We feel that this would be an excellent area of research for those interested in the origin of Mormonism. We are especially suspicious of the disk because Joseph Smith never published it. In the case of the 'Book of Abraham' and the 'Kinderhook plates' he proudly published facsimiles for the world to see. Why was he ashamed of the Book of Mormon disk? Was he afraid that its publication would give something away? It is true that he did allow Harris to take it to Anthon in February 1828, but after that incident he seems to have suppressed it. (The reader will remember that Anthon later suggested that it might be an altered copy of something that had been published.)

"A second copy of the 'Caractors' was produced which does not contain the disk. Although the characters were copied from the circular object (see especially the last two lines in the photograph which appears on page one), they appear in straight horizontal lines. 'Book of Mormon' witness David Whitmer came on the scene a year after Harris took the transcript to Anthon. From his statement we are led to believe that he was never shown the document containing the disk. He claimed, in fact, that the horizontal transcript was "the original paper . . . Martin Harris took to Professor Anthon, . . ." ('An Address To All Believers In Christ,' p. 11)

"The fact that the Mormon Church never published the vertical transcript and that not even one handwritten copy of this important document is known to exist seems to show there was something about it. Joseph Smith did not want to make public. Because

many people will now have access to photographs of it, we feel that it is possible that someone will find similar characters or the circular object in a book published before Joseph Smith brought forth the 'Book of Mormon.'

"At the present time we are preparing a more detailed report on the whole matter. We will show, for instance, that on the horizontal transcript the characters are copied backwards to the normal direction of Hebrew or Egyptian writing. This would seem to indicate that Joseph Smith had no knowledge of ancient languages. We hope to have this preliminary report prepared within a month or two. It will contain any important new developments that come to light."
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(Source: "Joseph Smith's 'Caractors" Found!: Important Discovery Puts President Kimball on the Spot," by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, "Salt Lake City Messenger," No. 43, July 1980, at: http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no43.htm)

Re: Joseph Smith's Phony Character Exposed by His Phony "Caractors" Posted by: **grudunza** ( )
Date: May 05, 2018 11:23AM

Steve, have you seen this recent attempt at a translation?
http://bmslr.org/translation-of-the-caractors-document/

Another Mormon god goof for the Mormon god fraud Posted by: **steve benson** ( )
Date: May 05, 2018 07:52PM

I can hardly wait for its scientific peer review. :)

Even this latest peddler of the preposterous admits the following about his own attempt at Book of Mormon apologetics:

"This exercise is not designed to prove the Book of Mormon true; it is not a theological or doctrinal exercise. I leave it up to the reader (and other experts) to evaluate and process the impact of what I have found."

Uh-huh. See you in "Lancet."

Re: Joseph Smith's Phony Character Exposed by His Phony "Caractors"

Posted by: **baura** ( )
Date: May 05, 2018 07:32PM

"In any case, the recent discovery of the vertical transcript which Martin Harris took to Professor Anthon has revived interest in magic characters and Joseph Smith's talisman. The reader will notice that in the lower right hand corner of the transcript there appears a circular object which bears some resemblance to Joseph Smith's talisman. In both cases we have a circle drawn within another circle with characters running around the edge and within the center circle."

This is the Hofmann forgery that was called "The Anton Transcript." This quote from the UTLM newsletter was before Hofmann's forgery career was exposed.

https://vignette.wikia.nocookie.net/criminalminds/images/a/ab/Reformed_Egyptian_fo cb=20130914165225

Hofmann created it to match Professor Anton's description of the document Martin Harris had presented to him:

"This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calender given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived."
--Charles Anton letter dated 17 Feb. 1834

http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/anthonletter.htm

Mark Hoffman's production of a vertical column forgery of the transcript

A copy of Hofmann's forgery of the Anthon document can be seen below as it appeared in the July 1980 issue of the Mormon Church's "Ensign" magazine, p. 2. The Tanners have attached the following explanatory note to their reproductive copy of that fake document: "'Anthon Transcript' [Editor note: This is a Hofmann forgery. See 'Tracking the White Salamander' for more information]."

http://www.utlm.org/images/tracking/trackingp72sup_ensignanthontranscript.jpg
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A copy made of the original "Anthon Transcript" is here, with the following attached explanatory note:

"The document traditionally known as the 'Anthon Transcript.' A new discovery shows this is only a very poor copy of the 'Book of Mormon Characters' (see below page 3 for a full-sized photograph of the newly-discovered transcript)."

http://www.utlm.org/images/newsletters/43anthontranscript.gif
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The larger Tanner article in which the above-mentioned Hofmann forgery of the "Anthon Transcript" is reprinted can be read here:

"Joseph Smith's 'Caractors" Found!: Important Discovery Puts President Kimball on the Spot," by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, "Salt Lake City Messenger," No. 43, July 1980, at: http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no43.htm

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 05/05/2018 07:46PM by steve benson.