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Prophet or Magician?

The Debate Surrounding Joseph Smith Jr.

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Abstract

Many authors have seen elements of Joseph Smith Jr.'s life, and early Mormonism in general to be of a magical nature. D. Michael Quinn, John L. Brooke and Lance Owens in particular have written much on the subject. There does indeed appear to be a lot that may be called 'magical' in the life of the Mormon prophet. However, the distinction between magic and religion is very fine, and at times the two seem almost inseparable. Many anthropologists have wrestled with the terms, including W. J. Goode, who believes magic and religion can be distinguished on a continuum, and gives eleven characteristics to apply to practices thought to be magical.

However, a distinction like this is determining whether the practices would be magic or religious to the outsider, from an etic perspective. It is also important to attempt to ascertain how the people involved see their practices. With regard to Joseph Smith Jr., this may be done by finding motives behind his actions, and locating any biblical antecedents, as he was strongly influenced and familiar with the Bible. It may be that while the practice looks magical, it has religious roots.

Many of Joseph Smith Jr.'s early practices do appear of a magical nature. However, throughout his life, Smith moved away from these practices to something more recognisably religious. At the end of his life, he was immersed in hermeticism, something which has magical elements but unable to be tested by something like Goode’s characteristics.

By the time of Smith’s death in 1844, he was recognisably a prophet to his people, as opposed to a hired ‘money-digger.’ He had created a new context with all the characteristics of a religion, and had moved away from any magical activity he may have been involved in earlier in his life.
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Chapter 1: Joseph Smith and Magic

The Mormon prophet Joseph Smith Jr. was born in Sharon, Vermont on December the 21st, 1805. Even at an early age there were elements of his life that many authors have described as ‘magical’. However, this is an uncertain term, and one which many scholars have attempted to define in relation to religion. Jan de Vries has described the two as “conflicting twin brothers” (de Vries 1961-62:214). Something that may seem magical to an outsider may appear completely normal to someone involved. It follows that, because of this, many aspects of Joseph Smith’s life which have been referred to as ‘magical’ may in fact not have been seen this way by the Prophet himself. When put into the Mormon context, these practices which were called magical may take on new meanings, as to Joseph Smith Jr. and many early Mormons they were a part of their religion.

In this chapter we shall examine the practices which authors such as Michael Quinn, Lance Owens and John L. Brooke have called magical. Brooke argues that Joseph Smith Jr. underwent two critical transformations in his life; we shall look at both of these. In the second chapter we shall examine the terms ‘magic’ and ‘religion,’ and various distinctions between the two that have been made. Various anthropologists’ distinctions, including those of Tylor, Frazer, Malinowski and Durkheim will be examined, as well as a working model by William J. Goode. Finally, the etic and emic perspectives will be discussed. In Chapter Three we shall look at religion and magic as indigenous categories in order to shed light on whether Joseph Smith and the early Mormons themselves would have thought of what they practiced as magic. Finally, the model of William J. Goode’s will be used to test the practices against. This will show, from an etic point of view, the magic and religious elements of some early Mormon practices. Joseph Smith Jr.’s transformations may be observed. Whether these early practices are called magical or not, a movement in the career of the Mormon prophet is visible, away from practices that were more clearly magical and towards something more recognisably religious, as he established a new community. All biblical quotes and references given are from the King James edition of the Bible, as this was the edition Joseph Smith Jr. owned and was so familiar with.
In the early years of the nineteenth century, a series of religious revivals swept through the area where the Smith family were living. Mormon historian Richard Bushman writes that the 1803 revivals were such that they “would soon surpass the Great Awakening [of the 1740s]” (Bushman 1984:37). The severity of these religious revivals led to the term ‘burned over district’ being applied to the area around Palmyra. Joseph’s parents, Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith were overwhelmed by the number of religious groups, and were uncertain which, if any, to join. These revivals continued for several decades. In the 1853 edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s History, she wrote of a “great revival in religion [around the time of 1819], which extended to all the denominations of Christians in the surrounding country in which we resided […] Most of them were desirous of uniting with some church, but were not decided as to the particular faith which they would adopt” (Vogel 1996:288).

Writing of a revival that took place around the time of 1824, Joseph Smith Jr. wrote in his 1853 History that he noted how everyone seemed affected by this interest in religion. “There was in the place we live an unusual excitement on the subject of religion […] indeed the whole district of Country seemed affected by it and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties” (Vogel 1996:58). Great multitudes may have allied themselves with different groups, but the Smith family held back. Lucy desperately wanted to be part of a group and did frequent Methodist meetings and even joined a group. “I began to attend Methodist meetings, and, to oblige me, my husband joined me; but when this came to the ears of his father and oldest brother, they were […] displeased” (Vogel 1996:250). This was printed in Lucy Smith’s 1853 edition of her History. Joseph Smith Sr. whilst sceptical of the preachers in the revivals, was not without his own religious beliefs. He experienced visions, or prophetic dreams. There were seven in total, and in many of them he was on the brink of receiving knowledge regarding salvation only to wake up at the critical moment. His various dreams led him to believe that joining a denomination was not the answer.
This was a very fertile time and area for religion and the religious mind. This can be seen by the fact that visions were commonplace, and Joseph Smith Jr. was not the only person to declare himself a prophet. Fawn Brodie lists several other people proclaiming the millennium, all of whom achieved some success at the time. However, she writes that "of these and other prophets only one was destined for real glory [...] Joseph Smith, a century after his death, had a million followers who held his name sacred and his mission divine" (Brodie 1971:15). The religion continues to grow, and there are at present ten million Mormons worldwide.

From the time of Joseph Smith Jr.'s birth until about 1811, the Smith family moved frequently. Fawn Brodie has commented that this contributed to "an insecurity that in a lifetime of 38 years he was never to escape" (Brodie 1971:7).

All of this had an influence on the young Joseph Smith. The bewildering variety of religious groups, his mother's desire to be a part of one and his father's reluctance all combined to confuse him even more. In fact, "the earliest non-Mormon documents that mention him at all [...] indicate that Joseph reflected the religious independence of his father" (Brodie 1971:16). It would not be long before he would claim to have had visions of his own, visions that would reinforce the beliefs of his father and lead to the beginning of a new religious tradition.

1.1 Alleged Magical Influences.
1.1.1 Counterfeiting.
A major problem in early America, and one with magical connotations was counterfeiting. This was particularly strong in Vermont, where Joseph Smith's family settled. His relatives on both his father and mother's sides had first hand experience with counterfeiting. The area in which they lived was, as Fawn Brodie puts it, "infested" (Brodie 1971:7) with counterfeiters. While this may not seem strictly magical, John L. Brooke has argued that counterfeiting has strong links with alchemy and hermeticism. "Counterfeiting, in its medieval and early modern manifestations, represented a low
tradition of alchemical experimentation” (Brooke 1994:107). Hermeticism goes back to 1463, when the Corpus Hermeticum was translated. These were the purported revelations of Hermes Trismegistus, who was believed to have preceded Moses. A book of the corpus, entitled ‘Pimander,’ was seen by many to be a precursor to Genesis. This was not the case, as Isaac Casaubon showed in 1614. Hermes Trismegistus was in fact a creation of second century Gnostics. However, hermeticism was an important tradition, and one of its components is alchemical belief and practice. The goal of alchemy was to reach the Philosopher’s Stone, which would transmute base metals into gold, and also give humans perfection, and immortality on earth.

The goal of hermeticism was to reach once again the status of Adam before the Fall. Hermetic thought can be seen rather more clearly in the ideas of Joseph Smith Jr. towards the end of his life, as he began to move from the role of prophet to that of magus. Brooke demonstrates the link between alchemy and counterfeiting in eighteenth century America by suggesting that both traditions “offered a similarly flawed dream of riches and treasure” (Brooke 1994:107). The alchemist strives to transmute base metals into gold, the counterfeiter doing effectively the same thing, albeit in a more deceptive manner. Many counterfeiters had knowledge of the alchemical tradition, argues Brooke, and this added to the air of mystery surrounding them. These tricksters “had long had an acquaintance with methods of making the fraudulent seem real, methods that to the uninitiated might appear magical” (Brooke 1994:110).

D. Michael Quinn disagrees with the claim that there was an alchemical aspect to counterfeiting, stating that “Counterfeiting was a significant dimension of early Mormon experience […] but there was never any suggestion of alchemical belief or metaphysical context” (Quinn 1998:307). It does however appear that many counterfeiters did have connections with alchemy. In his 1867 Account, Pomeroy Tucker mentions the influence that the works of Stephen Burroughs had on Joseph Smith Jr. “The stories of Stephen Burroughs and Captain Kidd, and the like, presented the highest charms for his expanding mental perceptions” (Vogel 2000:93). Burroughs’ Memoirs Of My Own Life was published in 1811. In this his exploits are recounted, including counterfeiting and an
encounter with a “‘wonderful transmuter of metals’” (Brooke 1994:111). Brooke also mentions one Joseph Bill Packer, a counterfeiter who wrote of his “‘chymical process’” (Brooke 1994:109). “What is significant is that Bill had knowledge of the [alchemical] tradition and, at the very least, used the mystique of the alchemist as cover for his counterfeiting activities” (Brooke 1994:109).

1.1.2 Treasure-Digging
One activity in which the connections to the hermetic and alchemical world-view can be seen more clearly is money digging, or the search for buried treasure. Joseph Smith Jr. and his family were immersed in the world of counterfeiting, but searching for buried treasure was something that Joseph was directly involved in.

The search for buried treasure goes back to medieval England, where it was believed that there were chests of treasure buried all around the country. Keith Thomas notes that although this sounds rather odd, “it should be remembered that in the absence of an alternative system of deposit banking the possibility of coming across hidden treasure was by no means a chimera” (Thomas 1971:279). It was common for people to hide their money in various places, at times buried in the ground. It was also commonly believed that there would be a guardian of some description at the site of the treasure, which would need to be overcome. Because of this it was necessary to bring someone with expertise in firstly finding the treasure, and secondly to exorcise the spirit guarding it. It was here that the treasure seer or diviner came in, with their knowledge of things magical.

The belief that there were riches buried in the ground was also popular in early America. “Indeed, backcountry folk insisted that troves of pirate treasure guarded by evil spirits pockmarked the New England countryside” (Taylor 1986:7). This idea was fuelled by stories of people discovering treasure in the earth, and living well for the rest of their lives. For example, one Daniel Lambert, formerly a farmer no richer than his neighbours appeared to suddenly have come into wealth. He “added immeasurably to his local popularity by buying round after round for his neighbours […] and increased their consternation by ostentatiously lighting his pipe with burning bank notes” (Taylor
Lambert added to this by showing his divination skills in finding gold hidden in a field. The story of Lambert and others like him increased the public’s determination to find this buried gold.

Taylor explains the popularity and serious belief in treasure seeking by suggesting that it possessed a dual nature, “functioning at once as a supernatural economy [...] and as a materialistic faith” (Taylor 1986:8). Looking at it this way, it can be understood that the search for buried treasure gave people a reassurance that they would have some control over the supernatural, and a chance to gain riches.

Joseph Smith Jr.’s earliest detractors attempted to use the fact that he and his family had been involved in the search for buried treasure against them. Many believed that “treasure-seeking was an ignorant superstition whose devotees were either credulous dupes or cunning con-men equally driven by materialistic greed” (Taylor 1999:142). To some it seemed that religion and the treasure search could not be reconciled. However, “for the Smiths and many other hill-country Christian primitivists, treasure-seeking was an extension of their ‘experimental religion’” (Taylor 1999:146). These people saw themselves as living in a ‘magical cosmos’ filled with supernatural entities, both good and bad.

In order to find the treasure, certain requirements had to met. Alan Taylor writes of a boy named Smith, from New York. Smith, who was no relation to Joseph Jr., possessed a seer stone, something that most treasure seekers used. In order to find the location of the buried treasure, or anything that was being looked for, the stone would usually be placed in a hat and then one’s face over it, so that all was darkness. The boy Smith used this method, as did many other treasure seers. Quinn states that before Joseph Smith Jr. “Palmyra’s most notable seer was Sally Chase who used a greenish-coloured stone” (Quinn 1998:41).

Taylor writes that the seer “needed to find the particular stone that was right for him” (Taylor 1986:10). This seems to have been the case for Joseph Smith Jr. who, after
looking in a seer stone belonging to someone else, saw the place in which one for him was lying. Quinn writes, “Brigham Young verified that [Joseph] Smith used someone else’s stone to find his own stone, which Joseph dug up himself” (Quinn 1998:43). As well as Brigham Young, Quinn cites the non-Mormon William D. Purple, “who published his reminiscences of acting as scribe for an 1826 court case during which he heard Joseph Jr. describe finding his first stone” (Quinn 1998:42). Purple stated that Smith looked into Sally Chase’s seer stone to find his own. Quinn also reports that many of the Smith’s neighbours, hearing of Joseph Jr.’s ability with the seer stone, were keen to enlist his help. “E. W. Vanderhoof remembered that his Dutch grandfather once paid young Smith 75 cents to look into his ‘whitish, glossy, and opaque’ stone to locate a stolen mare” (Quinn 1998:43). The horse was soon recovered. Although Vanderhoof later grumbled that anyone could have guessed where the horse had gone, Quinn stresses the fact that 75 cents, which would have been more than enough to buy a new book in those days, was paid. This shows that it was believed that Joseph did indeed have a real ability, and people were prepared to pay him for his services.

Treasure seeking was an activity that was engaged in by all manner of people. Brodie mentions a Vermont weekly paper which wrote “‘We could name, if we pleased [...] at least five hundred respectable men who do in the simplicity and sincerity of their hearts believe that immense treasures lie concealed upon our Green Mountains, many of whom have been for a number of years industriously and perseveringly engaged in digging it up’” (Brodie 1971:18). One such man was Joseph Smith Sr. An article in the Palmyra Reflector reported that Joseph Smith Sr. “‘evinced a firm belief in the existence of hidden treasures, and that this section of the country abounded in them. He also [...]believed that] These treasures were held in charge by some evil spirit’” (Brodie 1971:430). This belief in a guardian or ‘evil spirit’ protecting the treasure meant that finding the location of the buried riches was only the first part of the process of actually acquiring it, for the guardian must also be overcome.

In 1825 Joseph Smith Jr. went to work for Joseph Knight and Josiah Stowell in South Bainbridge, at the site of what Stowell thought to be an old Spanish mine. Unable to find
the buried coins, Joseph Smith Jr. and his father were asked to help. It has been shown that Joseph Smith Jr.'s reputation as a treasure seer was well known, and here he had been enlisted to find the treasure because of the fact that he had a reputation for being able to see things that others could not. Lucy Smith wrote in the 1853 edition of her *History* that “He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye” (Vogel 1996:309-10). The ‘certain keys’ referred to Joseph’s seer stone. D. Michael Quinn writes that “several accounts agreed that teenage Joseph first obtained a whitish, opaque stone in September 1819” (Quinn 1998:43). However, this was only one of several seer stones possessed by Joseph Smith Jr. Quinn argues that “from a combination of friendly and unfriendly sources, it is clear that Joseph Smith as a teenager acquired three different seer stones” (Quinn 1998:42). It was a brown stone, found whilst digging a well for Willard Chase in 1822 that he favoured the most. Brodie writes that following the discovery of this stone, “Joseph’s money-digging began in earnest” (Brodie 1971:20). Quinn states that “even *Book of Mormon* witness Martin Harris linked the time of Smith’s discovery of a seer stone in the Chase well with the time the young seer first became involved in treasure-digging along the Susquehanna” (Quinn 1998:53).

1.1.3 Rhabdomancy

Joseph Smith’s use of seer stones in his treasure digging has been well documented. Quinn argues that not only Joseph Jr. but also his parents had a belief in the usefulness of seer stones. “According to neighbours in various towns of Vermont, a revelatory stone, the divining rod, and the treasure-quest were all part of Joseph Sr.’s beliefs and practices […] his wife Lucy Mack Smith also used seer stones” (Quinn 1998:42). Not only were these beliefs common in and around the area in which they lived, but they were also practiced within the family, giving Joseph Jr. an even greater exposure to them.

There was, however, another method of discovering the location of buried treasure. The art of rhabdomancy, or divining with a rod had been in use since biblical times, but became very popular in the sixteenth century, particularly in Germany. It was from this point onwards that the term rhabdomancy was “more particularly applied, to begin with,
to a procedure which we should now call ‘prospecting’ in mines” (Grillot de Givry 1973:311). Taylor describes the type of branch to be used as “a freshly-cut, forked witch hazel [...] branch with one eighteen to twenty-four inch prong held in each fist and a third, centre prong pointing directly away from the ‘conductor’” (Taylor 1986:10). The ‘conductor’ would then walk over the area where the treasure was thought to be buried. At the exact location, the rod would jerk or twist in the hands of the ‘conductor.’

Taylor includes part of a letter written by Joseph Smith Jr. on June the 18th 1825 in which he wrote of another way to use the rod. Smith wrote “‘take a hazel stick one yard long being new Cut and cleave it Just in the middle and lay it asunder on the mine’” (Taylor 1986:11). If there was treasure buried at that spot the two halves would join together.

Another reference to divining rods occurs, writes Quinn, in Doctrine and Covenants Section 8. Joseph Smith Jr. received a revelation concerning his scribe Oliver Cowdery in April 1829. “Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron; behold, it has told you many things” (D&C 8:6). Quinn argues that this was a reference to divining rods. “The 1835 Doctrine and Covenants substituted the phrase ‘the gift of Aaron’ in place of ‘working with the rod’ and ‘rod of nature’ in the 1833 Book of Commandments” (Quinn 1998:37). It would appear that the purpose of this revelation was to validate “as ‘the work of God’ an instrument of folk magic that Oliver Cowdery had already been using for revelations before he met Smith” (Quinn 1998:39). The action was being justified and Cowdery told that it was fine to have used the rod, and also to continue to use it.

1.1.4 Magic Circles

Another folk magic practice to do with treasure seeking that the Smiths have been associated with is that of making magic circles on the ground for protection from the guardian spirits. Taylor quotes from one William Stafford, who spoke of Joseph Smith Sr. using these magic circles. Stafford described the senior Smith’s method of making the circle. A circle was made around where the treasure was thought to be. To keep the evil spirits away witch hazel sticks were put in the ground around the circle. Another circle
was made inside the first. Then, said Stafford, “he walked around three times on the periphery of the last circle, muttering to himself something which I could not understand. He next stuck a steel rod in the middle of the circles, and then enjoined profound silence upon us” (Taylor 1986:11). This idea of silence was important so as not to wake the spirit guarding the treasure. A breaking of the silence would often be blamed for an unsuccessful night’s digging, and the disappearance of the treasure.

The means for getting past these evil spirits could become very complicated. Circles were commonly used and reading from various books, both astrological and religious became prominent. “A party led by [...] Joseph Smith Jr. drove stakes around their circle and one man with a drawn and brightly polished sword orbited the digging site while the rest shovelled” (Taylor 1986:11). Even animal sacrifice was not uncommon and yet, if the party did get past the guardian they must still be alert, as the treasure was liable to move, either down further into the ground, or sometimes sideways. Perhaps unsurprisingly, very few treasure-seekers were actually successful.

1.1.5 Astrology

D. Michael Quinn links Joseph Smith Jr.’s treasure seeking with astrology. He writes that “some of Joseph Jr.’s contemporaries condemned his early treasure-seeking as inconsistent with his later religious claims, yet both activities found a comfortable home within the astrological world view” (Quinn 1998:81). Quinn demonstrates extensively that the Mormon prophet was interested in and took notice of astrology. He argues that “both friendly and unfriendly sources show that astrology was important to members of the Smith family” (Quinn 1998:72). With regard to searching for buried treasure, Quinn argues that some knowledge of astrology was fundamental. “Cowdery and the Smiths required knowledge of astrology in order to use divining rods in the 1820s” (Quinn 1998:97). It was believed that the state of the moon would affect the success of a money digging expedition. Like Taylor, Quinn quotes from William Stafford, who participated in these searches for treasure with the Smiths. Stafford had said that success in the digs “depended on a great measure on the state of the moon” (Quinn 1998:74). This reflected the belief of many. Astrology was not merely consulted for treasure seeking though.
Astrological almanacs were consulted for a great deal of everyday actions. Quinn argues that the Smith family consulted these almanacs and took note of astrological advice. “When there are demonstrable correlations between voluntary act and astrological guides, this suggests that the individual chose to do certain things in conformity with astrological advice” (Quinn 1998:75).

Seventeen of Joseph Smith’s weddings, argues Quinn, were performed on days with astrological significance. Not only this, but “Smith performed three polygamous marriages for Brigham Young on the recommended days of marriage according to the moon’s transit through the zodiac” (Quinn 1998:77).

Belief in astrology was common, and Quinn shows that it was significant to the Smith family, and particularly Joseph Jr.

1.1.6 Magic Parchments

Another magical aspect of Joseph Smith’s life, which has been documented by Quinn, are the Smith family’s magic parchments, or lamens. There were three parchments, and these were handed down through the Smith family. Quinn writes that instructions on the making of these parchments could be found in medieval manuscripts, and that “the parchments show precise knowledge of directions for ritual magic” (Quinn 1998:104). The meaning of the inscriptions was available in published books at the time but, as Quinn concedes, this does not necessarily mean that they had that meaning for the Smiths. However, “their inscriptions and purposes fit the context of early Mormon events” (Quinn 1998:104). Although very much bearing an occult appearance, Quinn states that “aside from the use of common symbols in magic, the Smith family’s parchments had purposes very different from the grimoires of Anglo-European black magic” (Quinn 1998:104).

The parchments themselves were all for different purposes. Firstly, there was a ‘Holiness to the Lord’ parchment, which was “a lamen of ceremonial magic to receive visitation from ‘good angels’” (Quinn 1998:104). The second parchment Quinn refers to as the
'Saint Peter bind them' parchment, a protective amulet. Lastly was a house-amulet, the 'Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah' parchment.

These magic parchments combine verses from the Bible with magic symbols. The source for these magic symbols, Quinn argues, was Ebenezer Sibly's *New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences*. "With thirteen editions between 1784 and 1826, Sibly's handbook was the most available academic work on ceremonial magic in Joseph Smith's generation" (Quinn 1998:106).

While unable to say definitively who inscribed each lamen, Quinn demonstrates that the purposes of the magic parchments correspond to the circumstances of Joseph Smith Jr. and his father. For example, "all three parchments aided generally in Joseph Jr.'s treasure-quest and specifically in the coming forth of the *Book of Mormon*" (Quinn 1998:111).

In response to William J. Hamblin's challenge that Joseph or anyone associated with him could not know the real meaning and purpose of these artefacts, Quinn writes "when the artefacts are linked with their uses according to occult handbooks and with the context of Joseph Smith's life and circumstances, Hamblin's polemical dodge is not plausible" (Quinn 1998:116).

1.2 From Treasure-Seeker To Prophet.

It can be seen that in Joseph Smith Jr.'s early years he and his family were concerned with that which others may call superstition. This involved treasure seeking, with the young Joseph Smith attaining the role of 'treasure seer'. John L. Brooke argues that Joseph Smith Jr. went through two critical transformations. He started "as a village conjurer but transformed himself into a prophet of the 'Word', announcing the opening of a new dispensation. Then [...] Smith transformed himself and the Mormon priesthood into Christian-hermetic *magi*" (Brooke 1994:4). The medieval alchemist, striving to reach the Philosopher's Stone is one form of *magus*. Taylor writes that "Joseph Smith Jr.'s transition from treasure-seeker to Mormon prophet was natural, easy, and incremental"
and that it resulted from the dynamic interaction of two simultaneous struggles” (Taylor 1999:143-44). These struggles were firstly the treasure seekers with those hostile spirits guarding the buried gold, and secondly the treasure seekers with those hostile rationalists living around them. Taylor argues that faced with these challenges the seekers “adopted more complex and explicitly empirical techniques [...] determined to prove [...] that they were in fact careful and canny investigators of the supernatural” (Taylor 1999:144).

1.2.1 Joseph Smith’s Visions
Joseph Smith Jr.’s transformation into a prophet of the ‘Word’ began with what he describes as a vision of the divine. Although the year of what later became known as the First Vision has been disputed, it is generally given as 1820. There is some debate as to whether Joseph Smith Jr. was actually remembering a religious revival in 1822, not 1820 when he wrote it down. However, in his History of 1832 Smith wrote that it was “in the 16th year of my age” (Vogel1996:28), which would have been 1821.

As the religious revivals swept through the area where the Smith family were living, the young Joseph became more and more concerned about religion. “At about the age of twelve years my mind became seriously impressed with regard to the all important [sic] concerns for the welfare [sic] of my immortal Soul” (Vogel 1996:27). He was confused by the many churches, and had no idea which was the right one to join, and so hung back. Joseph Jr. would still study the Bible and it was around this time he came upon James 1:5, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” In Joseph Smith Jr.’s 1839 History, he wrote that “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man [...] it seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart” (Vogel 1996:60).

Having read this, Smith decided that he must ask God himself in order to know the truth. He made his way to a clearing in the woods to pray. As Richard Bushman points out, although this is referred to as the First Vision, in order “to understand how Joseph Smith’s life unfolded, it must be kept in mind that in 1820 he did not know this was the First Vision” (Bushman 1984:56). There are differences in Smith’s account of his First
Vision between his 1832 History and his 1839 History. In 1832 he saw the vision as a personal conversion, writing that a pillar of light descended “and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me Joseph [...] thy sins are forgiven” (Vogel 1996:28). In 1839 Joseph wrote that “when the light rested upon me I saw two personages [...] standing above me in the air” (Vogel 1996:60). However, the result of this vision was that Joseph knew his sins had been forgiven, and that, in the 1839 account, he was told to join no church as they were all wrong.

Michael Quinn writes of the importance of this first vision with regard to the Smith family’s folk magic. “Smith’s first vision occurred within the context of his family’s treasure-quest. His first emphasis was God’s forgiveness, yet some of Smith’s accounts state that God told him the clergymen of any organised church were wrong [...] Smith’s vision of the divine gave him every reason to ignore the clergy’s instructions” (Quinn 1998:31). Joseph’s sins had been forgiven, and he now felt no pressure to join a religious group but felt justified in doing his own thing.

Brodie dismisses this first vision as “probably the elaboration of some half-remembered dream [...] or it may have been sheer invention [...] to cancel out the stories of his fortune-telling and money-digging” (Brodie 1971:25). Whether a divine message or sheer invention, the story of the first vision of Joseph Smith Jr. came to take on a significant meaning in later years.

Although after his first visionary experience Joseph was reassured, he soon “fell into transgression and sinned in many things which brought a wound upon my soul” (Vogel 1996:29), as he wrote in 1832. In 1839 he expanded on this, saying that he fell “into many foolish errors and displayed the weakness of youth” (Vogel 1996:63). He continued to feel guilty until, on the evening of September 21 1823 he prayed for forgiveness in the small house in which his family lived in. He wrote “I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness” (Vogel 1996:63). Joseph reported later that as he prayed, the room became full of light and a figure appeared, hovering in the air beside him. “He had on a loose robe of exquisite whiteness [...] his whole person was
glorious beyond description” (Vogel 1996:63). This figure declared himself to be Moroni, who told Joseph that he had been sent from God to him, and that God had a work for Joseph to do. Moroni went on to speak of “a book deposited written on gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from which they sprang” (Vogel 1996:64). Also deposited with these plates were “two stones in silver bows and these [...] constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim” (Vogel 1996:64). These stones were in order to translate the writing on the gold plates, prepared by God. Joseph said that Moroni quoted some biblical passages, passages which Joseph was familiar with and which had to do with the last days and the coming millennium, such as Malachi 3 and Joel 2:28-32. After stressing that these items should not be shown to anyone, Moroni left through “a conduit open right up into heaven” (Vogel 1996:65).

However, as Joseph lay coming to grips with what he had experienced, the room began to get light again and Moroni reappeared and told Joseph the same things he had spoken of only minutes before, with the addition of imminent judgements and desolations. Joseph claimed that having seen Moroni depart for the second time he could no longer sleep, and he lay awake pondering what he had seen. “But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before and an added caution” (Vogel 1996:66). This added caution was that there would be a temptation from Satan of wanting merely to get rich from the plates, when the only object should be to glorify God.

Moroni left for the third time, his departure followed shortly by the cock crowing. Joseph reported that he rose, and was surprised to realise that his meeting with Moroni had lasted all night. He then stated that he went to work in the fields. Falling unconscious, Joseph believed that he beheld the figure of Moroni out in the field, who told him to tell his father of his mission to retrieve and translate the gold plates.

There are many elements of Joseph Smith Jr.’s second vision which authors have deemed magical. Quinn sees Moroni as a folk magic treasure guardian. He refers to Reginald Scot’s Discourse, which he argues the Smith family had access to. This Discourse states
that "when Treasure hath been hid [...] there is a magical cause of something attracting the starry spirit back again, to the manifestation of that thing" (Quinn 1998:142). Moroni had once guarded the gold plates, and buried them in the hillside in order to preserve them from his killers. "If a treasure-guardian of concealed gold was once mortal, American folklore usually described this being as a previously murdered man" (Quinn 1998:142), which fits with Joseph Smith Jr.'s account of what Moroni told him in his vision.

Quinn argues that the Smith family used Scot's writings extensively. These stated that eleven o'clock at night was the optimum time for communicating with a spirit. Quinn writes that "[Oliver] Cowdery wrote that Smith began praying earnestly 'to commune with some kind of messenger' that Sunday night about 'eleven or twelve'" (Quinn 1998:143). Added to this, writes Quinn, is the fact that the night of Joseph Smith's experience with Moroni, the 21st of September 1823, was, astrologically speaking, "the only night of the week ruled by Jupiter [Joseph Smith Jr.'s ruling planet]" (Quinn 1998:143). This was also the time of the autumnal equinox, an important point, argues Quinn. "In the magic world view, the equinox was a time when the earth could be expected to experience the introduction of 'broad cultural movements and religious ideas'" (Quinn 1998:144).

Quinn suggests that an unsuccessful search for treasure earlier that evening may in fact have spurred Joseph on to seek guidance from a spirit. Moroni was reported to have appeared at around eleven, an important time for spirits to appear in mid-nineteenth century folk-lore. The fact that Joseph said Moroni appeared on three separate occasions that night is also significant. Brodie writes "three times that night the spirit appeared, as angels are wont to do, for, to be authentic, celestial truth must be thrice repeated" (Brodie 1971:39). Quinn states that the spirit appearing three times was "expected within the magic world view" (Quinn 1998:195).
1.2.2 Salamanders and Slippery Treasure

The hill where Joseph Smith Jr. believed the gold plates to be buried was about three miles away from where the Smiths lived. The day after Moroni's visit, the 22nd of September, Joseph visited the Hill Cumorah where he believed the plates were buried, in order to procure them. Under a large stone he found a stone box. Smith wrote “I looked in and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummin and the breastplate as stated by the messenger” (Vogel 1996:67). However, Joseph later said that he was overcome with feelings of greed upon seeing the gold, despite Moroni’s warnings, and was not allowed to take the plates.

It has been argued that Joseph may have spoken of an amphibian, a toad-like creature that he saw with the plates. Quinn and Brooke both cite Willard Chase’s 1833 affidavit in which he writes “He [Joseph] saw in the box something like a toad, which soon assumed the appearance of a man, and struck him on the side of his head” (Vogel 1998:67). Benjamin Saunders, an acquaintance of Joseph Smith Jr. was interviewed in 1884. He also spoke of Smith’s telling of an encounter with a toad. “When he [Joseph] took the plates there was something down near the box that looked some like a toad that rose up into a man which forbid him to take the plates” (Vogel 1998:137).

Quinn reports that finding amphibians in the ground in the area of the Smith’s farm was not at all unusual. “Amphibians such as frogs, toads, and salamanders were extremely common in the moist soil of New York and New England” (Quinn 1998:151). There were several cases of people digging wells and encountering these creatures. There was also a commonly held belief that these amphibians could remain alive for hundreds of years, trapped underground, for example in stone.

Joseph Smith Jr. could well have seen a frog or a toad in the earth when he attempted to retrieve the plates. However, as Quinn writes “it is useful to explore the connections he and others may have made between seeing an amphibian at a treasure-site and the appearance of an otherworldly personage” (Quinn 1998:151-152). He points out that neither Chase nor Saunders actually state Smith said it was a toad, but rather like a toad,
and writes that “Joseph Sr. and Jr. undoubtedly used the word ‘salamander’ or one of its equivalent descriptions from the occult traditions clearly in evidence on the Smith family’s magic parchments” (Quinn 1998:152-153).

The salamander, an amphibian said to have the ability to change into human form, was important with regard to the hermetic tradition. (Brooke 1994:301). Brooke describes it as “an emblem of the philosopher’s stone, the quintessence of perfection” (Brooke 1994:301). Vogel, on the other hand, disagrees with Quinn’s argument for a salamander. “I see no justification for Quinn’s associating the toad-like creature with a salamander [...] the toad was also associated with folk magic and treasure seeking” (Vogel 1998:67n11). It is interesting, however, that both authors suggest a connection to magical beliefs.

In the mid-1980s the salamander issue arose once more. Mark Hoffman (currently in prison) lived in Salt Lake City and earned his money as a counterfeiter. Hoffman wrote what has come to be known as the ‘White Salamander Letter,’ supposedly written by Martin Harris to William W. Phelps. This document “introduced a powerful alchemical symbol as the bait in a fraud worthy of any of the great eighteenth-century conning men” (Brooke 1994:300). In this letter was written that Joseph Smith Jr. spoke of an encounter with a salamander on the Hill Cumorah, rather than the toad-like creature. This salamander, stated the letter, turned into a spirit, struck Smith and would not allow him to take the gold plates. In order to be allowed the plates, Smith was told that his dead brother Alvin must be brought to the hill the next year. Hoffman’s letter was a forgery, but as Quinn writes “the historical issues these forgeries first raised still require a careful re-examination of other evidence long in existence” (Quinn 1998:xx). Brooke concurs.

“There are many who, either explicitly or implicitly, see the survival of Mormonism in the embracing of this hermetic tradition and its complex roots in the Gnostic mysteries of the ancient Mediterranean world” (Brooke 1994:301). The Church itself feels very uneasy about items such as this. “The church had already spent considerable money on controversial documents, the contents of which always seemed to leak out to the public” (Booke 1994:300).
Being denied the contents of the stone box, Joseph Smith returned to the site on the same day for the next four years. Quinn argues that this too has magical significance, and quotes from *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual*, a book by Eliphas Levi, published in 1856. “‘Should nothing result […] the same experiment must be renewed in the following year, and if necessary a third time’” (Quinn 1998:158).

On September the 22nd 1827, Joseph Smith Jr. made the trip to the Hill Cumorah for what would be the last time. It appears that he planned ahead in order to help his chances of securing the gold plates. The fact that he went dressed in black and riding on a black horse has significance within folk magic, writes Quinn, who cites an occult handbook he argues Smith was familiar with. This handbook stated that with regard to the convocation of good spirits “‘take a (black) Robe of Mourning’ […] in addition, smearing lampblack on the palm had been used as a form of divinatory scrying for centuries” (Quinn 1998:166). Quinn argues that by using this black colouring, Joseph Smith Jr. was using folk magic beliefs in order to promote his success in his bid to obtain the gold plates.

In addition to this, Quinn states that Smith’s “September 1827 visit conformed to astrological traditions and to an occult handbook on sale in his neighbourhood” (Quinn 1998:167). However, Quinn does concede that “astrology and ceremonial magic do not exhaust the parallels that are possible for this momentous occasion in Joseph Smith’s life” (Quinn 1998:167). For example, September the 27th 1827 was the day of the Jewish Feast of Trumpets, thought to begin the Days of Awe.

Whatever Smith’s influences, in 1827 he was apparently successful and secured the gold plates for himself. Although he brought them home, “Joseph warned his family that it meant instant death to look at them and frequently changed their hiding-place” (Brodie 1971:41).

In claiming to have the gold plates and yet keeping them to himself and hidden from others, Joseph incurred the anger of his former associates, the money-diggers, who
claimed to have a right to this 'gold bible.' Brooke cites Martin Harris, who said “‘they [the money-diggers] claimed that Joseph had been a traitor, and had appropriated that which belonged to them’” (Brooke 1994:156).

1.2.3 Rosicrucianism

Owens, while emphasising that Joseph Smith Jr. drew from many traditions, argues that “we must recognise that something in the nature of the prophet, some element of his own intrinsic vision, did resonate with the occult traditions of the Western spiritual quest” (Owens 1994). This ‘Western spiritual quest’ includes Rosicrucianism, of which Owens writes that Joseph “may even have heard the old [...] legend of a seventeen-year-old prophet named Christian Rosencreutz and the mysterious ‘Book M’ that he translated” (Owens 1999:168). According to the story, tablets and a brass plate were found in Rosencreutz’s tomb bearing inscriptions, along with the Book M. Three Rosicrucian manifestos were published between 1614 and 1616 and were “steeped in Hermetic, alchemical, and in the broader definition, Gnostic symbolism” (Owens 1994:16). While it is not clear whether the Mormon prophet was familiar with the story of the translation of the Book M, Owens points out that “a vague outline of the story told by Joseph Smith might here also be discerned” (Owens 1994).

Brooke notes that the idea of a hidden or buried source of occult knowledge was also prominent in eighteenth-century Masonry. He writes, “the Rosicrucian-Masonic mythology of sacred texts buried in underground vaults had a formative influence on the young Joseph Smith” (Brooke 1994:19).

1.2.4 Translation

Having claimed to have acquired these long hidden gold plates, Joseph Smith Jr.’s next task was to translate them. Quinn argues that Joseph Smith Jr. would have thought of himself as qualified to translate the plates. “According to the occult traditions of the early 1800s, persons with magic experience were the most appropriate interpreters of the Egyptian hieroglyphics identified with the Book of Mormon” (Quinn 1998:194). Joseph Smith’s earlier career as treasure-seer was seen as qualification. His method of translation
was described in 1836 by Truman Coe. Coe stated that “by putting his finger on one of the characters and imploring divine aid, then looking through the Urim and Thummin, he would see the import written in plain English on a screen placed before him” (Vogel 1996:47).

However, Quinn writes that in April 1829 Joseph was using a seer stone in the translating process. "The actual translation process was strikingly similar to the way Smith used the same stone for treasure-hunting" (Quinn 1998:173). The stone would be placed in a hat, which would then be looked into, excluding all light. Quinn cites a passage from the Book of Mormon, Alma 37:23, in which is written “And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth [...]”. While it seems ambiguous whether Gazelem refers to the servant or the stone, Quinn argues that “some early Mormons regarded Gazelem as the name of [the stone...] consistent with the practice of conferring names on instruments of magic such as divining rods” (Quinn 1998:174). Brooke also refers to Gazelem as the “interpreter-stone” (Brooke 1994:178).

As mentioned above it appears that Joseph Smith used not only the Urim and Thummin to translate the plates, but also a seer stone of his, previously used in his treasure quest. Brooke writes that the translation process involved “Joseph sitting behind a curtain with the supposed plates and interpreters or out in the open with only his seer-stone” (Brooke 1994:156). Joseph Smith Jr. even began referring to his seer stone as the Urim and Thummin. Quinn notes that “this substitution was crucial evidence that by 1829 Joseph Smith used biblical terminology to mainstream an instrument and practice of folk magic” (Quinn 1998:175).

Having translated a portion of the plates, Smith decided that some of the characters should be copied and taken by Martin Harris to a linguist in New York City, Professor Charles Anthon. Anthon decided it was a hoax and warned Harris to beware. He asked Harris to bring the plates in order that he might see the whole of them. Harris replied that he could not, and some of the text was still sealed. To this Anthon was reported to have said “I cannot read a sealed book” (Vogel 1996:70).
For Quinn, the word 'sealed' suggests a magic context. Not only was Charles Anthon reported to have said that he could not read a sealed book, which would have fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 29:11, but the Book of Mormon itself uses this as prophecy of its coming forth (2 Nephi 26:14-17). Also the Book of Mormon frequently refers to itself as 'sealed.' Quinn notes that "throughout its entire text, the Book of Mormon refers to itself with the words 'sealed' or 'seal' more than twenty times [...] which] had a magic meaning that extended from antiquity to early America" (Quinn 1998:196). This term had to do with the overcoming of evil.

Furthermore, Quinn cites the title page of the Book of Mormon, which states that the plates were "sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the land." Writes Quinn "this description echoed the folklore of buried treasure" (Quinn 1998:196), in which it was believed that the burier of the treasure put a seal on it so that no one else might take it. Another element of the Book of Mormon which echoes the treasure seekers' language noted by Quinn is in Helaman 13:35. "Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land." Of this Quinn writes the "Book of Mormon phrasing was consistent with one scholar's observation about American folklore of 'slipping treasures' that 'sink into the earth when something is wrong'" (Quinn 1998:196). This idea of the treasure 'slipping' away was common with the money diggers. It would occur if, for example, someone broke the silence, which was required at all times.

1.2.5 The Priesthoods

In May of 1829, Joseph Smith and his secretary Oliver Cowdery were pondering the fact that they felt "'none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the gospel'" (Bushman 1984:100). Cowdery was particularly concerned that Joseph himself had not this power. To attempt to receive some guidance concerning this they both went outside to the river to pray. They both reported that they saw a vision of John the Baptist, Cowdery in gushing tones, Smith in a more laconic manner. Cowdery's fears that Smith was not ordained were soon put to rest, as they stated that John the Baptist conferred the
Aaronic Priesthood on them, with the promise of the higher Melchizedek Priesthood to come. Joseph Smith Jr. wrote in his 1839 History that their heavenly visitor said to them, “Upon you my fellow servants in the name of Messiah I confer the priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” (Vogel 1996:75). The two then baptised one another, as was instructed. Brooke writes that much “doubt exists about the timing of the announcement of the higher Melchizedek Priesthood” (Brooke 1994:192). Joseph Smith has stated that Peter, James and John appeared in a vision in May of 1829, and conferred this priesthood. However, “the first references to these angels in Mormon texts did not come until 1835, and it appears that the priesthood was not actually established until June 1831” (Brooke 1994:192-193). Brooke also notes that while the Aaronic Priesthood was “limited to ‘outward ordinances,’ the Melchizedek Priesthood would hold ‘the key to the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God’” (Brooke 1994:193).

The priesthood were capable of various healing powers. These included exorcisms, which Joseph Smith Jr. himself performed at times. The High Priesthood even had the ability to grant eternal life. Brooke writes that, “in effect, Mormon high priests were given the authority to grant salvation through a ritual – an authority that orthodox Christians reserved to God” (Brooke 1994:194). Brooke sees the influence of magic at work here. “[This] was a fundamental departure, clearly inspired by the experience of magic. The Mormon high priests would in effect be magi, with powers extending up from the visible world on earth to the invisible world of the heavens” (Brooke 1994:194).

In September 1832, Joseph Smith Jr. claimed to have received a revelation on the passing on of the priesthood. This is documented in Doctrine and Covenants 84, where it is written, “Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people” (D&C 84:2). Quinn writes that this revelation “again recalled traditional views of magic rather than Judeo-Christian theology” (Quinn 1998:220). Joseph Smith Jr. stated that the priesthood was passed on in a patrilineal chain, beginning with Adam, who passed it on to Abel, who passed it on to Enoch, and so
on. Quinn states that "as far as I am aware, no other previous writing on Judeo-Christian theology or history described such a biblical chain of priesthood conferrals [but] within the magic tradition, astrology was conferred in a similar manner from Adam onward" (Quinn 1998:221). Quinn cites seventeenth century writer John Butler, who wrote that astrology came out of Paradise, "and that our Father Adam after the Fall did communicate the same unto his Son Seth" (Quinn 1998:221), and so on down the patrilineal line.

Quinn also suggests that "a second tradition paralleling Doctrine and Covenants 84:6-16 was that the Jewish Cabala was conferred in the same patrilineal manner" (Quinn 1998:221). Here, again, after the Fall Adam was given a book containing kabbalistic knowledge. He then passed it on to his son Seth, and the knowledge continued down the generations.

Finally, Quinn sees another tradition paralleling the passing on of the Mormon priesthood. "A third tradition was that magic itself descended patrilineally from Adam" (Quinn 1998:222). Quinn cites seventeenth century authors who spoke of this passing on of magic in ways like that of astrology or kabbalah. One of these authors wrote, "'natural or legitimate magic was [...] a gift from God to Adam, who by peopling the world handed it down to posterity’" (Quinn 1998:222).

For Quinn, "traditional Christianity and contemporary Freemasonry were not the context for Smith’s priesthood revelation on September 1832 [...] On the other hand, centuries of occult tradition claimed that priesthood, ceremony, and occult knowledge had passed from father to son among biblical patriarchs” (Quinn 1998:222).

Joseph Smith Jr. formed The Church of Christ on Tuesday, April the 6th, 1830. Quinn points out, however, that rather than organising the church on a Sunday, as may have been expected in a Christian context, "instead he chose a day which was significant in the astrological world view” (Quinn 1998:176). Quinn cites Miscellanies by John Aubrey, which described itself as "A Collection of Hermetick [sic] Philosophy.” This book stated
that "according to the folk belief of 'DAY-FATALITY' the sixth of April was always a beneficial day to transact important business" (Quinn 1998:176), and was apparently available in New York in 1813. Quinn also reports that an almanac published near the Smith’s house stated that “on Thursday, 6 April 1830, Joseph Smith’s governing planet Jupiter was in ‘quadrature’ with the sun” (Quinn 1998:176).

1.2.6 The Book of Mormon
The Book of Mormon was published in 1830 and on sale by March of that year. Quinn writes of the fact that the Book of Mormon came about in a context of folk magic, as well as the biblical tradition. “Therefore, it is not surprising that the Book of Mormon and other early Mormon translations/revelations have correspondences to words, phrases, and ideas in occult literature” (Quinn 1998:178).

Quinn argues that there were many occult texts that were widely available to the public, and writes of two Palmyra bookshops, and advertisements offering occult handbooks. He cites direct evidence “that young Joseph Smith had access to these book advertisements in his local newspaper” (Quinn 1998:179), and so was influenced by the occult works.

Quinn gives examples of the influence of the occult on the Book of Mormon. One such example is the passing on of sorcery from father to son. This began with Cain, and continued after the Flood with Ham, Noah’s son teaching his son Mizraim. Quinn argues that this tradition was well established in print. He writes “this occult tradition paralleled the Book of Mormon's description of the twenty-four gold plates of the Jaredites who travelled from the Tower of Babel to the new world” (Quinn 1998:210).

Quinn also sees magic parallels in the Book of Mormon’s opening pages. He cites 1 Nephi 1:2. “Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.” Citing Thomas Vaughan’s Magica Adamicca of Magic, Quinn suggests that “the beginning phrase of this parallel couplet associated the Book of Mormon with the mystery and magic of the Jewish Cabala” (Quinn 1998:200). He goes on to argue that “the second part of this phrase
further intensified the sense of magic heritage. [...] Within early America’s magic heritage, the reference to Lehi’s knowledge of Egyptian evoked the popular image of ancient Egypt as the centre and transmitter of all magic” (Quinn 1998:200).

Brooke writes that a connection between counterfeiting and Freemasonry can be seen in the Gadianton Bands, and their ‘secret combinations.’ They appear in the latter half of the Book of Mormon. “Inter-woven with these elements are sub-themes that bear a striking relationship to traditional meanings associated with counterfeiting, divining, and their root-metaphor of alchemy: slippery, volatile treasures, witchcraft and sorcery, and fiery furnaces” (Brooke 1994:175). Brooke surmises that “Joseph Smith’s emerging theological system was shaped by a perception of evil Masonic counterfeiters” (Brooke 1994:175).

Brooke also notes the alchemical language used in the *Book of Mormon*. While perhaps not appearing to be ‘magic,’ the alchemical tradition drew on a range of ideas, including kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition, and in due course the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Brooke writes “with all of these occult and hermetic influences on the Smith family experience, it is not surprising that a culture of metalworking and hints of the alchemical worldview found their way into the language of the *Book of Mormon*” (Brooke 1994:159). In the *Book of Mormon* metalworking becomes an important concept, as Nephi must construct a ship in order to reach the New World. Brooke sees many of the metalworking words used as important with regard to alchemy. “Several words rooted in this metalworking language stand out as particularly important given their sacred contexts and connotations” (Brooke 1994:160). He cites several words in particular. Firstly the word ‘refine.’ In 3 Nephi 24:2, it is written of Jesus that “he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi.” Brooke argues that terms such as ‘refine’ and ‘purify’ “convey the consuming and transforming power of the Lord, particularly his fire” (Brooke 1994:160).

The second term cited by Brooke, ‘furnace’ refers to that which those who had been refined by the Lord passed through, and emerged unscathed. This is an image that can be
seen more than once in the Book of Mormon. For example in 3 Nehi 28:21 it states “And thrice they were cast into a furnace and received no harm.” This was also a term seen in the Bible. In the Book of Daniel there is a reference to three children in the furnace. It was thought that as a Mormon, one would pass through the furnace, being purified on the way, to the celestial kingdom.

Brooke writes that “fire, refining, and the furnace had long been symbols connecting experimental alchemy with Christian themes of salvation, perfection, and the millennium […] and Smith and the medieval alchemists used many of the same biblical images” (Brooke 1994:161). The philosopher’s, or refiner’s, fire drove the work of the alchemist, as they strived to find the philosopher’s stone, which had the ability to turn base metal into gold. Yet there was more than this, as is shown by Brooke, who writes that “‘man, who before was dead, is made a living soul’” (Brooke 1994:161). Owens also writes on this topic. “Late alchemical literature reveals that ultimately it was the alchemist’s own human baseness which sought transmutation into something divine” (Owens 1994).

Brooke argues that “magical white stones that appear at various points in the Book of Mormon echo the symbolism of the philosopher’s stone. The Pearl of Great Price, the title of a collection of Smith’s writings from the 1830s, similarly had ancient mystical and alchemical connotations” (Brooke 1994:161). Owens argues that the philosopher’s stone was “the antecedent of Joseph Smith’s ‘seer’s stone’” (Owens 1994).

An important feature that linked alchemy with Christianity was the association of Christ with the philosopher’s stone. Brooke reports that “the critical stage in the alchemical work was a fusion of elements in the furnace, followed by their ‘death’ and ‘resurrection,’ the resulting stone having a Christ-like perfection, a source of immortality” (Brooke 1994:162). As well as the references to the alchemical tradition throughout the Book of Mormon, and The Pearl of Great Price, Brooke argues that “the Smith family lore contained a number of such biblical-alchemical symbols” (Brooke 1994:162). This family lore was the dreams of various family members, often involving
the Tree of Life, which "in hermetic thinking [...] stood for the alchemical work of transmutation to perfection" (Brooke 1994:162).

The alchemical tradition, and hermeticism in general, was important to Joseph Smith. While Quinn has argued that there are many folk magic aspects to the Book of Mormon, Brooke demonstrates that references to alchemy can be seen throughout the text, and in the thinking of the whole Smith family. Smith's interest in this aspect of 'magic' can be seen more clearly later in his life, as he assumes the role of magus.

1.3 From Prophet to Hermetic Magus

1.3.1 Book of Moses

Around the time of the publication of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith Jr. also made his own translation of Genesis, entitled the Book of Moses, which included the main ideas of Smith's cosmology. Brooke writes that "Smith wrote his revision of Genesis between June 1830 and February 1831, and his key revelations date from November 1831 to May 1833" (Brooke 1994:195). Quinn notes that "this presented new and disturbing extra-biblical doctrines to traditional Christianity, but it fit comfortably within various occult traditions" (Quinn 1998:212). We shall return to the cosmology of the Mormon prophet later, of which more can be seen in his Book of Abraham.

At this time Joseph Smith Jr. was working with Sidney Rigdon, who acted as a scribe for the Mormon prophet. Rigdon had links with the Freemasons, and became a Mason himself in later years. He had a large influence on Joseph Smith Jr. and these Masonic leanings can be seen, argues Brooke, in the Book of Moses. He writes "Smith added themes to the Genesis story that were directly analogous to Masonic myths describing priestly genealogies running back to Adam" (Brooke 1994:196). In the Book of Moses 6:5, it is written that "a book of remembrance was kept, [...] in the language of Adam." Brooke writes that these references to Adam, and the language of Adam show a "critical link with the intellectual world of seventeenth century hermeticism" (Brooke 1994:196). It is the hope of hermetic philosophers and kabbalists that this language of Adam, lost at the time of the Tower of Babel, will be recovered. The means of recovery is through
“magical manipulations of Hebrew letters and Egyptian hieroglyphics” (Brooke 1994:196).

Brooke shows that Joseph Smith, particularly later in his life, became very interested in ancient languages. This can be seen in the fact that the Gold Plates were reputedly engraved with writing of an ancient language, and Joseph Smith did use what appeared to be magical means to translate them, in his seer stones. Brooke writes “the concept of an Adamic language was central to the hermetic quest for perfect knowledge, it was the essence of pure Freemasonry handed down from Adam, and it was certainly on Joseph Smith’s mind throughout this period” (Brooke 1994:197).

1.3.2 Degrees of Glory

With Joseph Smith’s rewritten Genesis, elements at odds with traditional Christianity had been introduced. However, in February of 1832, Joseph Smith Jr. and Sidney Rigdon claimed to have experienced a vision that, as Brooke puts it, “totally transformed orthodox notions of the cosmos” (Brooke 1994:199). This has come to be known as ‘The Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory,’ and has been documented in Doctrine and Covenants 76. The vision was concerned with where people went after death, and who would be saved by God. In Doctrine and Covenants 76:43, it is stated that God would save everyone “except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him.” With regard to this Brodie has stated that “Joseph had taken a long step towards Universalism, […] only a handful of unregenerates called the Sons of Perdition were to be eternally damned” (Brodie 1971:118). Quinn also writes that “for traditional Christians, any concept of universal salvation was a dangerous heresy akin to Universalism. Its opponents regarded universal salvation as undermining the fabric of moral conduct in society” (Quinn 1998:215-216).

The traditional idea of heaven and hell had been changed also. Now there were three kingdoms, or Degrees of Glory. The highest was the celestial, then the terrestrial, and finally the telestial, where dwelt “liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie” (D&C 76:103). Even those in the telestial world
were saved. Brooke argues that “the critical distinction lay between simple salvation and divine exaltation [...] Raised to the celestial kingdom, the Mormon priesthood of the Melchizedek would rank as gods” (Brooke 1994:199-200). These gods would be ranked in a hierarchy. At first sight this seems to be at odds with traditional Christianity, where people cannot be elevated to this divine level. “Human salvation and Mormon divinity would be structured in a radically new configuration of the invisible world, three ascending kingdoms replacing the duality of heaven and hell” (Brooke 1994:200).

Quinn argues that this vision of 1832’s “description of multiple heavens was compatible with occult views. Even ‘degrees of glory’ was an occult phrase connected with the ancient mystical beliefs of Judaism” (Quinn 1998:216).

Quinn suggests that Joseph Smith was influenced by the Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg, who claimed that there were three separate heavens. “Often regarded as a devotee of the occult [...] this Swedish mystic called the highest heaven ‘the celestial kingdom,’ and stated that the inhabitants of the three heavens corresponded to the sun, moon, and stars” (Quinn 1998:217). Quinn also writes that “Smith knew Swedenborg’s writings about ‘the celestial kingdom’ well enough to criticise them” (Quinn 1998:218). Also cited by Quinn is Robert C. Smith’s book, Complete System of Occult Philosophy, from 1825. This book mentions three heavens, and the phrase ‘degrees of glory.’

Quinn reports that Hugh Nibley, an LDS scholar, included Joseph Smith Jr. among others such as Swedenborg, Paracelsus and John Dee, as “examples of ‘the Hermetic tradition’” (Quinn 1998:218). Brooke notes that by 1833 “Joseph Smith had arrived at the outlines of the essence of hermetic theology” (Brooke 1994:204). Owens notes that many of Joseph Smith’s activities such as his “quest for a sacred golden treasure buried in dark earth [...] and his restoration of a temple with its central mystery of a sacred wedding – all could be fitted into one very recently recognised context: Hermeticism” (Owens 1999:167).
1.3.3 Book Of Abraham.

On July the 3rd 1835, Joseph Smith Jr. was given an opportunity to indulge his interest in ancient languages. A traveller by the name of Michael Chandler arrived in Kirtland, bringing with him papyri and four mummies from Egypt. Smith stated that one papyrus was the writings of Abraham, and another those of Joseph of Egypt, and attempted to translate them. He tried without success, and eventually, by November, “had fallen back on his powers of intuitive translation” (Brooke 1994:211). Joseph Smith’s ‘intuitive translation’ yielded the Book of Abraham, a document far removed in its content from traditional Christianity.

Quinn writes that the wording of the Book of Abraham was “reminiscent of a passage from Francis Barrett’s occult handbook” (Quinn 1998:212). Smith here built on the Book of Moses, writing more on creation. The Book of Abraham was a radical departure from traditional Christianity. The phrase ‘God created the earth’ became ‘the council of Gods organised the earth.’ Joseph Smith had recently begun learning Hebrew. Brooke suggests that “Smith’s ultimate motive in studying Hebrew may well have been to learn what had long been thought to be the ‘pure Adamic language’” (Brooke 1994:212). From his classes “he had learned that Elohim, one of the Hebrew words for God, is plural, and had therefore concluded that the Bible had been carelessly translated” (Brodie 1971:171).

This organisation, rather than creation, of the world by many gods rather than just one was spoken of by Joseph Smith Jr. in the King Follett Discourse, on April 6th, 1844. Here also, Joseph Smith spoke of how human beings may in time become gods, as God was once human. Owens writes that “interestingly, these were all concepts that could […] be found in the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition. But even more astoundingly, it appears Joseph actually turned to the Zohar for help in supporting his introduction of these radical doctrinal assertions” (Owens 1994:33). This was more than likely the first Kabbalistic text Smith would have studied. Owens notes the importance of the Zohar, “as the central text of Kabbalah, [it] is the key book any individual with Kabbalistic interests would have preserved in his library” (Owens 1994).
1.3.4 Kabbalah

Quinn suggests that with regard to the council of Gods organising the earth, “Joseph Smith apparently borrowed this idea directly from Eisenmenger’s *Traditions of the Jews*” (Quinn 1998:299). John Allen, who wrote *Modern Judaism*, which was published in 1816, is also cited by Quinn as an influence on the thinking of Joseph Smith. He concludes that “Eisenmenger’s and Allen’s books on the Cabala in English were the apparent sources for some of the Mormon prophet’s own phrasing and concepts” (Quinn 1998:302).

Owens also argues that “during Joseph’s final years in Nauvoo, [...] his connection with Kabbalah becomes more concrete” (Owens 1994), and that Joseph Smith Jr.’s teachings were influenced by the Kabbalah. Owens explains this by pointing to a Mormon convert from Judaism, Alexander Neibaur. Neibaur came from Europe, and brought with him an extensive collection of Kabbalistic writings.

Owens gives some background on Neibaur, noting that there has been little written on the man who, he argues, introduced Joseph Smith to many new Kabbalistic writings and ideas. The eldest son of a physician and dentist, it was hoped that he would be a rabbi. However, although rabbinical training was begun, Neibaur went to study dentistry in Berlin, and even converted to Christianity, moving to England. It was here that he met Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, and Joseph Fielding. Owens writes that “Neibaur had been troubled by several dreams about a mysterious book, and his first question for Joseph Smith’s apostles was whether they had a ‘book’ for him” (Owens 1994). The *Book of Mormon* was produced and Neibaur and his family were soon baptised and on their way to America. Upon arrival, Neibaur was soon introduced to Joseph Smith.

Alexander Neibaur wrote an article called ‘The Jews’ which was published in 1843. Many Kabbalistic texts were cited by Neibaur in this article, and Owens argues that “the general precision of his numerous citations suggest Neibaur had access to the works he quoted” (Owens 1994). Owens also notes that many of the texts cited by Neibaur were in Hebrew, and there was some very rare material. As well as having similar interests and
living close to each other, Neibaur was Joseph Smith's tutor in Hebrew and German. Owens argues that "given this friendly relationship, the interests of the prophet, and the background of Neibaur—and perhaps even the books in Neibaur's library—it seems inconceivable that discussions of the Kabbalah did not take place" (Owens 1994). As mentioned above, the main text of the Kabbalah is the Zohar, and the first thing that a newcomer to the tradition would study. Owens writes "This might explain why in 1844 Smith, in what may be his single greatest discourse and in the most important public statement of his theosophical vision, apparently quotes almost word for word from the first section of the Zohar" (Owens 1994). The discourse to which Owens refers is the King Follet Discourse, to which we shall return.

In 1836 Joseph Smith Jr. and Oliver Cowdery claimed to have experienced a vision of Jesus, Moses, Elias and Elijah. As part of the Kirtland Temple dedication ceremony, Smith and Cowdery sat praying behind veils, so that those present could not see them. After a time the veils were taken away. The two reported that they had seen the Lord, and that Moses had "'committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the Ten Tribes from the land of the north'" (Brodie 1971:180). Brooke reports that "the content of these keys to the mysteries—baptism for the dead and the divinising powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood—would be spelled out at Nauvoo seven years later" (Brooke 1994:221). Baptism for the dead and divinisation are two themes to which we shall return. Brooke sees this point in Mormon history as critical. He argues that "by this time the classic terminology of Protestant Christianity—grace, atonement, justification—had long since dropped out of the language of Smith's revelations" (Brooke 1994:221).

A crisis in 1837 led to Joseph Smith Jr. reverting back to his old treasure-seeking ways. The Kirtland population was rising rapidly, and many of the new converts were poor. More money was being borrowed in order to pay old debts and the community was in trouble. At this time, Joseph Smith heard of some gold, buried under a house in Salem. As Brodie writes, "with the need so critical, he [...] decided to] try his luck at finding the buried gold" (Brodie 1971:192). On this matter Brooke states that "Smith reverted to the
occult […] although divining for treasure was forbidden among the rank-and-file Mormons, it was apparently suitable for the prophet” (Brooke 1994:222).

The real reason, that of seeking for hidden treasure was kept secret and it was widely believed that this was a missionary tour. In Salem, Joseph Smith spoke in the Lord’s name to justify this. This can be seen in Doctrine and Covenants Section 111:1-2. “I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, notwithstanding your follies. I have much treasure for you, for the benefit of Zion.” As Quinn notes, “The opening words of this revelation […] show that someone in the First Presidency felt concern that God disapproved of this trip” (Quinn 1998:262-263).

Quinn reports that “official Mormon histories have affirmed the basic facts of this 1836 quest for treasure in Salem, but some recent LDS historians have tried to downplay its unusual circumstances” (Quinn 1998:262). He then goes on to list these unusual circumstances and notes that “the treasure-quest in folk magic also included seeking wealth hidden in buildings. Traditional Jewish magic provided for locating treasure in a house” (Quinn 1998:263).

These authors have shown that with the need so great, Joseph Smith Jr. did slip back to his old folk magic ways in order to solve the monetary problems. However, the trip to Salem to obtain money was a failure.

1.3.5 Healing

There have been many acts of healing in the Mormon church that appear to be of a magical nature. Quinn notes the use of ‘healing handkerchiefs.’ While this can be seen in the biblical tradition, Quinn writes that “Protestant evangelicals have long found it difficult to ignore the magic dimensions of Paul’s sending a blessed handkerchief to heal people” (Quinn 1998:313). Fawn Brodie notes that when Joseph Smith Jr. “was worn out with praying for the sick, he gave his handkerchief to Wilford Woodruff and told him to wipe the faces of the stricken children, who were thereby saved in scores” (Brodie 1971: 257). Quinn then goes on to list a number of incidents in which handkerchiefs were used
to heal people. He writes that “Heber C. Kimball proclaimed: ‘I have known Joseph, hundreds of times, [to] send his handkerchief to the sick, and they have been healed’” (Quinn 1998:314). Not only were handkerchiefs believed to have healing properties once blessed, but Quinn writes that they could also protect. “Mark Leslie Nichols used his Snow-blessed handkerchief as an amulet” (Quinn 1998:315). This practice was not only restricted to Joseph Smith Jr. and his close associates. “With this kind of emphasis on the use of healing objects, it is not surprising that rank-and-file Mormons sent handkerchiefs to heal people” (Quinn 1998:314). Missionaries made use of these healing handkerchiefs a great deal. Quinn gives an example of a Mormon missionary in England who was asked to help a sick child. “This missionary said: ‘I took my pocket handkerchief and gave it to her, telling her to return home and place the handkerchief upon the child and pray’” (Quinn 1998:314).

Later on, Quinn argues, items with healing powers were not restricted to handkerchiefs. Canes or rings could be sent to do the healing. “The emphasis by First Presidency counsellors Richards and Kimball was similar to the medieval Catholic on relics of the martyred saints. The faithful revered a relic as having metaphysical power in itself” (Quinn 1998:315). The healing canes were in fact said to have been made from the “blood-soaked boxes which had held the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and the blood of the martyrs turned these pieces of wood into healing relics” (Quinn 1998:315).

Quinn also writes of how Brigham Young, in 1858 spoke of what he would do if one of his sons stepped on a nail. Young described how the nail would be greased, wrapped up and kept warm, while a piece of salt pork would be placed on the injured foot. “This was magic healing through folk medicine, not ‘scientific’ healing through academic medicine” (Quinn 1998:317). This appears to be very similar to the ‘weapon salve.’ This was a salve that was thought to heal a wound by being applied to the instrument that caused it. The wound was said to be cured through sympathy. George Macdonald Ross writes of Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-1665), who was a supporter of the weapon salve. He gives a description of what he calls ‘sympathetic powder.'
A bandage stained with the injured person's blood is put into a bowl of water at blood temperature, in which vitriol has been dissolved. The volatile part of the vitriol, which has healing properties, becomes attached to the blood particles. They are dispersed into the atmosphere, and the blood particles, together with the vitriol, are attracted by the victim's body because of their similar nature, and the vitriol has its healing effect (Ross 1998).

Ross states that although he does not specifically mention the weapon salve, Digby does argue that this method would also work using the weapon that made the wound.

Another form of healing practiced not only by Joseph Smith Jr. but also other Mormons, was exorcism. Brooke writes of occult influences in medicine. "Conceptions of the supernatural also underlay popular uses of astrology and demonic exorcism to treat mental illness" (Brooke 1994:21). In 1826 Joseph Smith Jr. performed an exorcism on Newell Knight. Smith himself writes of this in his 1839 History, where he states that Knight's wife called him to have a look at her husband. Joseph Smith Jr. wrote that "I went and found him suffering very much in his mind, and his body acted upon in a very strange manner" (Vogel 1996:102). After a gathering of about nine people had arrived to watch, Newel Knight asked Joseph Smith Jr. to perform the exorcism.

With great earnestness [Knight] requested of me, that I should cast the Devil out of him, saying that he knew he was in him, and that he also knew that I could cast him out. [...] Almost unconsciously I rebuked the devil, and commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from him; when immediately Newel spoke out and said that he saw the devil leave him and vanish from his sight (Vogel 1996:103).

This practice of exorcism was much associated with the occult. Quinn notes that in Reginald Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft from 1584, there were "instructions for a parchment charm to protect a house from spirits [...] and] the 'Fiat, fiat, fiat' formula of exorcism for commanding evil spirits to depart" (Quinn 1998:273).
1.3.6 Talismans and Amulets
Quinn also describes several amulets and talismans of significance to Joseph Smith Jr. and importance within the magic world view. The first of these was found on the Mormon prophet's body and is known as the Jupiter talisman. Smith was said to have carved the medallion himself and Quinn writes that "it was inscribed [with the words] 'Confirm[o] O Deus Potentissimus;' [...] the phrase meant: 'O God make me all powerful'" (Quinn 1998:82). However, this translation, it should be noted, is not the definitive meaning. The phrase is ungrammatical, and there have been various attempts made to translate it. Quinn argues that Joseph Smith followed instructions from Francis Barrett's *The Magus*, published in 1801. "It is clear that Smith's silver [Jupiter] talisman depended on *The Magus* rather than some other source [...] There was no standard form of Jupiter talisman, but Joseph Smith's followed Barrett" (Quinn 1998:84). Quinn argues that there is significance in the fact that the talisman is made out of silver rather than tin. He cites Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*, which states that enchantments would be 'dissolved' by the silver Jupiter talisman. "Young Joseph often said 'enchantment' blocked his seer stone's view of buried treasure, which made a Jupiter talisman worth its cost to him in the 1820s" (Quinn 1998:90).

The uses of the Jupiter talisman were varied. *The Magus* states that it could be used to gain things such as love, peace, riches and favour. As Quinn writes, "These traditional magic uses for the Jupiter talisman are consistent with Smith's activities beginning in the mid-1820s" (Quinn 1998:90).

Quinn writes of another artefact which is also Jupiter related. This was "a serpent-headed cane inscribed with the initials 'J S' under a carved crown" (Quinn 1998:90). As Quinn has documented earlier, Jupiter was the governing planet of Joseph Smith Jr.'s astrological birth. The serpent head is significant with regard to the astrological tradition. The serpent was ruled over by Jupiter and Saturn, both of which Joseph Smith Jr. had links to. Smith was also a Capricorn, and, as Quinn notes, "the traditional magic world
view was that those born in the first degrees of Capricorn could ‘soothe poisonous snakes’” (Quinn 1998:90).

A second medallion, referred to as the ‘Dove Medallion,’ was owned by Joseph Smith Jr., and is on display in the Daughter’s of Utah Pioneers Museum. Quinn discounts two interpretations of the dove medallion made over the years, firstly that it was a Masonic emblem, or secondly, of Christian significance. While labelled ‘Masonic Emblem,’ Quinn argues that “to Smith it probably had symbolic significance outside of Freemasonry” (Quinn 1998:91). The reason for the Masonic associations was the fact that this medallion features a dove carrying an olive branch in its beak. This was a Masonic emblem, but, as Quinn argues, “the emblem is so little-known in the United States that an American Masonic publication in 1945 began an article on the dove with the question: ‘How many of our readers are aware that the dove occupies a high place among our Masonic symbols’” (Quinn 1998:91)?

Within Christianity, the dove was a symbol of the Holy Spirit and peace. However, Quinn argues that “used strictly as a Christian symbol, the dove almost never appeared in jewellery and was ‘seldom or never used as a charm or ornament’” (Quinn 1998:91). Instead of agreeing with the Masonic emblem or Christian ornament arguments, Quinn argues that the medallion can be interpreted and understood within the context of the magic world-view. “The dove was one form neither devils nor witches could assume. In medieval Europe the dove-and-olive-branch served as ‘a talisman to ensure pilgrims hospitality wherever they travelled,’ and the dove was a ‘sexual emblem sacred to love and mother goddesses’” (Quinn 1998:91-92).

Quinn also reports that the dove has been regarded as belonging to Venus in the astrological and Kabbalah traditions. “Joan Evans discussed an English manuscript which described astrological jewellery inscribed with a dove-and-olive-branch. This included a silver Venus medallion” (Quinn 1998:92). According to Barrett’s The Magus, it was believed that the silver Venus talisman, among other things, “promotes concord, ends strife” (Quinn 1998:92), and would procure the love of women. As will be seen later, this
was something very important to Joseph Smith Jr., as his doctrine of plural marriage will show. The Venus talisman was also a cure for melancholy. Quinn writes “such uses of a silver Venus talisman were compatible with the purposes of Joseph Smith’s Jupiter talisman. Both talismans were also consistent with the purposes of the Smith family’s magic parchments” (Quinn 1998:92).

Although one cannot arrive at a definitive answer as to what the medallion meant to Joseph Smith Jr., Quinn urges us to bear in mind Smith’s folk magic activities and also occult artefacts owned by his family. Quinn argues that these are important with regard to understanding the Mormon prophet. “His early folk magic experience gives insight into some (but not all) acts of Smith’s life, just as his knowledge of the Bible provides insight into some (but not all) aspects of his life” (Quinn 1998:93).

Yet another item has been cited by Quinn as a possible talisman or amulet. Quinn describes it as an “unusual pendant” (Quinn 1998:93). While he concedes “I have not found any published references about the purpose of the emblem or the meaning of its arcane symbols” (Quinn 1998:93), this is precisely why he includes it, as “its inscriptions are still mysterious and [...] are unexplained by verifiable sources” (Quinn 1998:93).

In addition to these, Quinn argues that seer stones could also be used as amulets. Seer stones could be hung around the neck, even giving the appearance of an amulet. Quinn writes “the use of seer stones for protective purposes replicated the function of magic amulets” (Quinn 1998:96). Quinn sees these amulets and talismans as being important and of significance to Joseph Smith Jr.

1.3.7 The Temple Endowment
In May 1842, nine of the leading Mormons met in order for Joseph Smith Jr. to show them the temple endowment. Brooke describes the temple ritual, based on nineteenth and twentieth-century accounts, dividing it into four segments. Firstly the initiates, anointed and in special ritual garments would be given new names. “Identified as Adam throughout the ceremony, the initiates were taken through a dramatisation of the history
of the world and of redemption through the power of the Mormon priesthood” (Brooke 1994:248). Miracle plays formed the second part, showing Creation and the Fall. “The Creation scenes included three Creation gods: Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael” (Brooke 1994:248). Thirdly “the initiates were instructed in the First and Second Tokens of the two priesthoods — various handgrips, signs and coded passwords” (Brooke 1994:248). Then it was through the veil and into the kingdom. Here, Brooke sees strong Masonic overtones. He writes that “throughout the temple rituals themselves there were striking similarities with Masonic symbolism” (Brooke 1994:249).

Brooke finds similarities between the Mormon temple ritual and the symbols of Freemasonry in everything from the clothing and language to the Creation and Fall dramas. Fawn Brodie, too, notes these similarities. “A good deal of the ceremony performed after the rituals of washing and anointing was borrowed from the Freemasons […] Joseph made free use of other Masonic symbols – the beehive, the all-seeing eye, the two clasped hands, and the point within the circle” (Brodie 1971:279-281). Brodie even writes that the nine leading Mormons with Joseph Smith Jr. “would have been blind indeed not to see the parallelism between the costuming, grips, passwords, keys, and oaths” (Brodie 1971:281).

Quinn, however, argues that these similarities do not go any deeper than face value. “Although there are superficial similarities of symbol and rite between Masonic rituals and the Mormon endowment, I believe that the underlying philosophy and purpose of the two were fundamentally different” (Quinn 1998:227). Quinn goes on to write that “Mormon revelation, in fact, proclaimed that the LDS endowment directly restored what Masonry acknowledged it had only some connection with – the occult mysteries of the ancient world” (Quinn 1998:227).

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Quinn argues, the word ‘mysteries’ was widely understood to refer to pagan secret rites. He cites Buck’s Theological Dictionary, which he states was “on sale in the Palmyra area from 1817 to the 1820s” (Quinn 1998:227), for this definition. It was these mysteries then, mysteries which “have been
viewed as the climax of the occult tradition and magic world view” (Quinn 1998:227), which, Quinn argues, the Mormon temple endowment was said to restore.

Quinn lists eleven features common to the LDS endowment and the ancient mysteries. These include the fact that human beings could become gods and that our God was once a mortal human, ideas that as Brooke writes, “promised a radical departure from traditional Protestant Christianity” (Brooke 1994:200). Following these eleven common elements seen by Quinn, he writes that “the ancient occult mysteries manifest both philosophical and structural kinship with the Mormon endowment” (Quinn 1998:234). He argues that many Mormon converts between 1829 and 1830 were folk magic believers, attracted to Joseph Smith Jr. because of the occult elements in that which he was speaking of. “Diaries and autobiographies clearly show that most of these converted seekers [from folk religion] felt at ease in a church organisation for the first time” (Quinn 1998:236).

One year after Joseph Smith Jr. revealed the keys to the mysteries, the temple endowment, on the 12th of August 1843 the revelation on plural marriage was read to the High Council, receiving a mixed reception. However, the idea of plural marriage was something that had been around for years, and there was even talk of Joseph Smith’s extra-marital affairs as early as 1835 when “it began to be whispered about that he had seduced a seventeen-year-old orphan girl whom Emma had taken into the family” (Brodie 1971:181). It was also in 1835 that the Mormon Church issued its first public denial of polygamy. Brooke writes that in 1835 “Smith began to experiment with unorthodox sexual and marital relationships, a departure that would culminate at Nauvoo in the Mormon doctrine of polygamous ‘celestial marriage’” (Brooke 1994:212). Joseph Smith himself performed several marriages, asserting that “Mormon priests would have both spiritual powers and primary authority over marriage” (Brooke 1994:213).

Brooke argues that the roots of this idea of plural marriage can be traced back to when Joseph Smith Jr. was translating the Old Testament and Genesis in particular. “His particular interest [lay] in the sections of Genesis describing and justifying patriarchal polygamy” (Brooke 1994:213). Joseph Smith did not, however, base his doctrine solely
on the fact that it was in the Old Testament. Another link with the magic world-view can be seen here argues Brooke. He writes, “Smith’s vision of celestial marriage […] would replicate the hermetic concept of divinisation through the coniunctio, the alchemical marriage” (Brooke 1994:214). In Doctrine and Covenants 132 it is written that “if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another […] then he is justified; he cannot commit adultery” (D&C 132:61). Later the text states that the women “are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, […] and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds” (D&C 132:63). Owens writes that the heart of the alchemical tradition “was embodied in its ultimate mysteries: the hierosgamos, [sic] or ‘sacred wedding,’ and the mysterium coniunctionis, a mysterious union of opposites that eternally wed male to female, matter to spirit, above to below, microcosmos to macrocosmos, humankind to divinity” (Owens 1994).

Although Smith may have first considered plural marriage after studying Genesis, it is clear that there is nothing in the Bible that would lead people to believe that having more than one wife would turn them into a god. Because of this, Brooke suggests that “it is worthwhile to explore some of the points at which hermetic knowledge […] intersected with contemporary notions of sexuality and reproduction” (Brooke 1994:214), in order to ascertain where these ideas of Smith’s came from.

In light of Joseph and Emma Smith’s difficulty in conceiving and giving birth, Brooke proposes that they would have sought advice from sexual manuals of the time. He argues that “the language of sexual generation and growth so powerful in alchemy and metallurgy had particularly accessible parallels in these manuals” (Brooke 1994:214), and that if the Smiths were reading these texts, it would throw new light on Joseph’s transitional period between 1827 and 1830. “If Joseph Smith had been exposed to these manuals in the 1820s, they might well have contributed to the sexual structure of his divine order […] and] would have provided intellectual legitimacy” (Brooke 1994:215).

Brooke argues too that in this context new light is thrown on the image of the Nephite and the furnace’s refining fire. “With its alchemical analogues, this symbol takes on new
force against the backdrop of the popular lore of sexual generation when the original biblical text is considered” (Brooke 1994:215). In Daniel, “this figure in the fire was also associated with the three children in the furnace. Was the Nephite disciple a ‘child in the furnace,’ and by analogy a baby in the uterus” (Brooke 1994:215)? Brooke admits that these links are speculation, and cautiously states that “such hermetic thoughts about sexuality and marriage may have shaped Smith’s move into spiritual wifery” (Brooke 1994:216).

Owens too writes of this ‘celestial marriage;’ “The sacred wedding ritualised by Smith was a transformative union that anointed men and women to become ‘priests and priestesses,’ ‘kings and queens,’ and then ultimately gods and goddesses, the dual creative substance of divinity in eternal, Tantric intercourse” (Owens 1999:168).

Brooke proposes that the term of coniunctio is a suitable summary of the thought that Smith had arrived at in Nauvoo by the summer of 1844. “He had established a theology of the conjunction – the unification – of the living and the dead, of men and women, of material and spiritual, of secular and sacred, all united in a ‘new and everlasting covenant’ over which he would preside as king and god” (Brooke 1994:281). Joseph Smith Jr. had arrived at the third and final stage in his transformation, that of the Christian-hermetic magus, and his cosmology was greatly changed from a decade earlier.

1.3.8 The King Follet Discourse
On April 6th 1844, Joseph Smith Jr. gave his King Follett Discourse, in which he addressed issues such as baptism for the dead, divinisation and the character of God. As Brooke writes, “With the King Follett discourse, […] Joseph Smith incontrovertibly announced in public the nature of the mysteries of the kingdom, in language that reproduced the essence of the Renaissance hermetic tradition” (Brooke 1994:253-254). Baptism for the dead was not something new, even in North America. This practice could be seen at Ephrata towards the end of the 1720s, in a “utopian community [which...] in some measure anticipated Mormon polity and cosmology” (Brooke 1994:42). This group was immersed in beliefs and practices from the alchemical tradition. They were
completely cut off from the outside world, and as Brooke writes, “Some occult and mystic influences spread out [...] among the Pennsylvania Germans, mingling with their own inclinations toward popular magic” (Brooke 1994:44). One such influence was baptism for the dead, brought back by Joseph Smith Jr. over a century later, a practice to which we shall return.

Divinisation was another important issue addressed here. Joseph Smith Jr. speaks of Creation, by using his own translation of Genesis. He states that Creation was not from nothing, and argues that the word baurau [sic] means to organise, as opposed to create out of nothing. “Hence we infer that God had materials to organise the world out of chaos – chaotic matter, which is element [...] they may be organised and re-organised, but not destroyed” (Smith 1844). The spirits of people were also eternal, argued Smith, and “The mind or intelligence which man possesses is coequal with God himself [...] Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is spirit from age to age, and there is no creation about it” (Smith 1844). Smith spoke of progressing, reaching higher stages of divinity. “You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, [...] the same as all Gods have done before you – namely, by going from one small degree to another” (Smith 1844). We shall come back to this doctrine of divinisation later.

After Smith’s death in 1844, the Mormon church would continue to change, and as Owens notes that “how this strange hermetic religion evolved into today’s Mormon church is a question awaiting detailed study” (Owens 1999:169).

Much of the content of Joseph Smith Jr.’s King Follett Discourse has been regarded as radical and containing magical elements. It is clearly a departure from traditional Christianity, but is Joseph Smith’s developed teaching magical or religious?

Chapter 2: Religion and Magic – The Theoretical Issues

There is much in the life of Joseph Smith Jr. that authors have deemed ‘magical.’ From his folk magic beginnings, extensively documented by Michael Quinn, to his claims of
discovering the *Book of Mormon*, to his recasting himself as a Christian-hermetic *magus*. Mormon scholars have found much to make present-day Mormons uncomfortable. Mark Hoffman's forged 'salamander letter' may have been closer to the truth than at first believed, in terms of the involvement with magic of the early Mormons. An important issue, however, is the distinction between religion and magic. Magic is a difficult term to define, and many people who are said to practise it would not consider what they do to be magic at all, but rather, a religious, or perhaps simply mundane part of their lives. Malcolm Hamilton gives an example of Malay fishermen who burn incense on their boats to attract fish, something which is not seen to be magical in any way. “Although Malays do have a concept rather like our own concept of magic, this particular practice does not belong to it but is in their eyes an ordinary mundane technique that just happens to work” (Hamilton 2001:40). However, we “would be inclined to categorise [the technique] as magical on the grounds that they have no sound empirical foundation” (Hamilton 2001:40).

Jan de Vries notes that “the relation between magic and religion poses one of the most controversial problems of the last half-century” (de Vries 1961-62:214). David Aune writes that E. E. Evans-Pritchard along with “many other anthropologists, have come to speak more inclusively of ‘religio-magical’ [or perhaps ‘magico-religious’] phenomena” (Aune 1980:1510). Here the distinction becomes merely evaluative. Hamilton concedes that “it is not always possible, in any given instance, to distinguish between magic and religion” (Hamilton 2001:39).

William J. Goode asks the question of why there has been an insistence for a distinction between religion and magic. He suggests that “the distinction stems from at least three conflicting intellectual camps, all of which needed to insist upon the difference, for divergent reasons” (Goode 1949:179). Firstly, those travelling missionaries of the eighteenth century needed to keep a distinction between what they practiced and the practices of the people they met, “whose customs had to be described as barbarous, their manners atrocious” (Goode 1949:179). The second group, as Goode puts it, “romanticised the savage” (Goode 1949:179). The beliefs of these people were thought to
be "natural, simple, pure, and worthy, whatever his errors in science which were crystallised in magical practices and superstitious beliefs" (Goode 1949:179). The third and final group Goode writes of "was composed of the evolutionary philosophers and scientists of the nineteenth-century" (Goode 1949:179). These people believed that science had come about through a progression, beginning with what they termed magic. Religion came next, followed by philosophy and finally science. Here then are three examples given by Goode of different groups, each with their own need for a distinction between religion and magic.

Authors such as Michael Quinn and John L. Brooke may argue that Joseph Smith Jr. was influenced by various forms of magic, but to Smith himself what he was doing may not have seemed magical. It may have been something which was done simply because it 'worked' or, as we shall see, it may have had its origins in the Christian tradition. Alan Taylor gives a useful definition of 'magic' in his article 'Rediscovering the Context of Joseph Smith's Treasure Seeking.' Taylor writes that "magic is a particular way of looking at the universe [...] it detects supernatural entities throughout our natural environment [...] that can hurt or help men and women both materially and spiritually. To minimise harm and secure benefit, people who believe they dwell in a magical cosmos practice rituals intended to influence the spiritual beings, the supernatural entities" (Taylor 1999:142). Religion, as opposed to magic, takes away these spiritual entities from nature, and relocates God to somewhere distant.

2.1 The Distinction

2.1.1 Tylor and Frazer

Firstly, can we make a distinction between magic and religion? Taking into account what the authors above have written on the subject, it may seem a daunting task, but there have been many theories attempting to find a distinction in the past. One popular theory is what we might call the 'supplicative and coercive' distinction. This can be seen in the work of E.B.Tylor (d.1917) and Sir James Frazer (d.1941). However, this distinction also goes back to the ancient Greeks. Fritz Graf writes of Plato using this approach. "In the Laws, Plato distinguishes between magic and religion in that magic makes every effort to
persuade the gods, whereas the truly religious behaviour is to leave the gods a free choice” (Graf 1997:26). This distinction is self-explanatory: religion is not demanding. The religious person does not try to force God to help them. However, the magic practitioner does attempt to manipulate the gods, or other powers, having control over them rather than merely asking respectfully.

Tylor argues that the practice of magic came about through a confusion between the objective and the subjective in the minds of people. This mostly occurred in the form of associating something and its representation as one and the same. Tylor writes of this in *Primitive Culture*. “Man, as yet in a low intellectual condition, having come to associate in thought those things which he found by experience to be connected in fact, proceeded erroneously to invert this action, and to conclude that association in thought must involve similar connection in reality” (Tylor 1903:116). One example of the association of ideas given by Tylor is astrology. He suggests that “a sober examination of the subject may [...] show] that it is on an error of the first order that astrology depends, the error of mistaking ideal analogy for real connection” (Tylor 1903:128). Tylor then considers the value that magical practices may have in society. “Is there in the whole monstrous farrago no truth or value whatever? It appears that there is practically none” (Tylor 1903:133).

Frazer argues in the same way as Tylor, and his description of magic is much the same. In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer defines religion as “a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life” (Frazer 1917:222). With regard to magic, Frazer writes that the magician “supplicates no higher power: he sues the favour of no fickle and wayward being: he abases himself before no awful deity” (Frazer 1917:221). Frazer argues that there are two principles of magic. These, he writes, are the Law of Similarity and the Law of Contact, or Contagion. “Charms based on the Law of Similarity may be called Homeopathic or Imitative Magic. Charms based on Law of Contact or Contagion may be called Contagious Magic” (Frazer 1917:52).
Frazer’s argument is much the same as Tylor’s, as he writes that magic’s two principles are the result of a confusion from the association of ideas. “Homeopathic magic commits the mistake of assuming that things which resemble each other are the same: contagious magic commits the mistake of assuming that things which have once been in contact with each other are always in contact” (Frazer 1917:53-54). An example of homeopathic magic would be voodoo dolls. A small doll or model is constructed to resemble someone, and the things done to the doll are expected to have an effect on the person. The image of the person would be burned or broken, and so therefore, thinks the practitioner, the body of the person would also be burned or broken. An example of contagious magic is the belief that a part of someone’s body no longer in contact with that person will have an effect on the person to whom it belonged. Frazer gives numerous examples of people who hold this belief. Frazer sees magic as similar to science, as both use established laws to achieve their ends. “Both [Tylor and Frazer] take the line that a succession of events is destined by unchangeable laws and the ability of one to foresee and calculate the effect of these laws” (de Vries 1961-62:215). This is not magic’s fatal flaw, but rather, “its total misconception of the nature of the particular laws which govern that sequence” (Frazer 1917:221). Distinguishing between magic and religion, Frazer writes “magic is nothing but a mistaken application of the very simplest and most elementary processes of the mind […while] religion assumes the operation of conscious or personal agents” (Frazer 1917:233).

2.1.2 Malinowski
A second theory, favoured by Bronislaw Malinowski, is what we might call the ‘expressive and instrumental’ distinction. Both magic and religion, writes Malinowski, offer a respite from the stresses of life. However, they differ in the fact that magic expresses something the people wanted, argued Malinowski. It was performed to reach a goal. If the desire for a specific goal is great, and all other means of reaching that goal have been tried, magic is used. “Man, […] forsaken by his knowledge, baffled by his past experience and by his technical skill, he realises his impotence. Yet his desire grips him only the more strongly” (Malinowski 1925:73-74). Man would then turn to magic to achieve his goal.
Religion, on the other hand, was performed simply because that was the way it had always been and a specific goal or function may not be able to be named by the practitioner. Hamilton puts it thus: “magic is always related to some concrete purpose or definite outcome which the practitioner wishes to achieve. Religion, on the other hand, aims at no particular purpose or end result” (Hamilton 2001:39). In ‘Magic, Science and Religion’ Malinowski defines “magic as a practical art consisting of acts which are only means to a definite end expected to follow later on; religion as a body of self-contained acts being themselves the fulfilment of their purpose” (Malinowski 1925:81). He goes on to add that magic is far simpler than religion. “It is always the affirmation of man’s power to cause certain definite effects by a definite spell and rite. In religion, on the other hand, we have a whole supernatural world of faith” (Malinowski 1925:81). Malinowski also argues that religion is a great help to people when attempting to deal with death. “Death [...] is a fact about which science and rational philosophy can tell nothing [...] And here religious revelation steps in and affirms life after death, the immortality of the spirit” (Malinowski 1936:61).

Hamilton sees Malinowski’s distinction as perhaps the most helpful. However, he writes “in reality, Malinowski’s categories are rarely found in pure form but are very much intermingled. Practices often embody elements of each although usually they lean more in one direction than the other” (Hamilton 2001:39). This is true, and Malinowski does recognise it. In ‘Magic, Science and Religion’ he writes that

Both magic and religion arise and function in situations of emotional stress [...] Both magic and religion open up escapes from such situations and such impasses as offer no empirical way out except by ritual and belief into the domain of the supernatural [...] They both are surrounded by taboos and observances which mark off their acts from those of the profane world (Malinowski 1925:80-81).

These are merely a few of the examples given by Malinowski. In practice one cannot clearly divide magic from religion. Some elements will always be blurred, although they
will fall more to one side than the other. Although Hamilton favours Malinowski’s distinction, Hildred Geertz points out that “the failure to distinguish the meaning of an action from the action itself blinded Malinowski to the recognition that many different motivational purposes can be served by the same customary performance” (Geertz 1975:78), which is also a significant point.

2.1.3 Durkheim
A third theory is the communal and individual model, as shown by Émile Durkheim (d. 1917), whose “ideas have had a shaping influence on sociology and social anthropology, and his later work on the sociology of religion has been of particular importance” (Lukes 1987:517). Durkheim writes that religion is distinguished from magic by the fact that it is performed by the community, for the community, whilst magic is more centred on individuals. This is a distinction that is commonly made. In The Elementary Forms Of The Religious Life Durkheim goes into a lengthy discussion on defining religious phenomena. He writes that “the real characteristic of religious phenomena is that they always suppose a bipartite division of the whole universe, known and knowable, into two classes which embrace all that exists, but which radically exclude each other” (Durkheim 1915:40). These two classes are the sacred and the profane; the former to be protected while the latter is to be kept away from. A religion is formed, continues Durkheim, “when a certain number of sacred things sustain relations of co-ordination or subordination with each other in such a way as to form a system having a certain unity, but which is not comprised within any other system of the same sort” (Durkheim 1915:41).

However, Durkheim states that the definition of religion is not complete, for it can be applied not only to religion, but also to magic. Therefore a distinction is necessary. There are many features that magic has in common with religion, such as their various myths and dogmas. However, as Durkheim writes, “they are more elementary, undoubtedly because, seeking technical and utilitarian ends, it does not waste its time in pure speculation” (Durkheim 1915:42). With all that magic and religion have in common, from demons to the importance of the souls of the dead, Durkheim states that the two still
cannot get along. “Magic takes a sort of professional pleasure in profaning holy things, [...] religion, when it has not condemned and prohibited magic rites, has always looked upon them with disfavour” (Durkheim 1915:43).

Durkheim’s attempt to distinguish these two “conflicting brothers” (de Vries 1961-62:214), thus centres on the distinction between the communal and the individual. He states that “the really religious beliefs are always common to a determined group [...] The individuals which compose it feel themselves united to each other by the simple fact that they have a common faith” (Durkheim 1915:43). The practice of magic, on the other hand, is a much more individual affair. “The belief in magic [...] does not result in binding together those who adhere to it, nor in uniting them into a group leading a common life” (Durkheim 1915:44). With this distinction, Durkheim completes his definition of religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim 1915:47).

2.1.4 Goode
A useful working model has been suggested by William J. Goode. Firstly, Goode describes the similarities between the two phenomena. He observes that the similarities come from the fact that both magic and religion deal with the supernatural, his first point which the two have in common being that they are both “concerned with the non-empirical. They refer to a realm beyond that of the ‘logio-experimental,’ to the non-measurable, the intangible, where the non-believer ‘cannot see’ those elements which are real enough to the faithful” (Goode 1951:50). Because of this, and this is Goode’s second point, “they both stand in somewhat the same relationship to Western science” (Goode 1951:50). Thirdly, “both are pervasively symbolic” (Goode 1951:50). For example, an object which may seem to have no special significance normally, may do so in a religious or magical situation. “They stand for something else, such as a magical force, an idea, an occurrence, etc” (Goode 1951:50). The fourth and fifth similarities as given by Goode are that “they both deal with non-human forces, sometimes called the sacred […] and a ritual
... system [...] is common to both” (Goode 1951:50). With regard to that which is symbolised in the rituals, Goode writes that “both systems contain many ‘anthropopsychic’ entities” (Goode 1951:50-51). By this he refers to entities which are interacted with as if they were the same, in terms of thought and mood, as the other people in the society. Goode’s seventh and final similarity refers to the practitioners. “There is usually a specialised (a) set of skills, and (b) a select group holding those skills, for dealing with such forces” (Goode 1951:51).

It is clear that magic and religion have much in common, and at times can appear very difficult to distinguish. However, Goode writes that a distinction based on a number of characteristics is an option. “Part of this distinction goes back to Tylor’s idea that magic is a pseudo-science based on an inaccurate association of ideas, divination being a ‘sincere but fallacious system of philosophy’” (Goode 1951:51). Goode writes that from this we can note the instrumental, and subsequently the personal rather than collective nature of magic. Goode concludes that “magic and religion can be distinguished through the use of a theoretical tool, the polar ideal type concept” (Goode 1951:52). The idea of the ‘ideal type’ goes back to Max Weber (1864-1920), although Talcott Parsons writes that “Weber’s own treatment of this subject was not altogether satisfactory” (Parsons 1937:601). Although the ‘ideal type’ is difficult to explain, Parsons notes that “Weber is quite clear what it is not: (1) It is not a hypothesis [...] (2) It is not a description of reality [...] (3) It is not an average [...] (4) Nor, finally, is it a formulation of the concrete traits common to a class of concrete things” (Parsons 1937:603-604). Parsons notes that Weber does give “one positive characterisation of the ideal type [...] it is a construction of elements abstracted from the concrete, and put together to form a unified conceptual pattern” (Parsons 1937:603). This concrete reality is not to be found in the world; it is an exaggeration. “The ideal type involves determining the features of a social institution that would be present if the institution were a logically consistent whole, not affected by other institutions, concerns and interests” (Elwell 1996). As Frank Elwell writes “There can be an ‘ideal type’ whore house or a religious sect, [...] (none of which may be ‘ideal’ in the colloquial sense of the term)” (Elwell 1996).
When using the polar ideal type concept, any concrete manifestation of the phenomenon in question will not be found at either end, but more towards one end than the other. This is also true of religion and magic. “In its application one accepts the idea that any given magical or religious system is concretely not to be found at either extreme, theoretical polar, but somewhere between the two” (Goode 1951:52).

In giving his distinction, Goode cites eleven “characteristics most prominently emerging in anthropological writings as theoretical aids in distinguishing these two complexes” (Goode 1951:52). Rather then there being separate, distinct types of practice, magic or religious, in Goode’s analysis there is a continuum.

2.1.5 A Working Model

Goode’s continuum may be represented as a table. The characteristics have been slightly altered so as to better fit our purposes, but essentially remain the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W. J. Goode</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(adapted)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magical Pole                    Religious Pole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Material Goal.......................................................Spiritual Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Manipulation of Spiritual Powers........Supplication of Spiritual Powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Profession-Client Relationship................Shepherd-Flock Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Directed Towards Individuals’ Goals.......Directed Towards Social Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Private Activity.........................Common Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Substitution of Techniques......................Fixed Ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Low Emotional Involvement......................High Emotional Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Voluntary Rituals.................................Compulsory Rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Free Choice of Times.........................Fixed Times and Seasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Potentially Anti-Social.......................Supportive of Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Instrumental.................................End in Itself</td>
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Goode’s first characteristic is concrete specificity of goal, which “relates more closely to the magical complex” (Goode 1951:53). However, he also adds that this category does overlap with the religious more so than the others as religious goals can be obtained in this world. “Religious goals do lean more heavily in the direction of ‘general welfare,’ ‘health,’ ‘good weather,’ and eschatological occurrences” (Goode 1951:53). However, for the purposes of examining the practices of Joseph Smith Jr. I have labelled this first category ‘material goal,’ which would be expected in magical practices, and ‘spiritual goal,’ to be found towards the religious end.

The second characteristic is that of which Frazer wrote, the supplicative and coercive distinction. Goode writes that “the manipulative attitude is to be found most strongly at the magical pole, as against the supplicative, propitiatory, or cajoling, at the religious pole” (Goode 1951:53).

Thirdly, Goode argues that magic may be distinguished through the relationship of the leader to the people. Within magic, “the professional-client relationship is ideally-theoretically to be found [...] the shepherd-flock, or prophet-follower, is more likely in the religious” (Goode 1951:53). This reflects Durkheim’s definition and distinction, religion being more communal, whereas magic is strictly ‘professional-client,’ with no bonds between the various ‘clients.’

Goode’s fourth characteristic is that magical practices are generally directed towards individual ends as opposed to group ends. “Individual ends are more frequently to be found toward the magical end of this continuum” (Goode 1951:53). This can be seen in such acts as searching for buried treasure, or wearing protective amulets and talismans. An example of when this may not work would be an act such as a rain dance. This may appear magical, yet it is intended to benefit the entire population of the town. The fifth category is related to the idea that magical acts are more likely to be performed in private. Goode argues that “the magical practitioner or his ‘customer’ goes through his activities as a private individual” (Goode 1951:53). As opposed to this, religions tend to function with people in groups, such as in churches. Durkheim’s distinction is also reflected here.
Sixthly, Goode writes that "with regard to the process of achieving the goal, in case of magical failure, there is more likely to be a substitution or introduction of other techniques" (Goode 1951:53). Goode argues that since religious activity is less instrumental than magical, and the goals are achieved indirectly, a substitution of techniques is more unlikely.

Goode’s seventh point is that magic is more impersonal than religion. There is not the same emotion that one sees within religion, as one deals with forces rather than God. “A lesser degree of emotion is expected at the magical end of this continuum [...] at the religious end, one expects a greater degree of emotion, possibly awe or worship” (Goode 1951:53). This can be clearly seen in religion with hymns and songs of praise and worship.

The eighth characteristic that Goode gives is that within magic, the people involved determine whether to begin or not. Within religion, there is no choice. “The practitioner decides whether the process is to start at all, toward the magical pole. Toward the religious, the ritual must be carried out” (Goode 1951:53). This is linked with the ninth characteristic, which is the fact that the person practising magic decides when to begin, as well as whether to begin at all, although Goode writes “toward the latter end of the continuum, the time relationships of rituals are fairly fixed, within rough limits, even when not calendrical” (Goode 1951:53).

Goode’s penultimate category argues that magical rituals are potentially directed against society, or specific groups or people within society. For example, the voodoo dolls mentioned earlier would be used to cause harm to an individual, and so would be anti-social. On the other hand, “religious rituals are not thought of as even potentially directed against the society or such respected people” (Goode 1951:54).

Finally, Goode’s eleventh characteristic can be seen in earlier works of people such as Malinowski, and can be seen in his expressive and instrumental model. Goode writes “as
a final, ideally distinguishing characteristic, magic is *used only instrumentally*, i.e., *for goals*. The religious complex may be used for goals, but at its ideal pole, the practices are ends in themselves” (Goode 1951:54).

This list of eleven criteria creates a continuum, and, as Goode himself notes, “it seems likely that a given magical or religious complex will fall fairly definitely toward one pole or the other, although of course no such concrete complex will be found exactly at either extreme” (Goode 1951:54). A good example to use here is hermeticism. This was seen as a magical tradition, and yet contained elements of Christianity. These distinctions can be made, but in practice magic and religion appear mixed up, with no clear boundary. David E. Aune writes that “Goode is exceedingly wary of formulating universally valid statements about either religion or magic unless they are carefully qualified” (Aune 1980:1512).

Another important point, and one which Malcolm Hamilton notes is the fact that the idea of magic is one which is found in our culture, but not necessarily in others. Hamilton writes that “other societies do not always possess such a concept and have no notion of a distinct category of magic with its connotations of special and mysterious forces” (Hamilton 2001:40). His example is of the Malay fishermen, mentioned previously, who burn incense on their boats to attract fish, something which is not seen to be in any way magical. Similarly, many of the things Joseph Smith Jr. engaged in may not have been seen as magical by him or the people around him. Because of this, Hamilton points out that it is “very important to distinguish between the actor’s and the observer’s account of what is happening” (Hamilton 2001:41). If Joseph Smith Jr. did not consider what he was doing to be magical, why do outside observers label it ‘magical?’ As we shall see, many of the practices of Joseph Smith Jr. that have been labelled as magical had their origins in the Bible or early Christianity. In nineteenth-century North America magic was an indigenous category. Joseph Smith was certainly aware that magical practices existed, and could have made the distinction himself between what he was doing, and magic. The issue here is whether ‘magic’ is a useful category for non-European cultures.
Hildred Geertz writes that “we need to know always when we are speaking in our own conceptual language and when we are speaking in theirs” (Geertz 1975:74). This is the question of emics and etics, which we shall examine below.

2.2 The Point Of View Adopted

2.2.1 Emic and Etic

Having given several different ways of making a distinction between religion and magic, it is now necessary to discover the method used by authors such as D. Michael Quinn, John L. Brooke and Lance Owens. Their method of distinction and labelling may be compared to that of Joseph Smith Jr. and some comparison may be drawn. If the distinctions are different, Joseph Smith Jr. may have seen what he did as being different from the definition of magic given by these authors, and perhaps not magical at all. We need to ask what the authors are doing.

Michael Quinn goes into great detail defining what he means by magic and the occult. He gives a definition for each from Webster’s Third New International Dictionary. Occult is defined as “‘deliberately kept hidden, not revealed to others, secret, undisclosed’” (Quinn 1998:xxiii). Magic is “‘the use of means (as ceremonies, charms, spells) that are believed to have supernatural power to cause a supernatural being to produce or prevent a particular result (as rain, death, healing) considered not attainable by natural means’” (Quinn 1998:xxiii). Also included in this definition of magic are divination, incantation, sympathetic magic, miracles and “‘control of natural forces by the typically direct action of rites, objects, materials, or words considered supernaturally potent’” (Quinn 1998:xxiii). The only thing that Quinn states his book does not refer to as magic is “sleight-of-hand trickery as practiced by the performance ‘magician’ Houdini of the silent film era” (Quinn 1998:xxiii).

Quinn notes one of the methods of distinction mentioned earlier, the supplicative and coercive distinction. However, he argues that “both religion and magic involve supernatural supplication, supernatural coercion, intricate rituals, and efforts to understand the otherworldly and ineffable” (Quinn 1998:xxvi). Quinn states that “a more
useful distinction between the two is centred in ethics and personal conduct” (Quinn 1998:xxvi). Religion gives morals and ethics, a way to live for everybody. Magic, on the other hand, “gives little or no attention to group ethics, and emphasises individual ethics primarily as another instrument to achieve the desired ends of ritual” (Quinn 1998:xxvi). Quinn notes the many problems that arise when attempting to find a distinction between magic and religion. It is his definitions of ‘occult’ and ‘magic’ that he uses to distinguish these terms from religion, and activities that are religious. Many LDS apologists are unhappy with these terms being applied to Mormon history, but Quinn writes that “there are no better word in English [than occult and magic] to describe the beliefs and practices described in this book” (Quinn 1998:xxix).

It can be seen that Quinn uses a method of distinguishing religion from what he sees as magic involving the use of what we term the emic and etic perspectives. These are terms that were originally used by Kenneth Pike, derived from the suffixes of the words ‘phonemic’ and ‘phonetic’.

Pike’s stated intention in coining these terms was to apply a single comprehensive research strategy to language and behaviour based on analogies with the concepts and principles of structural linguistics, the school of language study responsible for the development of the study of the phoneme (Harris 1976:332).

Stated basically, the emic perspective refers to that of the insider, while the etic perspective is that of the outsider. There is much confusion with regard to these terms, and they are often used in a way that may appear foreign to Pike himself. Thomas Headland writes of his surprise at hearing people’s differing interpretations. “By the early 1980s, […] I was becoming increasingly fascinated with the confusion I found in people’s definitions of the terms, and the distinctions that those distinctions were supposed to produce” (Headland 1990:15). Marvin Harris, an anthropologist, used Pike’s terms in his writing. However, Pike and Harris use them in different ways. “Part of the confusion is that Pike and Harris not only do not use the concept in the same way, but that they differ in their applications and definitions of the terms” (Headland 1990:15).
Headland observes how the use of the terms has spread into other disciplines, and notes the fact that they have become more and more common in everyday language. “This trend is reflected in the gradual inclusion of the terms into unabridged dictionaries [...], a decrease in the number of authors who felt any need to cite Pike, [...] and an increase in the number of authors who used the terms in print with no definitions or explanations” (Headland 1990:17-18).

However, because of this confusion, some explanation is necessary. Russell McCutcheon states that

> The emic perspective [...] is the outsider’s attempt to produce as faithfully as possible [...] the informant’s own descriptions [...] The etic perspective is the observer’s subsequent attempt to take the descriptive information they have already gathered and to organise, systematise, compare [...] that information in terms of a system of their own making (McCutcheon 1999:17).

What Michael Quinn does not make clear is whether he is looking at Joseph Smith Jr.’s practices from the emic position or the etic position. At times he appears to be defining something as magic according to his own definition, viewing it from the perspective of an outsider. Yet at other times he seems to argue that Joseph Smith Jr. himself would have seen the practice or belief in question as magical.

For example, with regard to what Quinn refers to as Joseph Smith Jr.’s silver Venus talisman with the dove-and-olive-branch symbol, Quinn states that the “Mormon prophet did not comment publicly on the meaning [of the symbol]” (Quinn 1998:93). Despite this, Quinn argues that “every interpreter should consider the fact of Joseph Jr.’s extensive activity in folk magic, as well as the specifically occult items that he and his family possessed” (Quinn 1998:93). Here, Quinn is arguing from an etic perspective, something that he does do more often than the emic. He has used the evidence to come to his conclusion that the talisman owned by Joseph Smith Jr. was of a magical nature. This is not to say that Joseph Smith Jr. himself would have viewed the object as magical.
These are two separate categories, and it is important to define them as such. On the one hand we have religion and magic as our analytical categories, or ideal types. The observer may place these practices into a magical category for his own purposes, although those who practiced them may not have seen them in this way. On the other hand, there is the self-understanding of the people who practise these things, and who hold these beliefs, in this case Joseph Smith Jr. and other early Mormons. It may be argued that some of their practices were of a magical nature, but that does not necessarily mean they saw them this way themselves. Both categories are important, and we shall examine each later.

2.2.2 Original Meaning and Present Meaning
John L. Brooke, however, uses a different method. Brooke traces Joseph Smith Jr.'s "two critical transformations" (Brooke 1994:4) from the village conjurer to a prophet of the 'Word,' and from a prophet of the 'Word' into a magus, "a role previously manifested in the medieval alchemist, the Renaissance hermetic philosopher, and the perfectionist sectarians of the Radical Reformation" (Brooke 1994:4). Brooke, then, makes an historical claim as opposed to Quinn's classificatory claim. Lance Owens appears to use both of these methods. In Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: The Occult Connection, Owens traces Joseph Smith Jr.'s use of the kabbalah and hermeticism from their understanding in medieval Judaism and Christianity. He writes that the understanding of his thesis "requires exploration of an occult religious tradition spanning more than a millennium of Western history" (Owens 1994). In his article entitled 'Joseph Smith: America's Hermetic Prophet,' Owens writes that following the Salamander Letter incident, there was much "genuine historical evidence [...] substantiating that Smith and his early followers had multiple involvements with magic, irregular Freemasonry, and traditions generally termed 'occult'" (Owens 1999:162).

Brooke traces the beliefs and practices of Joseph Smith Jr. back in order to discover their source. Once the source is found, these beliefs and practices may then be classified in their original context. This, then, helps with the classifying of them in the context of nineteenth-century North America. Quinn looks at the religious and magical beliefs and
practices of Joseph Smith Jr. and classifies them according to his own, or rather, *Webster's Third International Dictionary*'s definitions and categories as ideal types, in order to better understand the data. Another method would have been to look at religion and magic as indigenous categories, to see how the practitioners understand themselves. In some cases the categories may not even exist, or perhaps those involved would not use both of the categories to describe what they do. The belief or practice may then be classified in its original context, and then as found in its new context.

In both the historical method and the classificatory method, the authors are attempting to classify as religious or magic a belief or practice of Joseph Smith Jr. as found in the eighteenth century. The question that needs to be asked is whether or not these beliefs and practices have been transformed within this new context. If they have, authors such as Brooke, Quinn and Owens may no longer be able to classify the beliefs and practices in the way in which they were seen previously. Also, the participants themselves may not classify them in the same way as they used to be. In other words, something deemed magical in one context may be participated in by Joseph Smith Jr. and his followers but thought of in a completely different, non-magical way. If this is the case, it would seem unhelpful to understand these beliefs and practices as magical. While we may not be able to discern exactly how Joseph Smith Jr. and his followers would have seen their practices, it is important to note how they may be seen in other ways, if this is possible.

Chapter 3: Joseph Smith and Magic Reconsidered

3.1 Religion and Magic as Indigenous Categories

3.1.1 Treasure Digging

One of the earliest examples of Joseph Smith Jr. being involved in an activity with magical dimensions was the search for buried treasure. However, this was something that these people could reconcile with their religion. Alan Taylor argues that 'Christian primitivists,' or religious seekers saw treasure seeking as part of their 'experimental religion.' "Terrified of living alienated and isolated from God's voice, seekers longed for the reassurance of regular spiritual encounters in dreams, visions, inner voices, and..."
uncanny coincidences” (Taylor 1999:146). This was common among the people in rural areas. They often joined various churches, but many left soon after joining for another. The Smiths were one such family. Seeking for buried treasure was a major part of their lives, and yet, “there was no contradiction [as they would have seen it] between the Smith’s religious seeking and their treasure-seeking […] it represented a cross-fertilisation of material desire and spiritual aspiration” (Taylor 1999:146).

The search for buried treasure was not simply for materialistic gain, but also for spiritual rewards. The guardian spirits of the treasure were thought of as tests of their faith in Christ, to be overcome by the seekers, “using prayers, Bibles, and religious pamphlets in their digging rituals” (Taylor 1999:146). A Methodist preacher was “a leading collaborator in their Palmyra treasure-seeking” (Taylor 1999:147), and no one of “dubious morality or incomplete faith” (Taylor 1999:147) was allowed to accompany the group, as this would lead to failure. There are aspects to this that appear magical, however the manner in which they were performed suggests a more religious context. Alan Taylor observed that “Joseph Smith eagerly pursued treasure-seeking as a peculiarly tangible way to practice ‘experimental religion,’ as an opportunity to develop his spiritual gifts through regular exercise in repeated contests with guardian spirits” (Taylor 1999:147).

It can be seen from Taylor’s comments how difficult the distinction between magic and religion can be to make. Quinn refers to this treasure seeking of Joseph Smith and his family as one of their many magical practices. However, Taylor’s description shows that religion, or religious belief played a large role, with the emphasis on morality. On the other hand, this could merely illustrate Quinn’s claim that magic “emphasises individual ethics primarily as another instrument to achieve the desired ends of ritual” (Quinn 1998:xxvi). It does appear, however, that religious belief plays a large part in the search for treasure. Joseph Smith Jr. was brought up in a religious and God-fearing family and was himself deeply religious. Rather than believing the treasure-seekers themselves can find the wealth and deal with any guardian, there is a heavy reliance on Bibles and praying. While many referred to these treasure-seeking groups as ‘money-diggers,’
Taylor writes that “because of this intersection with religious seeking I prefer to call them treasure-seekers rather than the more sordid sounding money-diggers” (Taylor 1999:147). It seems likely that Joseph Smith Jr.’s use of Bibles and prayers stemmed from a genuine religiousness, and were not simply the means to an end. In any case, it is important to pose the question. It may be more helpful to understand this as not simply a magical activity.

3.1.2 Joseph Smith’s Visions

Joseph Smith’s visions, too, do not need to be interpreted magically. In his first vision, Smith reported that he had witnessed God and Jesus. People have claimed to have had visions of Jesus ever since his body went missing from the tomb. Phillip H. Wiebe gives many examples of people throughout history who say they have experienced visions of Jesus. As well as just seeing Jesus, Wiebe writes that “Jesus is also said to have been seen at the right hand of God [...]” (Wiebe 1998:19). A vision of this nature is certainly nothing new or occult. This vision and the message of forgiveness given to Joseph Smith Jr. appear to be “commonplace at the time” (Quinn 1998:137).

It is Joseph Smith Jr.’s second vision in which Michael Quinn sees what he describes as magical or occult influences. One aspect of Smith’s second vision which Michael Quinn sees as having magical significance is the thrice repeated message. Although he writes that a spirit appearing three times was to be expected within magical traditions, this can also be seen in the biblical tradition. In Acts 10, Peter is praying in much the same fashion as Joseph Smith Jr. did in his bedroom on the night of his second vision. While praying Peter fell into a trance and experienced a vision, seeing “heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth” (Acts 10:11). In his vision, Peter saw all manner of animals and was told to eat. This was repeated three times. “This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven” (Acts 10:16). As Quinn states, repeating something three times was significant within the magic world view. However, it is also significant within the religious world view, and so it would seem unnecessary to describe the thrice
repeated message of Moroni as 'magic', when it has a direct antecedent in the New Testament.

3.1.3 The Book of Mormon
Another example of how Joseph Smith Jr. may have thought of his actions and practices in religious rather than magical terms is the discovery of the Book of Mormon, as the recovery of a lost book. Lance S. Owens and John L. Brooke both write of the occult and magical elements of the discovery of a book like this. While Owens only writes that in terms of comparisons only "a vague outline [...] may be discerned" (Owens 1994), a more likely and better-known parallel may be drawn from the biblical tradition. The idea of the discovery of a 'lost book' occurs in 2 Kings. "And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord" (2 Kings 22:8). Then, "the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him [...] and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord" (2 Kings 23:8). When there is such a well-known example of the recovery of a hidden book in the biblical tradition, there seems no need to resort to magic or occult parallels in order to explain this.

3.1.4 Degrees of Glory
The idea behind Joseph Smith Jr. and Sidney Rigdon's vision in 1832 which totally "transformed orthodox notions of the cosmos" (Brooke 1994:199), was not wholly new, nor is an occult explanation necessary. Michael Quinn writes that "the 1832 vision's description of multiple heavens was compatible with occult views" (Quinn 1998:216). This is true, but there are, however, other possibilities. The idea of multiple heavens can be seen in the Bible, specifically 1 Corinthians 15:40-42 and 2 Corinthians 12:2. Quinn does acknowledge this, but argues against it being an influence on Joseph Smith Jr. While Quinn argues that "the phrase 'degrees of glory' is nowhere in those biblical verses" (Quinn 1998:216), Paul does speak of the glory of terrestrial and celestial bodies. Brooke states that Smith was "drawing on language from First Corinthians" (Brooke 1994:199). In 1 Corinthians 15:41, Paul writes "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of
the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.” In 2 Corinthians 12:2, Paul writes of a person “in Christ above fourteen years ago, […] such an one caught up to the third heaven.” Fawn Brodie writes of the influence of the Corinthians passage on Joseph Smith Jr. “Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians contained three verses that caught his interest […] Upon reading these lines, he said, there came to him and Rigdon a vision of the resurrection in which they saw the three great kingdoms to which all men would be assigned at the Judgment Day” (Brodie 1971:117).

Quinn documents extensively various occult books and the like from which Joseph Smith Jr. may have been influenced. However, Paul in First and Second Corinthians does speak of something very similar to the degrees of glory, and while he does not use that particular phrasing, it is significant to note this as a possible non-magical explanation for the thought of Joseph Smith Jr. The young Mormon prophet was certainly well versed in biblical literature and would have been familiar with these passages. Indeed, he quoted 1 Corinthians 15:41 in his King Follett discourse of 1844, saying “‘We have reason to have the greatest hope and consolations for our dead of any people on the earth’” (Smith 1844).

3.1.5 Healing
Another example of something considered magical by Quinn, and yet with biblical roots is the sending of healing handkerchiefs by Mormon apostles to help the ill when the apostles themselves could not be present. The same practice can be seen in Acts 19:11-13: “And God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.” This is a clear example of something that Joseph Smith Jr. and his followers practiced which could have been taken straight from the Bible. This is also a practice that not only Mormons and practitioners of magic indulged in, but also comparable to practices that can be seen within Christianity, even in the present day. These include the use of relics within Roman Catholicism to heal. The use of items that had been in contact with Joseph Smith Jr. or a saint is undoubtedly a mysterious practice,
but nonetheless one which has biblical roots, and the early Mormons were likely not to have considered it magic.

Linked to this idea of a magical healing are Joseph Smith Jr.'s reported exorcisms. Again, as with the healing handkerchiefs, this activity can be clearly seen in the biblical tradition. Jesus was said to have performed lots of exorcisms himself, documented in the New Testament. A good example of this occurs in Mark chapter nine. An epileptic child is brought by his father to Jesus. Here Jesus "rebuked the foul spirit, saying to him, 'Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him" (Mark 9:25). A second example of Jesus casting out demons can be seen at the beginning of Mark. A man with an 'unclean spirit' appears in the synagogue, the demon revealing itself by crying out to Jesus. "And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried, with a loud voice, he came out of him" (Mark 1:25-27).

G. H. Twelftree writes that "although the view is sometimes advanced that Jesus was not an exorcist [...] there is ample evidence that he had a reputation for being extremely successful in expelling evil spirits from people" (Twelftree 1992:166). For Jesus, or at least for his followers, these exorcisms were like not thought of as magical, or connected with magic in any way. They were performed through the power of God, as can be seen in Luke, where Jesus says "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

There were many magic formulas or incantations for casting out demons around Joseph Smith Jr. One such example is given by Quinn. As mentioned previously (p36), he writes of the "'Fiat, fiat, fiat' formula of exorcism for commanding evil spirits to depart" (Quinn 1998:273). However, Brooke notes that "such healing powers clearly had biblical antecedents" (Brooke 1994:193), and with so many exorcisms documented in the Bible it seems unnecessary to describe this as coming from a magical tradition. Even if Joseph Smith Jr. used a formula, which seems at first sight to have roots in the magical tradition, the practice of exorcism has numerous biblical parallels. An obvious objection to this
would be that even if these exorcisms did have biblical antecedents, they could still be
labelled magical. There have been books and articles on whether Jesus himself was a
magician. However, what is important for our purposes is how nineteenth-century
Christians saw these New Testament practices. It is unlikely that they would have seen
them as magical.

The High Priesthood’s ability to heal and essentially grant eternal life may not be such a
fundamental departure as Brooke sees. Brooke is comparing it to a very Protestant notion
of ‘orthodox Christianity.’ Within Catholicism Joseph Smith Jr.’s ideas appear more
familiar. At the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, differences between
Catholicism and Protestantism are noticeable. The Council “upheld the idea of a distinct
status and function as intermediaries for the priesthood, which would have to remain
celibate” (Oxtoby 1996:298).

3.1.6 Divinisation
Divinisation and the divinising powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood is another aspect of
Mormonism that has been described as magical, or coming from magical traditions by
these authors. As mentioned above, Quinn notes the fact that humans can become gods in
his list of common features between the LDS Endowment and the ancient mysteries.
Brooke argues that with this idea of divinisation (theosis or theopoiesis) among others,
“Joseph Smith had arrived at the most critical themes of hermetic theology” (Brooke

However, once again we find this idea playing a role within orthodox Christianity. In the
New Testament 2 Peter 1:4 states that “whereby are given unto us exceeding great and
precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having
escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Much can be read into this, and
it is not unlikely that it could be taken to mean divinisation in the way that Joseph Smith
Jr. wrote.

1 For example see Smith 1978
Early Christian thinkers also discussed this, and arrived at their own interpretations. Irenaeus (c. AD 125-203), in *Against Heresies* wrote, “For we canst blame on Him, because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, then at length gods” (White no date). Origen (c. AD 185-254), in *Against Celsus* wrote that “in order that the human, by communion with the divine, might rise to divine, not in Jesus only, but in all those who believe, but enter on the life that Jesus taught” (White no date). The idea of divinisation is seen most clearly in Eastern Christian thought. It has become a dominant idea among Eastern Orthodox theologians. That Joseph Smith Jr. may not have read any early Christians’ works is not important. The fact that Christians were thinking like this is significant. They wrote of becoming divine, participating in divinity, and yet were not considered to be dabbling in magical or occult thought. So too would it have been possible that Joseph Smith Jr. could have had these thoughts simply from reading the Bible.

3.1.7 Baptism for the Dead

Baptism for the dead was another idea that has been seen as coming from a magical tradition. Brooke writes that “this doctrine would be a comfort to those who so regularly lost family members [...] but baptism for the dead had a radical heritage” (Brooke 1994:243). As mentioned earlier (p43), it was practiced in the 1720s and 1730s at Ephrata, and according to Brooke was tied up with the alchemical tradition. However, this idea can also be found in the Bible. First Corinthians 15:29 asks: “Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead?” In Doctrine and Covenants 128:17, Joseph Smith Jr. links baptism for the dead with the prophet Malachi. Smith quotes from Malachi chapter four. “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet [...] And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse” (Malachi 4:4-5). In Doctrine and Covenants Smith writes that to avoid the curse, there needs to be a “welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other – and behold what is that subject? It is baptism for the dead” (D&C 128:18). Here Joseph Smith Jr. is justifying the practice by linking it back to the biblical tradition, and using biblical terms.
As mentioned earlier (p67), John L. Brooke sees this talk of baptism for the dead and divinisation as Joseph Smith Jr.'s arrival at hermetic thought. Joseph Smith’s theology in the 1840s did indeed bear much resemblance to hermeticism, but, hermeticism itself was strongly influenced by biblical ideas. Hermeticism makes use of a large number of ideas including the Corpus Hermeticum, kabbalah, alchemy and Christian thought. Pico Della Mirandola was a fifteenth century hermetic philosopher “who first united the Hermetic and Cabalist types of magic” (Yates 1964:86). The magical elements were emphasised by Pico, but a deep religiousness was always present. “The connection between magic and Christianity in Pico’s formulations is made even closer and more formidable by his extraordinary claim that Magia and Cabala help to prove the divinity of Christ” (Yates 1964:105).

3.1.8 Hermeticism and Talismans
As mentioned earlier (p42), John L. Brooke notes the alchemical language that he sees used in the Book of Mormon. He cites words such as ‘fire,’ ‘furnace,’ and ‘refine.’ These can be looked at as coming from the alchemical tradition, but it may also be argued that Joseph Smith Jr. is using biblical language here.

There was also a non-magical form of hermeticism. Francis Yates writes that “There was a way of using the Hermetica which was purely religious and philosophical” (Yates 1964:169). Those who took this line saw Hermes Trismegistus as a religious thinker and writer, and the magical elements were thought of as most likely inserted by someone else in the translation. “This left the way clear to admire Hermes without reserve for his remarkable insights into the Old and New Testament truths” (Yates 1964:169).

Talismans and amulets were also prominent within hermeticism. These were also linked to astrology. The talisman would, by sympathetic magic draw down powers from the heavens. Someone could use these talismans religiously, “for insight into the divine forces in nature and to assist his worship of them” (Yates 1964:45).
It is therefore unhelpful to label hermeticism simply as a magical tradition. There are certainly elements that may appear magical, but the underlying aim, to better know God, was often religious.

Much has been made of the use of talismans and amulets by Joseph Smith Jr. and other early Mormons. However, Quinn himself notes that early Christians were known to use the same type of things. "In the period of 'roughly 300-600 C.E.,' both Jews and Christians used 'magic bowls' for 'protection for houses and property'" (Quinn 1998:272). These correspond to many of Joseph Smith Jr.'s lamens and talismans. The fact that these Jews and early Christians were using protective bowls is significant as a parallel to Joseph Smith Jr.'s protective parchments. Whether the early Christian bowls were considered to be magical by others or not is again unimportant for our purposes.

The two talismans owned by Joseph Smith Jr. and described by Michael Quinn may be examined with how Smith himself may have perceived them being kept in mind. Firstly, the silver Jupiter talisman. It does appear that Joseph Smith Jr. would more than likely have thought of this amulet in the way described by Quinn. It seems to be of astrological significance, and very important to Smith. It is important to note though, the fact that Smith's talisman was made of silver as opposed to tin. As mentioned earlier (p37), it was thought that the silver Jupiter talisman would dissolve enchantments, and Smith would have found this useful with regard to the use of his seer stones. At the time he acquired the Jupiter talisman he was using his seer stones on the treasure quest, and would sometimes complain that "'enchantment' blocked his seer stone's view of buried treasure" (Quinn 1998:90). The breaking of enchantments would appear to be Joseph Smith's primary motive, at least early on, in possessing and using the Jupiter talisman. However, it is also important to note that Quinn states "to the right of the magic square of Jupiter is the familiar Hebrew word for father/God, 'Abba'" (Quinn 1998:83). Even on an item with seemingly magical properties and uses, God is not forgotten. Despite this though, it does appear that Joseph Smith Jr. himself would have considered this item as having some sort of magical power.
A second amulet, or talisman that was mentioned by Quinn is the one "dominated by the image of a dove in flight with an olive branch in its beak" (Quinn 1998:91). The dove is a prominent image in Christianity, and although Quinn states that "used strictly as a Christian symbol, the dove almost never appeared in jewellery" (Quinn 1998:91), it must be remembered that Joseph Smith Jr. borrowed and transformed other elements of Christianity. These include the various readings and translations of Scripture, and the healing properties of handkerchiefs and other objects. As previously suggested by Quinn, this is likely to be a Venus talisman.

Quinn's argument is in danger of becoming circular at this point. He argues that Joseph Smith Jr. was involved in folk magic, and so attributes folk magic characteristics to this talisman to show Smith was involved in folk magic. The dove with an olive branch is commonly associated with the biblical story of Noah and the great flood, the dove representing the Holy Spirit. As Michael Quinn himself writes, "in the Christian tradition, the dove represented peace, purity, and the Holy Ghost, meanings that Smith also stated in a sermon" (Quinn 1998:91).

3.2 Religion and Magic as Analytical Categories
We have examined many of the practices of Joseph Smith Jr. and his early followers from an emic point of view, in an attempt to discover whether they themselves might have seen these practices as magical, and found many biblical antecedents. We can also examine them in order to see if they appear magical from an observer's point of view. By applying William J. Goode's eleven characteristics to better distinguish religious and magical practices to things such as what Quinn describes as the magic parchments, talismans and seer stones, the magical nature of these items may be determined. It is also important to note any shift in the way these items are used or thought of, as something that looks magical at first sight may in fact come to be viewed as religious in a different context.

3.2.1 Rhabdomancy
Firstly, perhaps the most clearly magical practice engaged in by Joseph Smith Jr. is rhabdomancy. The art of divining for treasure with a rod was very popular, and one in
which Smith was said to be talented. It was something that the Mormon prophet’s
detractors made particular mention of and Smith himself made little mention of it later in
his life. Clearly, the goal of rhabdomancy is a material one, the discovery of hidden
 treasure. Added to this, there is also a manipulation of spiritual powers, as opposed to
supplication. In order to increase their chances of finding the treasure, prospectors would
have conditions in place such as silence, and circles would be drawn. As already stated
(p9), Alan Taylor gives a detailed account of the methods used to locate and acquire the
buried treasure in his article ‘Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast.’ There were
instructions on how to make divining rods; the wood had to be right and there were
precise measurements to take into account. The rod would be pointed “directly away
from the ‘conductor,’ who addressed his rod in a soft whisper, ‘work to the money’”
(Taylor 1986:10). Intricate circles would be made around the area thought to contain the
treasure with stakes. This was to fend off the supernatural guardian. There is no
supplication or propitiation to be found here, merely a list of requirements in order to
manipulate supernatural powers so that the treasure may be obtained.

Furthermore, a professional-client relationship is visible between the leader of the group,
and the people searching for the treasure. These leaders were treasure seers, a position
Joseph Smith Jr. himself was said to hold, an important point although, as Quinn notes,
“some Mormon historians still downplay its significance” (Quinn 1998:64). Joseph Smith
Jr. and others like him who were thought to have a gift in this area were hired by
prospective treasure seekers to locate the buried gold. Smith would use his divining rod
which, Quinn argues, he “still used […] as late as the fall of 1825” (Quinn 1998:54). He
would, at times also use one of his seer stones. In this case, Smith was the professional,
the one who knew where the treasure was and how to acquire it. The other seekers were
the clients, those who had employed Smith in order to make them wealthy.

The use of rods to locate hidden treasure is directed towards the individuals’ goals, is the
next characteristic of Goode’s. The seekers were searching for treasure, in order to
become wealthy. However, there is more to it than simply material wealth. There was a
religious dimension to the search for buried treasure. As mentioned earlier (p62), Alan
Taylor argues that the practice can be seen as a “materialistic extension of their Christian faith as well as a supernatural economy” (Taylor 1986:22). The Smith family themselves were not entirely happy with Joseph Smith Jr. using his gift with the rod and seer stone for material gain. In 1826, Smith was on trial for disturbing the peace; “at the trial Joseph Smith Sr. testified that he was ‘mortified’ that his son’s ‘wonderful power which God had so miraculously given him should be used only in search of filthy lucre’” (Taylor 1986:25). However, for the majority of seekers, materialistic wealth would more than likely have been the main reward.

A substitution of techniques is present within rhabdomancy, and so once again the practice would fall towards the magical end of the continuum. This was a practice that more often than not resulted in failure. There were many explanations for this; frequently the blame was placed on someone in the party not keeping their silence. Taylor notes that “persistent failure and insistent belief progressively promoted evermore complex techniques and tools in the search for treasure” (Taylor 1986:17). Rather than giving up the search, it was decided that their equipment was not up to the standard required, and so new methods and tools were experimented with. “As a result, the precise performance of complicated procedures increasingly characterised treasure seeking” (Taylor 1986:17-18). With regard to rhabdomancy, the old rods made of wood were replaced by ones more sophisticated. “Metal divining rods and mineral balls began to supplant mere witch hazel or peach rods” (Taylor 1986:18). This substitution of techniques corresponds exactly with what Goode argues is the case in a practice that can be seen as magical.

We have only looked at the first six of the eleven characteristics, but already it seems clear that the practice of rhabdomancy would fall well towards the magical end of Goode’s continuum.

3.2.2 Seer Stones
Next we shall examine something closely related to rhabdomancy and the search for buried treasure, that is, Joseph Smith Jr. and his use of seer stones. There is ample evidence that Joseph Smith Jr. owned and used several seer stones, early on as an aid in
the search for buried treasure and later as a device for interpreting the gold plates. Smith’s apparent ability to see things in the stones led to his becoming a treasure seer, and being employed by various people including Oliver Harper. Quinn writes of this association, and states that “young Joseph Smith served as Harper’s treasure seer” (Quinn 1998:49).

It is clear that there is a desire for a material goal here, as opposed to a spiritual goal. In Smith’s days as a treasure seer, the goal was finding the location of the hidden treasure. Even people sympathetic to Joseph Smith and his family stated that the seer stones were used for this purpose. Quinn writes that “Palmyra’s neighbours (both hostile and friendly to the Smiths) agreed that young Joseph used his seer stone (of whatever colour) to search for buried treasures” (Quinn 1998:44). Searching for buried treasure is clearly not a spiritual goal, and does not even correspond to what Goode describes as “religious goals” (Goode 1951:53), that is, things of benefit to the community in general, such as health, wellbeing and so on, rather than gaining treasure.

Later on, when Smith had ceased to use his seer stones to find treasure, there was still a goal they were used to achieve. After the retrieval of the gold plates, Joseph Smith would at times use his seer stones for the purpose of translating, allowing non-Mormons to observe him. “Rejecting the world view of the believers, these […] witnesses scoffed at Smith’s religious use of his treasure-quest seer stone” (Quinn 1998:174). Quinn notes that “the actual translation process was strikingly similar to the way Smith used the same stone for treasure-hunting” (Quinn 1998:173). This is particularly significant as it shows the transition from magical practices to a more clearly religious purpose. Earlier in his life Joseph Smith Jr. was what John L. Brooke has described as a “village conjurer” (Brooke 1994:4). In using his seer stone in the translation of the gold plates, Joseph Smith was making use of an item associated with magical practices for something much more religious. This illustrates well Smith’s transformation into a prophet of the ‘Word’. A goal may be present with the translation of the gold plates, that is, the completion of the translation, but it is a spiritual goal. Smith stated that he believed them to be an account of the earlier residents of America, and of much spiritual value.
The goal here then was to spread the message of the gold plates, a spiritual goal rather than the material goal of the discovery of gold. Smith intended the Book of Mormon to be of benefit to people. His seer stones have been described as magical, and with regard to the magical characteristic of the material goal, early on they do appear to fall more towards the magical end of the continuum. However, when they are put to the use of the translation of the gold plates, Joseph Smith Jr. was using these magical items in a new way, a way that was more recognisably spiritual. This is perhaps the example that shows best Joseph Smith Jr.'s movement from being associated with magical practices to something much more religious.

Joseph Smith Jr.'s use of his seer stones in the quest for treasure would also be seen as having magical dimensions with regard to the fourth criterion, that individual goals are more likely to be found towards the magical pole. The treasure that the seekers were after was for their personal use. As Alan Taylor writes “Treasure chests symbolised the long-promised prosperity still awaiting marginal farmers; they wanted to believe that their fortunes lay all about them beneath the stony ground that so slowed their material advance” (Taylor 1986:19). The riches hoped to be found with the aid of Smith’s seer stones would be used to help the seekers, and not distributed around the community. They embarked on the treasure quest with individual goals.

However, as with the material and spiritual goal, another dimension to the use of Joseph Smith Jr.'s seer stone is visible, in the translation of the gold plates. Here the result is the Book of Mormon, something Smith would certainly have seen as benefiting everyone. Fawn Brodie states that the Book of Mormon “decided all the great controversies: - infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, […] and even the question of free masonry, republican government and the rights of man” (Brodie 1971:69-70). Many important issues of the time were addressed, and Smith had the intention of publishing the book. His seer stone, so often used for magical practices within the treasure quest, was being put to a different task. Once again Joseph Smith Jr.'s movement from the magical pole to the religious is observable with the use of his seer stones.
The same can be seen, more generally, with regard to the third characteristic, that magical practices involve a professional-client relationship, as opposed to a shepherd-flock relationship, which is found in a more religious way of thinking. When Joseph Smith Jr. was involved in the treasure quest, he would be approached and employed by various people who were hopeful of success in the discovery of gold. As his reputation grew, more offers were made. People would help financially with the treasure quest too. “First Oliver Harper and later Josiah Stowell provided the funding for Joseph Jr.’s treasure-quest in the area along the Susquehanna River border between New York and Pennsylvania” (Quinn 1998:59). It is clear that the professional-client relationship may be applied here.

However, as he moved more towards the role of prophet, this relationship changed. With the publication of the Book of Mormon, the relationship of Smith to his followers was more clearly of a shepherd-flock nature. With regard to the role of prophet, Brodie writes that Joseph Smith Jr.’s “talent [...] was emotional rather than intellectual, and it was free from the tempering influence that a more critical audience would have exercised upon it” (Brodie 1971:85). Smith soon had a large group of followers, dedicated and passionate. These people often “came from experiences of poverty and hardship, finding release and empowerment in a message of millenarian restoration and in a church where there would be no educated and salaried ministry” (Brooke 1994:187). From seekers employing him to aid them in the treasure quest, people were now flocking to Joseph Smith Jr. as he took on the role of prophet. Smith’s movement away from someone characterising elements of magic, to a prophet, involved in what may be described as a shepherd-flock relationship with his followers is clearly visible.

When looking at the life of Joseph Smith Jr. it seems clear that there was much early on that one may label magical. However, as Smith’s career progresses, there is an increasing movement away from the magical pole and towards the religious pole. With regard to Goode’s criteria and the seer stones, for example, the use to which they are put has moved from being quite clearly magical to something much more religious. The way
Joseph Smith himself was perceived by people changes enormously too. Where once he would be approached and employed, he was now gathering many followers, in a much different relationship to him than ‘clients.’

3.2.3 Hermeticism
Later in Joseph Smith Jr. ’s life he became very involved in many elements of hermeticism. The hermetic way of thought was something that came under a lot of criticism in the middle ages. It was deemed ‘magical’ and frowned upon by the Church. However, Joseph Smith Jr. took up much of it in his theology. Brooke states that “scattered evidence indicates that by the end of his life Joseph Smith had arrived at the ancient understanding of the dual-gendered divinity that lay at the heart of the hermetic theology” (Brooke 1994:258). Although hermeticism as a tradition has been labelled magical, and considered to be part of the occult tradition in Western thought, it does not appear to be magical in the sense envisaged by Goode’s criteria. It seems that Goode has a certain type of magic in mind to use against his criteria. This may be described as ‘popular’ magic, and can be seen in practices such as rhabdomancy and the use of talismans. These are objects, as opposed to a particular way of thinking, and a distinction between religion and magic can be made more easily. However, when it comes to hermetic ideas, the distinction between religion and magic seems much less clear. The ideas associated with hermeticism are much closer to religious ideas than, for example, the use of a charm to ward off evil spirits. The Corpus Hermeticum was believed to be an ancient text, containing many things thought to be relevant to Christianity by a great number of people.

Hermetic thought is very close to religion, and this may be shown if we take hermeticism in general and apply it to the criteria given by Goode. Firstly, the goals sought within the hermetic tradition are of a spiritual nature rather than material. For example, the alchemist was seeking the ‘philosopher’s stone.’ This may seem like a search for a material goal, the goal being wealth, but “the late alchemical literature reveals that ultimately it was the alchemist’s own human baseness which sought transmutation into
something divine” (Owens 1994). This shows that the alchemist’s goal was in fact spiritual.

An attitude of supplication of spiritual powers is also present within hermeticism. Owens states that “in the Hermetic-Kabbalistic interpretation magic had more to do with obtaining experiential knowledge of God and the celestial hierarchies than with particularistic goals of control and coercion” (Owens 1994). The hermetic philosopher was seeking knowledge of God, as opposed to control over various spiritual powers, or anything else.

Goode’s criteria states that a magical activity is more likely to be of a private nature, and a religious one more public. Though the first two characteristics may be applied to hermeticism, this demonstrates well the fact that magic, as understood by Goode is something different to the hermetic tradition. The hermetic magus goes about his business as an individual, and as written above, his goals are spiritual.

Thus Joseph Smith’s transformation from village conjurer to prophet of the Word to hermetic magus is complete. His ideas and practices at this stage in his life had moved on from his earlier, ‘popular’ magical practices, which were easily tested against Goode’s criteria. The thought of Smith in his later life was of a more philosophical nature and very difficult to test against Goode’s characteristics. This hermetic thought is itself very close to religion.

3.2.4 New Context
The early practices of Joseph Smith Jr. may be described as magical, but later they were either not used, or else used in a different, more religious context. Hermeticism may also be said to have magical aspects. However, with the publication of the Book of Mormon and the formation of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith Jr. had become the founder of a new community. We may examine this new community with regard to the characteristics given by Goode.
The goals of Joseph Smith and his followers were of a spiritual nature, rather than merely material. Smith’s theology was still evolving, but the goals of the Latter Day Saints were to reach heaven, and ultimately Godhood. There was no manipulation of spiritual powers, but rather an attitude of supplication, through prayer. Thirdly, as mentioned previously (p76), the relationship of Smith to his followers was not that of a professional to a client, but of a shepherd to his flock. Fourthly, social goals were thought of as opposed to those of an individual. Money was put towards building churches, and communities were set up in many different towns. This new community’s activities were public rather than private. Worship and prayer were centred in churches, and people encouraged to gather together. There were now compulsory, fixed rituals, with a very high emotional involvement, which all correspond to the religious end of Goode’s continuum.

Within the Mormon Church there was order, and a strict hierarchy. “Nearly every man had a New Testament title […] and each title carried a certain rank” (Brodie 1971:100). Everyone was expected to work hard and do his or her bit for the church.

With regard to this high emotional involvement, an example is when Joseph Smith Jr. was considering organising a church. He and Oliver Cowdery were walking in the woods. Brodie writes that as they were praying, “Cowdery was overcome with a vision of heaven” (Brodie 1971:74). Cowdery himself stated that “as we heard we rejoiced, while his love enkindled our souls, and we were rapt in the vision of the Almighty!” (Brodie 1971:74). Also, as Smith was speaking to his followers of the Melchizedek Priesthood, “the fierce-looking, fanatical Lyman Wight […] jumped upon a bench. […] His arms were outstretched, his hands cramped back, and his whole system agitated as he cried: “If you want to see a sign look at me!”” (Brodie 1971:111). As Joseph Smith’s movement shifted away from the magical practices, and towards a more religious stance, language such as that used by Oliver Cowdery became common. Actions such as those of Lyman Wight did not seem out of place either, as people became caught up in the spirit of the movement.
All this demonstrates that although there are certain items and practices that Joseph Smith Jr. took part in early in his career, a movement to the religious end of the continuum is evident. This may be observed firstly in the use to which old practices, deemed magical, were put. Secondly, the magical ideas Joseph Smith was speaking of later in his life were from hermeticism, which is very close to religious thought itself. Thirdly, as the founder of a new community, Joseph Smith had transformed the way in which people saw him.

No longer was he being employed to help people become wealthy, now people followed him, eager to hear his message.

Conclusion.

The life of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith Jr. has been described by many as having aspects that can be viewed as magical. Michael Quinn demonstrates in great detail practices which may be referred to as 'popular' magic in which Smith was involved. These included his participation in the search for buried treasure, his belief in and reliance on astrology, and his use of amulets and talismans. However, as Joseph Smith Jr. grew older, he moved away from these things and transformed himself from what John L. Brooke describes as "a village conjurer" (Brooke 1994: 4), into a more recognisable prophet in the biblical sense. From this a second transformation was made, as Smith took on the role of magus. Various elements of hermeticism can be seen in Joseph Smith's thinking at this stage. Much of his writing shows the influence of hermetic literature, and this is noticeable particularly in the Book of Abraham, and the King Follet Discourse, in which Smith spoke of multiple gods, baptism for the dead and divinisation. Much of what he said would have appeared unfamiliar and strange to his listeners and it is understandable that many people have described this aspect of Smith's life as magic, despite the fact that direct biblical antecedents can be found.

However, the life of the Mormon prophet may not necessarily need to be seen as having magical aspects. Practices and beliefs that to others appear of a magical nature may not appear so to those actually involved in them. In order to attempt to understand these aspects in the life of Joseph Smith Jr. a distinction between magic and religion is needed. Many anthropologists have wrestled with this problem, many deciding a distinction is
unnecessary or impossible. Others, though, have attempted to give differences between
the two. W. J. Goode’s list of eleven characteristics is useful, although more suited to the
‘popular’ magic of Smith’s early life. Many distinctions given by earlier anthropologists
can be seen in Goode’s list. The ‘supplicative and coercive’ distinction can be seen in the
work of Frazer, and Goode’s statement that “magic is used only instrumentally” (Goode
1951:54) is important with regard to the thought of Malinowski. When the early practices
of Joseph Smith Jr. are applied to Goode’s list of criteria, it appears as though many of
Smith’s early activities were of a magical nature. However, would Joseph Smith himself
have seen them this way? This is the question of emics and etics; from whose point-of-
view we are looking. Looking at religion and magic and analytical types, and using
Goode’s scheme, it does appear that Joseph Smith Jr. was involved in magic in his early
life. However, considering the two as indigenous categories, that is, looking at what
Smith was doing from his own perspective may give a different answer. There are other
explanations, including a great deal of examples from the Bible, and as we have seen,
Joseph Smith prayed often. Even on items deemed magical, there was often words in
praise of God.

With the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith’s first
movement away from the old magical practices is observable. The seer stones, items
viewed as falling towards the magical pole were put to a new use. This new use, the
translation of the gold plates, falls much more towards the religious end of the
continuum.

Brooke argues that Smith went through two transformations, to become a Christian-
hermetic magus. This is reflected by the fact that at the end of his life Smith’s practices
are unable to be tested against Goode’s criteria. The distinction between religion and
magic in the life of the Mormon prophet had by this stage become so small that while to
many what Joseph Smith was talking about appeared strange and of a magical nature, it
can be viewed as essentially religious. By this stage, Joseph Smith Jr. had created a new
community. Within this community there was a supplication of spiritual powers, fixed
times and rituals, public activities and a very high emotional involvement.
The question of how one distinguishes between magic and religion is a key one. It is also important to state clearly from whose perspective one is looking. Are these practices being looked at as analytical categories, or are they being seen as indigenous categories? An outsider may decide that these practices are of a magical nature, although those actually practicing them may view them as being religious or even simply everyday events. With regard to early Mormonism from an outsider’s, or etic position it appears as if magic does play a large role early on. However, looking at it from the perspective of Joseph Smith Jr., the practices do not necessarily need to be magically explained. There are other explanations for the thought and practices of Joseph Smith and the early Mormons that are also plausible. There is also a feeling of deep ‘religiousness’ behind Smith’s actions, particularly as he adopted his prophetic role, and his following began to grow.

Although Joseph Smith Jr. may have been involved with practices that might be called magical early on, as we have seen, through his life there is a distinct movement away from these practices. With the establishment of the Mormon Church, the old magic associations are all but gone. Smith had started a new religious movement which is now adhered to by millions of people less than two hundred years later. By the end of his life Joseph Smith Jr. can be viewed the way he and his followers did and continue to do so: as a prophet with new and challenging ideas for his community.
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