

Witnesses of the Lewis Family

Nathaniel Lewis Affidavit, March 20, 1834

As originally published in *The Susquehanna Register* and then *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic) by Eber D. Howe, 1834.

I have been acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. for some time: being a relation of his wife, and residing near him, I have had frequent opportunities of conversation with him, and of knowing his opinions and pursuits. From my standing in the Methodist Episcopal Church, I suppose he was careful how he conducted or expressed himself before me. At one time, however, he came to my house, and asked my advice, whether he should proceed to translate the Book of Plates (referred to by Mr. Hale) or not. He said that God had commanded him to translate it, but he was afraid of the people: he remarked, that he was to exhibit the plates to the world, at a certain time, which was then about eighteen months distant. I told him I was not qualified to give advice in such cases. Smith frequently said to me that I should see the plates at the time appointed. After the time stipulated, had passed away, Smith being at my house was asked why he did not fulfil his promise, show the Golden Plates and prove himself an honest man?

He replied that he, himself was deceived, but that I should see them if I were where they were. I reminded him then, that I stated at the time he made the promise, I was fearful "the enchantment would be so powerful" as to remove the Plates, when the time came in which they were to be revealed. These circumstances and many others of a similar tenor, embolden me to say that Joseph Smith Jr. is not a man of truth and veracity ; and that his general character in this part of the country, is that of an impostor, hypocrite and liar.

NATHANIEL C. LEWIS.

Affirmed and subscribed, before me, March 20th, 1834.

CHARLES DIMON, J. Peace

Joshua McKune Affidavit, 1834

Editorial Note: Joshua McKune was son-in-law to Nathaniel Lewis through daughter Esther Lewis

As originally published in *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic) by Eber D. Howe, 1834.

Joshua McKune states, that he "was acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, during their residence in Harmony, Pa. , and knew them to be artful seducers;"—That they informed him that "Smith had found a sword, breast-plate, and a pair of spectacles, at the time he found the gold plates"—that these were to be shewn to all the world as evidence of the truth of what was contained in those plates," and that "he (M'Kune) and others should see them at a specified time." He also states that "the time for the exhibition of the Plates, etc has gone by, and he has not seen them."

"Joseph Smith, Jr. told him that (Smith's) first-born child was to translate the characters, and hieroglyphics, upon the Plates into our language at the age of three years; but this child was not permitted to live to verify the prediction." He also states, that "he has been intimately acquainted with Isaac Hale twenty-four years, and has always found him to be a man of truth, and good morals."

Levi and Sophia Lewis Affidavits, 1834

Editorial Note: Sophia Lewis was Levi's wife.

As originally published in *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic) by Eber D. Howe, 1834.

Levi Lewis states, that he has "been acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, and that he has heard them both say, adultery was no crime. Harris said he did not blame Smith for his (Smith's) attempt to seduce Eliza Winters &c.;"—Mr. Lewis says that he "knows Smith to be a liar;—that he saw him (Smith) intoxicated at three different times while he was composing the Book of Mormon, and also that he has heard Smith when driving oxen, use language of the greatest profanity. Mr. Lewis also testifies that he heard Smith say he (Smith) was as good as Jesus Christ;—that it was as bad to injure him as it was to injure Jesus Christ."

With regard to the plates, Smith said God had deceived him—which was the reason he (Smith) did not show them,

Sophia Lewis, certifies that she *heard a conversation between Joseph Smith Jr., and the Rev.. James B. Roach, in which Smith called Mr. R. a damned fool. Smith also said in the same conversation that he (Smith) was as good as Jesus Christ ;" and that she "has frequently heard Smith use profane language. She states that she heard Smith say "the Book of Plates could not be opened under penalty of death by any other person but his (Smith's) first-born, which was to be a male." She says she "was present at the birth of this child, and that it was still-born, and very much deformed."

Joseph Ellis Lewis Letter

Originally published in the Salt Lake Tribune compilation by Wilhelm Wyl of "Smith family Members' Testimonies" October 17, 1879.

Joseph Ellis Lewis: The facts are these: I, with Joshua McKune, a local preacher at that time, I think in June, 1828, heard on Saturday, that Joe Smith had joined the church on Wednesday afternoon, (as it was customary in those days to have circuit preaching at my father's house on week-days). We thought it was a disgrace to the church to have a practicing necromancer, a dealer in enchantments and bleeding ghosts, in it. So on Sunday we went to father's, the place of meeting that day, and got there in season to see Smith and talked with him some time before the meeting; told him that his occupation, habits, and moral character were at variance with the discipline, that his name would be a disgrace to the Church, that there should have been recantation, confession and at least promised reformation; that he could that day publicly ask that his name be stricken from the class book, or stand an investigation. He chose the former, and did that very day make the request that his name be taken off the class-book; and if Mr. Morse was leader at that time, and Smith's name remained on the class-book six months, the class leader neglected his duty.

Wilhelm Wyl: This is of very great importance -- as it must be borne in mind that the prophet Joseph had already "translated" a considerable portion of his sacred plates, and that the "Father and Son" had some time before appeared to him and told him that all the sects were "an abomination" and that he was on no account to unite himself with any of them.

Hezekiah McKune Statement, 1834

Editorial Note: Hezekiah McKune was son-in-law to Nathaniel Lewis through Elizabeth Lewis, 8th child of the Lewis family

As originally published in *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic) by Eber D. Howe, 1834.

Hezekiah McKune states, that "in conversation Joseph Smith Jr., he (Smith) said he was nearly equal to Jesus Christ; that he was a prophet sent by God to bring in the Jews, and that he was the greatest prophet that bad ever arisen."

Hiel Lewis Letter with a portion by Elizabeth Lewis McKune, Sept. 29, 1879

Originally published in the Salt Lake Tribune compilation of "Smith family Members' Testimonies" October 17, 1879.

I will give what I can from my own knowledge and memory and from what I heard at the time. When Emma Hale eloped with Joseph Smith, the Hale family was greatly exasperated, and perhaps it would not have been safe for Smith to have shown himself at his father-in-law's house. Emma was, or had been, the idol, or favorite, of the family, and they still felt a strong attachment for her. Permission to return and reconciliation were effected and accomplished by her, and perhaps her sister, Mrs. Wasson, who lived near Bainbridge, New York. The persuasions for Smith to return all came from the other side, not from Mr. Isaac Hale or his family in Harmony, Pa.

The statement of Mr. Hale, made under oath before Esquire Dimon, was strictly true. * * * Reuben Hale is but little older than myself, was living with his father at the time of Smith's money-digging, and wrote for Smith when he first began to translate, before Harris came to Harmony. It is true that Alva Hale went with his team to Palmyra, N. Y., one hundred miles or more, and moved Smith and wife to Harmony. It was stated by Alva Hale, at the time, that the "Gold Bible" was in a barrel of beans in his wagon, and that he (Hale) slept in his wagon to guard that barrel of beams and its treasure. I remember hearing my older brother Joseph tell Alva that if he, Joseph Lewis, had been in your place (Alva Hale's) he would have known

whether that barrel of beans contained any golden Bible or not, perfectly regardless of Smith's statement that it would be certain death for any one to see the plates.

The Hales seemed, for a time, to be kept in awe by Smith's statements, but that awe did not last long. Alva Hale is over eighty and his memory has failed much in a few years past. Some things he remembers distinctly, and some things I have been able to help him recall; for example, I asked him if he remembered the letter he wrote to Smith and Emma when they eloped. He said, no, and had no recollection of writing a letter to them. When told the contents of the letter; which was as follows -- "My Creed! I believe in love-powder, in gun-powder and hell fire," he replied, I recollect it as plain as if but yesterday. I asked Alva, on one of our late visits, if he remembered weighing the gold Bible; but he did not. My brother tried to refresh his memory, but in vain. Joseph [Ellis Lewis] remembers hearing it stated by Alva that he (Hale) was permitted to weigh the gold Bible in a pillow case, and, according to our memory, it weighed thirteen pounds! There were many persons in Harmony who had from Joe Smith positive promises that they should see the plates and the spectacles, but all say that they never saw them. Alva Hale says he never saw them. I presume he saw that old glass-box that Isaac Hale spoke of, said to contain the plates. Smith's excuse for using his peepstone and hat to translate with, instead of those spectacles, was that he must keep the spectacles concealed; but any and all persons were permitted to inspect the peep-stone; and that he could translate just as well with the stone.

My sister, **Mrs. Elizabeth Lewis McKune**, says,

"I worked in the families of Joseph Smith and uncle Isaac Hale for about nine months, during which time Mrs. Emma Smith had a child which was still-born and much deformed. The dwellings of Mr. Hale and Joseph Smith, jr., were near each other. I saw Smith translating his book by the aid of the stone and hat. Reuben Hale, younger son of Isaac Hale, acted as scribe, writing down the words from Joseph Smith's mouth, but after a short time Martin Harris did the writing. I heard Smith tell his wife Emma that he was nearly equal to Jesus Christ, and was as good to her as her Savior. The time when Smith told the story of the bleeding ghost was after the close of the money-digging, after Smith was married and had moved back to Harmony, and had commenced the translation of his book, I think either before or about the time that Mrs. Harris had abstracted the 130 pages of their manuscript. The date I cannot precisely recall. I have a distinct recollection about the bleeding ghost."

Your idea that the first start of the book was a money speculation, not a new church, is perfectly correct. Your general idea of Smith's plates is also correct. He had something which he would permit a select few to handle, as they were done up in a cloth, or in a box, but doubtless the plates were something prepared for the occasion. Among the first of Smith's scribes was one Martin Harris, who operated in our immediate neighborhood. His residence was then, I think, in Palmyra, N.Y. He was a man of some property, and his wife was very strongly opposed to his spending his time and money in Smith's speculation, and once, while Harris was writing for Smith, she came to Harmony township and got hold of the manuscript they were making and carried it off, or destroyed it, and caused them considerable trouble.

I am able to get near the exact date of Smith's joining the Methodist Episcopal Church. My sister, Elizabeth L. McKune, says she was working in the family of Michael B. Morse the latter part of the winter and spring, and soon after that Joseph Smith, Jr., joined the Church, and while she was working for Mr. Morse he made her a chest and when he painted it put the date, 1828, in red paint on the inside of the chest. She has said chest and date now in her possession. Also my brother Joseph Lewis, from circumstances and business transactions, is able to fix the date to be Harmony, Susquehanna county, Pa., June __, 1828. The day of the month I am not able to ascertain. We have another witness to Smith's joining the Church, in Elder Cadwell's reply to my statement in the Amboy Journal.

Yours Truly,
HIEL LEWIS.

Hiel Lewis and Joseph Lewis Joint Letter and Affidavit by, 1879

Portions of this Letter and Affidavit were originally published in the Salt Lake Tribune in October 1879, then in 1886 as part of a compilation by Wilhelm Wyl's called *Joseph Smith, the Prophet, His Family and His Friends: A Study Based on Facts and Documents, with Fourteen Illustrations*.

Editorial Note: There was no known William *Hale* in Isaac Hale's extended family, however there was a William *Ward*, a relative of Isaac Hale's mother. They may have assumed the surname based on the connection to Isaac.

Joseph Ellis and Hiel Lewis Letter:

Some time previous to 1825, a man by the name of William Hale, a distant relative of uncle Isaac Hale, came to Isaac Hale and said that he had been informed by a woman by the name of Odle, who claimed to possess the power of seeing under ground (such persons were then commonly called peepers), that there were great treasures concealed in the hill northeast from Isaac Hale's house, and by her directions, William hale commenced digging. But, being too lazy to work and too poor to hire, he obtained a partner by the name of Oliver Harper, of York State, who had the means to hire help. But after a short time operations were suspended, for a time, during which William Hale heard of PEEPER Joseph Smith, jr. and wrote to him and soon visited him, and found Smith's representations were so flattering that Smith was either hired or became a partner with William Hale, Oliver Harper and a man by the name of Stowell, who had some property.

They hired men and dug in several places. The account given in the history of the Susquehanna county, p. 580 of a pure white dog to be used as a sacrifice to restrain the enchantment, and of the the anger of the Almighty at the attempt to palm off on Him a white sheep for a white dog, is a fair sample of Smith's revelations, and of the God that inspired him. Their digging in several places was in compliance with 'Peeper' Smith's revelations, who would attend with his peptone in his hat, and his hat drawn over his face, and tell them how deep they would have to go; and when they found no trace of the chest of money, he would peep again and weep like a child, and tell them that the enchantment had removed it on account of some sin or thoughtless word, and finally the enchantment became so strong that he could not see, and the business was finally abandoned. Smith could weep and shed tears at any time if he chose to.

But while he was engaged in looking through his peep-stone and old white hat, directing the digging for money, and boarding at uncle Isaac Hale's, he formed an intimacy with Mr. Hale's daughter and after the abandonment of the money digging speculation, he consummated the elopement and marriage to the said Emma Hale, and she became his accomplice in his humbug Golden Bible and Mormon religion.

The statement that the prophet Joseph Smith made in our hearing at the commencement of his translating his book in Harmony, as to the manner of his finding the plates, was as follows:

He said that by a dream he was informed that at such a place in a certain hill in an iron box, were some gold plates with curious engravings, which he must get and translate, and write a book: that the plates were to be kept concealed from every human being for a certain time, some two or three years; that he went to the place and dug till he came to the stone that covered the box, when he was knocked down; that he again attempted to remove the stone, and was again knocked down. This attempt was made the third time, and the third time he was knocked down.

Then he exclaimed: 'Why can't I get it?' Or words to that effect, and then he saw a man standing over the spot, who to him, appeared *like a Spaniard* (Oh, you great son of Lucy!), having a long beard down over his breast to about here (Smith putting his hand to the pit of his stomach), with his (the ghost's) THROAT CUT FROM EAR TO EAR, and the BLOOD STREAMING DOWN, who told him that he could not get it alone; that another person whom he (Smith) would know at first sight must come with him and then he would get it; and when he saw Miss Emma Hale he knew that she was the person, and that after they were married she went with him to near the place and stood with her back towards him while he dug after the box, which he rolled up in his frock, and she helped carry it home; that in the same box with the plates were spectacles; the bows were of gold and eyes were stone, and by looking through these spectacles all the characters on the plates were translated into English.

In all this narrative there was not one word about visions of God or of angels or heavenly revelations; all his information was by the DREAM and that BLEEDING GHOST. The heavenly visions and messages of angels etc. contained in Mormon books were afterthoughts, revised to order.

While Smith was in Harmony he made the above statements in our presence to Reverend Nathaniel Lewis. It was here also, that he joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. He presented himself in a very serious and humble manner, and the minister, not suspecting evil, put his name on the class-book in the absence of some of the official members, among whom was the undersigned, Joseph Lewis, who when he learned what was done, took with him Joshua McKune and had a talk with Smith. We told him plainly that such a character as he was a disgrace to the Church; that he could not be a member of it unless he broke off his sins by repentance, made public confession, renounced his fraudulent and hypocritical practices, and gave some evidence that he intended to reform and conduct himself somewhat nearer like a

Christian than he had done. We gave him his choice, to go before the class and publicly ask to have his name stricken from the class-book, or stand a disciplinary investigation; he chose the former, and immediately withdrew his name. So his name was a member of the class was on the book only three days. It was the general opinion that his only object in joining the church was to bolster up his reputation and gain the sympathy and help of Christians; that is, putting on the cloak of religion to serve the Devil in."

We will add one more sample of his prophetic power and practice. One of the neighbors, whom Smith was owing, had a piece of corn on a rather wet and backward piece of ground, and as Smith was owing him, he wanted Smith to help hoe corn. Smith came on, but to get clear of the work and debt said: 'If I kneel down and pray in your corn, it will grow just as well as if hoed.' So he prayed in the corn and insured its maturity without cultivation, and that the frost would not hurt it. But the corn was a failure in growth and killed by the frost. This sample of prophetic power was related to us by those present, and no one questioned its truth.

[Mr. Hiel Lewis affirmed separately that Joseph joining Methodism was in June 1828.]

Joseph Ellis and Hiel Lewis Affidavit of the above letter: April 23, 1879

First, we would add our testimony to the truthfulness of the statements of our uncle Isaac Hale, father of Mrs. Emma Smith Bidamon, Alva Hale, her brother, Rev. Nathaniel Lewis, our father, Levi Lewis, our brother, and Sophia Lewis, his wife, and Joshua McKune, husband of Elizabeth McKune, our sister. These, with the exception of Alva Hale and Elizabeth McKune, are dead. They were all living in Susquehanna county, Pa., at the time of Joe Smith's exploits, and their statements in the book, "Mormonism exposed by John C. Bennett," are perfectly reliable in every respect.

The statement that the prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., made in our hearing, at the commencement of his translating his book, in Harmony, Pa., as to the manner of his finding the plates, was as follows: Our recollection of the precise language may be faulty, but as to the substance, the following is correct:

He said that by a dream he was informed that at such a place in a certain hill, in an iron box, were some gold plates with curious engravings, which he must get and translate, and write a

book; that the plates were to be kept concealed from every human being for a certain time -- some two or three years; that he went to the place and dug till he came to the stone that covered the box, when he was knocked down; that he again attempted to remove the stone, and was again knocked down; this attempt was made the third time, and the third time he was knocked down. Then he exclaimed, "Why can't I get it?" or words to that effect; and then he saw a man standing over the spot, who to him appeared like a Spaniard, having a long beard coming down over his breast to about here, (Smith putting his hand to the pit of his stomach) with his (the ghost's) throat cut from ear to ear, and the blood streaming down, who told him that he could not get it alone; that another person whom he (Smith) would know at first sight, must come with him, and then he could get it; and when he saw Miss Emma Hale, he knew that she was the person, and that after they were married, she went with him to near the place, and stood with her back towards him while he dug up the box, which he rolled up in his frock and she helped carry it home; that in the same box with the plates were spectacles, with bows of gold and the eyes of stone, and by looking through these spectacles all the characters on the plates were translated into English.

In all this narrative, there was not one word about visions of God, or of angels, or heavenly revelations; all his information was by that dream and bleeding ghost. The heavenly visions and messages of angels, etc., contained in Mormon books, were after-thoughts revised to order.

(Signed)

JOSEPH LEWIS,

HIEL LEWIS.

STATE OF ILLINOIS,

Lee County. Ss.

"I, Everett E. Chase, a Justice of the Peace in and for the County of Lee, State aforesaid, do hereby certify that the above named Joseph Lewis and Hiel Lewis, personally known to me to be respectable, truthful, and honorable men, came before me and in my presence signed the above statement, and each of them before me made affidavit to each and all of the allegations therein set forth according to their best memory."

EVERETT E. CHASE, J. P.

AMBOY, LEE COUNTY, ILLINOIS, }

April 23d, 1879. }

"We the undersigned hereby certify that we are personally acquainted with Joseph Lewis and Hiel Lewis, that we know them to be in every way worthy of confidence, that they are truthful, honorable Christian gentlemen, and their statements entitled to the fullest credence."

J. B. Felker, M. D., Mayor of Amboy.

W. H. Haskell, Ed. and Pub. Amboy Journal.

R. H. Mellen, Post Master.

A. H. Merrifield, Druggist and Bookseller.

Wm. B. Andruss, J. P. and Alderman.

Alfred Tooker, Attorney at Law,

J. S. Briggs, Druggist and Grocer.

Has. A. Church, Jeweler.

Josiah Little, Banker.

Anecdote of "Uncle Nat Lewis and Joe Smith"

As published by George Peck in *Early Methodism within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828; or, The First Forty Years of Wesleyan Evangelism in Northern Pennsylvania, Central and Western New York, and Canada.*

"Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet, married a niece of Mr. Lewis. After the story of the golden Bible and the miracle-working spectacles had come out, Joe undertook to make a convert of "Uncle Nat." The old gentleman heard his tale with due gravity, and then proceeded: "Joseph, can anybody else translate strange languages by the help of them spectacles?"

"O yes!" was the answer.

"Well now," said Mr. Lewis, "I've got Clarke's Commentary, and it contains a great many strange languages; now, if you will let me try the spectacles, and if by looking through them I can translate these strange tongues into English, then I'll be one of your disciples."

This was a poser, and the only way Joe had to escape from Uncle Nat's net was to get away and run."

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