

circa June 30, 1830 Trial of Joseph Smith Jr. before Justice Joel K. Noble

“Mormonism,” *Boston Christian Herald* 4 (September 19, 1832):2-3, Boston, Massachusetts, emphasis retained.

MORMONISM.

By the politeness of a friend we have been favored with the following account of the trial of that notorious impostor, Joseph Smith, Jr. for a breach of the peace, in “looking through a certain stone to find hid treasures,” &c. Our readers are probably acquainted with the origin of this sect and their bible; and that two of the mormonite preachers have visited this city, and made a number of proselytes. Joseph Smith Jr. is the founder; “a bare-faced impostor, his moral character of the darkest hue, his name a derision, shunned by all decent society, and disowned by his pious father-in-law.” He has associated with himself characters, though of less intellect, yet equally base and profligate, and for some years has been practising upon the credulity of the weak. Many have been *swindled* out of their property by these false prophets—let others take warning.

We extract the following from a letter written by a gentleman in Windsor Broome, Co. N. Y., acquainted with Smith, and entitled to confidence, to his friend in this city—dated August 30, 1832;

“It is more difficult to obtain information of this kind than one would think, other than hearsay. The fact that J. Smith Jr. and others, dug in various places for money, is easily proved;—at the great bend or near there, that there was a company digging part of two years could be easily proved;—but that Smith said that there was money buried there by some Spaniards could not be so easily proved, though it is generally believed; and also that toward the last of the digging there, he sold out shares in the treasure to as many as he could, and when he quit digging, said that the money had sunk down to a great depth. I have seen a hole eight or ten feet deep, on the creek back of Captain Waller’s, where it was said Smith said there was treasure. On Monument Hill near to what is called “The Monument,,” there is a hole dug 25 or 30 feet deep, where it is said Smith said that two veins of Gold crossed each other as large as a barrel. On Mr. Samuel Stowes flat, a hole was dug one night and filled again, and Smith was said to be one of the number. I might mention a hole on the back side of the hill over the river against where I live, and other places, if it were necessary; but I forbear.

I called on several persons to gain what information I could. The most I could get was hearsay. Among others, I called on Mr. William Devenport, who went out with the Mormons to Ohio—and has since returned. He says that he bore his own expenses out, but was often importuned by their leader to put his money into the common stock, and was told, that those who did not would be struck dead the moment they arrived on the promised land—like Annanias and Sapphira. He said that the only object of the leaders was in this, to get the money into their own hands and keep it. He mentioned a Widow Peck, of Bainbridge, who, he said, paid in \$500 and went with them; but could not get a cent on the way to procure something for a sick child. Said that he lived between two and three miles from where they settled in Ohio, and that Smith had a new commandment

every few days through the summer, a year ago, and that last summer he thought there was not a fortnight in which he did not have a new commandment. Smith pretended to go into the woods and converse with the Almighty. Mr. Devenport said he had lately received a letter from William Youman's Widow, who went out with the Mormons and had since left them and got married, stating that a Mr. Rigdon, or a name that sounded like it, their principal Preacher under Smith, said lately that the Mormon religion was not true, and in consequence had been silenced by Smith. Enclosed I send you some testimony taken on a trial in Colesvilles. Several offered to testify to what N. Knight said of Smiths casting a devil out of him; some thought he had returned and would seem to allude to the unclean spirit mentioned in the Gospels."

The following is the report of the trial forwarded by the writer above, and referred to in the letter;

STATE OF NEW YORK, } JOEL K. NOBLE,
BROOME COUNTY, SS. } *Justice.*
The People, }
 vs } Samuel Dickinson,
Joseph Smith, jr. } *Complainant.*

The defendant was brought before me by virtue of a warrant on the 30th day of June, A. D. 1830, on a charge "that he, the said Joseph Smith, Jr. had been guilty of a breach of the Peace, against the good people of the State of New York, by looking through a certain stone to find hid treasures, &c., within the Statute of Limitation.

To the charge, the defendant plead not guilty. At the instance of the people, *Joseph A.S. Austin* was by me duly sworn, and says "that he had been acquainted with Smith, the Prisoner, for several years; that prisoner pretended to look in a certain glass, or stone, and said he could tell where stolen goods were, and could discover mines of gold and silver under ground; made some pretence at telling fortune, but he, witness, never knew of prisoner's finding any thing by his pretended art. Once witness asked prisoner to tell him if he, prisoner, could tell any thing by looking in said glass, and wished a candid and true answer. Prisoner told witness frankly, he could not see any thing, and in answer, prisoner likewise observed to witness, *any thing you know for a living*: says, two or years before this present time, he saw prisoner drink a certain quantity of *distilled liquor, and was drunk, as he does believe; for he could not stand up, but lay in the woods for some hours.*"

Harriss Stowel being by me sworn, saith, "he has been acquainted with the prisoner for a number of years past; that prisoner said he could look in a certain stone or glass, and could tell where money and hid treasures were, and could tell where gold and silver mines and salt springs were; and that Smith, the prisoner, the *pretended prophet and money digger*, had followed digging for money, for salt, and for gold and silver mines for a number of years; that others, by his instigation, had followed digging; that at one time, witness hid a bag of grain in his barn, told Smith he had lost a bag of grain, and wished Prisoner to find it; Prisoner looked in his glass in vain, for he could not find it; prisoner, after using all his art for a number of days, offered to give witness's brother fifty cents (so his brother told witness) to find where the grain was, and tell him, prisoner,

unbeknown to witness, so that Smith, the prisoner, might have the credit of finding the grain.”

Cross questions—says, he has not known the prisoner look in the glass within the space of two years last past.

Josiah Stowel being by me sworn, saith, he has been acquainted with Smith, the prisoner for quite a number of years; that he did pretend to tell, by looking in a stone, or glass, where money and goods and mines were in a manner peculiar to himself; the prisoner had followed digging for money; pretenddd to find mines, hid treasures, and lost goods, and frequently others would be digging with him; says that about three years since, prisoner was put under arrest by an officer at Bainbridge in Chenango county, for breaking the peace, and that he escaped from the officer and went to Palmyra; and that about two years since witness was at Palmyra, and saw prisoner; that prisoner told witness that the *Lord had told prisoner that a Golden Bible* was in a certain hill; that Smith, the prisoner went in the night and brought the Bible, (as Smith said;) witness saw a corner of it; it resembled a stone of a greenish caste; should judge it to have been about one foot square and six inches thick; he would not let it be seen by any one; the Lord had commanded him not; it was unknown to Smith that witness saw a corner of the Bible, so called by Smith; told the witness the leaves were of gold; there were written characters on the leaves; prisoner was commanded to translate the same by the Lord; and from the Bible got from the hill, as aforesaid, the prisoner said he translated the book of Mormon, prisoner put a certain stone into his hat, put his face into the crown, then drew the brim of the hat around his head to prevent Light—he could then see as prisoner said, and translate the same, the Bible, got from the hill in Palmyra, at the same time under a lock and in a chest; and the prisoner, when looking for money, salt springs, hid treasures, &c. looked in the same manner; did not know that prisoner could find money lost, &c.; and that prisoner told witness after he was arrested in Bainbridge, he would not look for money, &c. any more; told witness he could see into the earth forty or fifty feet.” &c. &c.

Newel Knights sworn, saith “prisoner could see in a stone as stated by Stowel; that formerly he looked for Money &c, but latterly he had become holy, was a true preacher of the Gospel of Christ, possessed the power of casting out Devils; he knew it to be a fact, that he (Smith, the prisoner) had cast a Devil from him witness, in manner following, viz. witness was in mind impressed; witness and Smith did conclude and knew the devil was in witness; they joined hands, their faith became united, the devil went out of witness; witness knew it to be a fact, for he saw the devil *as he departed*; Smith did it by the *power of God*,” &c.

A true copy from minutes taken by me on the trial.

JOEL K. NOBLE, *J. Peace*.

Dated Colesville, August 28th, 1832.

STATE OF NEW YORK, } Personally came before me, Joel K. Noble, justice
Broome County, } of the peace of said town of Colesville, *Preston T. Wilkins*,
Town of Colesville, ss. } known by me to be the same person, and being by me duly
sworn, saith, that *Newel Knights* did stile himself a *prophet of the Lord*, and was
ordained by Joseph Smith, Jr. the pretended author of the book of Mormon, as the said
Newel told him, this deponent, and this deponent understood so by others, that the said
Newel was so ordained; that the said *Newel* told this deponent he knew past, present, and

future; that in order to ascertain the prophetic ability of the said Newel, the deponent went and took from the father of said Newel, a mormon Bible, (so called) unbeknown to any one, as this deponent believes and buried it under his own door-step (witnesses); in the morning the book was found; this deponent went to the aforesaid Newel, told him the mystery that had happened; the said Newel and father told this deponent it did not come from this package of books; they counted them and were certain, as they said; the aforesaid Newel told this deponent that God told him, the said Newel, that he had sent his angel to put the book on the door-step for to convince him, this deponent, of the truth of the mormon book, as also to warn him to flee from impending wrath.

PRESTON T. WILKINS.

Subscribed and sworn before me, this 28th day of August, 1832. JOEL K. NOBLE, *J. P.*

A true copy from the original affidavit on file in my office. J. K. NOBLE.

Colesville, August 28, 1832.

Joseph Smith, jr., was discharged; he had not looked in the glass for two years to find money; &c.—hence it was outlawed.