

THE LETTERS OF CHARLES ANTHON THE SCHOLAR WHICH REFUTE THE ALLEGED TRANSLATION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Joseph Smith (1805-1844), the Mormon founder, claimed to have had golden plates given to him by an angel. To back up this extraordinary claim, he had to have witnesses to silence people who thought that the plates never existed. He chose three witnesses who said they saw the plates as an angel turned the leaves for them to have a look. They testified also that Smith's miraculous translation of the plates was correct. Then he chose eight witnesses who said that they saw the plates close up. This testimony led to the foundation of the Church of Christ which later became the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The translation is called the Book of Mormon.

As there was only the word of men who were not qualified to judge the translation, a professional testimony was needed. That was when Martin Harris took some characters copied and "translated" by Smith to Professor Charles Anthon. Anthon said that Harris went to Doctor Mitchell first who found the characters and the translation made no sense.

One more try. Harris went to Professor Charles Anthon. Harris said that Anthon authenticated Smith's translation. Harris added that Anthon wrote a certificate to authenticate the translation and tore it up upon hearing the text came from an angel. As if he would not have asked that before!

Anthon always denied the authentication claim.

Smith is the one telling us what happened between Anthon and Harris. It is Smith that wrote down what Harris reported back so it is really Smith we are being asked to trust! So it is really Smith's evidence. It is hearsay.

The whole point of bringing in the Professor was to back Smith up and all we have is Smith's testimony!

The Mormons say that the characters on the plates were Reformed Egyptian but what Anthon saw "contained any thing else but "Egyptian Hieroglyphics." Even if the Egyptian had been changed it should have retained some similarities.

Mormons call Anthon a liar and then claim that he authenticated their holy book! Some authentication! They say that the characters formed an unknown language Reformed Egyptian so how could he authenticate the translation?

Read on and learn about the Mormon hoax.

ANTHON'S LETTERS

Mormons say that Professor Charles Anthon cannot be trusted for he waited four years before he said anything to contradict Harris and Smith. But there is no evidence that he said nothing. And if he waited that long it shows he did not have much prejudice against the Mormons and certainly not enough to lie about the characters he saw not being authentic.

Anthon wrote a letter in 1834 contradicting Harris' account.

Professor Charles Anthon Letter

New York, Feb. 17, 1834

Dear Sir –

I received this morning your favor of the 9th instant, and lose no time in making a reply. The whole story about my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be "reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics" is perfectly false. Some years ago, a plain, and apparently simple-hearted farmer, called upon me with a note from Dr. Mitchell of our city, now deceased, requesting me to decypher, if possible, a paper, which the farmer would hand me, and which Dr. M. confessed he had been unable to understand. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick, perhaps a hoax.

When I asked the person, who brought it, how he obtained the writing, he gave me, as far as I can now recollect, the following account: A "gold book," consisting of a number of plates of gold, fastened together in the shape of a book by wires of the same metal, had been dug up in the northern part of the state of New York, and along with the book an enormous pair of "gold spectacles"! These spectacles were so large, that, if a person attempted to look through them, his two eyes would have to be turned towards one of the glasses merely, the spectacles in question being altogether too large for the breadth of the human face. Whoever examined the plates through the spectacles, was enabled not only to read them,

but fully to understand their meaning. All this knowledge, however, was confined at that time to a young man, who had the trunk containing the book and spectacles in his sole possession. This young man was placed behind a curtain, in the garret of a farm house, and, being thus concealed from view, put on the spectacles occasionally, or rather, looked through one of the glasses, decyphered the characters in the book, and, having committed some of them to paper, handed copies from behind the curtain, to those who stood on the outside. Not a word, however, was said about the plates having been decyphered "by the gift of God." Every thing, in this way, was effected by the large pair of spectacles. The farmer added, that he had been requested to contribute a sum of money towards the publication of the "golden book," the contents of which would, as he had been assured, produce an entire change in the world and save it from ruin. So urgent had been these solicitations, that he intended selling his farm and handing over the amount received to those who wished to publish the plates. As a last precautionary step, however, he had resolved to come to New York, and obtain the opinion of the learned about the meaning of the paper which he brought with him, and which had been given him as a part of the contents of the book, although no translation had been furnished at the time by the young man with the spectacles. On hearing this odd story, I changed my opinion about the paper, and, instead of viewing it any longer as a hoax upon the learned, I began to regard it as part of a scheme to cheat the farmer of his money, and I communicated my suspicions to him, warning him to beware of rogues. He requested an opinion from me in writing, which of course I declined giving, and he then took his leave carrying the paper with him. This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calender given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived. I am thus particular as to the contents of the paper, inasmuch as I have frequently conversed with my friends on the subject, since the Mormonite excitement began, and well remember that the paper contained any thing else but "Egyptian Hieroglyphics." Some time after, the same farmer paid me a second visit. He brought with him the golden book in print, and offered it to me for sale. I declined purchasing. He then asked permission to leave the book with me for examination. I declined receiving it, although his manner was strangely urgent. I adverted once more to the roguery which had been in my opinion practised upon him, and asked him what had become of the gold plates. He informed me that they were in a trunk with the large pair of spectacles. I advised him to go to a magistrate and have the trunk examined. He said the "curse of God" would come upon him should he do this. On my pressing him, however, to pursue the course which I had recommended, he told me that he would open the trunk, if I would take the "curse of God" upon myself. I replied that I would do so with the greatest willingness, and would incur every risk of that nature, provided I could only extricate him from the grasp of rogues. He then left me.

I have thus given you a full statement of all that I know respecting the origin of Mormonism, and must beg you, as a personal favor, to publish this letter immediately, should you find my name mentioned again by these wretched fanatics.

Yours respectfully, CHAS. ANTHON.

The second letter: to Reverend Coit on April 3, 1841

New York, April 3d, 1841.

Rev. and Dear Sir:

I have often heard that the Mormons claimed me for an auxiliary, but, as no one, until the present time, has even requested from me a statement in writing, I have not deemed it worth while to say anything publicly on the subject. What I do know of the sect relates to some of the early movements; and as the facts may amuse you, while they will furnish a satisfactory answer to the charge of my being a Mormon proselyte, I proceed to lay them before you in detail.

Many years ago, the precise date I do not now recollect, a plain looking countryman called upon me with a letter from Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell requesting me to examine, and give my opinion upon, a certain paper, marked with various characters, which the Doctor confessed he could not decypher, and which the bearer of the note was very anxious to have explained. A very brief examination of the paper convinced me that it was a mere hoax, and a very clumsy one too. The characters were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing, and presented the most singular medley that I ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted, either through unskilfulness or from actual design, were intermingled with sundry delineations of half moons, stars, and other natural objects, and the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican zodiac. The conclusion was irresistible, that some cunning fellow had prepared the paper in question for the purpose of imposing upon the countryman who brought it, and I told the man so without any hesitation. He then proceeded to give me the history of the whole affair, which convinced me that he had fallen into the hands of some sharper, while it left me in great astonishment at his simplicity.

The countryman told me that a gold book had been recently dug up in the western or northern part (I forget which), of our state, and he described this book as consisting of many gold plates, like leaves, secured by a gold wire passing through the

edges of each, just as the leaves of a book are sewed together, and presented in this way the appearance of a volume. Each plate, according to him, was inscribed with unknown characters, and the paper which he handed me, a transcript of one of these pages. On my asking him by whom the copy was made, he gravely stated, that along with the golden book there had been dug up a very large pair of spectacles! so large in fact that if a man were to hold them in front of his face, his two eyes would merely look through one of the glasses, and the remaining part of the spectacles would project a considerable distance sideways! These spectacles possessed, it seems a very valuable property, of enabling any one who looked through them, (or rather through one of the lenses,) not only to decypher the characters on the plates, but also to comprehend their exact meaning, and be able to translate them!! My informant assured me that this curious property of the spectacles had been actually tested, and found to be true. A young man, it seems, had been placed in the garret of a farm-house, with a curtain before him, and having fastened the spectacles to his head, had read several pages in the golden book, and communicated their contents in writing to certain persons stationed on the outside of the curtain. He had also copied off one page of the book in the original character, which he had in like manner handed over to those who were separated from him by the curtain, and this copy was the paper which the countryman had brought with him. As the golden book was said to contain very great truths, and most important revelations of a religious nature, a strong desire had been expressed by several persons in the countryman's neighbourhood, to have the whole work translated and published. A proposition had accordingly been made to my informant, to sell his farm, and apply the proceeds to the printing of the golden book, and the golden plates were to be left with him as security until he should be reimbursed by the sale of the work. To convince him more clearly that there was no risk whatever in the matter, and that the work was actually what it claimed to be, he was told to take the paper, which purported to be a copy of one of the pages of the book, to the city of New York, and submit it to the learned in that quarter, who would soon dispel all his doubts, and satisfy him as to the perfect safety of the investment. As Dr. Mitchell was our "Magnus Apollo" in those days, the man called first upon him; but the Doctor, evidently suspecting some trick, declined giving any opinion about the matter, and sent the countryman down to the college, to see, in all probability what the "learned pundits" in that place would make of the affair. On my telling the bearer of the paper that an attempt had been made to impose on him and defraud him of his property, he requested me to give him my opinion in writing about the paper which he had shown to me. I did so without hesitation, partly for the man's sake, and partly to let the individual "behind the curtain" see that his trick was discovered. The import of what I wrote was, as far as I can now recollect, simply this, that the marks in the paper appeared to be merely an imitation of various alphabetical characters, and had, in my opinion, no meaning at all connected with them. The countryman then took his leave, with many thanks, and with the express declaration that he would in no shape part with his farm, or embark in the speculation of printing the golden book.

The matter rested here for a considerable time, until one day, when I had ceased entirely to think of the countryman and his paper, this same individual, to my great surprise, paid me a second visit. He now brought with him a duodecimo volume, which he said was a translation into English of the "Golden Bible." He also stated, that notwithstanding his original determination not to sell his farm, he had been induced evidently to do so, and apply the money to the publication of the book, and had received the golden plates as a security for payment. He begged my acceptance of the volume, assuring me that it would be found extremely interesting, and that it was already "making great noise" in the upper part of the state. Suspecting now that some serious trick was on foot, and that my plain looking visitor might be in fact a very cunning fellow I declined his present, and merely contented myself with a slight examination of the volume while he stood by. The more I declined receiving it, however, the more urgent the man became in offering the book, until at last I told him plainly, that if he left the volume, as he said he intended to do, I should most assuredly throw it after him as he departed. I then asked him how he could be so foolish as to sell his farm and engage in this affair; and requested him to tell me if the plates were really of gold. In answer to this latter inquiry, he said, that he had never seen the plates themselves, which were carefully locked up in a trunk, but that he had the trunk in his possession. I advised him by all means to open the trunk and examine its contents, and if the plates proved to be of gold, which I did not believe at all, to sell them immediately. His reply was, that if he opened the trunk, the "curse of heaven would descend upon him and his children." "However," added he, "I will agree to open it, provided you take the 'curse of Heaven' upon yourself, for having advised me to the step." I told him I was perfectly willing to do so, and begged he would hasten home and examine the trunk, for he would find that he had been cheated. He promised to do as I recommended, and left me, taking his book with him. I have never seen him since.

Such is a plain statement of all I know respecting the Mormons. My impression now is, that the plain looking countryman was none other than the prophet Smith himself, who assumed an appearance of great simplicity in order to entrap me, if possible, into some recommendation of his book. That the prophet aided me by his inspiration, in interpreting the volume, is only one of the many amusing falsehoods which the Mormonites utter relative to my participation in their doctrines. Of these doctrines I know nothing whatever, nor have I ever heard a single discourse from any of their preachers, although I have often felt a strong curiosity to become an auditor, since my friends tell me that they frequently name me in their sermons, and even go so far as to say that I am alluded to in the prophecies of Scripture!

If what I have here written shall prove of any service in opening the eyes of some of their deluded followers to the real designs of those who profess to be the apostles of Mormonism, it will afford me satisfaction equalled, I have no doubt, only by that which you yourself will feel on this subject.

I remain, very respectfully and truly, your friend,

CHAS. ANTHON.

Anthon wrote a letter in 1834 in which he denied having verified that the inscription was Egyptian Hieroglyphics for he said that it contained everything on it but Egyptian. He said that the sheet he was shown was copied out of a book on Mexican characters and contained a mixture of Roman, Greek and Hebrew letters. In 1841, he wrote another letter saying much the same thing. Anthon stated that he told Martin Harris that he was the victim of a fraud.

Had Anthon really authenticated the transcript like Smith and Harris said he did he would have copied the characters and the translation behind Harris's back. Then he would have been able to crack the code of how to translate Egyptian. He could have concealed the supernatural origin of the code and become the greatest and most famous Egyptologist of all time. He would not have written out the certificate for that presupposed that he was going to let go of the documents Harris brought. He would have kept them and perhaps told Harris that it was a fraud.

Mormons say, "There are contradictions between Anthon's two documents on the transcript and the episode with Harris. Anthon in the 1834 document, gave no opinion on the transcript while in the latter he condemns it totally as a fake. In the first letter, he admitted he was writing to refute the Mormons and he said that they were lying when they said he verified the transcript. He only said this and that he thought the transcript was a hoax while in the 1841 document he goes into detail and states that he is convinced it is a hoax and gives reasons and denies that the sheet had any Egyptian on it. Anthon was a liar so we should believe Joseph Smith and Martin Harris' versions."

This is the strangest contradiction I have ever heard of! Anthon thought in his first letter that he would just say that the Mormons were lying about him and that would do for then. Years later he decides to tell the rest of what he thought. There is no contradiction.

Anthon's 1841 letter was written to a friend so why would he put lies in it?

Smith couldn't translate anything never mind the Book of Mormon!