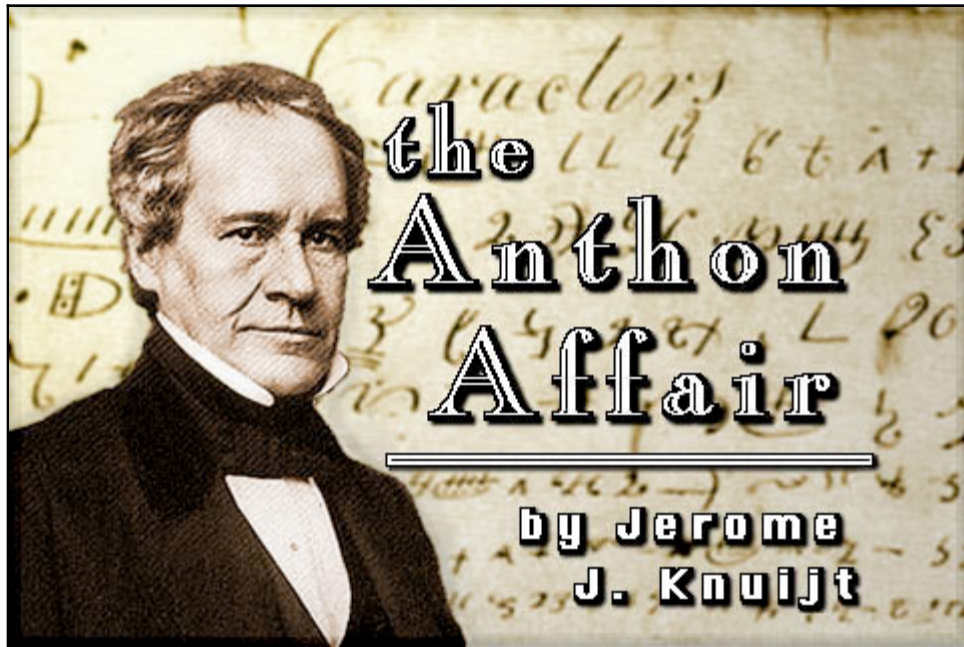


[MORMON STUDIES](#) PRESENTS:



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The "Anthon Affair"

By *Jerome J. Knuijet*

[Author's Preface](#)

This article on the "Anthon Affair" is a small excerpt from my book: *The Hoax of Mormonism*, and I have given permission for a limited publication of it on the web. The complete book presents the most comprehensive, published, investigation and evaluation of numerous aspects of "The Spaulding Theory" -- which is substantiated

considerably by the evidentially arrived at conclusions in this "Anthon Affair" article. The book blunts Fawn Brodie's reputed invalidation of the "Spaulding theory" in Appendix B of her book on Joseph Smith; and does the same to the important Mormon apologetic literature that is critiqued: including that of Mormon President Joseph F. Smith, and Brigham H. Roberts.

Other important topics covered are: the "visions" of Joseph Smith; the "Golden Plates" story and its various ramifications; theological and philosophical questions etc.; all of which evidentially support the title of my book. Along with these topics are included a few original insights, deductions, and theories; as well as a new psychological term "Belief Blindness" which describes a condition that I define and explain as to how it apparently creates serious problems in the minds of many Mormon apologists, and which prevents them from making objective and rational evaluations of the pertinent historical data.

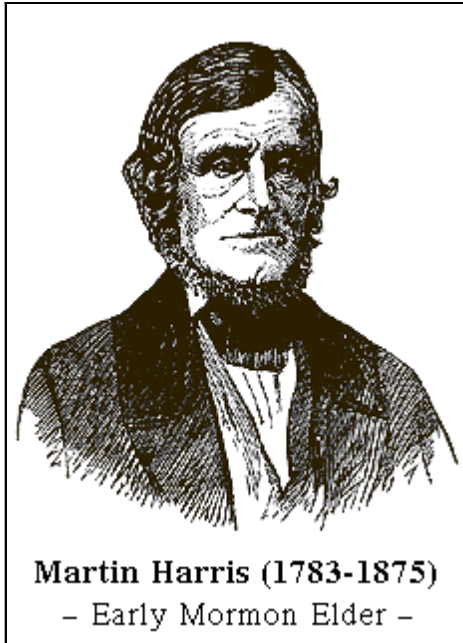
Much of the [previous edition](#) of *The Hoax of Mormonism* may be examined free of charge [on-line](#). For your convenience [purchasing information](#) is appended to this article.

Jerome K. Knuijt

[118 i]

(The page numbers in this article correspond to pages in Mr. Knuijt's *The Hoax of Mormonism* 2nd ed.)

Aristotle wrote in his *Metaphysics* that he is concerned with those who might deny the law of non contradiction ("A statement and its negation [opposite] cannot be true at the same time"). This law is accepted by reasonable persons as a realistic guide to good logic and valid reasoning, and should keep one who follows it in touch with reality. If in a contested situation a person proves one principle or supposed fact true, then an opposing one is false, or vice versa. The only area of contention here concerns the validity or quality of the physical facts and mental processes involved in the proving true or false one



contested thesis over the other; and thus the quality of the physical factors of support and the thought processes involved ultimately determines the acceptance or rejection of one thesis over the other. Physical factors are generally less contentious than thought processes since they are directly perceivable, whereas thought processes are not, and therefore they must be "pictured" and judged in the mind of the evaluator without the aid of objects that can be seen, felt, tasted, smelled, or listened to.

In most contentious issues it is the thought processes or evaluative processes of the mind, with or without the aid of physical objects, which are most important (ignoring emotional factors) in leading a person to decide a case in favor of one contested thesis over another, or to decide the issue is a draw. Therefore in the following presentation concerning an issue that is important in helping a person to at least partially resolve the question of the validity of the "Spaulding Theory" over the "Golden Plates" story (or vice versa) I will be especially careful in attempting to clearly present and illustrate the thought processes I go through in evaluating the supposed supporting evidence of these two views on the origins of the *Book of Mormon*.

[118 ii]

The story I am going to present in this paper concerning the authenticity of either the "Spaulding Theory" or the "Golden Plates" story has to do with the "Anthon Affair." This is my general name given to the situation which occurred in February of 1828 when Martin Harris went to Columbia University in New York city to try to get authentication for a page of characters (supposedly) copied from "Golden Plates" by Joseph Smith, and which were claimed by Smith to be "Reformed Egyptian" characters which he was translating into what was to become the Book of Mormon. Martin Harris went to see Professor Charles Anthon, an antiquarian linguist, to seek his

authentication of the script on a sheet of paper given to him by Joseph Smith (called the "Anthon transcript") as being authentic "Reformed Egyptian" writing.

And even before I get into the "Anthon affair," Martin Harris claimed he went to see a Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell **after** he met with Professor Anthon; while Anthon states that Harris went to see Dr. Mitchell **before** he came to see him. (contradictory fact #1). See appendices 2, 4, and 5 of STF-90, from FARMS, copyright 1990: 72 pages in length.

Professor Anthon and Martin Harris had a lengthy meeting by themselves and then parted. About two years later Martin Harris returned to show Professor Anthon the *Book of Mormon* which he had paid to have published (which Professor Anthon had strongly urged Harris **not** to do). The substance of what transpired in these meetings (especially the first one) constitutes the "Anthon affair."

I will now present the physical evidence that is known to exist that does, or at least is supposed to, elucidate the events and circumstances involved in the "Anthon affair."

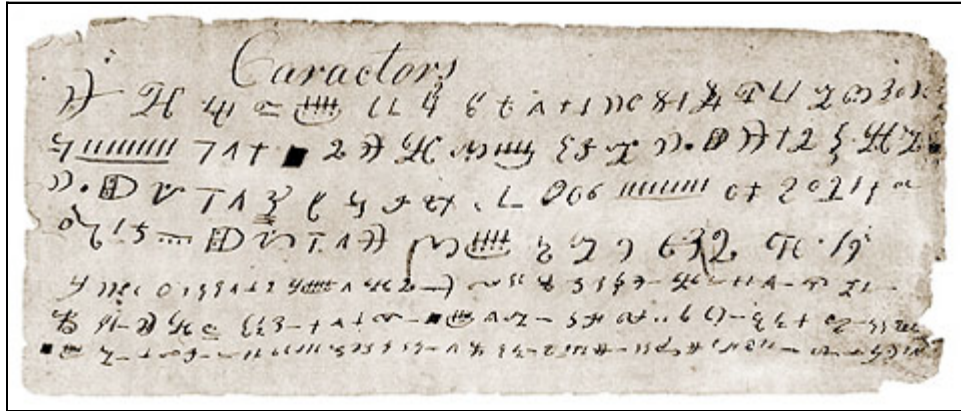
1. The supposed "Anthon transcript" as provided by David Whitmer (whose family reported many personal "miracles" -- Brodie, p. 75) A picture of this document is included with this article. This document **does not** fit the description of the "Anthon transcript" that Professor Anthon was presented with by Martin Harris and described by him in his first letter of February 17, 1834 as "...the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments;" and in his letter of April 3, 1841: "... and the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican zodiac." (a circular representation of constellations in the sky). (contradictory fact #2). The document from Mr. Whitmer has no circular or compartmental aspects in it!

[118 iii]

2. Two letters written by Professor Anthon describing some of the events he relates as having happened in the two meetings he had with Martin Harris.

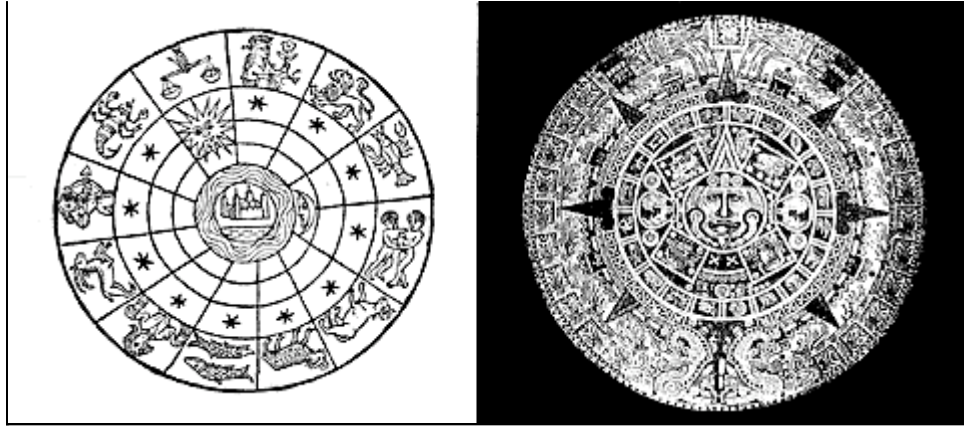
3. Statements (written or quoted) by Martin Harris and Charles Anthon as to what transpired in the first meeting Harris had with Professor Anthon. These statements are included throughout the text that follows.

The ANTHON TRANSCRIPT
(from David Whitmer)



A small page of markings obtained from David Whitmer that is reputedly, but erroneously, connected up with the "Anthon transcript." It is of unknown origin, authorship, and intention.

[118 iii]



A Pictorial Horoscope Chart
(right)

Mexican Calendar Stone

The appearance of an astrological horoscope chart and the Mexican Calendar Stone both fit the general composition of the "Anthon transcript" as described by Professor Charles Anthon in his letters of 1834 and 1841. **Astrology** was important in early Mormonism and there was general public knowledge of and interest in the **Mexican Calendar Stone** which was rediscovered in 1791. Also, there was considerable interest in **Egyptian antiquities since the discovery of the Rosetta Stone** in Egypt in 1799 and attempts to interpret it in the early 1800's the time of the birth of Mormonism. Thus Joseph Smith was clever to include elements of these three topics in his "Anthon transcript." See Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, p.289 and Mr. Anthon's first letter of Feb. 17, 1834.

[118 v]

Professor Anthon's Two Letters

The first letter: to Eber D. Howe on February 17, 1834
(from Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled* pp. 270-272)

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." Everything, 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.

[118 vi]

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 of 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
(from John A. Clark's *Gleanings By The Way* pp. 233-238)

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

[118 vii]

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

[118 viii]

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.

[118 ix]

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.

For further comments, comparisons, and evaluations I now turn to a FARMS document; STF-90 "Martin Harris's Visit with Charles Anthon" copyright 1990. In this document (which also includes the Anthon letters) there are numerous evaluations to be made and considered.

In his first letter of February 17, 1834, Professor Anthon states, "The whole story about my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be 'reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics' is perfectly false.... Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick, perhaps a hoax ...and (I) well remember that the paper contained anything else but 'Egyptian Hieroglyphics.'" Yet on the first page of Appendix two of STF-90 is the statement quoted from Martin Harris that "Professor Anthony stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian." (contradictory fact #3)

Later on in this letter Professor Anthon states "He (Martin Harris) requested an opinion (about the transcript) from me in writing, which of course I declined giving, and he then took his leave carrying the paper (transcript) with him."

While Martin Harris stated -- as related by Joseph Smith on page 2 of Appendix 2 of STF-90- "I took the certificate (containing the opinion of Dr. Anthon on the transcript) and put it

[118 x]
into my pocket... He then said to me, let me see that certificate, I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him when he took it and tore it to pieces..." (contradictory fact #4)

In the first and second letters of Professor Anthon he warned Mr. Harris that the transcript was being used as "a scheme to cheat the farmer out of his money", "and defraud him of his property" and "I (Professor Anthon) would incur every risk of that nature, provided I could only extricate him from the grasp of rogues." And "...which convinced me that he had fallen into the hands of some sharper, while it left me in great astonishment at his own simplicity." Professor Anthon was evidently genuinely concerned about Martin Harris, but one would not get this impression from the authors of STF-90 by

reading from page 6. And from page 8 "Moreover, Anthon had the motive to immediately destroy his written opinion because of the intellectually 'disreputable' source of the transcript, as well as the motive to either deny having given any written opinion or to affirm only that he had given a negative evaluation in writing- both of which he later claimed on separate occasions (compare Anthon's conflicting accounts in Appendices 4 and 5)."

The authors of STF-90 are here trying to authenticate Harris' story about Anthon ripping up his stated opinion (see my comments in the *Hoax of Mormonism*, 2nd edition, pages 29-30) and to indicate that Anthon's statements are not to be trusted because he made (supposedly) contradictory statements about whether or not he authenticated the "Anthon transcript" from Martin Harris in his letters of 1834 and 1841. This perplexing problem will require some extended coverage, clear thinking, and careful logic on the content of the two letters; especially since the authors of STF-90 make so much of it in determining the character and motives of Professor Anthon in the "Anthon affair", and because it may appear to a casual reader that Mr. Anthon is lying in one or both letters and thus his truthfulness is under suspicion against the contrasting views and statements of Martin Harris.

First of all I ask the reader to read the two letters, and I feel you will be impressed by the similarities in factual statements made in both written 7 years apart. Professor Anthon's words do not seem to reflect an attitude of defense or fear, but rather of plainly stated facts and concern for Martin Harris who Anthon feels is a simple person who is being deceived and cheated by a person "behind the curtain" (Joseph Smith). This is clearly illustrated in the following sentence in his 1841 letter to Dr. Coit, "That the prophet aided me by his inspiration, in interpreting the

[118 xi]

volume (translating the *Book of Mormon* from the "Golden Plates"), is only one of the many amusing falsehoods which the Mormonites utter relative to my participation in their doctrines." And I can't detect any overt attempt to clearly try to distance himself from any professional connection with the Mormons as the authors of STF-90 claim he tried to do! It isn't there! He appears to calmly state the facts as he perceives and experienced them and then asks Eber D. Howe (a publisher) "to publish this letter immediately, should you find my name mentioned again by these wretched fanatics." I feel he is peeved

and angered at being lied about by the Mormons. And well he should be! I would have been! And in the letter when Harris "...requested an opinion from me in writing (about the transcript), which I declined giving," if Anthon was determined to distance himself from the Mormons (and to show this to the public through Eber D. Howe who was publishing his book, *Mormonism Unveiled*) **he would have stated clearly a negative opinion on the transcript**, and would not have responded as he did in a noncommittal manner that "I declined" giving a written opinion, because his opinion on the validity of the transcript was absolutely clearly stated throughout the entire letter! He believed it to be a fraud! **Thus he did not respond as he did to distance himself from the Mormons** as claimed by the authors of STF-90! Then how does one reasonably explain his response?

And to complicate matters even more, in the second letter of 1841 to reverend Dr. Coit, Professor Anthon responds to "he (Martin Harris) requested me to give him my opinion in writing" (about the transcript), with "I did so without hesitation, partly for the man's sake, and partly to let the individual 'behind the curtain' (Joseph Smith) see that his trick was discovered."

Clearly, or so it seems, Professor Anthon is contradicting himself: in the first letter he declines writing an opinion about the transcript, and in the second letter he "did so without any hesitation."

If anything is clear to me about these statements, it is that if they are responses to the same question, and if Professor Anthon was truly concerned about the negative public image he might create in being associated with the Mormons, **he certainly would have** written out a negative opinion on the transcript that he expressed **throughout** the first letter (**which he didn't do!**); and **he would not have** subsequently given a positive written opinion about the transcript in his second letter (**which he did do!**). Something is wrong. Either Anthon was rather stupid,

[118 xii]

which does not seem to be the case (the authors of STF-90 on page 3 say Anthon was "the man who would become the most influential American classicist of the nineteenth century"), or the readers and evaluators of the letters are missing or misinterpreting something. But what?

AH, HA! But here is (I believe; logically theorize; and will logically

defend) the crux of the enigma. And it thoroughly includes the ignorance and assumptive nature of the reader which I have elsewhere commented on as to their extreme importance in thinking and drawing conclusions. And it fits the historical facts and the motives, desires, and human nature of the participants in the "Anthon affair."

What has probably been assumed by the reader (as at first it was by me) is that we are reading Professor Anthon's response **to the same question!** But after considerable thinking on, and critical evaluation of the whole "Anthon affair" -especially the transcript itself- and what it meant to the participants, I have concluded that **Professor Anthon in letters 7 years apart was commenting on his responses to two different questions about the transcript** that would logically fit the motives and human nature of Mr. Harris for seeking professional validation of the transcript in the first place.

Joseph Smith probably felt that he had nothing to lose by sending Harris on his mission, as he knew he could manipulate the simpleminded Harris no matter what happened; and Harris was very eager to get validation to pacify his wife's extreme mistrust of Joseph Smith, and to convince himself that mortgaging his farm to pay for the publication of the Book of Mormon would be in his economic and religious interest to do so.

Thus what is foremost on the mind of Mr. Harris when he first came to Professor Anthon is authentication of the transcript as being composed of "reformed Egyptian" characters. And the **first question** he would most likely ask Professor Anthon after he examined the transcript would have been very close to this: "professor Anthon, would you write me a letter or statement validating the origin of this transcript?" Which Professor Anthon would decline doing, as he clearly expressed in his letters he thought it was a fraud or hoax. And later in the conversation when Anthon was convinced that Harris was a victim of a trick or hoax and he felt evident compassion for Harris' "simplicity"; and Harris wished to salvage something positive out of his trip, Harris most likely asked **another different question** like: "Professor Anthon, would you at least write me a letter or statement giving your opinion on the transcript," and Anthon was

[118 xiii]

pleased to do so "without any hesitation," because he felt Harris was being tricked and cheated by Joseph Smith, and Anthon felt compassion for Harris and wanted to help him as he clearly stated in

his letters of 1834 and 1841.

Professor Anthon was responding to two different questions: one of which he related his response to in the letter to Eber D. Howe in 1834, and for some reason he thought of and responded to the second question -and wrote out his opinion and gave it to Martin Harris- and then related his response to it in his letter of 1841. It should be apparent to the thoughtful and knowledgeable reader what statement in the "Anthon affair" got ripped up and by whom!

The problem of the two seemingly contradictory statements and all the false, illogical, misleading, and self serving conclusions derived therefrom by the authors of STF-90 and anyone else, would appear to be consequently reasonably, factually, and logically resolved in their historical and human nature contexts. It appears at this point that Professor Anthon was not overtly attempting to distance himself from the "intellectually 'disreputable' source of the transcript", and that his straightforward statements should now be accurately evaluated at their face value from an apparently candid Professor Charles Anthon. Mr. Martin Harris on the other hand had numerous reasons and motives to lie about what happened when his statements conflict with those of Professor Anthon on the same topic. Thus the statements and revelations of Professor Anthon should be considered the most accurate and truthful renditions of what transpired in the "Anthon affair."

I will now go back and discuss the four contradictory facts which I designated earlier in this paper.

#1. Did Martin Harris see Dr. Samuel Mitchell before or after visiting with Professor Anthon?

It makes no sense to me that Professor Anthon would make up a story involving a letter from Dr. Mitchell introducing Martin Harris to him, even though Harris doesn't mention the fact in this literature. So I conclude that Harris did visit Dr. Mitchell first. After his abortive attempt to have Professor Anthon authenticate the transcript, Mr. Harris could have decided to visit Dr. Mitchell once again to see if he couldn't wrangle something positive on the transcript from him. (Mr. Harris was unaware that Dr. Mitchell had already told Professor Anthon that he didn't understand the paper or transcript that Harris had shown him.) Therefore Harris could have again

[118 xiv]

gone to visit Dr. Mitchell, but it is not clear to me that he did. **But this much is certain. Harris lied** when he said "I left him (Professor Anthon) and went to Dr. Mitchell who sanctioned what Professor Anthony had said respecting both the characters and the translation." The authors of STF-90 on page 3 say that Dr. Mitchell "...was more than just a fine MD With some training in the Classics. He was apparently a true Renaissance Man, a polymath." It is absolutely certain to me that such a man would never sanction something "he had been unable to understand" and "he could not decypher." **Harris lied.** And the last part of Harris' statement "...and the translation (of such of them as had been translated was also correct -see page 9 of STF-90) has led some to believe there was a second document that Harris had, that had a translation or the first transcript on it. But since Harris lied about what Dr. Mitchell supposedly told him, this inference that he had a second document is born of a lie and therefore false; and the statement (again from page 9) that "there is no other hint that such a document still exists." Is not surprising **-since it never did exist!**

And the authors of STF-90 either didn't remember or chose to ignore the **very lucid statement** by Dr. Anthon in his letter of 1834 to Eber D. Howe, that Mr. Harris was not given a translation of the transcript: "...he (Martin Harris) had resolved to come to New York, and obtain the opinion of the learned about the meaning of the paper he brought with him, **...although no translation had been furnished at the time by the young man with the spectacles.**" (Joseph Smith)

#2. Is the so-called Anthon transcript provided by David Whitmer and now in the hands of the RLDS the one that was written by Joseph Smith and taken to Professor Anthon by Martin Harris for authentication?

Professor Anthon describes the transcript in his first letter as composed "...in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various components." In the second letter he describes it as "...the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican zodiac" (like the pattern shown in the circular and compartmentalized Mexican [Aztec] Calendar Stone). The original "Anthon transcript" was therefore circularly composed, while the extant **supposed** transcript has no circular character and is therefore **not** the transcript that Joseph Smith gave to Martin Harris. There is no reason within reality that I can even dream up why Professor Anthon would make up such a description of the transcript if it really wasn't composed that way!

And therefore

[118 xv]

seemingly nothing of realistic value can be concluded from it (except that it exists) because nothing is known about its origin; composer; how, where, when, and why, it was composed; etc. And etc. And any attempts to use this paper of markings for anything useful in the real world is a trip into fantasy land.

Such a (hopefully supportive view in spite of the nature of the document) trip is wonderfully elaborated upon in STF-90 on page 7 beginning with "(it) may not be the original,". **Because it is obviously not the original** it should not even be designated as "the only surviving Anthon Transcript" because that is a deceptive designation. Page 7 is a page of futile and illogical attempts to make something (to support the authors views) out of nothing!!

#3. Professor Anthon's statement that "The whole story about my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be 'reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics' is perfectly false" is opposed by Martin Harris' statement that "Professor Anthony stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian."

Two problems can be solved together here. The first one is in the interpretation of Harris' statement which has led some persons to conclude that there was a second transcript (besides the page of only characters that had no message associated with them as described by Professor Anthon.) The second problem is about who is telling the truth. Professor Anthon's statement here is confirmed **throughout the two letters** in which he commented frequently on the fraudulent character of the transcript and thus the evidence weighs heavily on his telling the truth because I see no good reason for him to lie. **Therefore Harris must be lying** (and the recorded historical facts provide many reasons for his doing so) about what Professor Anthon said, and there never was a "message transcript." It only existed in the fabricated Anthon statement as manufactured in the mind of Martin Harris. See #1.

#4 Professor Anthon states he did not give Martin Harris a validating letter or statement on the transcript, while Martin Harris said he did but subsequently tore it to pieces.

I have already discussed the first letter of Professor Anthon written in

1834 where he stated he did not give Martin Harris a (validating) letter or statement on the transcript. And the ridiculous story about his first giving Harris the letter and then taking it back and destroying it is discussed in *The Hoax of Mormonism*, 2nd. Ed. Page 29.

[118 xvi]

And to those Mormon apologists and polemicists who composed STF-90 and denigrate the character of Professor Anthon with, "... Anthon was regarded with utter contempt by some others in his profession" (In what professions doesn't this occur?) and "Anthon's character is very much at issue here. His unethical conduct as a shameless plagiarist is well known," (STF-90 p.10) and that **Harris' honesty was not in question** among his contemporaries." (STF-90 p.9) rings of the old Mormon tune that our guys are all saints -no pun intended- and yours are all scoundrels. (it should be very obvious from this paper that **Harris' honesty is in question with me**, as my factual and logical analyses of what Harris said as contrasted with what Professor Anthon said on the same topics, shows to me without any reasonable doubt that **Martin Harris lied many times in the "Anthon affair."** And these derogatory statements about Dr. Anthon are in stark contrast to what Mark Hines M.A. Wrote in his paper on "The Anthon Affair": "Egyptologist Klaus Baer, of the University of Chicago ...found no resemblance of Joe Smith's 'reformed Egyptian' characters (which he labeled 'doodlings') to Egyptian hieroglyphics, ...Charles Anthon would not have authenticated the 'doodlings' either. Because Charles Anthon was, according to his biography a man of sterling scholarship and character, **he would not have lied for strangers who were trying to pass off doodlings as an authentic language.**" And the words that follow on page 9 that "...even Charles Anthon consistently recalled that Harris sought assurance that his possible investment of time and money in the Joseph Smith venture would be prudent" is **not** the sentiment expressed by Martin Harris to Professor Anthon in his two letters of 1834 and 1841. Where did Richard Anderson get this information from? (STF-90 p.9)

The last two-thirds of the contents of STF-90, which is included with absolutely no commentary, seems only put there to intimidate the ignorant (which we all are to a more or less degree) or unschooled reader with the supposed complexities of the topic, and to insinuate that he leave it up to the "experts." This serves no useful purpose in illuminating one's understanding of basic issues involved, or in the presenting of pertinent facts which the reader could use in evaluating the Martin Harris visit with Professor Anthon.

And finally, the letter on page 15 of STF-90 by W. W. Phelps in 1831, which is included to supposedly show something about Professor Anthon, shows mainly the assumed omniscience of its rather pompous author: "...but his (Joseph Smith's) knowledge of divine things, since the appearance of his book, has astonished many." How does Mr. Phelps (or anyone else) know what

[118 xvii]

"divine things" (if any exist) are? "...and he (Martin Harris) referred to Professor Anthon who translated and declared them (the markings on the transcript) to be the ancient shorthand Egyptian. So much is true." It is only true in the opinion of Mr. Phelps. Its verity is otherwise questionable.

Also much ado has been made by the authors about this "short-hand Egyptian," which term is used by Mr. Phelps in what I just quoted from his letter of January 15, 1831 and which he "probably learned (page 4) ...from Harris or other early Mormons" and "... This is strong evidence that Anthon was the source of the statement that the characters resembled short-hand Egyptian." From these statements it is apparent that **no one knows for sure** who or what was the source of the term "short-hand Egyptian" as used by persons peripherally associated with the "Anthon affair." Nor does it seem to be known for certain who originated the statement that "the characters on the 'Anthon Transcript' resembled short-hand Egyptian." And here the story should end. But it doesn't! The authors go on to state on page 5 that "Thus it becomes **highly probable** that Harris indeed got this phrase from Anthon, and that Anthon did mention short-hand Egyptian (in his conversations with Martin Harris). I agree that **this is a possibility**. But now the authors get involved deeper in assumptions by stating that Mr. Anthon was "no doubt struck by certain obvious similarities in the transcript to hieratic or demotic Egyptian." But this is a completely false and misleading assumption or a deliberate lie!¹

¹ This is another example of a fraudulent attempt by the authors of STF-90 to give the impression they know something for sure that supports their "case" or cause, because no one knows for sure the exact appearance of what Professor Anthon saw on the "Anthon transcript. We have only his general description of what it looked like to him as described by him in his letters of 1834 and 1841. Therefore, for the authors of STF-90 to say what Professor Anthon **thought** about what he saw- **when we don't even know what he saw**- is a fraudulent, misleading, deceptive,

self-serving, assumption or an outright deliberate lie made up to mislead the reader into thinking that the "Anthon transcript" actually had authentic Egyptian language characters written on it, when there is absolutely no evidence to indicate that that is true!!

One cannot even use the counterfeit sheet of markings (Caractors) shown in the first illustration with this paper -which some claim to be the "Anthon transcript", or at least a representation of what the transcript contained- because it is a counterfeit of unknown origin, and therefore is useless to use in making any conclusions about anything!

Yet the authors make this totally self-serving, deceitful statement on page 5 that Mr. Anthon was "no doubt struck by certain obvious similarities in the transcript to hieratic or demotic Egyptian" (and somehow these forms of Egyptian writing are supposed to connect to the real or imagined "reformed Egyptian" language Joseph Smith claimed the "Golden plates" were written in). I will repeat: these authors don't know, nor does anyone alive know, what Professor Anthon even saw on the transcript, because whatever it was cannot be examined by anyone as it is not known if the transcript even exists anymore!! But it is clear Mr. Anthon thought it to be a fraud, as is illustrated by his extended explanation of how he thought it had been deceitfully constructed in his letter to Eber D. Howe in 1834.

In summation, I find this to be another case of what I have found elsewhere in STF-90, and in the writings of almost every other Mormon apologist' papers I have critiqued, that their works contain attempts to mislead, confuse, deceive, or trick the reader into believing evaluations of people, and interpretations of historical events, which are favorable to Mormon desires, rather than being attempts to accurately and honestly relate reasonable and historically accurate data which can be confidently used in attempts to find the truth. Evidently, the **TRUTH** is not what is wanted!

[118 xviii]

(The transcript itself has disappeared) Mr. Anthon seemed to be **struck mainly by the fakery** used in making up of the transcript -read his letters to Eber D. Howe in 1834, and to Dr. Coit in 1841- and not by any resemblance the characters had to **any** Egyptian written language! We only have Harris' statement on that. (Just as we only have the words of Joseph Smith as "proof" of the existence of "golden plates").

And then from all these uncertainties, probabilities, and assumptions, the authors take **the big leap to certainties** with "From this, **what else can one conclude**, except that Harris has been telling the truth all along about what Anthon said on this point?" Did these authors catch a bad case of "BELIEF BLINDNESS"? One could conclude **many things or nothing** from these uncertain possibilities! They certainly do not prove the unquestionable honesty of Martin

Harris. And so another abortive attempt to prove the truthfulness of Martin Harris succumbs to physical and logical uncertainties.

Conclusion

I believe the reader can ascertain pretty much for certain from the facts and logic presented herein, that **Martin Harris was not an honest man** as the authors of STF-90 try to portray him.

Thus it appears **certain** that the most accurate, truthful (and thus most reliable) accounts of what transpired in the "Anthon affair" are to be found in the words and written accounts of Professor Anthon.

I also believe **this paper does show** by factual analyses and logical reasoning that the "Anthon transcript" as shown to Professor Anthon by Martin Harris was a fraud; and therefore it was not "translated" by Joseph Smith from the "reformed Egyptian language" written on "Golden plates" which were obtained from "angel Moroni." Thus the *Book of Mormon* had other authorship, which gives indirect support for the "Spaulding Theory" as a partial explanation for at least some of the contents of "The Golden Bible."

Jerome J. Knuijet
April 15, 2000



Dr. Charles Anthon



Dr. Samuel Mirchell

Finis

Editor's Note: The above essay was taken from Mr. Knuijet's book *The Hoax of Mormonism* (second edition, revised and expanded, 2000). Copies of the entire volume may be obtained from him for \$24.00 plus \$3.00 packaging and shipping (USA and Canada only -- write for foreign rates).

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Historical Quote

Martin Harris' visits to New York City were mentioned in the

Palmyra *Freeman* in August of 1829. A reprint of a *Freeman* article published in the Lockport NY *Niagara Courier* of August 27, 1829 says:

"**Golden Bible.**" -- ... the greatest piece of superstition that has ever come within our knowledge, now occupies the attention of a few individuals of this quarter. It is generally known and spoken of as the "*Golden Bible.*"... The subject was almost invariably treated as it should have been with *contempt*. A few however believed the "*golden*" story, among whom was *Martin Harris*, an honest and industrious farmer of the town of Palmyra. So blindly enthusiastic was Harris, that he took some of the characters interpreted by Smith, and went in search of some one, besides the interpreter, who was learned enough to *English* them; but to all whom he applied (among the number was Professor Mitchell, of New York,) happened not to be possessed of sufficient knowledge to give satisfaction! Harris returned, and set Smith to work at interpreting the Bible....

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