

Bible Special 06-07-18a last20min

...who wrote some of this stuff down. I'll tell you the story here. Back in 1823, the early 1800s were just a bad time.

People were getting sick of Calvinism, they were getting sick of the same old thing, and they were looking for something new, and there was a rash of cults and alternative religions that came out in the 1800s. This is when Jehovah's Witnesses started. This is when Christian science had its early roots.

This is when modern-day versions of Gnosticism and Unitarianism took root and took hold. And this is when the Mormons began. September 21st, 1823, a 17-year-old boy, remember Charles Tate Russell was 17 when he started getting all these wild ideas.

If you're a teenager, you better remember your Scripture verses, and you better keep your mind on the straight and narrow. All of these teenagers launched these heretical cultish religions. September 21st, 1823, a 17-year-old boy was praying, and he looked up, and there was the angel Moroni standing by his bed.

This is the story he tells. Moroni told him where he could find a set of golden plates, flat plates of gold on which was writing, containing the fullness of the everlasting gospel, because evidently the 66 books of our Bible weren't enough and didn't have the fullness. We needed some more information.

So, this was a message that Jesus had given to the ancient inhabitants of America after he left Israel. Went over there, worked on the Israelites a while, got crucified, rose again. Then he came over to America.

And so, the next day, this 17-year-old boy, this is his story, this is how he tells it, Joseph Smith was his name. So, Joe Smith, the next day, gets up and says, Wow, angel Moroni told me where I can find these golden plates. So, supposedly, he went and found these plates buried in a stone box in the side of a hill called Kumura near his home in Palmyra, New York.

But, Moroni was standing there and would not let him have the plates. He said, I told you where these are, and I'm glad you found them, but you can't have them. So, four years later, on September 22nd of 1827, Moroni finally let him kind of get close to the plates.

Nine months before the plates became his, Smith eloped with Emma Hale. Smith said, because of persecution, he moved to his wife's father's home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. It was there he began to translate the plates with the aid of two magic stones, the Urim and the Thunim.

He got the Urim and the Thunim some kind of way. I guess the people of Israel brought them over, buried them in Pennsylvania, and he got them. And, being 21 years old, and obviously a very erudite scholar, God chose him through the angel Moroni to get these golden plates out

and translate them using the Urim and Thunim.

Well, there was a farmer there in New York who got interested in this and said, this is amazing, this is supernatural stuff. If you'll publish what you've translated, I'll pay for it. But first, he wanted to be sure that it was the real thing.

Wouldn't you? If you were going to lay out several hundred dollars for a book to be published of new scripture from God, you'd want to kind of verify, other than just having some 21-year-old guy telling you that the angel Moroni appeared to him, you'd kind of want to know. So, the farmer, Mr. Harris, took Smith's copies, his handwritten translations, this is the very first copies of the Book of Mormon, he took them to Professor Charles Anthon of Columbia University. Smith later wrote that Anthon identified the letters as Egyptian, Chaldeic, Assyriac, and Arabic.

Why they were speaking Egyptian, Chaldeic, Assyriac, and Arabic in ancient America is something of a mystery, but supposedly this is what the scribbling on the golden plates was. These were the languages. I might point out to you that the alphabet for Egyptian is completely unlike that used for the Proto-Semitic languages, from which Aramaic and Hebrew and Syriac and so on are derived.

So, to mix those together would be like mixing the Russian Cyrillic alphabet into English and saying this was somebody's language. But, see, he didn't know that because he was only 21, he hadn't been to college. So, it's Egyptian, Chaldeic, Assyriac, and Arabic.

And Smith said that Professor Anthon from Columbia University had claimed that Smith's translation was more accurate than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. He had never seen anybody translate Egyptian like Joseph Smith did using the Urim and the Thummim. Well, the problem with this is there really was a Professor Anthon at Columbia University who really had looked at the transcripts.

And when he heard Smith's claims of what he had said, he wrote a letter. And this letter exists. You can look at it in a museum.

It's dated February 17, 1834, New York, New York. And it is addressed to Mr. E.D. Howe in Painesville, Ohio. He says, Dear Sir, this is Professor Anthon talking about Joseph Smith's claims about the Book of Mormon.

I received this morning your favor of the ninth instant and lost 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 at our city, now deceased, requesting me to decipher, if possible, a paper which the farmer would hand me and which Dr. Mitchell confessed he had been unable to understand because, of course, it was gobbledygook.

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 had 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 toward one of the glasses only, the spectacles being altogether too large for the breadth of a 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 farmhouse, and being thus concealed from view, put on the spectacles occasionally, or rather looked through one of the glasses, deciphered 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. Which cult are we talking about now? This is the Mormons, okay. Not a word, however, was said about the plates having been deciphered, quote, 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 toward 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 had been brought with him, which had been given to 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 took his leave carrying the paper with him.

This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of crooked characters disclosed 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 calendar given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source from which 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 anything else but Egyptian hieroglyphics. 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, Charles Anthon, Doctor of Letters, Columbia University.

Well, the professor's letter had no effect on the farmer because he mortgaged his farm, got the book published on March 26, 1830, The Book of Mormon. Harris later admitted that he never actually saw the plates since they were covered over with a cloth. So nobody but Joseph Smith ever saw the plates.

Two other men supposed to have seen the plates, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, later left the Mormon church having been accused of theft and counterfeiting. Despite this, the testimony of three witnesses, Harris, Cowdery, and Whitmer, is found in the front of every copy of The Book of Mormon. Well, the Mormons consider this production of Joseph Smith equivalent to scripture.

Supposedly it was translated from the Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics between 1827 and 1830, yet the book is written in exactly the same style as the King James Version of 1611. For example, here's an excerpt. And I'm getting this, by the way, from this book I've told you about before, So What's the Difference? It has a very good summary of these cults and religions.

It has good examples. Here's something from 2 Nephi 29, verses 6, 9, and 10. 2 Nephi is in The Book of Mormon.

Thou fool that shalt say, A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. And because that I have spoken one word, ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another. Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible, ye need not suppose that it contains all my words, neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.

The Book of Mormon is based on this idea. Jesus did everything that's in the New Testament Gospels. Crucified, rose, and ascended.

But he didn't go to heaven and stay there. He came to America. Because in 600 B.C. there was a prophet who rose up in Israel and led a bunch of the people away.

And they ended up in America. There have been two great migrations to North America. The first migration was in 2250 B.C. A group called the Jaredites.

I wish Jared was here tonight. The Jaredites left the area of the Tower of Babel and crossed the Pacific in eight large boats. When they landed on the west coast of Central America, they built large cities.

They prospered with the aid of many horses, asses, elephants, curalams, and cumams,

whatever those are. These are real useful animals, but nobody knows what they are. But the Jaredites didn't get along very well with each other.

They wound up having a civil war. All but two of them were killed. The two left over were Corian Tumor and Sheez.

Corian Tumor managed to cut off Sheez's head. According to the Book of Ether, 1531, Sheez raised upon his hands and fell. After that, he had struggled for breath.

He died. One would tend to think, head cut off, you would struggle for breath and die. So, that was the end of the first migration, according to the Book of Ether.

The second group to come to America, says the Book of Mormon, were Lehi and his family. Lehi was a Jewish prophet, 600 B.C. He and his son Nephi built a boat and the whole family sailed to South America. But some families of Nephi and his brother Laman rebelled against God, who cursed them and made their skin black.

This is in 2 Nephi 5.21. This is where you get your black people. God cursed Laman and some of the families of Nephi. Mormons believe the American Indians are the descendants of Laman.

This makes all the Indians dark-skinned Israelites. All anthropological studies to the contrary, they're Israelites. Of course, genetic studies have demonstrated that they don't have any of the unique genetic code that marks the Israelites, but that doesn't get in the way of the story.

The descendants of Nephi, who did not rebel against God, moved to Central and North America, where they built a great civilization with large cities, none of which have apparently ever been found. In A.D. 34, Jesus Christ came to them from heaven, taught them about baptism and communion, and preached the entire Sermon on the Mount in America. He preached it over again.

It went over so well the first time he brought it back for a rerun. In A.D. 385, near the hill Cumorah, the Lamanites and the Nephites all got killed in a great battle. The only survivor was Moroni, the son of Mormon.

This is the personage who appeared to Joseph Smith, Moroni. Besides translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith revised sections of the King James Bible. New revelations were added, especially in Genesis.

These additions can be found in a Mormon publication called The Pearl of Great Price. It says in there, for example, that Satan wanted to redeem mankind. Satan wanted to die on the cross, but God said, no, you can't go.

Adam got baptized in the Garden of Eden. Somebody baptized him there. Also in Genesis 50, there's a prophecy about the coming of Joseph Smith.

That seer I bless, his name shall be called Joseph. It shall be after the name of his father. For the

thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people into salvation.

This is all scripture for the Mormons, even though it's not found in any Bible but theirs. This is the origin. This is the beginning of the Book of Mormon.

Of course, there are people who find the origins of Christian faith humorous. They'll make fun of the Old Testament and the New Testament. But hopefully you can see a little bit of difference.

In the same way that people claim that Bible books were made up in ancient days and have come down just because they're old, well, here's a recent book. You can see that some people actually take these as being for real, but people with common sense can recognize that there are big holes in this story. Well, this parallels.

If you look at the writings of the Jehovah's Witnesses, if you look at the writings of Christian science, if you look at the writings of the Mormons, we are near at hand. This is within 200 years of our lifetime. And Christians immediately recognized these as bogus, identified them as bogus, and the church at large has never recognized them as anything other than bogus.

But there's a small group of people who think they're the Word of God. Same thing happened in the generations following the apostles. And this is why the Gnostic writings continue to survive, and a few people continue to think that they're the real deal.

There's just no telling some people that what they believe is not so. Well, let's pause and take a break. We'll come back and resume.