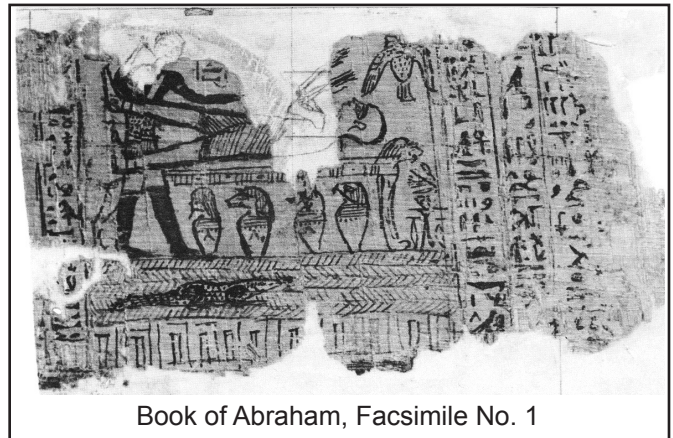


SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI

A book analyzing Joseph Smith's translation of the "Book of Abraham" has caused a real stir in Utah. It is written by Charles M. Larson and is entitled, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look At The Joseph Smith Papyri*. We understand that before the book was offered for sale, about 30,000 copies were sent without charge to members of the Mormon Church. Almost all the homes in one stake received a free copy. One man told us that his bishop was so upset with the book that he warned members of his ward not to read it. This, of course, made the man very curious and he came to our bookstore to purchase a copy.

Mormon scholars seem to be very worried that Larson's book will cause members to lose faith in the Book of Abraham. The Mormon apologist John Gee, a researcher for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.), has written a review of this book which is published in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992. While Mr. Gee tries very hard to find some way to belittle Mr. Larson and undermine his work, we do not feel that he has successfully answered the major issues. He, in fact, has made his own mistakes.

For example, on pages 93-94 of his article, Mr. Gee quotes from a cover letter which was sent out with copies of Larson's



Book of Abraham, Facsimile No. 1

books. He notes that the letter says that the book contains "the first ever published color photographs of the Joseph Smith papyri collection." Gee then asserts that this claim is not true and goes on to state:

... the publishers ... are **mistaken** in thinking that they are publishing the first color photographs of the Joseph Smith papyri. They are **nearly a quarter century too late for that**, for The Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints published a complete set of **color photographs** of the Joseph Smith papyri in the February 1968 *Improvement Era*.

While the photographs in the *Improvement Era* give the appearance of being "color" reproductions of the papyri (we ourselves once thought they were full-color photographs), the printing was apparently done with sepia ink, a dark brown or reddish-brown ink. This worked fairly well because papyrus is basically brown. Unfortunately, however, some of the papyri contain "rubrics"—portions written in red ink. Wherever rubrics appeared on the papyrus, the characters did not reproduce well in the church's magazine, *The Improvement Era*. Instead of being red, they appear to be a very light brown and sometimes faded out to the point that they are hardly readable. In the photographs found in Larson's book, however, real color printing has been used. Consequently, the rubrics come out red and are very readable.

While Michael Marquardt believes John Gee is wrong about the February 1968 issue of the *Improvement Era* having real color photographs of the papyri, he feels that the cover of another issue did have a color photograph of one fragment of papyrus, Facsimile No. 1.

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It is interesting to note that when the church received the papyri on November 27, 1967, church leaders only allowed four or five black and white pictures to be published. Reed Durham, an instructor at the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah asked if we could furnish photographs of all eleven pieces of papyri for the library at the Institute. We replied we could not obtain copies and wondered why he was not able to obtain them from his own church. He stated that when he contacted the church's *Deseret News*, he was told they had a large number of copies of photographs of all the Papyri, but had been ordered not to release them. Later, however, Grant Heward was able to obtain photographs from another source after being refused by the Mormon Church. When the *Deseret News* learned that Mr. Heward had the photographs, it caused a great deal of excitement, and word went out that photographs had fallen into the hands of the enemies of the church. Mormon leaders knew that if they did not release all the photographs, we would print them.

Evidence seems to indicate that there were originally no plans for any pictures of the papyri to appear in the February 1968 issue of the *Improvement Era* and that the publication of the photographs of the papyri were inserted at the last minute in a hasty and peculiar manner. In the table of contents on page 1 we read that pages "33-48" are devoted to a section called "Era of Youth." In the midst of this section, beginning at page 40, the Era of Youth abruptly ends and ten pages of photographs of the papyri are inserted. After this the Era of Youth starts again and continues to page 48 as the table of contents indicated. Two pages of the Era of Youth were deleted at the place where the 10 pages of photographs were added. This, of course, created a problem in the page numbers. To solve this the photographs of the papyri are numbered as pages 40, 40-A, 40-B, etc.

This unusual method of producing the February issue of the church's magazine seems to show that once word got out that our friend Grant Heward had photographs, the church rushed to get them into print. Church leaders certainly did not want these photographs to appear first in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*! This hasty attempt to get the pictures into print may have made it expedient to use sepia ink instead of going through the added trouble of making full color pictures.

Although we do not have the space here to deal in depth with John Gee's arguments, we will examine some of his work and also his sensational claim that papyri have been found that contain the name *Abraham*. Some of Gee's other arguments about Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Abraham have already been refuted in our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* Chapter 22.

4,000 YEARS OLD?

According to Mormon writers, the "Book of Abraham" was supposed to have been written on papyrus by the Biblical patriarch Abraham about 4,000 years ago! Mormon apologist Sidney B. Sperry said that "the Book of Abraham will some day be reckoned as one of the most remarkable documents in existence . . . the writings of Abraham . . . must of necessity be older than the original text of Genesis" (*Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone*, 1938, page 83). Mormon leaders felt the Book of Abraham was so important that they canonized it as scripture and published it in the *Pearl of Great Price*—one of the four standard works of the church.

The evidence shows that while Joseph Smith had the Egyptian papyri, he allowed many people to freely examine them. This was entirely different from the secretive attitude he

had with regard to the "gold plates" from which he translated the Book of Mormon. He was very careful to keep those plates concealed from the general public. Although Joseph Smith let some of his close associates look at the plates, he never allowed experts to examine them. Naturally, this caused many people to wonder if the Mormon prophet really had the plates he described. Others suggested that he may have had some plates which were fabricated to fool his friends and family but that they were neither ancient nor made of gold. In any case, Smith claimed that he eventually returned the plates to the angel who had brought them. Consequently, there is no way to check Smith's claim that he translated the Book of Mormon from gold plates.

While one has to depend upon Joseph Smith's own story and the testimony of the Book of Mormon witnesses concerning the plates, in the case of the Book of Abraham it can be established with certainty that Joseph Smith had some ancient Egyptian papyri which were purchased from Michael Chandler while he was in Kirtland, Ohio. While there is no question about the papyri's authenticity, many people have had serious reservations regarding the accuracy of Smith's translation. Unfortunately, while Joseph Smith had the papyri in his possession the science of Egyptology was in its infancy. Therefore, Joseph Smith's work as a translator could not be adequately tested. To make matters worse, after Smith's death the Mormon Church lost control of the papyri and it was believed that they were destroyed in the Chicago fire.

Since neither the gold plates nor the Egyptian papyri were available, it appeared that Joseph Smith's ability as a translator would never be tested. However, on November 27, 1967, the church's *Deseret News* announced one of the most significant events in Mormon Church history:

NEW YORK—A collection of pa[p]yrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. . . . Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the **original document** from which Joseph Smith had **copied the drawing** which he called "Facsimile No. 1" and published with the Book of Abraham.

After the papyri were recovered by the church, many Mormons felt that Joseph Smith's work would be vindicated. Church apologist Hugh Nibley, however, was not optimistic about the matter and warned his people that there was trouble ahead. On December 1, 1967, the *Daily Universe*, published at Brigham Young University, reported these statements by Dr. Nibley:

"The papyri scripts given to the Church **do not prove the Book of Abraham is true**," Dr. Hugh Nibley . . . said Wednesday night. "LDS scholars are **caught flat footed** by this discovery," he went on to say.

Since Nibley was supposed to be the Mormon Church's top authority on the Egyptian language, such a pessimistic assessment must have jolted Mormons who read his comments. After all, anyone could see that there were three rows of hieroglyphic writing on the right side of the papyrus which Joseph Smith used as Facsimile No. 1 in his Book of Abraham. In addition, another row of hieroglyphic writing appeared on the left side of the papyrus. Since the papyrus was surrounded by Egyptian writing, how could it fail to prove the Book of Abraham? If Joseph Smith really knew how to translate Egyptian, the writing would prove that the scene found in Facsimile No. 1 showed "The idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up **Abraham** as a sacrifice."

As it later turned out, when the writing found on the papyrus was translated by Klaus Baer, Associate Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, it became clear

that the papyrus was a pagan document which had absolutely no relationship to Abraham. The translation, in fact, revealed that the papyrus was really made for a dead man named “Hor”—after the Egyptian god Horus. Experts who have examined this papyrus agree that it is drawing of Osiris, the Egyptian god of the dead, being prepared for burial by the god Anubis. The fact that this is a funerary papyrus is made clear in Dr. Baer’s translation of the line on the left side of the papyrus: “May you give him a good, **splendid burial** on the West of Thebes just like . . .” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1968, page 117). Since the text of Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham says that Abraham survived the attempt to take his life, there would have been no reason to speak of burial. Furthermore, the Egyptians would not have given a sacrificial victim a “splendid burial on the West of Thebes.”

Since the Egyptian papyri did not support Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham, Hugh Nibley was not anxious for a translation to come forth. In the Spring 1968 issue of *Brigham Young University Studies*, page 251, Dr. Nibley made this revealing comment: “We have often been asked during the past months why we did not proceed with all haste to produce a translation of the papyri the moment they came into our possession. . . . **it is doubtful whether any translation could do as much good as harm.**”

We were very disappointed with Hugh Nibley’s attempt to make light of the importance of the Joseph Smith Papyri. We turned to Grant Heward who was studying Egyptian at the time. Mr. Heward had been excommunicated from the Mormon Church because he dared to question the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. Heward was convinced that the papyrus Joseph Smith identified as the Book of Abraham was in reality the Egyptian “Book of Breathings”—a pagan document which was actually a condensed version of the “Book of the Dead.” We were impressed with Heward’s argument and printed his observations in the March 1968 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. It seemed like a bold move to make at the time, but within a few months the identification was confirmed by leading Egyptologists.

In addition, Mr. Heward prepared the first rendering of some of the text from the Joseph Smith Papyri which we printed in the same issue of the *Messenger*. The portion he used was taken from what Joseph Smith identified as the Book of Joseph. In reality, however, Mr. Heward demonstrated that it was taken from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. It related to a dead woman “Transforming into a Swallow.”

It is interesting to note that even though the original Joseph Smith Papyri had been found, leaders of the Mormon Church seemed to have had no desire to produce a translation of the papyri for their people. Like Dr. Nibley, they must have felt that it was “**doubtful whether any translation could do as much good as harm.**” The three Egyptologists who allowed their work to be published by *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* were not commissioned by the church. *Dialogue* is actually an independent publication which is not controlled by the church and often prints articles that are disturbing to some of the top leaders of the church.

A DEVASTATING FIND

While the discovery that the papyri Joseph Smith believed contained the Book of Abraham and the Book of Joseph were nothing but pagan Egyptian funerary texts came as a great blow to church leaders, a far more distressing development occurred. Within six months from the time the Metropolitan Museum gave the papyri to the church, the Book of Abraham had been proven untrue! The fall of the Book of Abraham was brought about by

the identification of the actual fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith claimed to translate the book. The identification of this fragment was made possible by a comparison with *Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*—handwritten documents we photographically reproduced in 1966. Charles M. Larson gives this information about this matter:

Smith’s “Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar,” as it has come to be called, had never really been lost or missing. For a long time it was simply ignored, and more recently it had been considered **restricted**. It was among that portion of early Church records the Mormons managed to take with them when they left Nauvoo in 1846, and it was included in the list of materials recorded in the Church Historian’s Office Journal as having been deposited in the Historian’s vault in Salt Lake City in 1855. . . . as late as 1960 . . . Dr. Sperry remarked at BYU’s *Pearl of Great Price Conference* that he did not know whether or not the Church authorities would yet allow it to be published, adding that he thought “it would be a little premature, perhaps, to do it now, until we can really do a good job of it.”

Others who had occasion to come into contact with the material apparently disagreed with the Church’s reluctance in the matter. Late in 1965 a microfilm copy of the entire work was “leaked” to Jerald and Sandra Tanner of Modern Microfilm Company (now Utah Lighthouse Ministry). The Tanners were former Mormons who were rapidly gaining a reputation for printing documents relating to Mormonism that, though authentic, made Church officials uncomfortable. By 1966 the Tanners had produced the first complete photomechanical reprint and transcription of the entire *Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*.

But contrary to what most Mormons evidently expected, publication of the *Alphabet and Grammar* in no way substantiated Joseph Smith’s ability to translate ancient Egyptian. Quite the opposite, for the book turned out to be nothing but page after page of nonsensical gibberish. Though it had apparently succeeded at one time in impressing unsophisticated minds, the work was unable to withstand the scrutiny of experts.

Professional Egyptologists to whom the *Alphabet and Grammar* was submitted for examination were quick to point out that the material in Joseph Smith’s notebook bore no resemblance at all to any correct understanding of the ancient Egyptian language. As one of them, I. E. Edwards, put it, the whole work was “largely a piece of imagination and lacking in any kind of scientific value.” He added that it reminded him of “the writings of psychic practitioners which are sometimes sent to me.” (*By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus*, pages 42-43)

When characters in the original Egyptian papyri were compared with those copied into the translation manuscripts of the Book of Abraham, found in *Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*, it became apparent that one piece of papyrus supplied the characters which Joseph Smith claimed to translate as the Book of Abraham! This papyrus was identified in the Mormon Church’s publication *Improvement Era*, February 1968, page 40-I, as “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated).” We presented photographic evidence that Joseph Smith used the “Sensen” text to create his Book of Abraham in the March 1968 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we have additional proof that Smith used this papyrus. Surprisingly, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, asked us to work with Grant Heward to prepare an article presenting the evidence. This article, “The Source of The Book of Abraham Identified,” was published in *Dialogue*, Summer 1968, pages 92-98.

Egyptologist Klaus Baer accepted this identification without question. Speaking of the “Sensen” papyrus, Dr. Baer wrote:

“Joseph Smith thought that this papyrus contained the Book of Abraham” (*Ibid.*, page 111). In footnote 11 of the same article, Professor Baer observed: “This identification is now certain.” Mormon scholar Richley Crapo spoke of “the startling fact that one of the papyri of the Church collection, known as the Small Sen-Sen Papyrus, contained the **same series of hieratic symbols**, which had been copied, **in the same order**, into the Book of Abraham manuscript next to verses of that book! In other words, there was every indication that the collection of papyri in the hands of the Church **contained the source which led to a production of the Book of Abraham**” (*Book of Abraham Symposium*, LDS Institute of Religion, Salt Lake City, April 3, 1970, page 27).

Although Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley later reversed his position in a desperate attempt to save the Book of Abraham, in 1968 he frankly admitted that Joseph Smith used the “Sensen” papyrus for the text of the Book of Abraham. At a meeting held at the University of Utah on May 20, 1968, Dr. Nibley made these comments:

Within a week of the publication of the papyri, students began calling my attention . . . to the fact that, the **very definite fact that, one of the fragments seemed to supply all of the symbols for the Book of Abraham**. This was the little “Sensen” scroll. Here are the symbols. The symbols are arranged here, and the interpretation goes along here and **this interpretation turns out to be the Book of Abraham**. Well, what about that? Here is the little “Sensen,” because that name occurs frequently in it, the papyrus in which a **handful of Egyptian symbols was apparently expanded in translation to the whole Book of Abraham**. This raises a lot of questions. It doesn’t answer any questions, unless we’re mind readers.

At one point Dr. Nibley became so desperate to save the Book of Abraham that he suggested the “Sensen” text may have a second meaning unknown to Egyptologists (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 319-320).

In his article in *Dialogue*, pages 111-113, Egyptologist Klaus Baer set forth another serious problem confronting those who would try to save the Book of Abraham: the papyrus Joseph Smith identified as Facsimile No. 1 from the Book of Abraham was originally part of the same scroll which contained the “Sensen” text—i.e., they were both part of the Book of Breathings. The two pieces had been cut apart in Joseph Smith’s time and mounted on paper, but Dr. Baer demonstrated that they fit together perfectly. Dr. Hugh Nibley later acknowledged that they were both part of the Book of Breathings: “It can be easily shown by matching up the cut edges and fibres of the papyri that the text of the Joseph Smith ‘Breathing’ Papyrus (No. XI) was written on the same strip of material as Facsimile No. 1 and immediately adjoining it” (*The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: an Egyptian Endowment*, 1975, page 13).

The text of the Book of Abraham itself demonstrates that the drawing appearing as Facsimile No. 1 was supposed to be at the beginning of the scroll just as Professor Baer’s research has revealed. The original manuscripts of the Book of Abraham, as they appear in *Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*, reveal that Joseph Smith was using characters from the “Sensen” papyrus when he “translated” the first chapter of the Book of Abraham. In Abraham 1:12 the patriarch Abraham was supposed to have said the following: “And it came to pass that the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also, as they did those virgins upon this altar; and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to **the representation at the commencement of this record**.” It is clear, therefore,

that the picture shown as Facsimile No.1 was the start of the papyrus scroll, and that Joseph Smith was claiming to translate from the very next portion—the Small “Sensen” text.

A larger “Sensen” text follows the Small “Sensen” text. The name “Abraham” does not appear on any of the three pieces of papyri. On the other hand, the Egyptian **name Hor appears on every piece**. We have found it in at least nine places. Although the original piece of papyrus Joseph Smith used to prepare Facsimile No. 3 is missing, Egyptologists have also found the name “Hor” on the printed facsimile. Professor Baer believes the scene shown in Facsimile No. 3 ended the Book of Breathings which was prepared for the man Hor who had died and needed the magical papyrus which contained the charms which were necessary to reach the “world of the hereafter.”

Hugh Nibley was willing to concede that Facsimile No. 3 was probably part of the original Book of Breathings scroll:

For the Book of Breathings is before all else, as Bonnet observes, a **composite**, made up of “compilations and excerpts from older funerary sources and mortuary formulas.” . . .

Of particular interest to us is the close association of the **Book of Breathings** with the *Facsimiles* of the **Book of Abraham**. . . the text of Joseph Smith Pap. No. XI was written on the same strip of material as Facsimile Number 1, the writing beginning immediately to the left of the “lion-couch” scene. The British Museum Book of Breathing[s], “the Kerasher Papyrus,” has both the “lion-couch” scene . . . and a scene **resembling our Facsimile Number 3** . . . This last stands at the head of the “Kerasher” text, and suggests that our **Fac. No. 3 was originally attached** at the other end of the Joseph Smith Papyrus, coming after the last column, which is missing. . . the Book of Breathings . . . contains the essential elements of the Egyptian funerary rites from the earliest times . . . The Book of Breathings is not to be dismissed, as it has been, as a mere talisman against stinking corpses; it is a sermon on breathing in every Egyptian sense of the word. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1971, pages 158, 160, 162, 164, 166)

All of the evidence adds up to the inescapable conclusion that although Joseph Smith claimed to translate the Book of Abraham from the papyrus he had in his possession, the words that he dictated came from his own imagination. That papyrus, in fact, contains a pagan text having nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. We have counted the names of at least fifteen Egyptian gods or goddesses which appear on the papyrus but it contains absolutely nothing regarding the God of the Bible.

Since the Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered and translated by Egyptologists, a number of prominent Mormon scholars seem to have been living in a fantasyland with regard to the Book of Abraham. Instead of facing the truth about Joseph Smith’s work, they have come up with a number of incredible explanations. Dr. Hugh Nibley has led the parade by setting forth all sorts of reasons why a person should go on believing the Book of Abraham even though the evidence clearly shows it is the work of Joseph Smith’s own imagination. Since the discovery of the papyri in 1967, Professor Nibley has stubbornly fought against the truth with regard to the Book of Abraham. Although he put up many smoke screens to try to divert attention from the real issues, he has not been successful in silencing the opposition. In *Sunstone*, December 1979, Edward Ashment, a Mormon Egyptologist who has worked in the Translation Department of the church, demonstrated that Dr. Nibley’s work on the Joseph Smith Papyri was filled with serious errors. He, in fact, demolished Nibley’s arguments at every turn.

In a response, published in the same issue, Hugh Nibley acknowledged that “Since hearing Brother Ashment I have to

make some changes in what I have said already” (*Ibid.*, page 51). On page 49 of the same article, we find this startling statement coming from the church’s chief apologist for the Book of Abraham: “I refuse to be held responsible for anything I wrote more than three years ago.”

GEE’S MAGICAL PAPYRI

One of the more desperate attempts to save the Book of Abraham is the attempt to link it to late magical papyri. John Gee, the Mormon apologist who has criticized Charles Larson’s book, has been trying very hard to promote this view. On page 116 of his rebuttal to Larson, John Gee reported: “David Cameron discovered an Egyptian lion couch scene much like Facsimile 1 explicitly mentioning the name Abraham.” Mr. Gee has provided research on this subject for an article published by F.A.R.M.S. and has also prepared an article for the church’s magazine, *The Ensign*.

The “lion couch scene” Gee speaks of is found in the Leiden Papyrus I 384. The F.A.R.M.S. article concerning this matter caused some Mormons to be very excited because it stated that the “lion couch scene” shows “Anubis standing over a person . . .” (*Insight: An Ancient Window*, September 1991, page 1). Many were undoubtedly led to believe that the “person” on the couch must be Abraham as shown in Facsimile No. 1 of the Book of Abraham. Unfortunately for Mormon apologists, this has not turned out to be the case. Mormon Egyptologist Edward Ashment claimed that it was actually a woman who was lying on the couch. In his article published in *The Ensign*, July 1992, page 61, John Gee acknowledged that this is the case: “the figure on the lion couch in this papyrus is a woman.”

While many Mormon apologists have argued that Facsimile No. 1 shows a priest with a human head attempting to sacrifice Abraham, it has been obvious to Egyptologists for many years that the standing figure is really the jackal-headed god Anubis preparing the deceased for burial. The rediscovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri shows that the head was missing on the original papyrus, and it is clear that Joseph Smith made an imaginative restoration which is incorrect. In the papyrus John Gee speaks of it is obvious that the woman is being attended by the jackal-headed god. As we have shown, the article in *Insights* plainly states that it is “Anubis standing over a person . . .”

In *The Ensign*, Mr. Gee reveals that even the text speaks of the jackal-headed god:

Later in the text we read, “I adjure you spirits of the dead, [by] the dead (pharaohs) and the demon Balsamos and the jackal-headed god and the gods who are with him.” . . . The “jackal-headed god” is most likely **Anubis**, who usually officiates in lion couch scenes . . .

It is obvious, then, that this papyrus provides no support for the sacrificial scene found in Facsimile No. 1.

If this papyrus were dated 2,000 years earlier, the discovery of the name Abraham on it might be significant. It, of course, would not prove the Book of Abraham to be true, but would merely establish that the name “Abraham” was known in Egypt at that time.

One of the problems with the Book of Breathing’s Papyrus—the text Joseph Smith believed was the Book of Abraham—is that it is not old enough to have been written by Abraham. According to Josiah Quincy, Joseph Smith claimed that the papyrus he had contained the very handwriting of Abraham himself. “That is the **handwriting of Abraham**, the father of the Faithful . . .” (See *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 321 for additional

evidence concerning this matter). A number of Mormon scholars feel that Abraham lived in the twentieth century B.C.

When the Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered, it soon became obvious that they were not nearly old enough to support Joseph Smith’s claims concerning the Book of Abraham. Dr. Hugh Nibley admitted that the Book of Breathing’s only dated back to the first century: “. . . It has now become apparent . . . that our Joseph Smith Book of Breathing’s is one of a very special and limited and uniquely valuable class of documents clustering around a single priestly family of upper Egypt in the **first century A.D.**” (*The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 1975, page 3). Since the Book of Breathing’s—which, of course, contains the drawing Joseph Smith used for Facsimile No. 1 in his Book of Abraham—was written about 2,000 years after the time of Abraham, the Mormon Church is faced with a serious dilemma.

The magical texts which John Gee uses as evidence for the Book of Abraham present an even greater problem. In the article published in *Insights*, page 1, it is claimed that the texts “date to about the same time as the Joseph Smith papyri.” According to Edward Ashment, however, they were not written until the third century A.D. In his article published in *The Ensign*, page 60, Mr. Gee agrees they date “to **the third century A.D.** . . .” As we will show, they are so far removed from the time of Abraham that they are of no value.

In 1978 Morton Smith published a book entitled, *Jesus The Magician*. While we disagreed with his conclusion that Jesus was a magician (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1986), Professor Smith presented a great deal of material concerning the type of magical papyri we are dealing with here.

Although we know that Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the Bible indicates that many of them desired to return. By the fifth century B.C. there was a colony of Jews living at Elephantine in Egypt. Even though these Jews built a temple, it “has been argued by some scholars that the Jerusalem priests regarded the Jews in Egypt as semi-heretical, and therefore did not encourage them in their apostasy” (*The Bible and Archaeology*, by J. A. Thompson, 1962, page 226).

In any case, we know that by the time of Jesus there was a large Jewish population in Egypt, which was at that time a Roman province. Jesus, himself, was brought to Egypt by his father and mother to escape the rage of Herod. On page 62 of his book, *Jesus The Magician*, Morton Smith says that “There was a long standing legend that the god of the Jews was a donkey, or donkey-headed. . . . The Jews were among the largest groups of foreigners in Egypt, so their god, Iao, was identified with Seth.”

F. F. Bruce says that “Philo of Alexandria estimated about A.D. 38 that there were at least a million Jews in Egypt and the neighboring territories. We may subject this figure to a substantial discount, but the Jewish population of Egypt was certainly very great. In Alexandria itself at that time one out of the five wards of the city was entirely Jewish and a second was very largely so” (*New Testament History*, 1980, page 136). Bruce felt that “Christianity had found its way to Alexandria by A.D. 41” (*Ibid.*, page 294).

It is obvious that there would have been a good deal of information available in Egypt concerning the God of Israel and important Biblical characters long before the magical papyri were written. It is no surprise, then, that the names of prominent individuals mentioned in the Bible turn up in the magical texts written in the third century A.D. Many of those who practiced magic wanted to use the names of as many gods and religious leaders as possible and seemed to have little concern about mixing the Hebrew God and Biblical characters with Egyptian gods. C. K. Barrett observed: “Those in particular who practiced magic were willing to

adopt from any source names and formulas which sounded impressive and effective” (*The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*, by C. K. Barrett, 1987, page 34).

On pages 34-35, Barrett quotes from the *Paris Magical Papyrus*, written about A.D. 300. This text tells how to exorcise demons. We cite the following from this lengthy text:

The adjuration is this: “I adjure thee by the **god of the Hebrews Jesu** [Jesus], Jaba, Jae, Abraoth, Aia, **Thoth**, Ele, Elo, Aeo, Eu, Jiibaech, Abarmas, Jabarau, Abelbel, Lona, Abra, Maroi . . . I abjure thee by him who appeared unto Osrael [Israel] in the pillar of light and in the cloud by day, and who delivered his word from the taskwork of Pharaoh and brought upon Pharaoh the ten plagues because he heard not. I adjure thee, every daemonic spirit, say whatsoever thou art. For I adjure thee by the seal which **Solomon** laid upon the tongue of **Jeremiah** and he spake. . . . I adjure thee by the great God Sabaoth, through whom the river Jordan returned backward . . .”

The reader will notice that the author mixed Jesus in with the Egyptian god Thoth. It is hardly surprising, then, that we would find the name Abraham—one of the most important characters in the Bible—mentioned in the magical papyri. On page 114 of his book, Morton Smith pointed out that, “Jesus’ name was used in spells as the name of a god. So were the names of Adam (PGM III. 146), **Abraham**, Isaac, and Jacob, and of Moses and Solomon who were famous as magicians.”

On page 63, Morton Smith quotes PGM IV, line 1233:

“Be blessed, God of Abraham. Be blessed, God of Isaac. Be blessed, God of Jacob. Jesus Christ, holy spirit, son of the Father, who art under the Seven and in the Seven, bring Iao Sabaoth. May your power increase . . . until you drive out this evil demon, Satan.”

On page 69, we find this statement by Smith: “The Jews’ God, Yahweh . . . was particularly famous for his usefulness in magic. In the magical papyri (which contains a sprinkling of Jewish spells, but are mainly pagan documents) his name outnumbers that of any other deity by more than three to one.” Smith quotes the following from “an invocation of the world ruler the Good Demon”: “For I have taken to myself the power of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and of the great god-demon Iao Ablanathanalba” (page 102).

In the article published in *The Ensign*, page 60, John Gee notes that there is a similarity between a verse in the Bible and what is found on the papyrus with the “lion couch scene”: “The first reference occurs in a chapter on how to make a signet ring. One of the steps is to ‘bring a **white stone**’ and ‘write this name upon it . . . Abraham, friend of m[an].’” This, of course, is similar to Revelation 2:17, which speaks of “**a white stone**, and in the stone a new **name written** . . .” It is interesting to note that this is the **only** mention of “a white stone” in the entire Bible.

The fact that both documents mention “a white stone” with a “name” written on it seems too close to be a coincidence. The book of Revelation, of course, was not written until about A.D. 90. This would be around 2,000 years after the time of Abraham. The implications of this quotation from the book of Revelation in the papyrus are clear: the author of the text in the magical papyrus must have either seen or heard someone read from the book of Revelation. Once it is conceded that the author was acquainted with the book of Revelation, then it is also easy to believe that he or she had access to other information contained in Bible manuscripts and would have known about Abraham. It should also be noted that the magical papyrus speaks of “Abraham, friend of m[an].” This sounds like a quotation from the book of James, which speaks of Abraham as “the Friend of God” (James 1:23).

Speaking of the same papyrus, John Gee says:

. . . second instance of Abraham’s name occurs in a description of how to use a ring to obtain “success and grace and victory.” As a part of his invocation, the petitioner says, “O mighty god, who surpasses all powers, I call upon thee, Ioa, Sabaoth, Adonai, Elohim, [six other names], Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, [82 more names].” The first four names are Hebrew for “LORD of hosts, my Lord, God.” (*The Ensign*, July 1992, page 60)

The brackets found in the quotation above appear in the original publication. From this it is clear that the name *Abraham* in this section of the text was only one of ninety-five names that were being invoked! It would appear, then, that the name *Abraham* was just one of many magic names needed so that the person who recited the spell would be able to use “a ring to obtain ‘success and grace and victory.’”

There seems to be no evidence that the name *Abraham* came from any ancient Egyptian source or that it had anything to do with the Book of Abraham. Although John Gee’s writings may have given some members of the Mormon Church the idea that evidence had been found to support Joseph Smith’s translation, when the facts are known, it is clear that the magical papyri, dating to the third century A.D., provide absolutely no support for the Book of Abraham. Mr. Gee’s attempt to make a case from these second-rate papyri tends to show how empty-handed Mormon apologists are when it comes to defending the Book of Abraham. Mormon scholars cannot find the name of Abraham on any part of the papyrus which Joseph Smith claimed was written by Abraham himself and even contained Abraham’s own signature. Therefore, they have turned to magical papyri which were written two centuries after the text Smith translated as the Book of Abraham. We find it especially strange that they would make an issue of the name Abraham on other papyri, when it cannot be found on the papyrus scroll Joseph Smith designated as the Book of Abraham.

On page 62 of his article in *The Ensign*, John Gee acknowledges that the texts he has cited do not really inform us about Abraham or his history:

Though these texts tell us nothing directly about Abraham, they do tell us that there were traditions circulating in Roman Egypt. Traditions we must remember, often stem from older truths. . . . Even if we had a manuscript for the book of Abraham in Egyptian, dating to Abraham’s time, the critics still would not accept the book of Abraham. Those who seek to know the truth of the book of Abraham will have to wait upon the Lord.

MICHAEL RHODES’ WORK

Although the Mormon Egyptologist Michael D. Rhodes translated Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham, he found nothing regarding Abraham. Nevertheless, he has still tried to defend Joseph Smith’s work. Writing in the church’s magazine, *The Ensign*, July 1988, pages 51-53, Rhodes tried to answer the following question: “*Why doesn’t the translation of the Egyptian papyri found in 1967 match the text of the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price?*” In this article Michael Rhodes clearly laid out the problem which faced the church: “First of all, from paleographic and historical considerations, the Book of Breathings papyrus can reliably be dated to around A.D. 60—much too late for Abraham to have written it. . . . when one compares the text of the book of Abraham with a translation of the Book of Breathings; **they clearly are not the same.**”

Rhodes then proceeds to give “possible explanations why the text of the recently discovered papyri does **not** match the

text in the *Pearl of Great Price*.” One of Rhode’s suggestions is that the “copy of Abraham’s record” which Joseph Smith used “possibly passed through the hands of many scribes and had become editorially **corrupted** to the point where **it may have had little resemblance to the original . . .**” For this reason Joseph Smith may have used the “Urim and Thummim, or simply through revelation” revealed what Abraham had originally written.

Michael Rhodes was chosen to write two articles for the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. In vol. 1, page 136, Rhodes set forth the idea that Joseph Smith chose pagan drawings as illustrations for his Book of Abraham: “in summary, Facsimile 1 formed the beginning, and Facsimile 3 the end of a document known as the **Book of Breathings**, an Egyptian religious text . . . The association of these facsimiles with the book of Abraham might be explained as Joseph Smith’s attempt to find illustrations from the papyri he owned that **most closely matched** what he had received in revelation when translating the Book of Abraham.”

In a letter to a member of the Mormon Church who was troubled with regard to the origin of the Book of Abraham, Michael Rhodes spoke of a theory he proposed in his article in the *Ensign*, July 1988, page 51. Rhodes had stated that it was possible that the Book of Abraham “may have been taken from a **different** portion of the papyrus rolls in Joseph Smith’s possession.” In the letter, however, Rhodes made it clear that he no longer considered that as a very promising option. He went on to give more information concerning the idea that the Book of Abraham did not really come from the papyrus scroll in Joseph Smith’s possession:

Before I start, let me say that I . . . like you, definitely favor the second; namely that Joseph Smith **did not have the actual text of the Book of Abraham before him**, but that it was revealed to him . . . The first option I proposed seems **pretty unlikely to me now**. There is no doubt that the original Papyrus of Facsimile Number 1 belongs to the Book of Breathings text. The name of the owner of the Papyrus, Hor son of Userwer, is found both on this papyrus and in the text of the Book of Breathings . . . although we do not have the original of Facsimile Number 3, the name Hor can clearly be read in the hieroglyphs on this facsimile, and it seems very probable that this illustration was originally located at the end of the Book of Breathings papyrus now in the Church’s possession. I am not ruling it out completely, but I think **it is unlikely that Joseph Smith ever had the actual text of the Book of Abraham in his possession**. . . .

This still leaves us with the problem of how Facsimile Number 1, a commonly found representation **of the god Anubis preparing the body of Osiris** (or the deceased) for burial, that is part of an Egyptian funerary document that was produced nearly 2000 years (about 60 A. D.) after Abraham, can possibly be the illustration Abraham refers to in his book. The best explanation I have for this is that in the original papyrus Abraham, had drawn an illustration of himself being sacrificed on an altar by the priest of Elkenah. In the process of translation, this illustration was revealed to Joseph Smith and he saw that **it was similar** to the one found at the beginning of the Book of Breathings. Joseph Smith therefore used it (*with some modifications*) as Facsimile Number one. One of the most **obvious modifications is the changing of the head of the god Anubis** (who has a jackal’s head) **to that of a man**. Another is **putting a knife in the standing figures hand**. (Both the head and the knife **are missing** in the papyrus as it exists today.)

Joseph Smith may have used the other facsimiles found in the Book of Abraham similarly.

I certainly don’t claim this is the only possible explanation; it is simply the best I have been able to come up with so far. (Letter by Michael D. Rhodes, dated July 10, 1988)

This extraordinary letter gives the reader an idea of how far some Mormon scholars will go in their attempt to save the Book of Abraham. It is also interesting to note that after writing this letter, Michael Rhodes seems to have changed his mind again concerning the question of whether Joseph Smith really had the Book of Abraham papyrus. In his article published in *The Ensign*, July 1988, page 51, Rhodes had held out the hope that the Book of Abraham may “have been taken from a different portion of the papyrus rolls in Joseph Smith’s possession”—a portion which has since disappeared.

By the time he wrote the letter cited above, however, he had decided that Smith probably “did not have the actual text of the Book of Abraham before him . . . I think it is unlikely that Joseph Smith ever had the actual text of the Book of Abraham in his possession.” To our surprise, when we read an article by Michael Rhodes printed in *Review of Books*, vol. 4, 1992, we discovered that he seems to have reverted to the idea that Joseph Smith may have had a roll of papyrus. On page 122, Rhodes claimed that “a contemporary source indicates that the scroll of the book of Abraham was **not** part of the papyri fragments now in the possession of the Church.”

He cites from a letter written by Charlotte Haven in 1843. Haven claimed that Joseph Smith’s mother “opened a long roll of manuscript, saying it was ‘the writing of Abraham and Isaac, written in Hebrew and Sanscrit,’ and she read several minutes from it as if it were English.” Because the papyri the church now has in its possession were supposed to have been cut into sheets by this time and therefore could not have been a “long roll of manuscript,” Rhodes seems to conclude that there was a third roll of papyrus which has been lost. This interpretation, which is also held by John Gee, is erroneous. Significant evidence points to the conclusion that there were only two rolls of papyrus. Joseph Smith’s *History* contains this information: “On opening the coffins, he [Mr. Chandler] discovered . . . something rolled up . . . which, when examined, proved to be two rolls of papyrus, previously mentioned. Two or three other small pieces of papyrus, with astronomical calculations, epitaphs, &c., were found with others of the mummies” (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 349).

Although the text mentions that there were “Two or three other small pieces of papyrus,” Joseph Smith never identifies a third roll of papyrus. Furthermore, while Charlotte Haven’s statement contains some interesting information, it contains a number of factual errors. She says that Mother Smith told Haven that the roll contained the “writing of Abraham and **Isaac** written in **Hebrew** and **Sanscrit**.” Mormon leaders have never claimed that the Book of Abraham was written in “Hebrew and Sanscrit.” Joseph Smith’s *History* makes it abundantly clear that the Book of Abraham was supposed to be written in “Egyptian characters” (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 320).

While Haven’s account says that the roll was written by “Abraham and Isaac,” to our knowledge, Joseph Smith did not claim that Isaac wrote anything in the Book of Abraham. As early as 1969, the Mormon scholar Jay M. Todd saw the discrepancies in Haven’s account and made this observation: “One wonders if Sister Smith were not just throwing out names of languages she had heard; or, one wonders if Charlotte is reporting accurately. Until more evidence is gathered, the sum and **value of Charlotte’s report remains clouded on several issues**” (*The Saga of the Book of Abraham*, by Jay M. Todd, page 249).

Jay Todd also noted the discrepancy with regard to Haven’s claim that Lucy Smith opened a roll of papyrus. The preponderance of the evidence shows that both rolls had been cut up by the time Charlotte Haven saw them. Her statement,

of course, could be reconciled by claiming that what she meant was that Lucy Smith laid out the various pieces of the document side-by-side so that it appeared in the same order as when the roll was first opened up.

In our book, *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 2, pages 121-122, we give four different accounts by people who saw the original papyri in Nauvoo. Besides citing the letter by Charlotte Haven, we have included accounts by Josiah Quincy, Henry Caswall and an account appearing in a newspaper known as *The Quincy Whig*. These accounts are written in the period from 1840 to 1844. Charlotte Haven's account is the only one which talks of "a long role of manuscript" being opened. Because the manuscripts were so very fragile (a number of pieces had already broken off), it would not seem reasonable that Lucy Smith would unroll them time after time to display them to the many visitors who came to see the papyri.

As early as 1840, *The Quincy Whig*, reported that there were "numerous fragments of Egyptian papyrus" which were in "several frames, covered with glass." The same paper reported that Joseph Smith said: "These ancient records . . . have been **unrolled and preserved** with great labor and care" (*The Quincy Whig*, October 17, 1840, as cited in *Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone*, pages 51-52).

When Caswall examined the papyri in 1842, he found the rolls had been cut into "**sheets of papyrus**" and were kept in "**glazed slides**, like picture frames" (*The City of the Mormons; or, Three Days at Nauvoo, in 1842*, pages 22-23).

Both these accounts were written before Charlotte Haven's letter was penned in 1843. The other account, however, was written by Josiah Quincy, who visited Joseph Smith in 1844. He also claimed that the papyri "were **preserved under glass** and handled with great respect" (*Figures of the Past, 1883*, as cited in *Among the Mormons*, page 136).

In his article in *Review of Books*, pages 121-122, Michael Rhodes used a statement made by Caswall to support his argument that there may be a third role of papyrus containing the Book of Abraham: "In 1842, the fragments we now have were described as being mounted in 'a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics.'" He then proceeded to quote Charlotte Haven's letter to support his thesis of a third roll. If Rhodes had cited more of Caswall's statement, his argument would have fallen apart. Henry Caswall made it very clear that the very sheets that had been cut up contained the Book of Abraham. We quote the following from Caswall's book, pages 22-23:

The storekeeper . . . drew forth a number of **glazed slides**, like picture frames, containing **sheets of papyrus**, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics. These **had been unrolled** from four mummies, which the prophet purchased at a cost of twenty-four hundred dollars. By some inexplicable mode, as the storekeeper informed me, Mr. Smith had discovered that **these sheets contained the writings of Abraham**, written with his own hand while in Egypt. Pointing to the figure of a man lying on a table, he said, "that is the picture of Abraham on the point of being sacrificed. That man standing by him with a drawn knife is an idolatrous priest of the Egyptians."

It seems obvious from this that Joseph Smith did not possess another roll of papyrus.

John Gee uses the exact argument found in Rhodes' article on page 107 of his review of Larson's book. Like Rhodes, Gee fails to provide the important context. He does, however, use the last two sentences of the quote we have cited from Caswall five pages earlier in his article while trying to prove another

point (see page 102). Unfortunately, however, even on page 102 he uses ellipsis signs (dots) to omit the statement that "Mr. Smith had discovered that these **sheets contained the writings of Abraham**, written with his own hand while in Egypt." Because of the amount of material between the two quotes and the omission of the important portion regarding the fact that the Book of Abraham roll had been cut into sheets, it is doubtful that one person in a thousand would ever know that Gee's quotation actually refuted what he was trying to prove.

Many Mormon scholars would probably charge us with dishonesty if we did this sort of thing. In any case, an examination of some of the wording in Gee's quotation with that found in Rhodes' article seems to show that one scholar borrowed from the other. Below is a comparison:

In 1842, the fragments we now have in the Joseph Smith Papyri were **mounted in "a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics."** The next year, **in 1843, a nonmember named Charlotte Haven visited Lucy Mack Smith and wrote a letter to her own mother about it: "Then she [Mother Smith] turned to a long table . . ."** (John Gee, *Review of Books*, page 107)

In 1842, the fragments we now have were described as being **mounted in "a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics."** The next year, **in 1843, Charlotte Haven, a nonmember, visited Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith and wrote a letter to her own mother about it**, saying: "**Then she [Mother Smith] turned to a long table . . ."** (Michael Rhodes, *Review of Books*, pages 121-122)

It would appear from the comparison above that one of these two authors did the original research on this quotation but failed to realize that if the quote from Caswall was taken in its entirety, it would refute the entire argument that there was another roll of papyrus. The other author then blindly followed the first into the ditch. We, of course, do not know who made the original mistake, but feel that it resulted from an overzealous attempt to save the Book of Abraham.

Even if Rhodes and Gee could have established that there was a third papyrus, it would not have solved the serious problem faced by the church. The reader will remember that in the Book of Abraham, 1:12, Abraham was supposed to have said that he included a drawing of the attempt to slay him "at the commencement of this record." Now, it is obvious to all who examine the matter that the drawing in the Book of Abraham matches the drawing found in Hor's Book of Breathings. Both John Gee and Michael Rhodes acknowledge this to be true.

If, then, Joseph Smith had another roll of papyrus which really contained the Book of Abraham, why did he not use the drawing which Abraham himself said he placed at the beginning of that roll? Why would Smith switch over to the pagan Book of Breathings and use an illustration (Fac. No. 1) from that roll? The problem goes even deeper: why would the prophet include Fac. No. 3 at the end of the record? The reader will remember that Michael Rhodes said that "the name Hor can clearly be read in the hieroglyphs" on Fac. No. 3 and that this drawing was probably "originally located at the end of the Book of Breathings papyrus." In addition, Smith added Fac. No. 2 in the middle. As we have shown, this is also a pagan document. In the first printing of the Book of Abraham in the *Times and Seasons*, Joseph Smith called every one of these drawings "A Facsimile From The Book of Abraham."

The thesis set forth by Rhodes and Gee would actually lead one to believe that the prophet rejected the drawing Abraham himself put at the beginning of his record and added a substitute and two other drawings created by idol worshipers! This in itself would show that Joseph Smith was not inspired when he produced the Book of Abraham.

Brigham Young University scholar James R. Harris concluded that the papyri rediscovered in 1967 did not vindicate Joseph Smith's work and turned to the idea that the Book of Abraham came through revelation, not through a translation of the papyrus scroll. He even warns members of the church against holding out the hope that a papyrus manuscript may yet be found that will confirm Joseph Smith's work:

Facsimiles 1 and 3 were created from separate vignettes of a single Sensen text. Facsimile 2 was created from a disk-shaped amulet that was placed under the head of the deceased . . .

It is important to understand, precisely speaking, that in their original context, these illustrations have **no connection with the Book of Abraham**. The three facsimiles are, in fact, reproductions of real Egyptian documents. (*The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham, A Study of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 1990, page 5)

These two scrolls appear to have been regarded by Church leadership as **scrolls of Abraham and Joseph**. An understanding of the content of the papyrus fragments and the manner in which they were used by Joseph and Oliver, makes it **very improbable that there are now or ever were any other Abraham or Joseph scrolls** in the Joseph Smith Egyptian collection.

If we had some of the missing fragments of these documents there is every reason to believe that they would contain more of the same material as that on the present fragments: **spells and formulas to protect the deceased** and insure his or her continuation in the future state. . . .

As a caution, if the hope of acquiring an Egyptian text of Abraham is perpetuated as a major possibility, the perpetrators may be guilty of leaving future generations of Latter-day Saints with the same vulnerability that **has resulted in many spiritual casualties in this generation**. It is to the end that such casualties be diminished that I have undertaken this study. (*Ibid.*, pages 86-88)

The suggestion that Joseph Smith may have obtained the Book of Abraham by way of direct revelation and not from the papyrus is now held by a number of prominent Mormon scholars. The problem with this attempt to escape the serious implications of the evidence furnished by the papyri is that it flies in the face of everything Joseph Smith ever wrote or allowed to be published about the subject. In the *History of the Church*, Smith made it clear that he had the very writings of Abraham and Joseph in his possession. He even claimed that he received this material through translating the hieroglyphs:

Soon after this, some of the Saints at Kirtland purchased the mummies and papyrus . . . **I commenced the translation** of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the **writings of Abraham**, another the **writings of Joseph of Egypt** . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 236)

Joseph Smith not only said that he was going to translate the records, but he also maintained he produced a "correct translation" of the documents:

The **record of Abraham and Joseph**, found with the mummies [*sic*] is beautifully written . . . I have given a brief history of the manner in which the writings of the fathers, **Abraham and Joseph**, have been preserved, and how I came in possession of the same—a **correct translation** of which I shall give in its proper place. (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, pages 348, 350-51)

In his *History*, Joseph Smith indicated that in 1835 he spent a good deal of time working on his translation of the Egyptian papyri:

The **remainder of this month**, I was **continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham**, and arranging a **grammar** of the **Egyptian language** as practiced by the ancients. (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 238)

October 1.—This afternoon **I labored on the Egyptian alphabet** . . . during the research, the principles of astronomy as understood by Father Abraham and the ancients unfolded to our understanding, the particulars of which will appear hereafter. (*Ibid.*, page 286)

Tuesday, [Nov.] 24.—. . . In the afternoon we **translated some of the Egyptian records** . . .

Thursday, 26.—Spent the day **in translating Egyptian characters from the papyrus** . . . (*Ibid.*, page 320)

At the beginning of the handwritten manuscript of the Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith asserted that it was a "**Translation of the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus** and found in the catacombs of Egypt" (see photograph of the first page of the manuscript in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 312).

The introduction to the Book of Abraham still maintains that it was "**Translated From The Papyrus, By Joseph Smith**" (*Pearl of Great Price*, The Book of Abraham, Introduction).

In spite of Joseph Smith's many statements that he **translated** the Book of Abraham from the Egyptian language, Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley made this astounding assertion: "Joseph Smith **never pretended to understand Egyptian**, nor that the Book of Abraham was a work of his scholarship . . ." (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1968, page 176). In the same article Nibley said that he had "never spent so much as five minutes with the Egyptian Grammar"—i.e., Joseph Smith's *Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*.

A PAGAN BOOK?

The attempt by Mormon scholars to escape Smith's own statements that he translated the Book of Abraham from the papyrus appears to be a flight from reality. It is clear that they realize there is no way to defend Smith's work as a translator of Egyptian writing. Consequently, they are forced to resort to some kind of a theory that allows Smith to be a prophet even though his translation does not coincide with what is found on the papyrus. The idea that there was another papyrus scroll which Joseph Smith never had in his possession and that God revealed the text of that papyrus to Smith by revelation seems to stretch one's credulity beyond the breaking point.

Even if a person could accept this theory, it raises another insurmountable problem: why would God allow his prophet to use three pagan documents (the facsimiles) to illustrate his Book of Abraham? The facsimiles are filled with pictures of and praises to these heathen gods. For example, Mormon scholar

Michael Rhodes has translated Facsimile No. 2 and admits that the text “seems to be an address to **Osiris, the god of the Dead**, on behalf of the deceased . . .” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1977, page 274). On page 270 of the same article, Rhodes acknowledges that the same facsimile has a drawing of the “Hawk-headed Re”—the Egyptian sun god. Numerous other gods and pagan scenes are shown on the facsimiles. Rhodes himself admits that there is a “strange assortment of gods, animals, and mixtures of both” on Facsimile No. 2 (*Ibid.*, page 273). To have such an array of pagan gods and activities in a book purporting to have been written by Abraham appears to be in direct contradiction to the first commandment:

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20: 2-3)

Charles Larson makes some interesting observations concerning this matter in his new book:

Quite early in the game Dr. Nibley had given the impression that he felt that Mormon people ought to be willing to accept any association that could be found—even to pagan Egyptian mythology if need be—so long as it left open possibilities.

However, Nibley's approach in this regard is certainly in sharp conflict with the Bible, one of the four LDS standard works. Throughout the Old Testament it is abundantly clear that God took great pains to dissuade the children of Israel from any contact with the false gods and idolatrous practices of their pagan neighbors. . . . God specifically admonished his people to repudiate and completely forsake the gods of Egypt, to whom they had been exposed during their years of captivity there (Joshua 24:14). The Old Testament records that every time the children of Israel fell into pagan idolatry, they experienced God's chastening (Judges 2:2, 3, 11-15).

The New Testament likewise teaches the same principle that God does not use pagan or ungodly vessels to bear His truth. . . .

Since the Joseph Smith Papyri have been identified with absolute certainty as prayers to pagan Egyptian gods that, by biblical definition are ripe with occultism, it is inconceivable, given the holy character of God, that He would associate Himself or His revelation in any way with these pagan religious documents. This fact alone is ample grounds for totally rejecting the Book of Abraham as a revelation from the one True and Living God. (By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus, pages 119-120)

John Gee argues that the Book of Breathings “is addressed to no Egyptian gods; rather, it is addressed to a human individual and reminds him of promises made to him and things he has experienced” (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, page 100). While this diversionary tactic may be technically correct, those who take the time to read the text will find that the deceased is promised help from Re (the sun god), Uto (the cobra goddess), Nekhbet (the vulture goddess), Geb (the earth god), Shu (the god of air), and other gods and goddesses. (See Klaus Baer's translation in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1968, pages 116-126.) As noted earlier, we found at least fifteen pagan gods and goddesses mentioned on this papyrus!

Moreover, we have shown that the Mormon scholar Michael Rhodes has translated Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham and acknowledges that the text “seems to be an address to **Osiris, the god of the Dead**, on behalf of the deceased . . .” In addition, the rest of the Joseph Smith Papyri contains prayers to pagan deities.

We have to agree with Charles Larson's statement on page 166 of his book: “. . . It is surely inconceivable that the God of the

Bible would compromise his exclusivity as the one, true God by co-mingling His revelation with the idolatrous pagan teachings and rites of Egypt as expressed in the Joseph Smith Papyri.”

RELIGIOUS PORNOGRAPHY?

Figure 7 of Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham has caused some embarrassment to Mormon officials. In fact, it was considered so “explicit” that it was falsified in some printings of the *Pearl of Great Price*. In 1981, however, it was restored to match the original woodcut prepared under Joseph Smith's direction. (In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 341-343, 369-D, we discuss this pornographic drawing in detail and give photographic evidence of the falsification.) Joseph Smith stated that “Fig. 7. Represents **God sitting upon his throne**, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove.” It is actually an extremely crude representation of the pagan fertility god Min!

We have previously spoken of a letter written to Michael Rhodes by a member of the LDS Church who was troubled with regard to the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. In this letter, dated June 30, 1988, we find the following: “. . . how do you account for the Explanation of the Facsimiles? . . . Figure 7 of Facsimile 2 is described by Joseph as being Heavenly Father (with an erection?), whereas it is really the Egyptian god Min.”

Michael Rhodes did not mention the problem with regard to Fig. 7 in his response. However, in his article published in *BYU Studies* in 1977, he gave a very honest explanation of this part of Facsimile No. 2:

7. A seated **ithyphallic god** with a hawk's tail, holding aloft the divine flail. . . . The seated god is clearly a form of Min, the god of the regenerative, procreative forces of nature, perhaps combined with Horus as the hawk's tail would seem to indicate. . . . The procreative forces, receiving unusual accentuation throughout the representation, may stand for many divine generative powers, not least of which might be conjoined with the blessings of the priesthood in one's posterity eternally. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1977, page 273)

The Mormon writer Ian Barber responded to our work with regard to the god Min. He tried to defend the Book of Abraham but had to admit that Fac. 2, Fig. 7, shows an “ithyphallic” god:

The seated god Min in Figure 7 . . . is an ithyphallic deity. The Tanners call this “a pornographic representation,” and remark that it is “hard to believe that Abraham would draw an obscene picture of God.” . . . For the Egyptians, the ritual portrayal of the phallus was not understood to be obscene, but rather symbolic of the divine, regenerative powers, and it was even respectfully mummified on occasion. The Tanners are correct in implying that such an emphasis would be inappropriate in our contemporary Western culture, and that **the explicit portrayal offended Mormon sensibilities is evidenced by the fact that the phallus has been removed from several printings of the Pearl of Great Price . . .** (*What Mormonism Isn't*, page F-5)

In his book, *Abraham in Egypt*, Dr. Hugh Nibley acknowledges that Min was an Egyptian sex god who indulged in promiscuity and incest with his family and even his own mother:

As the supreme sex symbol of gods and men, **Min behaves with shocking promiscuity**. “The Egyptians,” wrote Plutarch, “are accustomed to call Horus ‘Min’ meaning visible” referring to the symbol of reproduction publicly

paraded at his festival. . . . The Greeks identified him with the lustful Pan . . . His sacred plants were aphrodisiacal . . . and he is everywhere represented as **indulging in incestuous relationships with those of his immediate family** . . . The rites of Min were secret, and the Chief Priest was “the Director of the Mysteries of the god in his character of Kamutef,” literally the **Bull of His Mother** . . . His special bull titles always denote **his too-intimate relationship with his mother** . . . For he is the divine beast, the irrepressible rampart bull ready for anything. In this regard he is the double of Seth, the two occupying prehistoric shrines directly opposite each other . . . Their outstanding characteristic, as Te Velde describes it, is their insistence on going “beyond the bounds” of discretion and morality, **completely unrestrained in their appetites and passions** . . .

The whip that the Min-images hold with upraised arm is always viewed as a fertility symbol . . . some Egyptologists have maintained that it signifies that Min took advantage of his mother **by brute force**, seizing the matriarchal rule of the land **by violence and incest** . . . What suggested that was his commonest epithet, Ka-mut-ef, “**Bull of his Mother**,” the fide that the youthful successor to the throne went by at the coronation . . . (*Abraham in Egypt*, 1981, pages 210-211)

That Joseph Smith would identify this promiscuous god who engaged in incest with his own mother as “God sitting upon his throne” shows a complete lack of inspiration.

Unfortunately for Mormon apologists trying to save the Book of Abraham, the problem with regard to the ithyphallic-god Min spills over onto Facsimile No. 1. As we have shown, Dr. Nibley has pointed out that the expression “Bull of his Mother” is applied to the god Min. When the Egyptologist Klaus Baer translated the original papyrus from which Fac. No. 1 was taken, he found these words: “**Min Bull-of-his-Mother**” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1968, page 116).

The problem may even go much deeper Egyptologist Richard A. Parker pointed out that the portion of the original papyrus which was missing when the Mormons obtained it was incorrectly restored by Joseph Smith. According to Professor Parker, the papyrus really contained a sexual scene before the papyrus was damaged:

This is the well-known scene from the Osiris mysteries, with Anubis, the jackal-headed god, on the left ministering to the dead Osiris on the bier. The pencilled (?) restoration is incorrect. Anubis should be jackal-headed. The left arm of Osiris is in reality lying at his side under him. The apparent upper hand is part of the wing of a second bird which is hovering over the erect phallus of Osiris (now broken away). The second bird is Isis and she is magically impregnated by the dead Osiris and then later gives birth to Horus . . . (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1968, page 86)

The Egyptologist Klaus Baer agreed with Professor Parker: “He [Osiris] was almost certainly represented as ithyphallic, ready to beget Horus, as in many of the scenes at Dendera” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1968, page 119). Since Facsimile No. 2 shows the ithyphallic god Min, it seems possible that a sexual scene would be shown on Facsimile No. 1. Dr. Hugh Nibley argues against this interpretation, but we have shown that his reasoning is fallacious (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 350). Nibley acknowledges, however, that there are “a number of procreation scenes in which the mummy is begetting his divine successor or reincarnation” (*Improvement Era*, October 1968, page 78).

In his book, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus*, page 102, Charles Larson restores the scene according to the interpretation

given by Egyptologists. Below his restoration, he comments as follows: “Isis, meanwhile, has taken the form of a falcon and hovers over the groin of Osiris who holds his phallus (hence this is known as an **ithyphallic** drawing) in anticipation of the procreative act which will make Isis pregnant with their son Horus.”

John Gee argues that the reconstructed drawing appearing in Charles Larson’s book makes no sense: “Not only is his restoration of Joseph Smith Papyrus I obscene, it is impossible . . . the reconstruction is too crude to have been done by a good artist” (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, pages 101-102). While Mr. Gee labels Larson’s reconstruction as “**obscene**” and “**impossible**,” he neglects to mention the fact that it was based on the statements of two noted Egyptologists, Klaus Baer and Richard A. Parker. (It is interesting to note that when Professor Parker translated the important portion of the Book of Breathing, Dr. Hugh Nibley publicly stated that he was “the best [Egyptologist] in America for this particular period and style of writing.”)

As to Gee’s statement that the drawing in Larson’s book is obscene, most Christians would feel that it is more obscene, even blasphemous, to have a drawing of the ithyphallic god Min identified in the Book of Abraham as “God sitting upon his throne” (see Facsimile No. 2, Figure 7).

Instead of attacking Larson’s restoration, John Gee should be discussing the false restorations in the facsimiles found in the Book of Abraham. The fact that Joseph Smith instructed Reuben Hedlock to make incorrect restorations in the woodcuts of the Book of Abraham facsimiles is acknowledged by noted Mormon scholars. James R. Harris, who felt that Joseph Smith sometimes operated under the power of inspiration, admitted that this was not always the case: “When he was **not inspired**, and consequently operated on his own wisdom, **Joseph Smith did not demonstrate an ability to interpret or to make appropriate restorations** of damaged portions of the documents” (*The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham, A Study of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, page 4).

We have already quoted Michael Rhodes concerning the “obvious modifications” in Facsimile No. 1. Edward H. Ashment also frankly discussed Joseph Smith’s false restorations:

It can be clearly ascertained that portions of Reuben Hedlock’s Facsimiles 1 and 2 were conjecturally restored. Moreover, according to the diary entry for Friday, March 4, 1842, in the *History of the Church*, it is apparent that the prophet was connected with their production. . . . he probably was **not as concerned with having historically accurate restorations** of Facsimiles 1 and 2 as he was with having complete pictures to publish in the *Times and Seasons*. Neither he nor Reuben Hedlock would have known that a standing human body would have a dog’s head (Facsimile 1, Fig. 3), nor that a bird would have a human head (Facsimile 1, Fig. 1). . . . It seems that they completed each damaged section with what was to them logical or important for whatever reason: a man’s head on a man’s body . . . a bird’s head on a bird’s body . . . (*Sunstone*, December 1979, page 44)

The evidence against the Book of Abraham is absolutely devastating. That Mormons would continue to endorse the Book of Abraham in the face of this evidence is almost beyond belief. Charles M. Larson made this comment concerning the sad state of affairs which now exists:

Sometime during the mid-1850s . . . an LDS Apostle named Orson Pratt confidently laid a dramatic challenge before the world: “. . . convince of our errors of doctrine, if we have any,

by reason, by logical arguments, or by the Word of God, and we will be ever grateful for the information, and you ever will have the pleasing reflection that you have been instruments in the hands of God of redeeming your fellow beings from the darkness which you may see enveloping their minds.”

Orson Pratt was no doubt confident that a successful case against the claims of Mormonism would never be presented because one simply did not exist. Over a century-and-a-half of close scrutiny, though, has proven the opposite to be the case. It is this fact which probably best explains why the contemporary LDS Church has shifted from the bold, confrontational stance of Pratt’s day, to one of cautioning members to “rely on faith and not on historical fact”. . . The message coming from LDS spokesmen today appears to be more and more one of accommodation: If facts fail to justify faith (what one **wishes** to believe), **then faith should overrule facts**. This sort of thinking is evasive, and must be set aside if any real reckoning with the facts is to take place.

But going back to Pratt, the challenge he made is a valid one, and the tendency of contemporary LDS figures to rationalize away problems instead of confronting them only underlines the fact that serious problems do exist. If error or falsehood within a religious system exists, it **should** be exposed, and using reason and the Word of God to do so makes a great deal of sense. Exposing error is the **right** thing to do, as only good can be the ultimate result of people learning the truth.

We are not only justified, then, in examining the evidences challenging the truth of the Book of Abraham which God has graciously allowed to come forth, we are firmly obligated to do so. And it is quite possible that the case against the Book of Abraham is the strongest evidence ever provided to test the truthfulness of Joseph Smith’s claims. . . .

One by one, virtually every Mormon belief about the Book of Abraham once considered essential to its support and regarded as faith promoting, has been shattered by the facts.

Not one trace of reliable evidence has appeared that would support the LDS view of the Book of Abraham as an authentic scripture, while an enormous amount of evidence is available to show that it is a man-made production of the nineteenth century, created by Joseph Smith to support his claim among his people to be a “prophet, seer, and revelator”. . . When an individual fails to respond openly and honestly to such a problem it only passes the problem—and the pain of dealing with it—to someone else, multiplying ignorance and hurt in the process. . . .

So much potential pain to loved ones and future generations could be avoided! How? By placing truth ahead of convenience, by being honest with ourselves and with others.

The question of meeting challenges to our faith really does matter, because truth matters. The Bible gives us the promise that “the truth shall make you free” (John 8: 32)—and that includes being free from delusion. (*By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus*, pages 169, 171, 175, 181)

We highly recommend Charles Larson’s new book. We feel that he has done a very good job of presenting the case against the Book of Abraham. He has also examined and refuted some of the theories Mormon scholars have brought forth in their attempts to save Joseph Smith’s work. Besides taking a very close look at mistakes made by Dr. Hugh Nibley, he also deals with misrepresentations and errors in the book written by Robert and Rosemary Brown. This is the first full-size book devoted almost entirely to presenting the evidence against the Book of Abraham. In addition, it contains beautiful color photographs of nine pieces of the Joseph Smith Papyri. *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look At The Joseph Smith Papyri* is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry. ■

ROPER ATTACKS

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

In a new publication by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.), the Mormon scholar Matthew Roper shows deep concern over the effect our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* has had upon the public:

The first edition of *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* was published by the Tanners in 1963 under the title, *Mormonism: A Study of Mormon History and Doctrine*. Since that time the Tanners’ *Magnum opus* has been published in no less than five editions, the most recent being in 1987. In 1980, in an attempt to facilitate wider distribution of their work, they published a condensed version [*The Changing World of Mormonism*] through Moody Press. Since their debut as vocal anti-Mormons in the early 1960s, the Tanners have produced and distributed numerous other works attacking various aspects of Mormon history, scripture, and doctrine.

There are **several reasons why this book merits review**. First, the Tanners are considered by their fellow critics to be among the foremost authorities on Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. Their arguments are central to most anti-Mormon attacks on the Book of Mormon today. One recent critic describes *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* as “**the heavyweight of all books on Mormonism.**” Even some of the more sophisticated Book of Mormon critics will often repeat methodological errors exemplified in the Tanners’ work. . . . This review will focus only on the Tanners’ criticisms of the Book of Mormon in chapters five and six of *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* (pp. 50-125). (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992, pages 169-170)

THIRTY YEARS OF SILENCE

The reader will notice that in the quotation above Matthew Roper said the book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* “**merits review.**” This is in sharp contrast with what church officials have said in the past. A spokesman for the church’s Deseret Bookstore wrote: “We **do not** have a specific response to the Tanner book. Perhaps it **does not deserve the dignity of a response**” (Letter written January 19, 1977). A man who talked to Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards claimed that Richards “told me to quit studying materials put out by the Tanner’s. . . . I told him “surely some day there will be an answer to these questions.” He told me **there never would be an answer and I should stop my inquiries.**”

There was an anonymous rebuttal to *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* printed in 1977 (see our response in *Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian*), but the church itself has never put forth an official response. Since we began publishing material on Mormonism in 1959, we have waited in vain for the church itself to make a response to our work. Although a large number of people have left the Mormon Church because of our publications and many others have been very concerned because their church has not published a rebuttal, Mormon leaders seem to feel that their best policy is silence.

TRIPPING AT THE FIRST HURDLE

While *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* contains over 600 pages of material, Matthew Roper’s response deals with only

pages “50-125.” Unfortunately for Mr. Roper, he stumbles and comes crashing to the ground on the very first hurdle (page 50). He boldly asserts that we have suppressed part of a statement by Brigham Young to “mislead” our readers:

The Tanners state, “The Mormon Church claims that the witnesses to the Book of Mormon never denied their testimony. There are, however, . . . statements in Mormon publications which would seem to indicate that the witnesses had some doubts” (page 50). They then quote a statement by Brigham Young: “Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel.” Unfortunately **the Tanners have left out the rest of the statement, giving the false impression that Brigham Young had reference to the three or eight witnesses.** The full quote reads as follows:

“Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel. **One of the Quorum of the Twelve**—a young man full of faith and good works, prayed, and the vision of his mind was opened, and the angel of God came and laid the plates before him, and he saw the angel, and conversed with him as he would with one of his friends; but after all this, he was left to doubt, and plunged into apostasy, and has continued to contend against this work. There are hundreds in a similar condition.”

The Tanners would mislead their readers by using this quotation as evidence against the Book of Mormon witnesses. But none of the eleven were ever members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Brigham Young was referring to one of several other early Mormons who had similar experiences, but **not to one of the official Book of Mormon** witnesses as the Tanners clearly imply. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992, pages 171-172)

Matthew Roper’s accusation concerning this quotation by Brigham Young raises a serious question with regard to the superficiality of his review. If Mr. Roper had examined the very next page (page 51), he would have found a photographic copy of not only the quotation but also the entire page of Brigham Young’s sermon! In the caption below the reproduction we stated: “A Photograph of the *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, page 164. In this sermon Brigham Young claims that some of the witnesses were left to disbelieve that they had seen an angel.”

Now, this certainly raises a question with regard to Matthew Roper’s claim that we were trying to “mislead” our readers. Why would we include a photograph of the document if we were trying to deceive people?

Even if we had not included the photograph of Brigham Young’s statement, there would be no reason for Roper to attack us in the way he did. We, in fact, fail to see how we have misused the quote.

A careful reading of Brigham Young’s statement reveals that he was referring to different cases of apostasy. First he spoke of some of the Book of Mormon witnesses having doubt and disbelief concerning the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated and also regarding the angel who showed them the plates. President Young then claimed that a member of the “Quorum of the Twelve” also had an experience in which an “angel of God came and laid the plates before him,” but he later “was left to doubt, and plunged into apostasy.” Young then concludes with the statement that “hundreds” had likewise fallen into a state of unbelief.

The reader will notice that Brigham Young indicated there was more than one witness of the Book of Mormon who had

grave reservations about the book. Young, in fact, stated that “**Some of the witnesses** . . . were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that **they** had ever seen an angel.” We know, therefore, that President Young felt that two or more of the witnesses had fallen into disbelief at some point in their lives.

It would appear that Mr. Roper would like his readers to believe that none of the original witnesses ever had seasons of doubt with regard to the Book of Mormon. He seems to be trying to redefine Brigham Young’s statement about “some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon” so that it does not refer to any of the original eleven witnesses whose names appear in the book. While there may be some exceptions to the rule, we believe that almost all Mormons would think of these eleven men when they read Brigham Young’s words, “the witnesses of the Book of Mormon.” (There are actually two separate statements by the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. The first contains the “Testimony of Three Witnesses”—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris. These men claim that an angel of God showed the plates to them. The second statement is by eight men who said they saw the plates, although they did not claim that an angel showed the plates to them.)

It is interesting to note that on April 6, 1855, Brigham Young gave another sermon in which he stated that “most of **the witnesses of the Book of Mormon** have died . . .” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, page 249). The reader will notice that President Young used exactly the same words as he did in the quotation cited in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* It is obvious that he was referring to the eleven men whose names appear in the Book of Mormon because he said that most of these witnesses were dead. Research shows that Brigham Young was correct about this matter; by 1855 only four of the eleven witnesses were still alive. Just above the portion we cited, Young indicated that “Martin Harris” was probably still alive, but “Oliver Cowdery has gone to his long home . . .” Harris and Cowdery, of course, were among the witnesses whose names appear in the Book of Mormon.

Although none of the witnesses ever gave a written statement repudiating the Book of Mormon, some of them did seem to have seasons of skepticism about the authenticity of that work. In our book, *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 2, page 16, we give photographic proof that after Oliver Cowdery (one of the three witnesses) was excommunicated from the Mormon Church, he joined the Methodist Church. Mormon writer Richard Anderson admits that Cowdery was affiliated with the Methodists, but he claims that Cowdery did not deny his testimony: “The cessation of his activity in the Church meant a **suspension of his role as a witness of the Book of Mormon.** Not that his conviction ceased, but he discontinued public testimony . . . he logically affiliated himself with a Christian congregation for a time, the **Methodist Protestant Church** at Tiffin, Ohio” (*Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 1981, page 57).

In 1885, G. J. Keen, who was a member of the Methodist Church which Cowdery joined, gave an affidavit in which he stated:

We . . . submitted his name to the church, and he was unanimously admitted a member thereof.

At that time he arose and addressed the audience present, admitted his error and implored forgiveness, and **said he was sorry and ashamed of his connection with Mormonism.**

He continued his membership while he resided in Tiffin, and became **superintendent of the Sabbath School**, and lived an exemplary life while he resided with us. (Affidavit quoted in *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, by Charles A. Shook, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1914, pages 58-59)

On July 15, 1841, the Mormon Church's official publication, *Times and Seasons*, printed a poem which made it clear that the Mormons believed that Oliver Cowdery had denied his testimony to the Book of Mormon. The following appeared in the poem:

Amazed with wonder! I look round
To see most people of our day,
Reject the glorious gospel sound,
Because the simple turn away.

.....
Or prove that Christ was not the Lord
Because that Peter cursed and swore?

**Or Book of Mormon not his word
Because denied, by Oliver?**

(*Times and Seasons*, vol. 2, page 492)

Martin Harris, who was also one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, was excommunicated from the church. Even the noted Mormon apologist Richard Anderson had to admit that his life showed "religious instability." Professor Anderson also revealed the following:

The foregoing tendencies explain the **spiritual wanderlust** that afflicted the solitary witness at Kirtland. In this period of his life he **changed his religious position eight times**, including a **rebaptism** by a Nauvoo missionary in 1842. Every affiliation of Martin Harris was with **some Mormon group**, except when he was affiliated with **the Shaker belief** . . . (*Improvement Era*, March 1969, page 63)

Martin Harris' involvement with the Shakers raises some serious doubts regarding his belief in the Book of Mormon. We feel that a believer in the Book of Mormon could not accept these revelations without repudiating the teachings of Joseph Smith. The Shakers, for example, felt that "**Christ** has made his second appearance on earth, **in a chosen female** known by the name of Ann Lee, and acknowledged by us as **our blessed Mother** in the work of redemption" (*Sacred Roll and Book*, page 358).

The Shakers, of course, rejected the Book of Mormon and all of the revelations received by Joseph Smith. They had their own book which they claimed came from heaven. It was entitled, *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth*. More than sixty individuals gave testimony to the "Sacred Roll and Book." Although not all of them mention angels appearing, some of them tell of many angels visiting them—one woman told of eight different visions. On page 304 of this book we find the testimony of eight witnesses: "We, the undersigned, hereby testify, that we saw **the holy Angel** standing upon the house-top, as mentioned in the foregoing declaration, holding the Roll and Book."

Joseph Smith only had three witness who claimed to see an angel. The Shakers, however, had a large number of witnesses who claimed they saw angels and the book. There are over a hundred pages of testimony from "Living Witnesses."

The evidence clearly shows that Martin Harris accepted the Shaker's "Sacred Roll and Book" as a divine revelation. Clark Braden made this revealing statement about this matter:

Harris declared **repeatedly** that he had **as much evidence for a Shaker book** he had as **for the Book of Mormon**. (*The Braden and Kelly Debate*, page 173)

There is a Mormon source which indicates that Martin Harris even claimed to have a greater testimony to the Shakers than to the Book of Mormon. In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, Wayne Cutler Gunnell stated that on December 31, 1844, "Phineas H. Young [Brigham Young's brother] and other leaders of the Kirtland organization" wrote

a letter to Brigham Young in which they stated:

There are in this place all kinds of teaching; **Martin Harris is a firm believer in Shakerism**, says his **testimony is greater than it was of the Book of Mormon**. ("Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon," 1955, page 52)

The fact that Martin Harris would even join with such a group shows that he was unstable and easily influenced by charismatic leaders. We feel, therefore, that his testimony that the Book of Mormon was of divine origin cannot be relied upon. How can we put our trust in a man who was constantly following after strange movements like the Shakers and the Strangites?

David Whitmer, the last member of the group known as the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, was also excommunicated from the Mormon Church and never returned. While we know of no evidence that he repudiated the Book of Mormon, he rejected the *Doctrine and Covenants*, believed that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet and claimed that God himself told him that he should leave the Mormon Church:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, **God spake to me again by his own voice** from the heavens, and told me to "**separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints**, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them." (*An Address to all Believers in Christ*, 1887, page 27)

Mormons cannot accept this testimony by their own witness without destroying faith in Joseph Smith. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 57, we present evidence showing that David Whitmer gave a revelation from the Lord which strongly condemned Mormonism.

At any rate, Mr. Roper has also accused us of using "underhanded" tactics when citing from Richard Anderson's work. In a response we are preparing we will demonstrate that this is not the case. Roper has, in fact, made the same type of error as he did when he accused us of suppressing part of Brigham Young's quotation. If he had carefully read all of Chapter 5 of our book, he would not have fallen into this serious error. The rebuttal we are now working on will deal with two different attacks on our work by Matthew Roper and also articles by John A. Tvedtnes and L. Ara Norwood.

Since this is the first time that F.A.R.M.S. has attempted to respond to *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we felt that it would be an excellent time to have a sale on this book. When our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, was reviewed by F.A.R.M.S., we had a similar type of sale to get the book "into the hands of as many people as possible." Mormon apologist Daniel C. Peterson, however, responded as follows: "But maybe the real idea was to make a sale on the old car **before the wheels and doors fall off** and the customer discovered **what a lemon he was looking at**" (*Review of Books*, 1992, Introduction, page lxxv). In a footnote on the page before, Peterson said that he accepted Roper's attack against *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* because he "thought it made a number of important points, and because most contemporary anti-Mormon writers depend heavily upon the Tanners. **Attending to the roots** seemed an efficient way of **dealing with the brunches**."

Despite the ridicule we may receive from Daniel Peterson, we sincerely believe that *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* will continue to provide very good transportation for those who want to tour the hidden sites of Mormonism and learn the real truth about the church. While many church members believe the F.A.R.M.S. vehicle gives a good tour of these areas, it actually skirts around some very important areas so that it can stay on the smoother roads of Mormonism. ■

SATANIC MURDERS

Shortly after finishing the printing of our new book, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, some new information with regard to Satanism came to light. The first development was the confession of a satanic human sacrifice by two women in Brazil. The following appeared in a newspaper published in Arizona on July 11, 1992:

RIO DE JANEIRO—A Brazilian woman and her daughter have **confessed to killing a 7-year-old boy as a sacrifice to the devil in a bloody ritual** to help save their family's fortunes, police said Friday. The women and **five other alleged devil worshipers** strangled Evandro Ramos Caetano, **mutilated his body and drained his blood to offer on an altar to Satan**, said Jose Maria Correa, civil police head in Parana state, where the killing occurred.

Police found the boy's rotting body in a forest near Guaratuba . . . "It was a black-magic ritual involving the number 7," Correa said. . . . He was found with his chest slit open. . . . It was terrible, indescribable.

In a taped confession to military police, Celina and Beatriz Abage, wife and daughter of Guaratuba Mayor Aldo Abage, said they kidnapped the boy by luring him with candy. In the tape, a transcript of which was printed in the *Jornal do Brasil* . . . Beatriz Abage said the boy was sacrificed "to bring more fortune, justice to my family." Seven alleged participants in the ritual are under arrest, including Celina and Beatriz Abage, and a man police believe was the leader, Osvaldo Marceneiro, known as The Warlock.

The mayor, who has not been directly implicated in the case, has fled, leaving municipal offices in chaos. Angry residents of Guaratuba stoned his house. Correa said police were investigating the disappearance of another child, named Leandro . . . (*The Arizona Republic*, July 11, 1992)

In our book, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, we reported that Glenn Pace, the Mormon General Authority who wrote the memo which exposed satanic ritual abuse in the church, interviewed some people in the city of Rupert, Idaho, a city which is located about forty miles from the Utah border. In November, 1989, the remains of a baby were found in a metal drum at a landfill near the city. On October 23, 1990, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported that "No deed was fouler than that perpetrated on Baby X . . . Before she was burned, Baby X . . . had been disemboweled and mutilated." Sometime later a boy who had lived near the landfill where Baby X was found, told authorities that he had witnessed satanic ceremonies in which babies were mutilated and burned. The boy also maintained that his own family was involved with a group of Satanists who participated in the sacrifices and that he also had been ritually abused (see his drawings in *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*).

People who live in the area believe that there is a satanic cult that functions in both southern Idaho and northern Utah. It is reported that this group has two High Priests. One, it is claimed, lives in a rural area of Bannock County, Idaho, and goes by the cult name "*Rosheeba-Son of Oliver*." The other leader lives in Logan, Utah, and is known as "*The Raven*."

In June, 1992, an inconceivably gruesome murder occurred in Burley, Idaho, a city about seven miles from Rupert. Christopher Clark stated that the body of Benito Ruiz Carabeo "was found June 24, carefully dismembered and placed in five triple-strength garbage bags . . ." (*South Idaho Press*, July 28, 1992). An investigation showed that the body had been cut into fourteen pieces. Two brothers, Luis and Anastacio Rodriguez, are wanted for questioning, but it is feared that they have fled to Mexico. While some feel that this is just another brutal murder, others believe that it is related to the occult. On July 28, 1992,

Christopher Clark reported: "From the condition of the body and the death's correlation to an occult calendar date, authorities have not ruled out a cult motive for the murder" (*Ibid.*).

Sometime before the murder, a woman from Burley came forth seeking protection. She claimed that she had been a member of a satanic cult which mutilated and killed victims. She had come to fear, however, that she might become the next victim of the cult and allowed a video tape to be made of her confession. The video tape was made in the presence of Christopher Clark, Noel Croft and Ralph Barranger. Paul Murphy, of KTVX (Channel 4) in Salt Lake City, was able to gain access to the video and show portions on the evening news on August 14, 1992. The woman maintained that cult members had conspired to commit the murder two years before the crime actually took place: ". . . it was a contract that we'd written **in our own blood** and we'd signed **in our own blood** that in two years . . . we would do . . . this big sacrifice." Paul Murphy commented: "Weeks before the murder, an alleged former cult member did leave a message on video tape. She predicted the date and place of a satanic human sacrifice."

As noted above, the man was killed either on or very close to "an occultic calendar date," the Summer Solstice, which occurs on June 21 or 22. Satanists consider the Summer Solstice as a very important Sabbat. It would be an ideal time for a sacrifice. When he was interviewed by Paul Murphy, Rupert's coroner and mortician, Arvin Hansen, pointed out that the body "was cut into different sections . . . it was cut into different types of cuts like a meat cutter would cut them." It was also revealed that part of Carabeo's body had been skinned. In this regard it is interesting to note that there have been charges that Satanists who perform human sacrifices sometimes skin their victims. There was, in fact, speculation that Baby X "may have been skinned before she was burned" (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 23, 1990). The woman who predicted that someone would be sacrificed in the area of Burley seemed to be familiar with the practice of skinning the victims. In addition, we have been informed she told of drinking the blood of sacrificial victims. According to Christopher Clark, the same woman told of many human sacrifices being performed by this satanic cult—possibly as many as thirty. She also reported that many of the victims came from the transient population in the Salt Lake City area.

We, of course, do not know for certain that her story is true, but even the Cassia County Sheriff Billy Crystal had to admit that her prediction of a ritual murder at the time of the Summer Solstice was rather remarkable. Sheriff Crystal also acknowledged to Paul Murphy that the Burley case has some resemblance to the ritual sacrifice of fifteen people near Matamoros, Mexico. Murphy noted that Carabeo's spine had been cut out. This seemed to be a common practice at Matamoros. In *Sacrifice: A Father's Determination to Turn Evil into Good*, 1990, page 119, we find that "After death, Mark's body was mutilated. The spine was cut free so the sect could use it as a necklace. Before the men buried the victim, Constanzo ordered *El Dubi* to cut the legs off at the knee." The cult believed that necklaces made from the spine would bring good luck and therefore used them in their occultic ceremonies. On page 177 of the same book, we read that the removal of the spine was "a trademark found on bodies." The sheriff's statement regarding Matamoros was very interesting to us because we had previously written of a possible connection on pages 67-69 of our book on ritual abuse: "Some people in the Rupert area believe that there is a relationship between the Baby X case and what went on in the city of Matamoros, Mexico, in 1989. They claim, for example, that people from the area have been in Idaho's Minidoka county and suspect that they may be involved in smuggling drugs." It has even been suggested that there may have been a synthesis of Satanism and the bizarre practices of the Matamoros cult. ■

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