

Reliable Revelations?

In our three-volume work *The Case Against Mormonism*, we have presented a great deal of evidence which demonstrates that the Book of Abraham was a work of Joseph Smith's own imagination and that the anti-Negro doctrine contained in its pages must be abandoned.

Fawn M. Brodie has recently come out with a "Revised and Enlarged" edition of her book *No Man Knows My History*. In this new edition she makes these interesting comments concerning the Book of Abraham problem:

From the standpoint of the church which survived him, the Book of Abraham was the most unfortunate thing Joseph ever wrote. By outliving the Civil War, which forever banished slavery as an issue between Mormon and gentile, its racial doctrine preserved the discrimination that is the ugliest thesis in existing Mormon theology.

Moreover, the book laid Joseph open to the ridicule of future scholars, for his papyri were almost certain to be examined at some later date by experts in the Egyptian language. Unlike the golden plates, which had been whisked back into heaven, the mummies and papyri were kept exhibit in both Kirtland and Nauvoo. The actual papyri escaped scholarly examination for many years. So after Joseph's death they were sold . . . and were thought to have burned in the great Chicago fire. Such a disaster might have ended all chance of exposing Joseph's mistake had he not preserved three facsimiles of the papyri, which he published in 1842 with elaborate interpretations.

These interpretations were first challenged in 1860, . . . to examine the facsimiles agreed that they were ordinary funeral documents such as can be found on thousands of Egyptian graves. The discovery in 1967 that eleven fragments of the papyri had found their way to the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art led to fresh interpretations by scholars which confirmed the earlier appraisals. (*No Man Knows My History*, New York, 1971, pages 174-175)

On pages 422-425 of the same book, Mrs. Brodie states:

. . . when the eleven fragments were given to the Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, many of the devout thought confidently that they would prove to be scientific evidence of the divine claims of their prophet.

Translation of the fragments by Egyptologists John S. Wilson and Klaus Baer of the University of Chicago Oriental Institute and Richard A. Parker of Brown University, indicated, however, that some of the fragments were Book of the Dead scrolls . . . and that others were from the Egyptian Book of Breathings, . . .

A remarkable compilation of the documentation on the papyri appeared in 1968 in two issues of *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought*, a scholarly Mormon publication not subject to censorship by the church leadership. . . . Professor Hugh Nibley of the Brigham Young University wrote defensively: "So far everything that has appeared in print about the newly found papyri has been written either by hysterical opponents of everything Mormon or by people innocent of any bias in favor of Joseph Smith. . . . we have seen some of the papyri that were in Smith's possession but there is no evidence that we have seen them all, and it is apparent that only one small piece among them has any direct bearing on the Book of Abraham."

The controversy over the papyri was further heightened in 1968 by that acquisition and publication by Jerald Tanner of a filmed copy of Joseph Smith's "Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar." Formerly unknown save to Mormon archivists, which proved to be at least as damaging to Joseph Smith's claims as a translator as the translations of the papyri by the Egyptologists. Tanner, together with Grant Heward, in commenting on the specific explanations Joseph Smith gave for numerous Egyptian characters, pointed out that "The characters from fewer than four lines of the papyrus make up forty-nine verses of the Book of Abraham, containing more than two thousand words." Their study indicates that the Book of Abraham did in fact come from a portion of the papyri now under scrutiny by scholars, and that Professor Nibley's suggestion that the Book of Abraham was translated from papyri not yet found is without foundation.

What makes for an intolerable complication to the Book of Abraham controversy is the fact that several lines in the sacred book constitute the theological basis for the Mormon Church's long-standing discrimination against the Negro. . . .

From this "scriptural precedent" the Mormon Church over the years developed an elaborate Jim Crow system in regard to black converts. Though all white and Oriental males were granted the right to "hold the priesthood," this right was denied to all blacks. . . . the Mormon leadership now faces a dilemma of peculiar complexity. To heed the Egyptologists means repudiation of the Book of Abraham, which could make all of Joseph Smith's holy books suspect. To give the blacks the priesthood without a new revelation or "manifesto" also means implicit repudiation of the Book of Abraham. But to continue to deny blacks the full privileges or membership in the Church on the basis of a book that is manifestly suspect as history seems to an increasing number of Mormons an immoral process, alien to the ideas of the Declaration of Independence and to the fundamental injunction of Christianity about loving one's neighbor as oneself. . . .

If the Mormon Church does not modify its racist practices, it seems likely that its future converts in large part will continue to come, as they have been in recent years, from right-wing groups who are hostile to black people under any circumstances. If so, the alienation of the intellectuals from the Church will continue. . . . As a social organization the Church is a dynamo of inexhaustible energy. It remains to be seen if Mormon leadership now seriously impeded by its failure to retire before they become aged the men at the peak of the pyramid, can continue to direct this dynamo in the direction of social betterment and racial understanding. (*No Man Knows My History*, pages 422-425)

In an article entitled "What is 'The Book of Breathings'?" Dr. Hugh Nibley now frankly admits that the facsimiles for Joseph Smith's "Book of Abraham" were taken from the Book of Breathings papyrus. He admits that the Book of Breathings is an Egyptian funerary text, but he is still unwilling to admit that the Book of Abraham is spurious:

Upon their publication in 1967, the Joseph Smith Papyri Nos. X and XI were quickly and easily identified as pages from the Egyptian "Book of Breathings." . . . 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." . . . The Book of Breathings is the great time binder; it comes towards the end of Egyptian civilization and so wraps everything up, right from the beginning . . .

The lateness of the "Breathing" documents, instead of detracting from their value actually enhances it. For it not only gives them a chance to embrace the entire funerary literature of the past, but places them in that crucial moment of transition in which they are able to transmit much ancient Egyptian lore to early Jewish and Christian circles. . . .

Of particular interest to us is the close association of the Book of Breathing with the **Facsimiles** of the Book of Abraham. It can be easily shown by matching up the fibers of the papyri that 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 . . . Thus our "Sensen" Papyrus is closely bound to all three facsimiles by physical contact, putting us under moral obligation to search out possible relationships between the content of the four documents.

As a "packaging job" the Book of Breathings is a most remarkable performance, "an attempt to include all essential elements of belief in a future life in a work shorter and more simple than the Book of the Dead." . . .

The Book of Breathings is the end-product of a long process of abbreviating and epitomizing which was characteristically Egyptian . . . 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 153, 158-160, 162-164 and 166)

It would appear that Dr. Nibley still has no real answers to give his people and that the authenticity of the Book of Abraham has been disproven by the translations of the Egyptologists.

In our *Case Against Mormonism* we not only show that the Book of Abraham is spurious but also that the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century and that Joseph Smith's revelations have been changed. In a review of the first two volumes of this work Kenneth Kantzer, Dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, made these statements:

These books represent no ordinary polemic against Mormonism. This is **the definitive, fully-documented, utterly-devastating case** against the divine authority and truthfulness of the foundational documents upon which the Mormon religion is based. . . . It is difficult to see how the Mormon church can survive the devastating destruction of its foundations as presented in these volumes. (*Evangelical Beacon*, Minneapolis, Minn., vol. 42, no. 1, October 8, 1968, page 7)

Marvin S. Hill, who teaches history at Brigham Young University, seems to feel that the Church can survive almost any attack on its scriptures by appealing to the fact that it is led by revelation at the present time:

While Mormons venerate their sacred books, . . . the final word comes not from any scriptural passage but from the living oracles. The Saints hang more upon the words of their prophets than upon the canons of the written law. This is one reason it may make little difference to them if they are told that some of the divine books have been altered, or even that the accepted view of the origin of one of their books might have to be revised.

. . . Yesterday's mistakes and revisions seem insignificant when compared with the advantage of social stability which derives from waiting upon the word of the Lord. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1970, page 96)

In *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 3, we show that even though the Church claims to be led by revelation the evidence clearly shows that it is not. Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Mormon Church, testified as follows in the Reed Smoot Investigation:

Senator Dubois.— Have you received any revelations from God, which has been submitted by you and the apostles to the body of the church in their semiannual conference, which revelation had been sustained by that conference, through the upholding of their hands?

Mr. Smith.— Since when?

Senator Dubois.— Since you became President of the Church.

Mr. Smith.— **No, sir; none whatever.**

Senator Dubois.— Have you received any individual revelations yourself, since you became President of the Church under your own definition, even, of a revelation?

Mr. Smith.— **I cannot say that I have.**

Senator Dubois.— Can you say that you have not?

Mr. Smith.— No; I cannot say that I have not.

Senator Dubois.— Then you do not know whether you have received any such revelations as you have described or whether you have not?

Mr. Smith.— Well, I can say this: That if I live as I should in the line of my duties, **I am susceptible, I think, of the impressions of the Spirit** of the Lord upon my mind at any time, **just as any good Methodist** or any other good church member might be. And so far as that is concerned, I say yes; I have had impressions of the Spirit upon my mind very frequently but **they are not in the sense of revelations.** (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 1, page 483-484)

On page 99 of the same volume Joseph F. Smith stated: "Mr. Smith, **I have never pretended to nor do I profess to have received revelations.**" From this it is plain to see that just because a man is ordained a "Prophet, Seer, and Revelator," it does not necessarily mean that he is. If Joseph F. Smith was only as susceptible to the impressions of the Spirit of the Lord as "any good Methodist," then why should his word be trusted above that of a good Methodist?

Although the Mormon Church is supposed to be led by revelation the evidence of this revelation is very hard to find. No new revelations have been added to the *Doctrine and Covenants* since the Manifesto of 1890.

We are told that revelation is found in the Conferences of the Church, when the leaders of the Church speak under the inspiration of the Lord, but how can we know when they are speaking under the Spirit of the Lord? Obviously, much of what has been said at the conferences of the church down through the years was not spoken under the inspiration of the Lord.

Today the Mormon Church is faced with some very serious problems, and these problems are complicated by the fact that some of the Mormon leaders are very old. Wallace Turner made these statements:

In 1966, I attended the April conference in Salt Lake City and was able to watch the almost casual way this disposal of power is reaffirmed. President David O. McKay was then greatly enfeebled by age and a stroke. He sat in the top row of the tiers of seats for the General Authorities while his first counselor, Hugh B. Brown, spoke, explaining that President McKay was "presiding" while Brown was "conducting" the meeting. Then the ninety-two old man slowly moved two or three steps to the rostrum, so aged and frail that one's anxiety was increased lest he fall. He spoke slowly and indistinctly and with great effort. Since his stroke at age ninety his once-powerful voice had faded. But he was still handsome and straight as he stood erect at the rostrum, . . . (*The Mormon Establishment*, pages 52-53)

David O. McKay lived to be 96 years old, but he was in very poor health toward the end of his life and was hardly in any condition to function as Prophet, Seer and Revelator for the Church.

Instead of appointing a younger man to lead the Church, they chose Joseph Fielding Smith who is now 94 years old. He is the son of Joseph F. Smith—the man who testified that although he was the Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Church, he had never received a revelation.

In our three volumes of *The Case Against Mormonism* we deal at great lengths with these matters. The reader will notice that we have extended our special offer on *The Case Against Mormonism*. The regular price for all three volumes is \$8.85, but if they are ordered before August 31, 1971, the price will be only \$6.95.

MORE SKELETONS?

After Joseph Smith's death the Egyptian papyri, which were supposed to contain the books of Abraham and Joseph, were lost. In 1967, however, the Mormon Church announced the "discovery" of eleven pieces of this papyri at the Metropolitan Museum. Another fragment had also been preserved in the Church Historian's Office, but the Mormon leaders tried to suppress this fact. Jay M. Todd, who has served as an editor and staff writer for the Church's *Improvement Era*, states that Dr. Clark, of Brigham Young University, knew about this fragment for thirty years but was told to suppress this information: "Outside of a few associates, Dr. Clark had kept the fragment a matter of **confidence, under instructions from the Historians Office, for over 30 years**" (*The Sage of the Book of Abraham*, Salt Lake City, 1969, page 364).

Two years after we published a photograph of this fragment in Joseph Smith's "Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar," the Church leaders decided that it was time to "find" it. The LDS Church Section of the *Deseret News* carried this statement of February 10, 1968: "An interesting development in the work going on at BYU by Dr. Hugh Nibley on the papyri fragments turned over to the Church by the New York Museum of Art is the **locating** of another fragment in the vaults at the Church Historian's Office."

We now have evidence which seems to show that the Mormon leaders have still not brought all of the skeletons out of the closet. In the *Messenger* for October, 1970, we stated: "We have heard from two separate sources that Dr. Nibley has discovered more of Joseph Smith's papyri—possibly Facsimile No. 2. If any of our readers know the location of the papyri or have any other information on this subject we would appreciate it if they would let us know." In a letter dated October 5, 1970, we received the following information:

I received your *Salt Lake City Messenger* . . . you mention about more papyri and for any information on the subject.

Here is what I know:

The first I heard about more Joseph Smith Papyri was from you . . . I went to see ____ [a prominent Mormon who is acquainted with Dr. Nibley] . . . He stated . . . Nibley told him that there was more papyri found and that it was discovered in Texas. . . . Mention was made by Nibley that Facsimile No. 2 was among the papyri.

The same man who sent us this information talked with another man who claimed:

Hugh Nibley mentioned that there were 2 scrolls still in existence which were once in the possession of Joseph Smith. One was owned by Emma Smith and the other by someone who had some connection with the R.L.D.S. Church. . . .

The Papyrus is in a small town safe and it is owned by an antique dealer. The dealer bought it from Emma Smith or relatives; he believed that they were sacred and said that they were Joseph's. He also said that they had Masonic symbols on the Papyrus and that he wouldn't sell them even for \$ 750.00.

It could be that Dr. Nibley's has known of this papyri for some time. In *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 3, page 1, we stated:

A friend of Dr. Nibley's gave us this information in a letter dated August 13, 1968: "I saw photographs of them [i.e., the papyri in the Metropolitan Museum] for the first time in 1963, I believe . . . I wrote Nibley that some of the Joseph Smith papyri still existed but that I was not at liberty to say where, and he wrote me about the same time that someone in Utah had located of pile of unpublished Joseph Smith papyri."

However this may be, it would appear that Dr. Nibley has recently made statements which would indicate that more of the papyri are still in existence and that he knows their location. Now, these papyri may be very important to those who are studying Mormonism, but we do not feel that we can put a great deal of stock in the statement that they are in Texas. This may be the case, but we remember that Dr. Atiya tried to divert us when we were on the track of the papyri in the Metropolitan Museum. He had a friend of ours write to a university back East when he knew the exact location of the papyri.

Perhaps some of our readers can provide a few clues that could lead to the discovery of the rest of the papyri. These manuscripts may contain some very important evidence concerning the development of the Mormon Church.

GOD'S POWER

On April 23, 1971, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed this statement: "**Utah** is ranked among the five states in the country with the **worst** drug abuse problems on a per capita basis, a national authority on drug abuse and treatment said there Thursday."

The drug situation in Utah as well as in other parts of the country certainly points to the fact that there is a spiritual problem in America today. We feel, however, that the Lord is able to deal with this problem. In an earlier issue of the *Messenger* we discussed the conversion of Tom Skinner. The reader may remember that Tom Skinner grew up in Harlem and became the leader of "the Harlem Lords" — a gang of over 100 men. He had "led the fellows in more than fifteen large scale gang fights." In his book *Black and Free* he states that he "had twenty-two notches on the handle of my knife which meant that my blade had gone into twenty-two fellows." One night Skinner was

"preparing strategy for a gang fight." This was to be "the largest gang rumble ever to take place in the city of New York." Five gangs "were going to unite together to fight a coalition of gangs from the other side of the city." Over "3,000 fellows" were to be involved in this fight. While planning this gang war, Tom Skinner was listening to a rock and roll program on the radio. At nine o'clock that night an "unscheduled gospel program came on." That night Tom Skinner decided to leave the gang and become a Christian. He states:

For the first time in my life I took a good look at Tom Skinner. Not so much what Tom Skinner had **done**—the money I'd stolen, the fact that there were fellows who were going to bear permanent bodily injury for the rest of their lives because of me and the gang fights I'd led. But I began to think of what I had **become**, arrogant, proud, bigoted, hateful. I was as bigoted as any white racist. (*Black and Free*, page 57)

. . . that particular night I came to Jesus Christ. Because God can't lie, Jesus Christ actually took up residence in my life and began to live in me, and He's been living there ever since.

It's been the most thrilling, the most adventurous life I believe a person could ever live. I've had the privilege of actually having the God of heaven and earth live inside me. . . .

I turned the radio off and began to think about the wonder of this new life—and was confronted with a reminder of the old Tom Skinner.

There in front of me were the plans for the rumble. Here was a dilemma! (*Ibid.*, page 64)

You don't just walk up to a gang of fellows that you've been leading around for two years in rioting, looting, fighting and law-breaking and say, "Well, guys, it's been nice knowing you. So long."

No one quits a gang. In fact, just two weeks before I had personally broken the arms and legs of two fellows who told me **they** were going to quit. And these fellows got off easy. . . .

The preacher signed off the air that night by saying that the promise of God to any person who receives Christ is that He will never leave you nor forsake you. He quoted a passage from the Bible that went like this: "Jesus says, Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

That's all I had to protect myself as I walked to the meeting place of the Harlem Lords—just a promise of God.

I moved into the smoky room and walked to the front. There were 129 fellows in that room. Every one of them carried a knife. Some had guns—and none of them had any reservations about using their weapons. . . .



OLD ORDER FORM REMOVED

I motioned for silence and began to speak. I told of the broadcast—how the speaker had given me insight to truth I'd never heard before. I told them that I was convinced Jesus Christ had died for all the sins I'd ever committed, and had given me ever-lasting life.

"Last night, I asked Him to come inside me and live in me. And He answered me," I said.

All the time I was talking, I could see the number two man in the gang. His nickname was "The Mop." We call him "The Mop" because whenever there was a gang fight, this fellow wasn't happy unless he drew blood from someone and wiped his foot in it. I knew "The Mop" wanted to be number one man. He would term my telling them that I had committed my life to Jesus Christ as a sign of weakness. And he would relish the opportunity to put his knife between my ribs or across my throat.

I forced myself to finish without weakening. . . .

You could have heard a pin drop. No one spoke. No one even moved. I walked down the aisle and out into the night air, half expecting a knife to come tearing into my back or a bullet to dig into my flesh. But nothing! I walked out without one person raising a hand against me.

I nearly shouted my thankfulness to God.

Two nights later I saw "The Mop" on the street. He motioned to me and said, "Tom, I wanna talk to you."

We stopped and he grinned. "You know," he said, "the other night when you got up and walked out of that meeting I was gonna really cut you up. I was all set to put my knife right in your back."

"And why didn't you?"

"I couldn't move," he said, his eyes growing wider. "It was like somebody was holding me back—like I was glued to my seat!"

He licked his lips and continued. "And I talked to some of the other guys, too. I wasn't the only one. They said the same thing—that something, or somebody, actually held them back in their seats."

Now my eyes widened and I felt the hair on the back of my neck rise.

"What d'ya make of it Tom?" he asked.

"I know that the Christ I've committed myself to isn't just some fictitious character who lived two thousand years ago . . . some nebulous spirit floating around in the air somewhere. I know now that Jesus Christ is alive! He's real! . . ."

The toughness was gone from my former associate in crime. I turned to "The Mop" and asked, "Would you like to know who that 'Somebody' was who kept you glued to your seat!"

He nodded.

Standing on 153rd Street and McCombs Place—two blocks from the Polo Grounds—an ex-gang leader, a Christian less than 48 hours, led another gang member to Christ. Apart from the thrill of my own commitment to Christ, I can't think of any other experience as thrilling as introducing "The Mop" to Jesus Christ.

"The Mop" has since graduated from law school and has entered one of the largest law firms in the city of New York, proof that Jesus Christ transforms the whole individual. (*Ibid.*, pages 65-67)

Many people believe that Christianity has failed, J. B. Phillips, however made this observation:

How many people, what proportion of people, do you suppose have ever tried to take the teaching of Jesus Christ seriously in any century? Your guess is as good as mine; but I should seriously doubt it's ever been much more than a very small percentage. Most people, even if you can get them to take the trouble to learn what Jesus Christ really said, did and taught, don't do anything about it. So how can you be surprised that the result seems so poor? I don't believe that Christianity, the real thing, has ever failed, but I am certain that it hasn't been given a fair chance to work, by most people. It's so much easier to go your own sweet way and say that Christianity is a beautiful ideal since a great many people take the line of least resistance, that's just what's happened. The results are written all over the world. But don't blame Christianity, blame people—you might even blame yourself. (*Plain Christianity*, page 66)

We thoroughly agree with J. B. Phillips. The gospel of Christ worked for us. It changed our lives, and we believe that it will do the same for anyone who will try it. It does not matter what we have done in the past; God stands ready to forgive us.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

As we indicated in our last *Messenger*, we are working on a full size book on Christianity and hope to have it published in the near future. ■

Thot: The greatest thief is one who will rob you of the truth.
—Watson

New Edition

No Man Knows My History

By Fawn M. Brodie

On Sale Now For \$9.00 — Reg. \$10.00

At the present time we are awaiting our first shipment of the new edition of Fawn M. Brodie's *No Man Knows My History*. When this book was first published it rocked the very foundation of the Mormon Church. We feel that it is the finest book written on the life of Joseph Smith. The Mormon writer Samuel W. Taylor made this statement concerning this book:

. . . Mrs. Brodie was unchurched for the writing of it and delivered to the buffetings of Satan; . . . It was not inaccuracy that raised the Mormon ire, but her documentation of that which we didn't wish to believe. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring, 1967, page 129)

In the Preface to the new edition Mrs. Brodie states:

In the twenty-five years since the first printing of this biography others beside myself have done much digging in documents relative to Joseph Smith's life, and have published considerable material that adds measureably to my own research. . . . I have written a supplement for this edition that is intended to inform the reader of the nature of new historical discoveries, particularly in regard to Joseph Smith's "first vision," and his controversial Book of Abraham. The supplement also includes additional speculation on the nature of his evolution. . . .

The new discoveries do not necessitate important revisions in this biography. On the contrary, I believe that the new data tend on the whole to support my original speculations about Joseph Smith's character. (*No Man Knows My History*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1971, page xi)

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