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A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price: Part 1: Challenge and Response (Continued)

Author(s): Hugh Nibley

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A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price

By Dr. Hugh Nibley

Part I. Challenge and Response (Continued)

Amateurs All

● The ever-increasing scope of knowledge necessary to cope with the great problems of our day has led to increasing emphasis on a maxim that would have sounded very strange only a few years ago: "There are no fields—there are only problems!"—meaning that one must bring to the discussion and solution of any given problem whatever is required to understand it: If the problem calls for a special mathematics, one must get it; if it calls for three or four languages, one must get them; if it takes 20 years, one must be prepared to give it 20 years—or else shift to some other problem. Degrees and credentials are largely irrelevant where a problem calls for more information than any one department can supply or than can be packaged into any one or a dozen degrees.

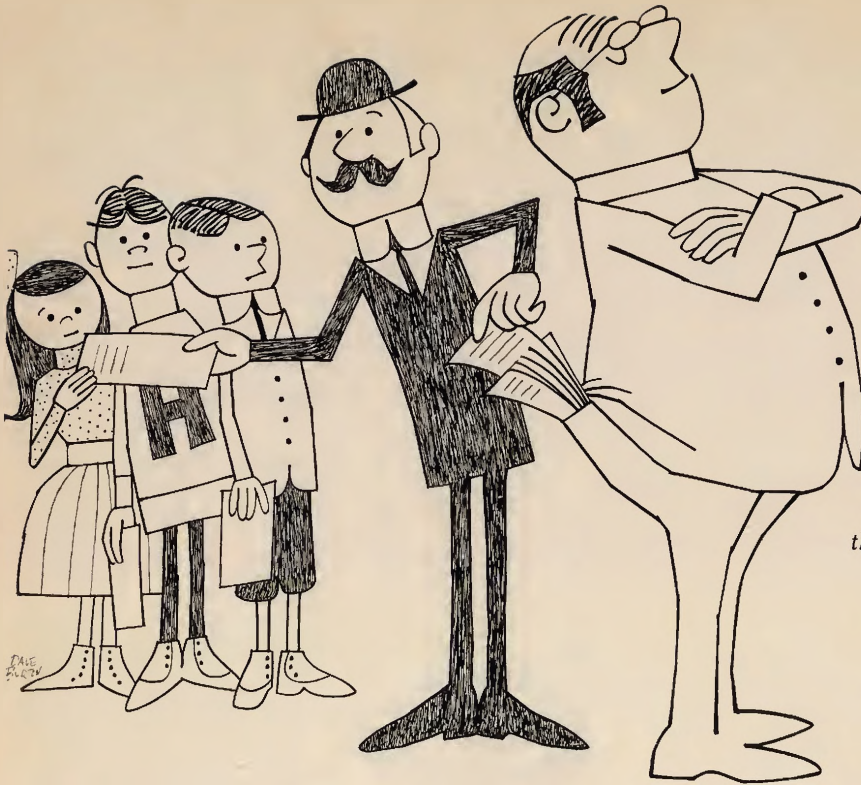
Now the Pearl of Great Price presents a number of big problems with which no Egyptologist has ever coped. A knowledge of Egyptian is the first step toward a solution of such problems, but it is by no means the last. Still, first things come first: "Ancient Egypt," wrote one of the earliest modern researchers in the field, "is accessible only to a small number, because of the length and the difficulties of the initiation into the language of the hieroglyphs. . . . But can a historian . . . renounce the direct examination of the original documents, which become every day more varied and more numerous, without violating the first rule of his discipline?"⁴²

Like it or not, we are stuck with Egyptian, and it is only fair to note, in defense of the specialists, that if authoritarianism can be a great mischief, the quackery to which it

gives rise can be even worse, a quack being anybody posing as an authority—a shadow of a shadow. There is a place in the world for professionalism and even for "authority" in science, as Thomas S. Kuhn has explained at great length; every field has its "paradigms" that must be mastered thoroughly so that they can be used as tools, quickly, deftly, with unconscious skill, in the processes of problem solving. The expert is one who knows how to use those tools, and because the Doctors have not chosen to use their knowledge in a serious study of the Pearl of Great Price, it does not follow that such knowledge is not important for such study—rather, it is indispensable.

Any ancient text is utterly without meaning to one who does not know the language in which it is written. Egyptian, however, being written in pictures, has been held to enjoy a unique status among the mysteries. Away back in the fifth century Horapollon had the idea that by attributing a symbolic meaning to each little picture and putting the symbols together, one could discover the meaning of any Egyptian text. This theory was adhered to by would-be translators of Egyptian right down to the time of Champollion, and it still has its advocates among Latter-day Saints who would discover ever-new secrets in the Facsimiles and identify battered Indian rock-carvings with Egyptian glyphs.

The attempt to give one's own interpretation to picture-writing is hard to resist. At the general conference in April 1967, for example, somebody circulated a mimeographed document bearing the frank and forthright title,



*And though he denied
 that his brochure was "circulated
 especially among the students of Latter-day
 Saint high schools,"
 he did admit putting it in the hands
 of those who would see
 that it got there.*

"Why Would Anyone Want to Fight the Truth?" The "truth" in this case consisted of the author's common-sense observations on the nature of Egyptian, such as, that an Egyptian symbol written with four elements "could be no more than a single Egyptian word." But ancient languages have a way of ignoring our modern common-sense rules; the Egyptians in particular had an incurable weakness for abbreviations, omissions, transpositions, puns, and cryptograms, and their writings are full of signs which, even when we know their meaning (which is by no means always the case), require at least a sentence or two to explain them. Anyone is free to guess at the meaning of any Egyptian phrase, and one of the most picturesque aspects of the discipline is a process that never ceases, day and night, year in and year out, by which Egyptologists are constantly altering and improving on each other's translations. But one is *not* free to present his interpretation as "The Truth," and then ask in hurt and accusing tones, "Why Would Anyone Want to Fight the Truth?" "I have acted upon a principle to which I attach the greatest importance," wrote A. H. Gardiner, the dean of Egyptian grammarians; "even a wrong idea is better than no idea at all, and progress in translation can only come by presenting to the critics some definite objective to tilt at."⁴³ So far was he from thinking that the experts ever have a corner on truth!

The specialists, however, can hardly be blamed for hesitating to become involved in arguments with just anybody, for they are daunted by a peculiarly insidious occupational

hazard.⁴⁴ The air of mystery and romance that has always surrounded things Egyptian has never failed to attract swarms of crackpots, cultists, half-baked scholars, self-certified experts, and out-and-out charlatans. The poor Egyptologist, constantly confronted with such characters and their antics, is understandably on his guard, quick to suspect and ever alert to the slightest signs of wishful thinking or free and easy logic. At the same time every Egyptologist is something of a crusader who feels bound to foster and encourage interest in his important but neglected field; he is naturally and humanely hesitant to give any sincere seeker the brushoff, or to offend any possible future donor or patron of his art. In addition, the Egyptologist is himself a romantic at heart, or else he would never have chosen such a field for himself, and has a secret and sometimes rather obvious kinship with the glamor hunters. That, of course, makes him even more circumspect in his behavior; he can't afford to get involved or identified with such creatures, he shies like a thoroughbred horse at every rag and tatter of nonsense in the breeze, and he avoids religious controversies like death itself. To expect a sympathetic word for Joseph Smith from such people is, of course, asking too much—a serious Egyptologist just can't risk it. Even to display too lively an interest in the Pearl of Great Price or the Book of Mormon has been known to jeopardize one's professional standing.

Bishop Spalding Prepares His Surprise

Bishop Spalding is described by those who knew him as a charming man, a convincing speaker, "a controversialist by nature,"⁴⁵ an enthusiastic intellectual who "follows

those who go to the farthest frontiers of research in modern, or higher, criticism . . . and fearlessly accepts the results of that school of thought,"⁴⁶ an ardent social reformer who, while urging the Mormons to come over to his one "historic faith," regrets that the same Mormons are actually doing what he only wishes his own people would do in the way of organized activity, while he labors "to help 'sweep and garnish' the house of faith with the whisk broom of Marxian sophistries."⁴⁷

This man simply could not square the supernaturalist claims of Joseph Smith with the enlightened thinking of 1912. He made such a show of fair play and was so diligent in procuring the support of the most eminent scholars in putting the Prophet to the test that even B. H. Roberts felt constrained to confess, "his method . . . is entirely legitimate, and the spirit of it [is] irreproachable."⁴⁸

But others, taking a closer look, were not so sure: ". . . while the bishop appears to treat his subject with fairness," wrote Osborne J. P. Widtsoe, "[and] while he tries to impress his reader with his openness, his frankness, his candor, his honesty, yet his every argument is based upon some unfair implication, some false premise. . . . His fairness is but surface deep."⁴⁹ This grave charge is fully borne out in an interview published in the *New York Times*, in which the bishop's magnanimous spirit of love and affection for the Mormons takes on a decidedly greenish tinge:

"The breaking up of Mormonism through the desertion of the intellectual part of its membership is the failure for the Prophet Smith's church which Bishop Spalding foresees. It is for that reason that he prefers to address the Mormons as his friends rather than to attack them."⁵⁰

Spalding's friend, Dr. Frederick J. Pack, perceived the wily stratagem thus freely admitted by Bishop Spalding when he was far away from Utah, and commented on its effectiveness: ". . . the apparent fairness shown by Dr. Spalding made far into the ranks of the Latter-day Saints a well prepared path along which the conclusions of his article might readily follow."⁵¹ And when a banker friend from the East asked the good bishop, "Why not leave the Mormons alone?" he replied, "Well, I must feel about their acceptance of what is intellectually and morally untrue, just as you would feel if you knew a group of people were coining . . . counterfeit money."⁵² If Dr. Spalding had ever heard of the Constitution, which explicitly provides that holding a wrong opinion about anything is not a crime, as counterfeiting is, he still could not, for all his vaunted liberalism, stand the thought that a religion whose teachings he believed to be false should be permitted to stay in operation.

As he went about with his sweet strategic smile ("He writes to the Mormons in a kindly mood," says the *Times*), the bishop was working hard on his demolition project.

"Much of Bishop Spalding's work," according to the interview in the *Times*, "was done in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in this city."⁵³ This suggests that the final scheme took shape only after a number of other approaches had proven ineffectual. Many a better scholar than Dr. Spalding has discovered that the revelations of Joseph Smith that look so delightfully vulnerable at first sight become more difficult to refute the more carefully one studies them. "The Bishop, it is said, gave a liberal portion of his time and thought for some years to this literary production, fully expecting that when it should appear in print, it would signal the end of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."⁵⁴ To compile the little book of but eight very brief letters would take no very great amount of time or effort—what was Dr. Spalding doing all those years? That his long and zealous labors should have brought forth so little is in itself a strong point in Joseph Smith's favor.

But Spalding made the best psychological use of the little that he had (an old game with ministers), catching the Mormons completely off guard when he finally "fired [his] broadside at us," as Professor N. L. Nelson put it: ". . . think, man," he wrote to his old friend, the bishop, "of the 'imprudence' of it! without a declaration of war, and in a time of profound peace." Dr. Spalding was counting on just that surprise to spread dismay and confusion, but though the burst was impressive, "as regards three-fourths of us, the effect was purely spectacular—a compound of smoke and noise."⁵⁵

Spalding's avowed purpose was to save "thousands of young men and women" from "the hopelessly illogical, untruthful, unspiritual, and immoral system of Joseph Smith, Jr."⁵⁶ And though he denied that his brochure was "circulated especially among the students of the Latter-day Saint high schools," he did admit putting it in the hands of those who would see that it got there.⁵⁷ The appeal to intellectual honesty without any insistence on hard study can always count on having some effect among those who wish to be thought intellectual, and R. C. Webb noted that the Spalding plan capitalized on that snob appeal which is never lost in academic circles.⁵⁸ Hence it was not surprising that when a valedictory speaker at the University of Utah two years later issued the routine call for greater freedom of thought, his boldness was nationally advertised by a visiting professor to the university as the direct fruit of Spalding's demonstration to the Mormons that "one of their sacred books is spurious."⁵⁹ Miffed when the Mormons refused to lie down because he said "bang," Bishop Spalding declared that his project "has become not only a test of the competency of the First Presidency of the Church, but also of the reliability of the present head of the church," since the latter had been unwise enough to believe Joseph Smith instead of Spalding's experts.⁶⁰ But it is high time to take a closer look at the famous test.

"Just the Test We Need"

The Reverend Spalding's book is dedicated "To my many Mormon friends—who are as honest searchers after the truth" as he hopes he is himself. This humane and generous approach caught the Mormons off guard, as it was meant to do. "The manifest fairness of the inquiry and the apparently well founded conclusions," wrote Professor Pack, "came as somewhat of a surprise to the 'Mormon' people," who were not accustomed to the soft sell.⁶¹ The book opens with the magnanimous admission that others have been impetuous, ill-informed, discourteous, and unfair in judging the Mormons, and that the time has come for a cool, fair-minded, objective testing of the claims of the Prophet. In particular, the Book of Mormon "has never had the serious examination which its importance demands."⁶² To correct this oversight, the author then launches into as rigged and spurious a test of prophetic inspiration as was ever devised by the Scribes and Pharisees.

Beginning with the statement, "If the Book of Mormon is true, it is, next to the Bible, the most important book in the world," Spalding notes that no definitive test of that book's authenticity is possible at this time, but suggests that it would be quite possible to test Joseph Smith's competence as a translator by examining not the Book of Mormon but another of his translations, that contained in the Pearl of Great Price under the title of the Book of Abraham. In this document, according to Bishop Spalding, "we have just the test we need of Joseph Smith's accuracy as a translator."⁶³

And he is right. Here we have at our disposal all the necessary resources for making an almost foolproof test. Moreover, it was Joseph Smith himself who first proposed and submitted to the test. When the papyri of the Book of Abraham first came into his hands, the Prophet, having learned that their owner, Michael H. Chandler, had gone out of his way to solicit the opinions of the experts in the big cities where he had exhibited his mummies, went into a room by himself and wrote out his interpretation of some of the symbols; then he invited Mr. Chandler to compare what he had written with the opinions of "the most learned." Chandler did so, and was properly impressed, voluntarily giving Joseph Smith a signed statement:

" . . . to make known to all who may be desirous, concerning the knowledge of Mr. Joseph Smith, Jun., in deciphering the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic characters in my possession, which I have, in many eminent cities, showed to the most learned; and, from the information that I could ever learn, or meet with, I find that of Mr. Joseph Smith, Jun., to correspond in the most minute matters. [Signed:] Michael H. Chandler."⁶⁴

Parley P. Pratt suggests that Chandler might have "on one occasion met with an individual who was enabled to decipher a small portion, or, at least, to give an opinion

of what he supposed its meaning to be," since nobody in America could really read the stuff.⁶⁵ Orson Pratt put it differently: "Mr. C[handler] had also obtained from learned men the best translation he could of some few characters, which however, was not a translation, but more in the shape of their ideas with regard to it, their acquaintance with the language not being sufficient to enable them to translate it literally."⁶⁶

Strangely enough, this last statement exactly fits Dr. Spalding's own eight experts, as we shall see. But whatever the competence of the informants, in Chandler's day or Spalding's, the point here is that it is Joseph Smith who actually suggests and carries out the very test the bishop devised. It was also Joseph Smith's idea, it will be recalled,

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to submit copies of the original writing from the plates of the Book of Mormon to the best scholars in America for their frank opinion. Granted again that nobody could read the "Anthon Transcript" either then or today, it was still very important for the leading antiquarians in the country to be given a chance to speak their piece, lest the world say forever after: "Joseph Smith never dared to show his mythical manuscript to *real* scholars; he never gave the experts a chance to express an opinion about it!" Whatever opinions Professor Anthon expressed about the transcript, his letters show that he was indeed given ample opportunity to study the characters and express an opinion about them.

The Prophet Joseph, then, is willing enough to undergo the most objective tests, but Bishop Spalding will not let him! The least the latter could have done would have been to follow the classic procedure used in the vindication of the cuneiform scholars many years before. In 1857 that same Ernest Renan who was loudly declaring Jesus to be a myth was telling the public that nobody could read cuneiform—that the Assyriologists were simply fooling themselves and others. So to put everyone's mind at ease, Sir George Grote sent a cuneiform text to four scholars, requesting each one to give *his* interpretation of the thing; then it was a simple matter to compare the answers and let the public decide whether these men really knew what they were doing or not.⁶⁷

This was obviously the procedure indicated for dealing with the Facsimiles. Joseph Smith had given his interpretation of the three ancient Egyptian documents and had challenged the world to give its own interpretation of the

same. So one had only to do what Sir George did, that is, send the three Facsimiles from the Pearl of Great Price to various Egyptologists without comment, requesting each one to give *his* interpretation of them. Then Bishop Spalding could open the envelopes publicly and invite the world to compare the readings of the experts with each other *and* with Smith's ideas. What could be fairer and simpler? Joseph Smith had put all the ingredients for a clear and foolproof test into Spalding's hands, and even shown him how to go about it—and Spalding threw it all away! R. C. Webb observed, “. . . it might have occurred to an ‘honest searcher after truth,’ . . . to have removed the captions from these figures. . . . Such an ‘honest searcher’ should have known perfectly well that ‘scholars’ would object to and denounce Smith as a ‘scab translator.’”⁶⁸ That is, it was absolutely imperative to get the experts' opinions *before* showing them Smith's answer, just as the Prophet had handed his interpretations to Chandler *before* he knew what the others had said, leaving it to Mr. Chandler to compare them.

But instead of calmly asking each scholar for his reading and then letting the public judge for itself, Bishop Spalding, as he reports it, sent “the original texts, together with his [Smith's] interpretations . . . to competent scholars,” with the idea that “if they declared his translation to be correct, then it must be accepted as true.”⁶⁹ The question put to the specialists was not “What is your interpretation of these things?” but instead, “Here is what the notorious Joseph Smith says about these Egyptian documents; is he right or wrong?” Stating the question thus not only made it very easy for the doctors to answer with a terse “yes” or “no,” but also carefully set the stage to avoid any possible danger that one of the correspondents might in an unguarded moment drop a word in favor of Smith. Professor Pack observed that since Bishop Spalding “has evidently written for opinions to a large number of scholars” it might be in order to ask whether any replies more or less favorable to Joseph Smith had been withheld, “whether any disharmonious statements may have been received and not published,” since the published letters are very few and very brief.⁷⁰ Even with such precautions, the bishop does not trust his jury, but prefaces their remarks with 17 pages of elaborate argument to demonstrate the impossibility of Joseph Smith's being a true prophet no matter *what* the experts may say.

Of the letters that make up his book, Dr. Spalding reports: “It seemed necessary . . . to copy in full the letters from the experts exactly as I secured them.”⁷¹ With such meticulous and commendable care to see that the reader knows just what is going on, it is strange indeed that the most important letter of all is missing, namely, the covering letter that went with the request for an opinion from each of the authorities. For that is the letter to which they are replying,

the letter that set up the experiment and determined the state of mind in which each of the participants approached the problem. “This inquiry you claim to be of transcendent importance to the world,” wrote Dr. John A. Widtsoe to Bishop Spalding later. “If you are sincere in this . . . you certainly would not be ready to pronounce final judgment on the basis of eight or eleven letters written in answer to, only Heaven knows, *what questions you propounded.*”⁷² (Italics added.) As a scientist, Dr. Widtsoe knew that the most important thing in writing up an experiment is a minute and accurate account of the exact procedure followed—and that is precisely the part of the report that Dr. Spalding chose to omit.

Whatever the covering letter said (and none was ever

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made public), it or they completely destroyed that atmosphere of cool and detached impartiality which Dr. Spalding declared himself so anxious to achieve. Dr. Mercer, the leader of the band, admits that “ill-temper was shown” and that “several of the scholars were disgusted at what they sincerely believed to be an imposition—‘righteous wrath,’ perhaps.”⁷³ But he insists that religion has nothing to do with this righteous wrath—“the letters were not prejudiced,”⁷⁴ and he testifies as one of the jury “that Bishop Spalding did not in any way, either intentionally or unintentionally, prejudice the witnesses.”⁷⁵ All he had to do to prejudice the whole company was simply to mention the name of Joseph Smith, but no, these men, though three of them are ministers of Spalding's church, expressed only “a scorn which was due to the crudeness of the linguistic work of the Prophet. . . . They condemned it purely on linguistic grounds.”⁷⁶ To labor the point, since Mercer admits that it is a very important one, “the animus evident in the communications of Sayce and Petrie is purely because of linguistic, and not because of religious reasons.”⁷⁷ Why linguistic *animus* in a field in which the experts are constantly correcting each other's translations? Is scientific animus any less prejudiced than religious animus? Mercer isn't kidding anybody: by bringing Joseph Smith into the picture from the very first, Bishop Spalding effectively loaded the dice—from then on only one game was possible.

Some Basic Misconceptions

Not only do all of Spalding's jury labor under certain serious misconceptions, but their verdict is in every case

determined by those misconceptions. “. . . all the learned doctors,” wrote Osborne J. P. Widtsoe, “. . . seem to have labored under the impression that the original manuscript of the Book of Abraham was available, that the three fac-similes . . . constitute that original manuscript, and that the inscriptions on those fac-similes were ‘written by his [Abraham’s] own hand.’ To one who is acquainted with Church history, there could be made no representation farther from the truth than this of Bishop Spalding’s concerning the Book of Abraham.”⁷⁶ Yet it was on these three incorrect assumptions that the experts based all their arguments against Joseph Smith. Consider the three points.

First of all, Joseph Smith did *not* draw the Facsimiles; they were the work of a professional wood engraver, Reuben Hedlock, who undertook the job on February 23, 1842, at the Prophet’s request, and finished it just a week later.⁷⁹ It was, as we shall see, a very creditable piece of work, but the miserable copies that Bishop Spalding circulated among his jury of experts made a very poor impression, and their raw clumsiness was in every case attributed to the Prophet himself. Some critics have noted that some of the numbers that have been added to Facsimile 2 are upside down, and have again assumed that Joseph Smith put them that way; but as R. C. Webb points out, “There is no evidence before us that Smith is responsible for it.”⁸⁰

The commonest objection to the authenticity of the Facsimiles is that they are of too late a date to have been drawn by Abraham. But Joseph Smith never claimed that they were autographic manuscripts or that they dated from the time of Abraham. “. . . with W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes,” he writes as of July 1835, “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.”⁸¹ (Italics added.) It is and was common to refer to any author’s works as his writings, whether he penned them himself or dictated them to others. The Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price itself, for example, are both writings of Joseph Smith, though written down entirely by the hands of other men and women.

Men of such importance as Abraham and Joseph in Egypt would surely have followed the accepted custom and dictated their “writings” to scribes. The system is clear in the book of Jarom, verse 14, where we are referred to “the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written,” and elsewhere in the Book of Mormon we are told of writings even “by the hand of” Mormon, Nephi, Moses, Omni, and others, and even “by the finger of God” (Alma 10:2), and also of a letter of Giddianhi sealed with his own hand—yet the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were largely the work of Mormon and were never seen by some of the men whose very hands supposedly had written them. As George Q. Cannon ex-

plained, “These constituted the writings of Abraham—the text by Abraham’s own hand; though there is nothing to show that this text had not been widely copied, and that this particular [manuscript] may not, in fact, have been a copy 500 years after Abraham’s day.”⁸² J. M. Sjodahl assumes that it was a copy: “As the work proceeded, he [Joseph Smith] became convinced that one of the rolls of papyrus contained a copy of a book written by Abraham.”⁸³ And Osborne Widtsoe opined that “this particular roll [the Book of Abraham] may or may not have been written by Abraham’s own hand. Possibly it was a copy of Abraham’s original manuscript.”⁸⁴

From the way the expression is used in the scriptures and by the brethren, it is clear that when a piece was said to be by its author’s “own hand,” what is meant is that

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he originally wrote or dictated it. Even when Wilford Woodruff reports in his journal for February 18, 1842, that “Joseph the Seer has presented us some of the Book of Abraham, which was written by his own hand . . .,” it means that the Book of Abraham is not merely a book *about* Abraham, of which many are known in the apocryphal literature, but one actually written *by* him. Actually, what the Prophet “presented” to the Saints, who had seen the papyri a hundred times, was his own rendering of the book, which of course was not *literally* written by the hand of Abraham.

It was only to be expected, human nature being what it is, that the announcement that the writings of Abraham and Joseph had been found with some mummies should have promptly given rise to the rumor that Joseph Smith was in possession of “the bodies of Abraham, Abimelech, (the king of the Philistines), Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, &c., &c.” And it was just as natural that the enemies of the Prophet should circulate the charge “that the purchasers of these antiquities” were spreading such rumors “for the purpose of attracting the attention of the multitude, and gulling the unwary.” These reports, the Prophet wrote in December 1835, were “utterly false. Who these ancient inhabitants of Egypt were, I do not at present say.”⁸⁵ He was not leaping at conclusions or claiming revelations on all things; indeed, the mummies did not particularly interest him, and he only consented to let Chandler have the high price he asked for them because he could procure the papyri in no other way: “. . . Mr. Chandler told him that he would not sell the writings, unless he could sell the mum-

mies. . . .⁸⁶ The mere sight of the mummies did not excite Joseph Smith, and neither did the rolls of papyri before he knew what was on them: they were just "something rolled up . . . which, when examined, proved to be two rolls of papyrus." It was only after the mummies had been bought and the rolls examined that the brethren discovered, "much to our joy," how important they were.⁸⁷ "The characters," Joseph Smith reported, "are such as you find upon coffins of mummies—hieroglyphs, etc.," that is, quite ordinary stuff, to look at them.⁸⁸ It is amusing to see how the Spalding specialists petulantly declare the Facsimiles, which they confess themselves unable to read, to be to all appearances nothing but perfectly ordinary Egyptian documents. Joseph Smith could have told them that.

The Prophet made no dogmatic statement as to how the writings got in with the mummies, and Church members speculated freely on the subject. "It is supposed," wrote Parley P. Pratt, "they were preserved in the family of the Pharaoh and afterwards hid up in the embalmed body of the female with whom they were found."⁸⁹ The reporter of a local newspaper, after being shown the mummies by Mother Smith, wrote a satirical account of how Joseph in Egypt had a roll of papyrus, delivered to him in a wooden box—by an angel, of course—"which was to be buried by him with the family of one of the patriarchs . . . Joseph . . . depositing the case on the Queen's breast, where it lay until the discovery of the 'brass plates' . . ."⁹⁰ Behind the usual garbling of the familiar motifs, one may detect another version of Brother Pratt's speculation.

Actually, ancient Egyptian documents have been found buried with mummies of later date. The manuscript of the famous Ramesseum Dramatic Text, written to be buried with a king, was found laid away on the mummy of a private citizen 200 years after the time it was written—and even then it was copied down from still older sources. "How this manuscript . . . came into the private library of the . . . Theban in whose grave it was found," wrote Professor Sethe, "is a question which of course can never be answered."⁹¹ It may not be without significance that our Pearl of Great Price mummies were also found in Thebes, and that some other mummies found there, notably those accompanied by those rare and peculiar documents known as hypocephali (Fac. 2 is a hypocephalus), had lying on their breasts just such rolls of papyri, apparently documents of considerable importance, but not well enough preserved to be read.⁹² Mummies themselves were "often re-embalmed by the priests and toted from tomb to tomb—for centuries."⁹³ Furthermore, when documents became worn out from age or use it was quite proper to make a copy, which was thenceforth regarded exactly as if it were the original writings.⁹⁴

Bishop Spalding's announcement that he submitted to the specialists "the original text," and that "the original

texts with the Prophet's translation are available for our investigation" is simply not true. It makes all the difference in the world what particular text a scholar has to work with, as a comparison of the recently discovered original of Facsimile 1 with the copies of it that Spalding sent to the critics should make clear to anyone. ○

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES

- ⁴²Maxence de Rochemonteix, *Bibliothèque Egyptologique* (Paris, 1894), Vol. 3, p. 3.
⁴³A. H. Gardiner, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. 9 (1924), p. 6.
⁴⁴This theme was often discussed by G. Maspero, e.g. in *Bibliothèque Egyptologique*, Vol. 29, pp. 269-276; Vol. 1 (1893), pp. viii, in which Maspero discusses his own changing ideas. On the dangerous appeal of Egypt to amateurs, A. Weigall, *Tutankhamen and Other Essays* (London, 1923), Ch. 3, and *The Glory of the Pharaohs* (London, 1923), Ch. 5.
⁴⁵R. C. Webb, *Era*, Vol. 17, p. 565. Webb paints an intellectual portrait of Spalding in this long article, pp. 565ff.
⁴⁶B. H. Roberts, *Deseret News*, Dec. 19, 1912, p. 11.
⁴⁷Webb, *op. cit.*, pp. 568ff, 577; the quote is from p. 569.
⁴⁸Roberts, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 310.
⁴⁹Osborne J. P. Widtsoe, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 594, illustrating this by examples on pp. 595-97.
⁵⁰*New York Times*, Magazine Section, Dec. 29, 1912, p. 3.
⁵¹Frederick J. Pack, *Era*, Vol. 16, pp. 333-34.
⁵²R. C. Webb, *Era*, Vol. 17, p. 566, quoting from Spalding's *Utah Survey*.
⁵³*New York Times*, *loc. cit.*, p. 1.
⁵⁴J. M. Sjodahl, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 1100.
⁵⁵N. L. Nelson, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 603.
⁵⁶Webb, *op. cit.*, p. 565.
⁵⁷Editorial in *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 378; cf. *New York Times*, *loc. cit.*, p. 1.
⁵⁸R. C. Webb. See the remarks of E. J. Banks, *Literary Digest*, July 10, 1915, p. 67.
⁵⁹The Banks article (see above) is fully discussed by Sterling B. Talmage in *Era*, Vol. 16, pp. 770-76.
⁶⁰F. S. Spalding, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 611.
⁶¹Pack, *op. cit.*, p. 334.
⁶²Spalding, *Joseph Smith as a Translator*, p. 4.
⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 18.
⁶⁴*Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 235, from *The L.D.S. Messenger & Advocate*, Vol. 3 (Dec. 1835), p. 235.
⁶⁵Parley P. Pratt, *Millennial Star*, Vol. 3 (July 1842), p. 46.
⁶⁶Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 20 (1878), p. 65.
⁶⁷*Encyclopedia Britannica*, XI Edition (1910), Vol. 6, p. 308 (s.v. "Chronology").
⁶⁸Webb, *op. cit.*, Vol. 16, p. 1078.
⁶⁹Spalding, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
⁷⁰Pack, *op. cit.*, p. 335.
⁷¹Spalding, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 611.
⁷²John A. Widtsoe, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 617.
⁷³S. A. B. Mercer, *The Utah Survey*, Vol. 30, p. 12.
⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 10.
⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 7.
⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 9.
⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 9.
⁷⁸Osborne J. P. Widtsoe, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 599.
⁷⁹DHC, Vol. 4, p. 518.
⁸⁰Webb, *Era*, Vol. 17, p. 324.
⁸¹DHC, Vol. 2, p. 236.
⁸²George Q. Cannon, quoted by N. L. Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 606.
⁸³Sjodahl, *op. cit.*, p. 1103.
⁸⁴Osborne J. P. Widtsoe, *op. cit.*, p. 600.
⁸⁵DHC, Vol. 2, p. 348.
⁸⁶Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 20, p. 65.
⁸⁷DHC, Vol. 2, p. 236.
⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 348.
⁸⁹Parley P. Pratt, *Millennial Star*, Vol. 3 (July 1842), p. 46.
⁹⁰*Warsaw Signal*, Sept. 19, 1845, p. 2, cited by C. D. McOmber, *A Study of the Criticism of the Book of Abraham* (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, Provo, 1960), pp. 17f.
⁹¹K. Sethe, *Dramatische Texte zu altägyptischen Mysterienspielen* (Leipzig, 1928), Vol. 2, p. 99.
⁹²This is discussed below.
⁹³C. W. Ceram, *A Picture History of Archaeology* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1959), p. 138.
⁹⁴A classical instance is found in the introduction to the famous Shabaka Stone, where the king "orders a copy to be made which should be better than the earlier [original] one [lit., 'than its earlier condition']".—K. Sethe, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 4, 8, 21f. "Many very ancient books appeared in later transcriptions throughout Egyptian history," e.g., the Admonitions of Ptah-Hotep; "if, then, in similar fashion, Abraham also wrote a book, there is no essential absurdity in the supposition that a copy of it was found in the tomb of some persons who died even 1,000 or 1,500 years after his day."—R. C. Webb, *Era*, Vol. 17, p. 314. Whatever others, such as Wilford Woodruff, may have thought as to the age of the Facsimiles, Joseph Smith left no clear pronouncement.