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Dr. Pack to Dr. Peters

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We print elsewhere today some letters which have passed between Professor F. J. Pack, of the Utah University and the Rev. Dr. John P. Peters, of St. Michael's church, New York, relative to the discussion of the Book of Abraham, re-opened by the Right Rev. Bishop F. S. Spalding, of this City. The letters explain themselves.

Dr. Peters endeavors to defend the opinion he expressed in his first letter to Bishop Spalding that the author of the Book of Abraham, "displays an amusing ignorance," because, as the learned doctor says, in that book, "Chaldeans and Egyptians are hopelessly mixed together, although as dissimilar and remote in language, religion and locality as are today American and Chinese."

We have on a former occasion called attention to the fact that the closest social relations at one time existed between the ruling houses of Egypt and Babylonia, as revealed by the Tel el-Amarna letters. We need not repeat the statement already made. We merely add here that, according to Prof. George Frederick Wright, of Oberlin College, long before the days of Abraham "kings from Babylonia had claimed possession of the whole eastern shore of the Mediterranean, including the Sinaitic peninsula." To say, therefore, as Dr. Peters does, that the Chaldeans and Egyptians were as remote both in language and locality as are today the American and Chinese is very far from accurate.

From the Book of Abraham we infer that some Egyptian monarch had established an Egyptian sanctuary at Ur of the Chaldees, where Abraham lived, and maintained officiating priests there just as Christian missionary societies in our day maintain representatives in all parts of the world; and, furthermore, that the followers after the strange gods were so many and influential at the city of Ur, that Abraham, when he sought to obtain the holy priesthood of his ancestors became the object of persecution and was told by the Lord to leave the land of his fathers. This command he obeyed, came to Palestine and eventually to Egypt. There is nothing improbable in this narrative. On the contrary, it is highly probable, and it throws a flood of light upon the reason for the emigration of Abraham and his sojourn in Egypt. He went there to battle with the errors of idolatry and persecution at their very source of supply. On the information

contained in the Book of Abraham it is perfectly natural that an altar had been erected in Chaldea on which to perform religious rites according to Egyptian customs, and the statement that the altar was constructed "after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans," as well as Egyptians, is not inconsistent with what is known of those ancient nations. They were so closely connected both socially and politically that they must have had many things in common.

We confess some disappointment with Dr. Peters because of the flippancy and contempt evident in his correspondence on the subject. It is very clear from his letters that he has formed his judgment of the Book of Abraham without giving it half the thought and study he would have devoted to a brick tablet from Nippur. He advises Dr. Pack to go an encyclopedia for information regarding the Chaldeans, as if a professor of our University needed such silly advice, and he addresses the Editor of the Deseret Evening News at "Deseret, Utah." If that is not intended as pleasantry, we might reciprocate by advising Dr. Peters, the undisputed authority on ancient Babylonia to turn to some reliable encyclopedia and learn that the capital of Utah, where The News and some other leading papers are published, is not Deseret, but Salt Lake City. Can it be that the learned clergyman needs to be reminded of our famous Salt Lake slogan: "See America first?"

These remarks may seem irreverent, but we notice the same inaccuracy, the same contemptuous attitude in the treatment by Dr. Peters of the illustrations in the Book of Abraham. And yet, their genuineness is not disputed. The subject deserves the study and thought of impartial scholarship.

We are reminded of the fact that not more than a few years ago a great scholar, Wellhausen, declared that it was impossible to believe the story in the 14th chapter of Genesis. He said:

"That four kings from the Persian gulf should, in the time of Abraham, have made an incursion into the Sinaitic peninsula, that they should on this occasion have attacked five kinglets on the Dead Sea Littoral and have carried them off prisoners, and finally that Abraham should have set out in pursuit of the retreating victors, accompanied by 318 men servants, and have forced them to disgorge their prey,—all these incidents are sheer impossibilities which gain nothing in

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credibility from the fact that they are placed in a world which has passed away."

And yet, in spite of this scholarly opinion, Amraphel has been identified with Hammurabi; Chedorlaomer, with Kudur-Lagamar; Tidal, with Tudghula; and Arioch with Erl-Aku who at one time reigned over Ur and Larsa, in Chaldea. The historicity of that remarkable part of Genesis has been

vindicated notwithstanding the attitude of skepticism. Is there, in the mistakes of eminent scholars regarding the Bible no lesson to us regarding the Book of Abraham? We think there is. The truth of the Book of Abraham will also be demonstrated by further research. This, if nothing more, has, we believe, been made sufficiently clear during the present discussion.

An Offshoot of the Spalding Argument

BY FREDERICK J. PACK, DESERET PROFESSOR OF GEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

On page 28 of the pamphlet "Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator," an article appears over the name of Dr. John Peters, purported to be of the University of Pennsylvania. The present writer found it quite impossible to obtain any specific meaning from several statements of the article, and with a view of clearing the matter up sent out the following letter:

Jan. 16, 1913.

Dr. John Peters,
University of Pennsylvania.
Dear Sir:

I have read with great interest your communication to Dr. Spalding which he recently published in a small pamphlet dealing with the claims of Joseph Smith the "Mormon" prophet.

The last paragraph of your letter closes thus: "The text of the chapter, as also the interpretation of the plates, displays an amusing ignorance. Chaldeans and Egyptians are hopelessly mixed together, although as dissimilar and remote in language, religion and locality as are today American and Chinese. In addition to which the writer knows nothing of either of them."

I confess that I do not know just what you mean by this statement. Perhaps you would be good enough to outline your meaning in greater detail for me.

Kindly permit me to thank you for your courtesy.

Very truly yours,

(Signed.) F. J. PACK.

In course of a few days a reply came from Dr. Peters addressed from St. Michael's Church, 225 West Ninety-ninth street, New York City. It was subsequently learned that Dr. Peters is not connected with the University of Pennsylvania and has not been for the past 20 years. These and other facts were set forth in an article over the signature of the present writer

published in the Deseret News of March 15.

The following letter has just been received from Dr. Peters requesting that his reply to my letter be published:

St. Michael's Church,
New York, March 25, 1913.

Dear Sir:

Under date of March 15, you published a letter from Prof. Pack to me. When I received it, I was quite unaware who the person was who had written me, the reply was written in haste and not for publication. Nevertheless, as Prof. Pack has published his letter, I think my answer to him had better be published also, and as a matter of courtesy and fairness I am sure you will be glad to do so.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) JOHN P. PETERS.

Editor of the Deseret Evening News,
Deseret, Utah.

Following is the letter which Dr. Peters requests the Deseret News to publish:

St. Michael's Church,
New York, Jan. 28, 1913.

Prof. F. J. Pack,

Salt Lake City, Utah.

My Dear Professor Pack:

Turn to the "Pearl of Great Price," page 52, paragraph 8; "it was the custom of the priest of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt to offer up upon the altar which was built in the land of Chaldea, for the offering unto these strange gods, men, women and children."

Page 53, verse 13: Where the bed pictured in the cut No. 1, which is taken from Egyptian sources is described as an altar "after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans." Section 14, 20 and 23 are also specific examples of this same confusion of Chaldean and Egyptian, which runs through the whole chapter—indeed the whole of the Book of Abraham. Each individual passage referred