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The Book of Abraham - Its Genuineness Established, Chapter VI

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THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS'

MILLENNIAL STAR.

"HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD, O YE NATIONS, AND DECLARE IT IN THE ISLES AFAR OFF, AND SAY, HE THAT SCATTERETH ISRAEL WILL GATHER HIM, AND KEEP HIM, AS A SHEPHERD DOTH HIS FLOCK."—*Jeremiah xxxi, 10.*

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THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM—ITS GENUINENESS ESTABLISHED.

BY ELDER GEORGE REYNOLDS.

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CHAP. VI.

Traces of Gospel Ideas in Persian, Greek and Roman Mythologies. The Ancient Pagan Mysteries. The Circular Cut in the Book of Abraham, its import, etc.

From the Egyptians we will turn to the Persians, the people next most likely to show traces in their religion of the influence left by the preaching of the Gospel in patriarchal days. Mr. Hyde, in his "Religion of the Ancient Persians," points out how that Magianism, as set forth in its sacred books, taught that the human race sprang from a single pair; that it bore testimony to the occurrence of the flood; that it mentions Noah and his sons; that as far as Abraham is concerned, it declares him to have been its own author; and that it makes mention also of Moses. Moreover, it contains predictions respecting the appearance on earth of a Savior, who would ultimately overthrow the kingdom of dark-

ness and make supreme and universal the kingdom of light and of God. It taught the existence of good and of bad angels, also a resurrection of the dead.

The religions of ancient Greece and Rome were, to a very great extent, originally drawn from those of Egypt, Persia and Phœnicia. Many traces of Gospel principles can be found in them, hidden concealed under the mass of filth and abomination that in later ages disgraced the religions of the kingdom of brass and iron. Still, in all these nations it is admitted that "so far from atheism and godless irreligion being the rule, belief in the Divine however mistaken, and worship of the Divine, however superstitious, everywhere prevailed." With regard to special Gospel ideas prevailing in all these nations, it has been remarked that "baptism was as completely a portion of the primeval ceremonial worship as was the tenet of immortality and resurrection a portion of primeval creed." It is also noticeable that all

the Greek schools of philosophy taught the doctrine of the eternity of matter and not only had these races a knowledge of things that occurred in antediluvian days, but in their different, absurd ways they recounted the history of the war in heaven when Lucifer was cast out. Those curious on this point can read their accounts of the war between the Titans and Heaven, and of the giants against Jupiter.

We now turn to another interesting feature of this phase of the subject.

In the explanation given by the Prophet Joseph of the disc or circular cut accompanying the Book of Abraham, he states "Fig. 3 is made to represent God sitting upon his throne, clothed with power and authority, with a crown of eternal light upon his head, representing also the grand key words of the holy Priesthood, as revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden as also to Seth, Noah and Melchisedek, Abraham, and all to whom the Priesthood was revealed." Fig. 7 also contains "the grand key words of the Priesthood." God having delivered these powers of the heavenly kingdom to "all to whom the Priesthood was revealed," until Abraham's day, it would be but natural to suppose that as men gradually departed from the truth they would still endeavor to retain these sacred trusts in their midst; and however much they might depart from the purity of the faith proclaimed and practiced by the ancient patriarchs they would still strive to perpetuate the knowledge these "keys" conveyed, that they might have a claim on the blessings of the world to come. It is so natural to humanity to claim the blessings of God's word long after they have ceased to regard its obligations.

The fact of these things appearing in the Book of Abraham, written in hieroglyphics, renders it very supposable that at one time the import of these revelations was comprehended by those among the Egyptians, who received the teachings of Abraham; and so far as Jewish tradition is concerned it is full of references to these matters, though these latter, perhaps, more directly centre in the rites of the temple at Jerusalem. It is our province to show that the recollection of these things was sought to be perpetu-

ated amongst the heathen, originating, as usual, in Egypt, long after the greatest portion of that which was pure and holy in the principles with these things had been associated, by the ministers of the word of Jehovah, was lost sight of in the teachings and practices of these Gentile nations. To do this we must call attention to the so-called secret "mysteries" of the ancients, which to us, seem clearly in their origin, to have been attempts to imitate the administrations of the holy Priesthood, in the sacred rites appertaining to the fulness of the Gospel. In the investigation of this point we are greatly indebted to M. Faber's researches into the "Mysteries of the Cabiri," and to other authors who have enlarged upon his researches.

According to one of the gentlemen above referred to, "some of these mysteries were expressly instituted, as there is good reason to believe, to preserve in remembrance the remains of pure primeval faith and worship." Another states, "Every ancient people possessed its mysteries, which had for their object to uphold the religious truths that animate the hope of immortality, or in which were observed rites intended to explain and enforce the conduct suitable to those who cherished and wished to realize that hope." What took place in the administration of these mysteries is very difficult for the enquirer to discover, for they were "conducted in secret, and those who were permitted to take part in them were solemnly obliged not to divulge what they had seen and learned," the word mystery itself being derived from a Greek word signifying to "shut the lips." However from what can be learned it is believed that the initiated were "powerfully appealed to by scenic or other modes of representing the condition of the good and bad." According to a writer in the *American Cyclopaedia*, "they consisted, in general, of rites of purification and expiation, of sacrifices and processions, of ecstatic or orgiastic songs and dances, of nocturnal festivals fit to impress the imagination, and of spectacles designed to excite the most diverse emotions, terror and trust, and sorrow and joy, hope and despair. The celebration

was chiefly by symbolical acts and spectacles, yet sacred mystical words, formulas, fragments of liturgies or hymns were also employed. There were likewise certain objects with which occult meanings, that were imparted to the initiated, were associated or which were used in the various ceremonies in the ascending scale of initiation. The sacred phrases, concerning which silence was imposed, were themselves symbolical legends, and probably not statements of speculative truths." Ste Croix on this subject writes, "The germ of the mysteries is lustration," (or purification by water) "and expiation. The doctrines taught were the necessity of repentance and confession, the immortality of the soul and a future state of rewards and punishments." The Sr. De Sacy adds, "Certain rites and symbols were secret and these it was a sacrilege to reveal." Baur states, "The fundamental idea of the mysteries is that of a god who suffers and dies and afterwards triumphs over death and has a glorious resurrection." Regarding the Persian mysteries of Mythras, it has been written, "The initiation was protracted and severe. The neophyte was baptized, anointed on the forehead and received bread and wine; a crown was placed on his head."

With regard to the preparation needed from those who asked admission to these rites the very remarkable statement is made, "It is quite undoubted respecting them, that as a necessary condition to admission, and as an important part of initiation, two things were imperatively necessary, namely, a confession of sins, a promise of amendment of life, followed by baptism in some form more or less complete." Faber states "baptism continued to be handed down in all the mysteries," whilst another writer affirms that "contenance fasting and lustrations" were necessary pre-requisites before the applicant could enter the sacred doors. It is also a fact worthy of consideration that in a list of forty-five sacred Greek words gathered by M. Faber, there is scarcely one which does not resemble the Hebrew term for the same or a similar object.

As the ages rolled around these

mysteries degenerated into the most licentious orgies, where excesses of a disgraceful character were so shamelessly practiced that in some cases they fell under the ban of the law, though presumedly a portion of the worship of the gods. As an example of this we will take the mysteries of Dionysus. These were originally celebrated by women alone, in the temple of Dionysus. They were presided over by the wife of the Archon king (Basilissa), assisted by fourteen priestesses, to whom she took an oath that she was pure and unpolluted, and with whom she offered mystic sacrifices, for the welfare of the city. When these mysteries were introduced into Rome, they speedily degenerated into shameful immoralities; men, as well as women were initiated; and such were the crimes and excesses committed that they were at length suppressed by a *senatus consult*, B. C. 186 (Livy. xxxix, 8-18.)

It has been urged as an argument against the varacity of the translation by the Prophet Joseph Smith, of the circular cut or disc, but why we cannot comprehend, that numerous copies of it exist, scattered amongst the museums of Europe. These copies have been found buried with mummies in the same way as the one that fell into the Prophet's hands. Instead of being an argument against the truthfulness of the translation given by Joseph Smith, we consider it a very strong one in its favor. For this reason, Egyptologists acknowledge that some peculiar potency was ascribed to it by the ancient Egyptians, but their ideas are very vague as to in what that power consisted. It was customary with the ancient inhabitants of the Nile, to enshroud their dead in hieroglyphic wrappings, on which various facts relating to the life of the deceased were narrated. This writing was addressed to Osiris, the chief lord of Amenti, the land of the departed, and amongst other things, it stated that the acts of the Osir, the deceased, had been scrutinized by the seven inquisitors appointed to investigate the lives of men, and that he was found worthy to pass by those who guarded the gates of the eternal worlds, and partake of the blessings of the saved. Accom.

panying the mummy is also often found this sacred disc, or hypociphras as the learned term it, which, if we mistake not was usually placed under or near the head of the mummy. The translations given by the professedly learned convey no idea why this was so placed, but the revelation through our martyred Prophet, that it contains the key words of the holy Priesthood, at once makes the reason plain. The Egyptians buried this disc containing these sacred words with their dead, for very much the same reason that the Saints bury their dead in the robes

of the holy Priesthood. No doubt the true meaning of these key words were soon lost from amongst the Egyptians, but they knew enough to understand something of their value, and as ages rolled on, their apostate priesthood doubtlessly invented some myth to take their place. That these priests did claim to hold such keys, is clearly shown in a photograph in the Deseret Museum, of the walls of the Temple at Karnac, on which the gods are represented, each holding a key in his hand.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

BAPTISM OF LITTLE CHILDREN.

BY ELDER WM. N. WILLIAMS.

This is a subject, in common with many others that should be earnestly considered by the professed teachers of righteousness, for the penalty is "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 8).

Among the various persuasions of so-called Christianity, many of them claim that infant baptism is a true doctrine. In this brief article, I shall endeavor to prove, scripturally, that infant baptism is unscriptural. In the first place, I will refer to the words of our Lord and Savior, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark x. 14). He said nothing about baptizing them, but avowed that of such is the kingdom of God. "He took them up in his arms put his hands upon them and blessed them" (Mark x. 16). Infants are without sin and redeemed through the atonement of Christ, "for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22). Then we understand that as far as the transgression of Adam goes, so far, also, goes the redemption by Jesus Christ, for Paul, in writing to the Romans, said: "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the right-

eousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans v. 18). When Jesus was approaching the river Jordan, John said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).

From the foregoing it must be acknowledged by every honest and reflective mind that infants are saved through the atonement of Christ, and are pure before God; consequently do not need baptism, as this is an ordinance for the remission of sins—see Acts ii. 38; Mark i. 4. Now as "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John iii. 4), infants are certainly innocent and without sin, for their limited capacity of intelligence does not enable them to discern between good and evil; obey or disobey a law; therefore there is no law given them, and where there is no law there is no transgression.

My opponents, to defend their belief, will refer to the Savior's commission to the Apostles, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," and accordingly Cornelius and all his house were baptized; the jailor and his house; the household of Stephanas; and Crispus and his house. And Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, said: "And the promise is unto you and