The Improvement Era

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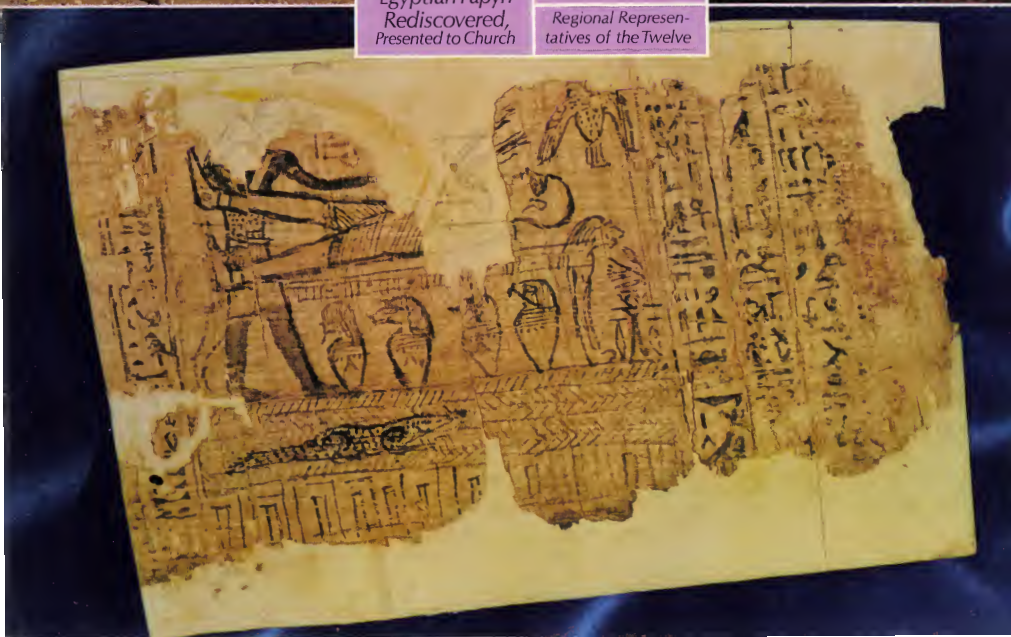
Beginning a fascinating series by Dr. Hugh Nibley -- *A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price*

The Ancient Land of Egypt -- *Neighbor of Palestine -- Refuge of the Prophets* with color photographs

Egyptian Papyri Rediscovered, Presented to Church

Regional Representatives of the Twelve



Manuscript from which the Prophet Joseph Smith obtained Facsimile 1, part of the Book of Abraham, is included in this valuable find.

Egyptian Papyri Rediscovered

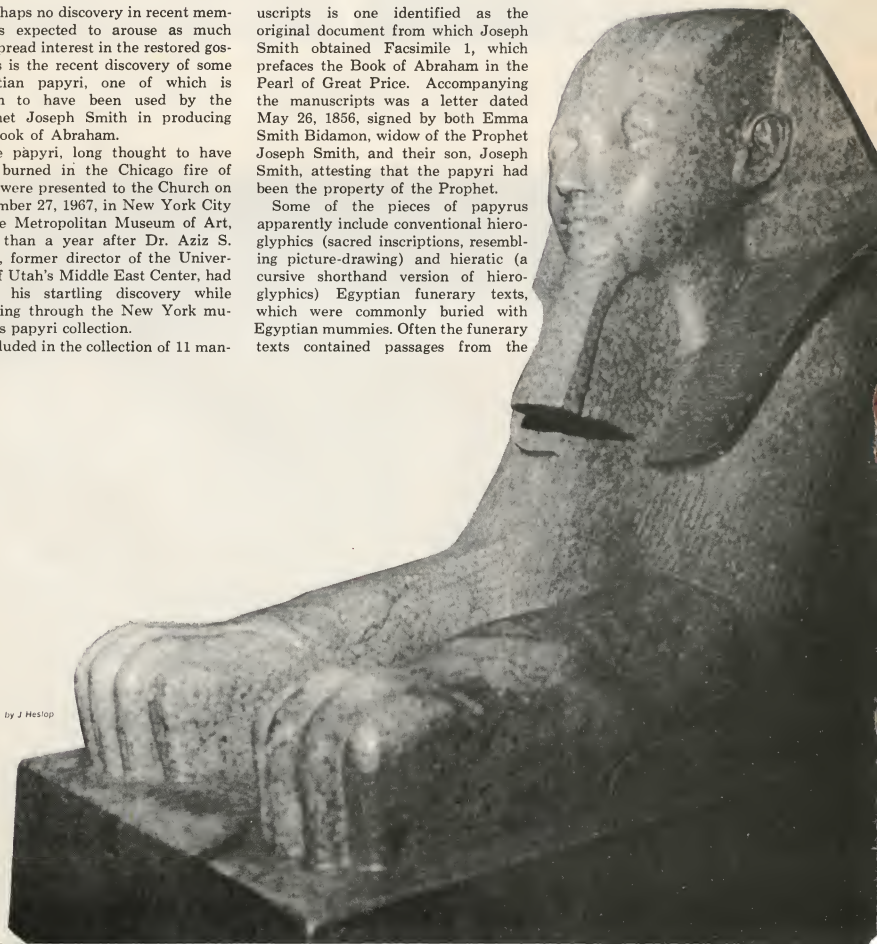
By Jay M. Todd
Editorial Associate

● Perhaps no discovery in recent memory is expected to arouse as much widespread interest in the restored gospel as is the recent discovery of some Egyptian papyri, one of which is known to have been used by the Prophet Joseph Smith in producing the Book of Abraham.

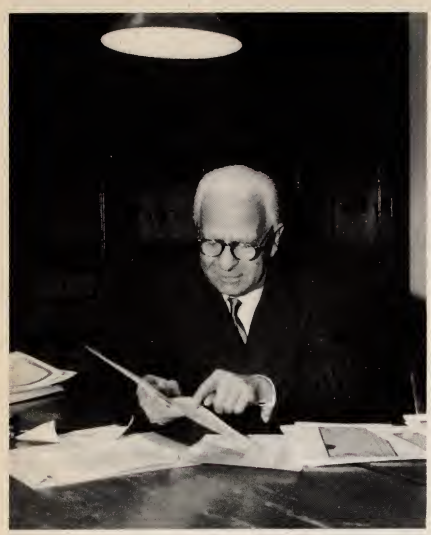
The papyri, long thought to have been burned in the Chicago fire of 1871, were presented to the Church on November 27, 1967, in New York City by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, more than a year after Dr. Aziz S. Atiya, former director of the University of Utah's Middle East Center, had made his startling discovery while browsing through the New York museum's papyri collection.

Included in the collection of 11 manuscripts is one identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith obtained Facsimile 1, which prefaces the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. Accompanying the manuscripts was a letter dated May 26, 1856, signed by both Emma Smith Bidamon, widow of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and their son, Joseph Smith, attesting that the papyri had been the property of the Prophet.

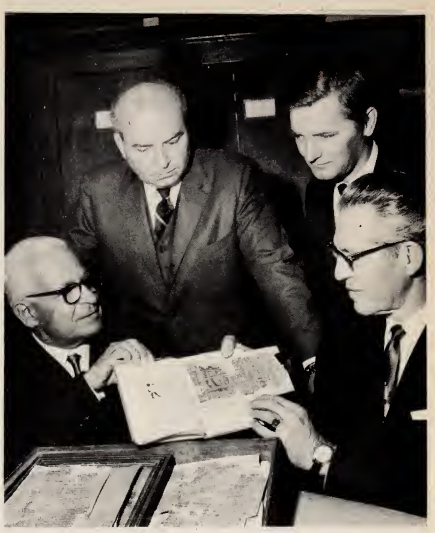
Some of the pieces of papyrus apparently include conventional hieroglyphics (sacred inscriptions, resembling picture-drawing) and hieratic (a cursive shorthand version of hieroglyphics) Egyptian funerary texts, which were commonly buried with Egyptian mummies. Often the funerary texts contained passages from the



Photos by J Heslop



Dr. Aziz Atiya examines manuscripts in the room in which he found the papyri and document signed by Emma Smith.



Dr. Aziz Atiya, Dr. Joseph Noble, Dr. Thomas P. F. Hoving, President Tanner compare Facsimile No. 1 with original.

"Book of the Dead," a book that was to assist in the safe passage of the dead person into the spirit world. It is not known at this time whether the ten other pieces of papyri have a direct connection with the Book of Abraham.

It was also discovered that on the backing of three of the manuscripts (the backing was pasted to the fragile manuscripts, apparently by the Prophet Joseph, to give them firm support) are some jottings, hand-drawn maps, and apparent notations of townships, all thought to be in the Prophet Joseph Smith's handwriting. Their importance or revelance has not yet been ascertained but will be of intense interest to Latter-day Saint historians.

The collection of manuscripts was presented to President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency by Thomas P. G. Hoving, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in an impressive ceremony held in the New York museum and attended by worldwide news agencies. After being displayed in the Church offices in Salt Lake City, the manuscripts were turned over to Dr. Hugh Nibley, scholar, linguist at Brigham Young University, and contributing editor of *The Improvement Era*, for further research and study.

The story of the unusual manner in which the Prophet Joseph Smith obtained the original papyri and four Egyptian mummies has been told often and is full of adventure and fascination. But of equal interest is the story of Dr. Aziz S. Atiya's discovery of the papyri in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is best told in his own words:

"I was writing a book at the time, one that I had started while a professor of world Christianity and eastern Christianity, and I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art looking for documents, papyri, pictures, and illustrations to serve the book. It must have been in the early spring of 1966. I really forget the date. My book was ready for the press, and I was looking for supplementary material.

"While I was in one of the dim rooms where everything was brought to me, something caught my eye, and I asked one of the assistants to take me behind the bars into the storehouse of documents so that I could look some more. While there I found a file with these documents. I at once recognized the picture part of it. When I saw this picture, I knew that it had appeared in the Pearl of Great Price. I knew the general format of the picture. This kind of picture one can find generally on other papyri, but this particular one has special peculiarities. For instance, the head had fallen off, and I could see that the papyrus was stuck on paper, nineteenth century paper. The head was completed in pencil, apparently by Joseph Smith, who must have had it when that part fell off. He apparently drew the head in his own hand on the supplementary paper. Also, the hands of the mummy, raised as they are, and the leg, raised as it is—usually the mummies lie straight forward—are

very peculiar. This papyrus is Egyptian, true enough, but what it stands for, I really don't know.

"Now when I saw this, I began to search further. I saw more pieces of papyri stacked together and suspected that Providence had assisted. Another document was found with these documents, signed by Joseph Smith's wife, his son, and someone else, testifying that these papyri were treasured and owned by Joseph Smith.

"In 1918 a Mrs. Heusser came to the museum and informed the officials that she had some papyrus, but an understanding was not reached until 1947. They were then acquired by the museum, and then the museum changed curators of Egyptian antiquities and the whole subject was forgotten.

"When I saw these documents, I really was taken back. I know the Mormon community, what it stands for, its scripture, etc., and I said at once that these documents don't belong here. They belong to the Mormon Church. Well, of course, the people in the museum are good friends of mine, and I tried to tempt them into ceding the documents to the Church. I informed my good friend Taza Peirce, who is executive secretary of the Salt Lake Council for International Visitors, and we discussed the manner in which I should acquaint the Mormon community of the find. She suggested I see President Tanner, and she was the intermediary who arranged and attended our first two meetings. Thereafter, I met directly with President Tanner, who had said the Church was very, very interested and would do anything or pay any price for them. Since that time, we worked quietly on the possibility of their transference to the Church.

"In these kinds of things, I never push. I take my time. With some kindly persuasions and discussions, the museum ultimately put a memorandum on the subject to the board of trustees of the museum. This took a long time to come to that step. The Board discussed the matter at very great length, greater length than you might think, and in the end they thought that since the museum had papyri of this nature in plenty, why should they keep these documents from the Church?

"When their generous decision was made, it was telephoned to me by the curator, and he wrote to me also. Then we had a lull in the situation, because the curator had to go to Egypt for a month in order to arrange final steps for the transference to the Metropolitan Museum of another treasure, in which I also had a hand. It concerns a great temple that is being presented by the Egyptian government to the American nation in recognition of the contributions America has made toward the salvage of the Abyssinian monuments.

"When the curator came back, he reported very nicely about the subject and said, 'The decision has been taken; your Mormon friends are going to get these papyri. So, you go to your friends and the President of the Church and make the necessary arrangements for a ceremony.'

"Of course, President Tanner was just as excited as I was. He reported to President McKay, who was very enthusiastic about the project also. We then decided the way in which the ceremony would be conducted.

"I felt very honored and very, very pleased to be in the center of the picture with such a distinguished person as President Tanner and Mr. Thomas P. G. Hoving, who is director of the museum. He's a very important man, as is his assistant and vice director, Dr. Joseph Noble. He's a very fine man. All of them were there, and to my surprise I found that the papyri were prepared in a very fine box for safekeeping.

"But during the morning of that day I made it a point to go in at an early hour, long before the meeting of these magnates, in order to make sure that the papyri were there—not only the papyri, because what is of importance is the document that accompanied the papyri. It was a faded thing, in nineteenth century hand. I found that the museum had photographed it. Well, of course, they had tried to photograph it before, but it wouldn't show because it was very faded blue paper. Now they used infra-red and ultra-violet photography to get the text out, so that now the photograph is very much better than the original.

"I was enchanted about the discovery of the papyri, which had been in the hands of Joseph Smith, but the discoveries were not ended there. On the morning of handing over the papyri, I began looking them up and down, up and down, and lo! I found on the back of the paper on which the papyri were glued writings and maps and an enumeration of townships and material of the highest value to Mormon history, made, I think, by Joseph Smith's own hand. Three of the backs were full of notes and maps, which have to be studied by the specialists. I am not a specialist of that, but I have an eye for original documents, and these papyri documents are not fakes; they are original Egyptian papyri of a pre-Christian era. They could be from 3000 B.C. to 300 B.C.—over 300 B.C., at any rate. That is my estimate. The era will have to be decided by the specialists.

"I know the kind of ink the Egyptians used and the difference between the genuine and the fake. Papyrus writings were usually placed with the mummy—papyri of many kinds—but essentially the "Book of the Dead," which would give the mummy safe passage to the world beyond. The papyri were sometimes colored. You find papyri like this with blue, gold, and red colors. This was not out of the ordinary. With regard to the ink used, it was generally made of soot and glue, and that is why it was eternal. I think these scrolls are written in that kind of ink. Usually the priests did the writing—they were most skilled. They used reed pens, and had to sharpen the reed and split it in the middle.

"The Egyptians had the papyrus plant, and they used to split it into thin layers and put the layers criss-cross on one another, pound them with a wooden hammer, and then glue them together. They cut them to suit the purposes of the documents they wanted to write. Usually long strips were used to make scrolls, and this one was made in that fashion.

"In order to protect the papyrus, which becomes brittle with age—for instance, the head of the person fell off simply because the papyrus was brittle—Joseph Smith probably thought that the best thing for its protection was to glue it on paper. When I first discovered these documents, I was so excited about the Egyptian writings that I did not look on the back of the paper, but when I returned to the museum, I noticed the writings on the back by Joseph Smith. These writings may not turn out to be of very great importance; however, any footnote one can get in the restoration of Mormon history is valuable.

"The exciting part, which has proved beyond doubt that this was the papyri that was in Joseph Smith's hand, was established by that document signed

by his widow. When I saw that, I had it transcribed and a copy typewritten to show to President Tanner.

"Do you know that this discovery appeared in the Egyptian press on the day following the ceremony? On the first page of the most important paper! You would be surprised at the attention that was given to this discovery, and apparently the Egyptians were very pleased about the revealing of these documents. I consider it a great honor to have been able to make this discovery. Great discoveries are always accidental, and this one was as accidental as any discovery I have made—and probably more exciting than all of them. It was an honor to have been able to persuade such an august body as the Metropolitan Museum to present it to another body as august as the Mormon Church. I feel flattered to have been able to do what I did."

The fact that Dr. Atiya made the discovery and so energetically attests to the manuscript's authenticity as that which Joseph Smith used in part in the translation of the Book of Abraham is of no little importance. Dr. Atiya is a world-recognized scholar and researcher of Egyptian and Arabic manuscripts. He was instrumental in building the University of Utah's Middle East Library to what has been called "perhaps the finest in its field in America." (The library, named for Dr. Atiya, was previously regarded as one of the five finest in the U.S.) He is one of three Distinguished Professors at the university. He is well-regarded for his lectures and writings while at the universities of Michigan, Columbia, Princeton, Liverpool, London, Bonn, Zurich, Cairo, and Alexandria. He is the author of approximately 20 volumes and about 50 monograph articles.

But of lasting importance are his writings on the Crusades of the Middle Ages and his studies and writings of his own Orthodox Coptic religion. He is also the founder of the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo. In essence, he is a well-recognized fellow among the worldwide community of scholars.

It could as well be said of Dr. Atiya's discovery as that which Parley P. Pratt said of Joseph's reception of Egyptian mummies and papyrus in the first place: "Singular is the providence by which this ancient record fell into the hands of the servant of the Lord, Joseph Smith."

Indeed, the story of how Joseph Smith received the papyri is very fascinating, one seemingly filled with providential direction. Some of the details are still clouded, although new research each year seems to divulge additional bits of information, but the principle points of the episode are in general agreement: Napoleon's 1798-99 conquest of Egypt turned the world's attention toward the land of pharaohs, and Egypt was soon overrun with both scientific expeditions and robbers of catacombs and ancient burial sites. One of those early adventurers interested in Egyptian antiquities was a Piedmontese named Antonio Lebolo, who worked as an agent for one of the powerful antiquity barons of the day, Bernardino Drovetti. While in Egypt during what now appears to be at least as early as 1817, Lebolo obtained a license to enter the catacombs in Thebes, Egypt. He discovered a pit tomb near a place called Gurneh, near Thebes, and found many mummies therein. He turned the best of them over to Drovetti but managed to keep some for himself. He later left Egypt en route to France via Trieste with some mummies, 11 of which eventually reached America.

While on the island of Trieste he became ill and died. This is believed to have been in 1823. It has long been presumed that the mummies Joseph Smith eventually received were from Lebolo's find, and that Lebolo willed them to Michael H. Chandler, who has been presumed to have been Lebolo's nephew. But some present-day scholars question Chandler's relationship to Lebolo. As early as 1885 N. L. Nelson, in an address at Brigham Young Academy at Provo, said that Chandler received the mummies from an "English Minister Plenipotentiary." Such a person might have been Henry Salt, a famous representative of the crown in Egypt, who died in 1827. At any event, Chandler apparently was thought to be in Ireland, and the mummies were apparently sent to Ireland via London. Chandler's friends redirected the mummies to America, where Chandler was living in Philadelphia. The mummies eventually arrived at the New York City customhouse.

Scholars have observed that it seems nothing short of miraculous that the mummies and their important records should have safely navigated through the rough waters of antiquity barons, catacomb plunderers, dishonest and rival agents in search of mummies, to eventually find safe port in the New York harbor.

In April 1833 Michael H. Chandler paid the customs duties, took possession of the 11 mummies, and opened them. He was disappointed in not finding jewels or something of great monetary value, but he did find several rolls of papyrus. Providence seemingly once more entered the story, for while yet in the customhouse, Chandler was informed that there was no man in the city who could translate the scrolls, "but was referred, by the same gentleman (a stranger), to Mr. Joseph Smith, Jr., who, continued he, possesses some kind of power or gifts, by which he had previously translated similar characters."

It was more than two years later, on July 3, 1835, that Chandler met the Prophet Joseph. During those years Chandler had exhibited for a nominal charge the mummies and even sold seven of them to private museums.

According to James R. Clark, a persistent and intelligent student of the history of our Pearl of Great Price, apparently a Benjamin Bullock of Moirie, New York, a nonmember but a relative of Heber C. Kimball, had heard of Joseph Smith, and when Bullock met Chandler, he offered to take him more than 250 miles by wagon to Kirtland, Ohio, to meet the Prophet.

(An interesting sidelight is that as a result of Bullock's visit to Kirtland, he returned to his home greatly impressed with Joseph Smith. He took with him a copy of the Book of Mormon. After he and his wife read it, they moved west to be with the Church.)

When they reached Kirtland, Mr. Chandler asked the Prophet Joseph if he had the power to translate the scrolls, and Joseph replied that he had. The Prophet records that he gave Chandler an interpretation of some of the material on the scrolls.

Mr. Chandler was so impressed that he wrote a certificate testifying of Joseph Smith's "deciphering the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic characters" "to correspond in the most minute matters" with that which Chandler had learned from "the most learned."

The Prophet records in his *Documentary History of the Church* (Vol. 2, page 236): "Soon after this, some of the Saints at Kirtland purchased

the mummies and papyrus, a description of which will appear hereafter, and with W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hierglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc.—a more full account of which will appear in its place, as I proceed to examine or unfold them."

Concerning the four mummies, the Prophet generally admitted that he did not know who the mummies were, although some secondary sources later reported that the Prophet identified them as a pharaoh, a queen, a princess, and a slave. The rolls of papyrus are known to have been with one of the female mummies. Concerning the rolls, it has been surmised that apparently they were original records or copies of original records made by Abraham and his grandson Joseph, and written upon by succeeding record keepers and pharaohs over several thousand years' duration.

The result is well-known to Latter-day Saints. The Prophet interpreted some of the writings on the scrolls, and this interpretation and facsimiles 1, 2, and 3 make up our present Book of Abraham. Some present-day scholars think that part of the papyri that Joseph had in his possession contained an actual primer in the Egyptian alphabet and grammar previously prepared by its ancient authors for the benefit of future translators. It is also known that the Prophet promised "further extracts from the Book of Abraham" than those writings that we already have, but martyrdom cut short his publication of new materials. (John Taylor, *Times and Seasons*, Feb. 1843.)

At any rate, after the martyrdom of the Prophet, the mummies and manuscripts were turned over to Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith. At her death in May 1855, the mummies and manuscripts were kept by Emma Smith Bidamon, with whom Lucy Mack Smith lived the two years previous to her death. Emma Smith Bidamon was the Prophet's widow and had since married L. C. Bidamon. Shortly after one year of holding the mummies and manuscripts, Emma sold them to a Mr. A. Coombs.

It was this letter of sales to Mr. A. Coombs, signed by Emma Smith Bidamon and dated May 26, 1856, in addition to the 11 pieces of papyri, that was found by Dr. Atiya. The letter reads: "This certifies that we have sold to Mr. A. Combs four Egyptian Mummies with the records of them. This mummies were obtained from the catacoms of Egypt sixty feet below the surface of the Earth. by the antiquaritan society of Paris & forwarded to New York & purchased by the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith at the price of twenty four hundred dollars in the year eighteen hundred thirty five they were highly prized by Mr. Smith on account of the importance which attached to the record which were accidentaly found enclosed in the breast of one of the Mummies. From translations by Mr. Smith of the Records. these Mummies were found to be the family of Pharo King of Egypt. they were kept exclusively by Mr. Smith until his death & since by the Mother of Mr. Smith notwithstanding we have had repeated offers to purchase which have invariably been refused until her death which occurred on the fourteenth day of May last." Signed: "L. C. Bidamon, Emma Bidamon, Joseph Smith [her son]. Nauvoo, Hancock Co. Ill, May 26."

The next account of the mummies appears in the 1859 "St. Louis Museum Catalogue" and then in the 1863 "Chicago Museum Catalogue," page 42, in which are described two mummies that were "kept by the Prophet's mother until his death, when the heirs sold them, and were shortly after purchased for the Museum."

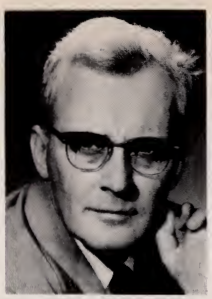
A great fire destroyed much of Chicago in 1871, and it had been presumed that the mummies and manuscripts were burned in that fire, even though the 1856, 1859, and 1863 catalogues do not give any information about the two other mummies or the manuscripts. Information on the two other mummies and the rest of the papyri manuscripts used by the Prophet may yet come forth in some future day.

The collection recently found by Dr. Atiya first came to the attention of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1918. Apparently Mr. A. Coombs had not disposed of all his purchases made from Emma Smith Bidamon, because in 1918 a Mrs. Alice C. Heusser of Brooklyn, New York, took the recently discovered papyri and document signed by Emma Smith to the Metropolitan Museum for evaluation. Mrs. Heusser was a daughter of the housekeeper of Mr. A. Coombs. But the museum did not buy the collection of papyri until Edward Heusser, husband of Alice, finally sold them to the museum in 1947. The papyri have been in the museum's files since that time.

Thus, the stage was set for the remarkable discovery of Dr. Atiya. These pieces of papyrus, only part of the ones Joseph Smith had in his possession, are now back in the hands of the Church. They are a remarkably powerful and tangible testimony to the truthfulness of the Prophet's clear and simply told story that he had in his hands some original papyri documents, some of which he used in producing the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. ○

The official presentation ceremonies in New York in which President Tanner accepted papyri from Dr. Thomas P. F. Hoving.

The Author and the Articles



The flood of newly discovered Jewish and Christian documents that are changing the complexion of religious studies in our time has been matched by equally significant, if less spectacular, developments in an area of no less interest to Latter-day Saints—that of the religious practices and beliefs of the Egyptians.

Recent challenges that question the authenticity of many statements in one of the standard works of the Church, the Pearl of Great Price, have reopened an old discussion at a time when fresh discoveries and interpretations are putting an entirely new face on the whole problem. Brother Hugh Nibley, who for many years has been gathering data relevant to the study of the Facsimiles in the Book of Abraham, presents in this fascinating series some of the materials that must be considered in the reappraisal of certain Egyptological aspects of the Pearl of Great Price for which the time is now ripe.

The reader is warned to be prepared for surprises. Although Dr. Nibley pulls no punches, he is still animated by a healthy respect for all qualified

A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price

By Dr. Hugh Nibley

Part I. Challenge and Response

Unsettled Business—The recent reissuing of Bishop Franklin S. Spalding's little book, *Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator*,[1] though not meant to revive an old discussion but rather to extinguish any lingering sparks of it, is nonetheless a welcome invitation, or rather challenge, to those who take the Pearl of Great Price seriously, for long experience has shown that the Latter-day Saints only become aware of the nature and genius of their modern scriptures when relentless and obstreperous criticism from the outside forces them to take a closer look at what they have, with the usual result of putting those scriptures in a much stronger position than they were before. We have all neglected the Pearl of Great Price for too long, and should be grateful to those who would now call us to account.

In this introductory study we make no excuse for poking around among old bones, since others have dug them up to daunt us; but we should warn them that if they insist on bringing up the ghosts of the dead, they may soon find themselves with more on their hands than they had bargained for. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since

Egyptologists, including his own revered instructors, in the rudiments of the mysteries of hieroglyphics, and promises to proceed with such caution and discretion that even they will approve of his methods, however much they may disagree with his conclusions.

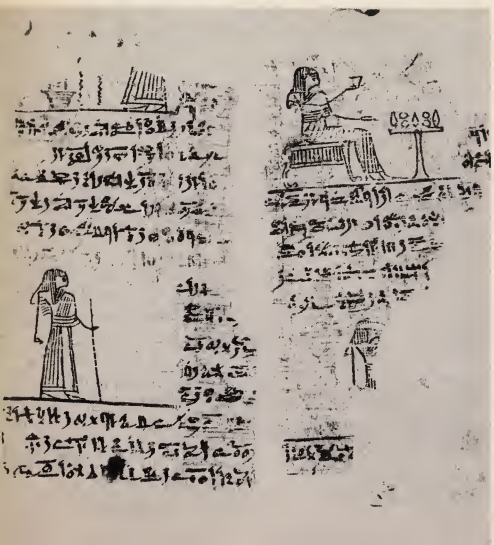
Dr. Nibley, who is professor of history and religion at Brigham Young University and who has been a contributing editor of The Improvement Era *for 22 years, is eminently qualified for the project he has undertaken. In addition to his familiarity with things Egyptian, he actively uses the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Babylonian, Russian, French, German, Arabic, and Coptic languages. He is at home with primary documents and original sources.*

Dr. Nibley's writings include nine extended series of articles in The Improvement Era. *His ability has also received continued recognition in a wide variety of scholarly journals, including the* Classic Journal, Western Political Quarterly, *the* Jewish Quarterly Review, *and the* Jewish Encyclopedia.

Dr. Nibley received his B.A. in history and the classics in 1934 from the University of California at Los Angeles, where he was graduated with high honors. In 1938 he received his Ph.D. degree from the University of California at Berkeley, where he also has done post-doctoral work. He has been a university fellow in historical research at the University of California at Berkeley, lecturer in history and social philosophy at Claremont College, and visiting professor in classical rhetoric at the University of California.

"A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" promises to be one of the most significant series of articles to appear in the pages of The Improvement Era *in recent years.* D.L.G.

One of 11 fragments of papyrus presented to the Church by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. The papyri, once in Joseph Smith's possession, are being studied.



1912, and of course many things that were said and written then with great confidence and finality would have to be revised today.

On the other hand, a careful survey of the journals will, we believe, show that the year 1912 saw more significant studies published in the field than any other year before or since; Egyptology reached a peak in 1912—it was the age of the giants. So if it should now turn out that the giants were anything but infallible, that should teach us to be wary of the scholarly dogmatism of our own day.

Nothing could be more retrograde to our desire than to call up the bearded and frock-coated savants of 1912 to go through their pompous paces all over again. But it is others who have conjured up the ghostly jury to testify against the Prophet; and unless they are given satisfaction, their sponsors can spread abroad, as they did in Bishop Spalding's day, the false report that the Scholars have spoken the final word and "completely demolished" (that was their expression) for all time the Pearl of Great Price and its author's claim to revelation.

"Of all the attacks on Mormonism, the great campaign of 1912 . . . was the one that should have suc

The silence of the Latter-day Saints in a matter that concerns them so vitally can only be interpreted as an abashed silence, leading many of the world and of the Saints to conclude that there is nothing to be said in Joseph Smith's behalf, than which nothing could be further from the truth. And so the sorry little saga of 1912 must needs be retold if only to forestall indefinite repetitions of what happened then as well as in 1845, 1865, and 1903.

The situation today is essentially the same as it was on all those occasions, with the Mormons, untrained in Egyptology, helpless to question on technical grounds the assertions of such experts as Deveria and E. A. W. Budge, who grandly waved their credentials for all to see, impatiently stated their opinions, and then gingerly decamped, refusing to be led into any discussion with the ignorant opposition.

And so the debate has never really come to the floor, the challengers being ever satisfied that the mere sight of their muscles should be sufficient to settle the issue without a contest. "These 'experts' have given us a lot of opinions," wrote the outsider, R. C. Webb, of the 1912 affair, "which they have not attempted to prove by authoritative demonstration. . . . We are concerned wholly with opinion, pure and simple, and not with anything that may be proved conclusively."[2]

For the benefit of those readers who may have forgotten some of the details of 1912, it may be recalled that Bishop Spalding asked eight Egyptologists what they thought of Joseph Smith's interpretation of the Facsimiles in the Pearl of Great Price. You can imagine what their answers were. Now let us take it up from there.

The Appeal to Authority—Of all attacks on Mormonism undertaken beneath the banners of science and scholarship, the great campaign of 1912 conducted by the Right Reverend F. S. Spaulding, Episcopal bishop of Utah, was the one that should have succeeded most brilliantly. Carefully planned and shrewdly executed, it enlisted the services of the most formidable roster of scholars that have ever declared against Joseph Smith as a prophet, while at the same time loudly professing feelings of nothing but affection and esteem for the Saints and a real desire to help them find the light in a spirit of high-minded dedication to truth at all costs.

Bishop Spalding's grand design had all the ingredients of quick and sure success but one, and if in spite of it the Pearl of Great Price is still being read, it is because the bishop failed to include in his tremendous barrage a single shell containing an item of solid and relevant evidence. If he has any other ammunition than names and credentials, he never uses it—he hurls at the Mormons a cannonade of titles and opinions, and nothing more. "The authority of experts in any line of research is always to be accepted without question, unless there is grave reason to doubt their conclusion. There is no such reason here."[3] And who is talking? Spalding's No. 1 expert, a young man who had just got his degree (*not* in Egyptology)—*he* tells us that we must accept his verdict "without question" because he is an expert and sees no reason to doubt his conclusions. This is what we mean by authoritarianism.

But then, who would ever have thought in 1912 that any other kind of ammunition would be necessary? What was there to say after the official voice of Scholarship had spoken? The Mormons did what they could. They pointed out that equally great authorities had been proven wrong about the Bible time and again.[4] They called attention to the brevity and superficiality of the experts' comments: "This 'inquiry,'" wrote Webb, "has been no inquiry at all in any real sense. . . . [It] presents merely a medley of opinions. . . . It furnishes absolutely no assistance to [the] reader. . . ."[5] They noted that the judges approached their task in a thoroughly hostile state of mind.[6] When an editorial in the Church newspaper pointed out in the most reserved and respectful language that there were indeed some rather obvious contradictions and discrepancies in the views of the experts, and that the Mormons might at least be permitted to ask for "a stay of final judgment," since (as B. H. Roberts expressed it) "these questions that depend on special scholarship are questions that require time and research . . . and the conclusions of the learned in such matters are not as unchangeable as they seem,"[7] the *New York Times* exploded with indignation: ". . . the Deseret Evening News spent its entire editorial page reviling scholars and scholarship."[8] One did not talk back to recognized scholars—it just wasn't done.

The *Deseret News* editorial in question pointed out that the Mormons had some years before already anticipated Bishop Spalding's investigations by making inquiries on their own among leading British Egyptologists, which "at least serves to show that we have not been lax, nor afraid to learn from whatever light the wisdom of the world might throw upon the illustrations of the Book of Abraham and their translation by the Prophet Joseph."[9]

ceeded most brilliantly."

Two days earlier an editorial in the *Deseret News* made a clear statement of policy: "The Latter-day Saints court inquiry, such as this. They want to know the truth, and only the truth. There is no important issue that they are not glad to face, whether presented by friend or foe."[10] And in the discussion that followed, the Mormons proved their good faith and sincerity by printing in the pages of *The Improvement Era* the letters of Bishop Spalding and his supporters, without deletion and without comment, along with those of the Latter-day Saints defending Joseph Smith.

There was no such dialogue in the non-Mormon periodicals in which Dr. Spalding published, including his own Utah newspaper, *The Utah Survey;* in spite of his constant protests of impartiality and intellectual integrity, only his own and like opinions ever appeared there.[11]

The Mormon writers, moreover, never claimed any such religious immunity as might have been conceded to Joseph Smith as a spiritual leader, but always insisted on arguing the case on its merits: "I allow the bishop all his claims to the dire results to 'Mormonism'" wrote B. H. Roberts, "if he can, to the point of demonstration, make his case good against Joseph Smith as a translator."[12] Bishop Spalding's scholarly band, on the other hand, most emphatically *did* claim immunity—to question them was to "revile" that noble thing called Scholarship, and that was the secret of their strength.

When Dr. S. A. B. Mercer, a hustling young clergyman who ran interference for the bishop throughout the game, summed up the case for the prosecution, his argument made a perfect circle: "The failure of the Mormon replies," he wrote, "is explained by the fact that the unanimous opinion of the scholars is unassailable. In the judgment of the scholarly world, therefore, Joseph Smith stands condemned of self-deception or imposition."[13]

Who said that the Mormon reply had "failed"? Mercer did, to be sure. Here we see the great convenience of permitting the attorney for the prosecution to act as judge. Dr. Mercer announces that the Mormon replies to him and his colleagues have failed—because he says so. And what he says must be so because his colleagues agree with him.

When the Mormons pointed out that there was anything but unanimous agreement among the colleagues, Mercer sternly overruled them, explaining that where any ordinary person might find the disagreements rather obvious, "to the expert there is here no discrepancy."[14] Only one had to be an Egyptologist to see it that way. That is why when B. H. Roberts was pressing Dr. Mercer pretty hard, the latter overruled him too, with the observation that the source of the difficulties in the case of Mr. Roberts, "is to be found in the fact that the writer is a layman in things Egyptian."[15] What Mercer's explanation amounts to, as R. C. Webb observes, is the argument "in effect, that scholars in his department can make no mistakes,"[16] or, in Mercer's own words, that their opinions are "unassailable." How can one discuss an "unassailable" opinion? One can't—that is just the point; the issue is closed; no debate is intended or possible.

In his final letter, Dr. Mercer divides the opposition into three classes: "First, intelligent and fair-minded Mormons," namely, those who do not challenge the scholars in any way; "secondly biased Mormons (perhaps unconsciously)," that is, Mormons guilty of pro-Mormon leanings, including B. H. Roberts, John A. Widtsoe, John Henry Evans, and J. M. Sjodahl—in fact, all who have presumed to question the verdict of the experts. Fortunately for Mercer, all their remarks can be summarily stricken from the record, since they are "very ignorant in respect to the subject they pretend to criticise"—it is not for them under *any* circumstances to talk back; they are all out of order. Dr. Mercer's third class is "biased and ignorant gentiles," being any such as may be inclined to give ear to the Mormon replies.[17]

And so the doctors must be allowed to sit in judgment on their own case because no one else is qualified; and if they should happen to decide in favor of themselves, why, there is just nothing we can do about it, since their expertise is far beyond the reach of the layman, placing them in fact "at the intellectual summit of the universe" by the ancient professional mystery of "autodeification in the order of knowing."[18]

This arrangement is basic to the prosperity of most of the learned professions. Long ago the Jesuits devised a special vocabulary and a special discipline of theology which, they announced, only one of their faith could really understand; for any outsider to risk criticism of anything they chose to propound in that recondite jargon could only be the sheerest folly, as Arnold Lunn reminded the great scientist J. B. S. Haldane when the latter ventured to point out certain weaknesses in his theology.[19] But then the scientists have played the same game for all it is worth. Thus, when "the main objections [to the evolutionary hypothesis] were clearly stated in its very early days," they were quickly overruled because "most of them came from people who were not trained biologists. . . . Their objections could be

countered summarily on the grounds of ignorance, despite the fact that Darwin's hypothesis appealed so largely to the evidence of common observation and experience."[20] Common observation and experience, no matter how clear and convincing, were no match for official credentials.

Even while Sir Gavin de Beer boasts that "the foundation principle of science is that it concerns itself exclusively with what can be demonstrated, and does not allow itself to be influenced by personal opinions or sayings of anybody. . . . The motto of the Royal Society of London is *Nullus in verba*: we take no man's word for anything,"[21] he is guilty of seeking to overawe or at least impress us with the authority of men of "science" in general and of the Royal Society of London (all stand, please) in particular.

Just so, in the Spalding discussion "the prosecution rests its case on the reputations and standing of its witnesses. . . ."[22] "In compiling the pamphlet," wrote the bishop in his summing-up, "I made no claim to a knowledge of Egyptology. I merely wrote an introduction to the opinions of scholars. In a matter of this kind most of us must form our judgment from the opinion of competent experts."[23] Thus he echoes the opinion of his No. 1 expert, cited above, who gracefully returns the compliment, noting that after all, it was the good bishop's opinion that in the end would settle all disputes: "The advisers of the Bishop proved to his satisfaction" that glaring contradictions of the judges did not really exist, "that there were no such differences. The apparent discrepancies were proved not to be real." Thus Spalding's chief adviser declares that his advisers, by satisfying the bishop that all was well, had brought the issue to its final and satisfactory conclusion, binding all thinking men to accept and share his opinion.[24]

Thus reassured, Bishop Spalding proceeded to demolish R. C. Webb: "We feel that we should be in a better position to judge the value of the opinions of Robert C. Webb, PhD . . . if we were told definitely who he is. . . . If Dr. Talmage . . . would inform us what the author's real name is, where he received his degree, and what academic position he holds, we should be better able to estimate the value of his opinions."[25] Here it is again: The bishop is not interested in Webb's arguments and evidence, but in his status and rank—considerations that are supposed to bear no weight whatever with honest searchers after truth—*Nullus in verba!* What on earth have a man's name, degree, academic position, and, of all things, opinions, to do with whether a thing is true or not?

In this case the answer is—everything. Dr. Mercer frankly admits that he and the other scholars "did not seem to take the matter very seriously," and devoted very little time to it indeed: ". . . the haste was justified in the minds of the scholars by the simplicity of the task. Even less time could be expected."[26]

Elsewhere he explains the perfunctory treatment of the whole thing: "They probably felt as I did, that their time was too valuable to spend on such scientific work as that of Joseph Smith's guesses."[27] Whatever the reason, they never intended to do any real work, but depended entirely on their credentials to see the thing through.

A word from such great men should be enough to settle anything, but still *we* insist on appealing to the slogan of the Royal Society. Many eminent scientists, in fact, are today calling attention to the crippling effect of appeal to authority and position in science, a professional complacency that "may in fact be the closing of our eyes to as yet undiscovered factors which may remain undiscovered for many years if we believe that the answer has been already found."[28] Thus a great biologist reminds us that "it is important to combat the assumption" that we know what primitive conditions of life were like (every scientist knew that in 1912), since "as long as this is assumed, insufficient effort will be put into the attempt to find ways to obtain genuine evidence."[29]

Now, part of the secret of the unusual productivity of the Egyptologists of 1912 was a buoyant adolescent confidence in their own newly found powers, which present-day scholars may envy, but which they can well do without—there is something decidedly sophomoronic in their lofty pretensions to have plumbed the depths of the human past after having taken a few courses, read a few texts (bristling with question marks), and broken bread with the learned at a dig or two. Their inexpressible contempt for Joseph Smith as an ignorant interloper is a measure of their pride in their own achievement.

In 1912 the Egyptologist T. E. Peet took to task all laymen who "mistrust a process in which they see a critic assign half a verse to Source E and the other half to Source J." Time has more than vindicated the skeptical laymen, but in those days Dr. Peet laid it on the line: "Have these people followed the developments of modern philology and do they realize that the critics . . . are men whose whole lives are devoted to the study of such problems, and whose knowledge of Hebrew and of the Semitic languages in general is so great that the differences of style . . . are as patent

Coffins similar to these may have housed mummies bought by Joseph Smith.

to them as they would be in English to a layman?"[30] Professor Peet would have done well to harken to what Bishop Spalding's own star witness, Professor A. H. Sayce, had written some years before:

"How then is it possible for the European scholars of today to analyse an old Hebrew book into its component parts . . .? Hebrew is a language that is very imperfectly known; it has long ceased to be spoken; only a fragment of its literature has come down to us, and that often in a corrupt state; and the meaning of many of the words which have survived, and even of the grammatical forms, is uncertain and disputed. In fact, it is just this fragmentary and imperfect knowledge of the language which has made the work and results of the higher critics possible. The 'critical' analysis of the Pentateuch is but a measure of our ignorance and the limitations of our knowledge. . . . With a fuller knowledge we would come to a recognition of the futility of the task."[31]

Subsequent discoveries have proven him quite right, but Sayce's early protest was a voice in the wilderness. Soon the higher critics were having it all their own way, and none ran more eagerly with them than Sayce himself. B. H. Roberts, a personal friend of Spalding's, admitted that the bishop held the whip handle: "I think the bishop is entitled to have it known by those reading these 'remarks' how eminent is the jury pronouncing in the case against the 'Mormon' Prophet. . . . One who can lay no claim to the learning of Egypt at first hand, . . . may well pause before such an array of Egyptologists. . . . In their presence it is becoming in me, and all others unschooled in ancient Egyptian lore, to speak with modesty and behave with becoming deference."[32]

One may wonder how an admittedly unqualified party could pass on such recondite qualifications in others, but it is the credentials of the specialists that impress Brother Roberts, not their knowledge, which he is in no position to judge. Faced by a solid phalanx of PhD's, the Mormons were properly overawed; they had no David to go against these Goliaths, and for that they had only themselves to blame.

The Mormons Default—From the first the Latter-day Saints had good reason to expect the Pearl of Great Price to come in for some rough treatment. "Here, then," wrote Parley P. Pratt in 1842, "is another subject for the Gentile world to stumble at, and for which to persecute the Saints. . . ."[33] Within three years of that remark the world was firing the same scholarly blasts against the Facsimiles and demolishing their claims with the same devastating finality as was to delight the intellectuals again in 1865, 1912, and today.

The figures in the Facsimiles, it was announced in 1845, were "familiar and now understood," and it served Joseph Smith right for "confidently defying inevitable exposure," now that "the Champollions of the Bibliotheque de Rei [*sic*] and the British Museum" had the subject well in hand. It was already apparent to the learned that "the whole thing is too gross to bear patiently, too painful to laugh at. . . ."[34] That should have settled the matter, but the Mormons were not convinced and would have done well in undertaking some study of Egyptian on their own.

Again and again Joseph Smith and Brigham Young had pointed the way for the Latter-day Saints to prepare themselves for just such eventualities, pleading with them to take heed to themselves and use their brains. Even during the grim days of December 1844, the leaders of the Church "advise[d] the Elders to get up schools, that all . . . might be taught in the branches of education, and prepare themselves, that the least might be fully competent, to correspond with the wise men of the world."[35] They were to meet the scholars of the world on their own grounds; but instead of that, human nature saw fit to expend its energies elsewhere: "There are hundreds in this community," said Brigham Young in 1860, "who are more eager to become rich in the perishable things of this world than to adorn their minds with the power of self-government, and with a knowledge of things as they were, as they are, and as they are to come,"[36] and he rebukes the Saints for being satisfied "to remain fixed with a very limited amount of knowledge, and, like a door upon its hinges, move to and fro from one year to another without any visible advancement or im-

provement, lusting after the grovelling things of this life which perish with the handling."[37]

Those Latter-day Saints who have gone on to higher studies have either pursued the physical and biological sciences or coveted bread-and-butter certificates that have rendered them all the more subservient to mere office and authority. To this day no one has engaged in the type of study necessary to come to grips with the Pearl of Great Price, though that great book openly invites such study: "If the world can find out these numbers, so let it be. Amen."

Up to the present, all studies of the Pearl of Great Price without exception have been in the nature of auxiliary studies—compendiums, historical background, etc.—or preliminary surveys.[38] In 1879 George Reynolds noted that in spite of all provocation, "very little has ever been said by the Elders of the Church in advocacy of its claims as an inspired record," and that while "outsiders have vigorously attacked it . . . styled its language 'gibberish,' and classed it among the 'pious frauds' . . . the people of God have said or written little in its defense. . . ."[39] His own book furnishes a clear demonstration of just why the Saints had never been able to get off the ground—they just didn't have the knowledge.

The authors of a long procession of articles in the *Era* in 1912, 1913, 1914, and 1917 frankly admitted their ignorance, and pleaded that they had been caught by surprise. Their studies are nonetheless by far the best to appear to date; the books, articles, and master's theses turned out since then have largely repeated what they had to say, with perhaps an item or two added to the bibliographies where it was felt necessary to justify a degree in the seven arts. Even the extensive labors of James R. Clark, valuable as they are, are all of an introductory nature, clearing the decks as it were for the real action to come.

Full-scale college and extension courses, graduate seminars, Churchwide lecture series, stately public symposiums, books, pamphlets, monographs, newsletters, and articles, all done up in fancy bindings usually adorned with reproductions of the Facsimiles from the Pearl of Great Price or with faked Egyptian symbols to intrigue and beguile the public, have all failed to get beyond the starting point of the race, which after all must be run on the long hard obstacle course of Egyptian grammar and epigraphy and not on the lecture platform. The Mormons, it seems, have gone all out for the gimmicks and mechanics of education, but have never evinced any real inclination to tackle the tough, basic questions of evidence raised by the Pearl of Great Price.

A new school of interpretation some years ago attempted to meet the challenge to and of the Pearl of Great Price by the face-saving thesis that the Book of Abraham was not written in Egyptian after all, but in "some Semitic language," and hailed this shifting of the discussion to more familiar grounds as putting "Book of Abraham investigation on a more sound and scholarly basis."[40] But no studies were forthcoming on the new foundation save a few "primarily for the laymen . . . making no claim of being . . . learned or scientific."[41] How, the ingenuous student may ask, can any study hope to be "sound and scholarly" without being at least a little learned and scientific? One should not enter the arena unless one is willing to meet more formidable opposition than the gullible student and tractable layman.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES

[2]Franklin S. Spalding, *Joseph Smith, Jr., As a Translator* (Salt Lake City: The Arrow Press, 1912); reprinted by the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church (New York: Church Missions House, 1915); photomechanical reprint, Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Company, 1965.

[3]Robert C. Webb (J. C. Homans), in *The Improvement Era*, Vol. 16 (1913), p. 1077.

[4]S. A. B. Mercer, *The Utah Survey* (published monthly by the Social Service Commission of the Episcopal Church in Utah), Vol. 1 (September 1913), No. 1, p. 30.

[5]e.g., an editorial in the *Deseret Evening News*, Dec. 17, 1912, p. 4, and J. M. Sjodahl, in *The Improvement Era* (hereafter designated as *Era*), Vol. 16 (1913), p. 326. The high critics erred egregiously especially where Egypt was concerned: "Dr. Von Bohlen, the honored co-laborer with Gesenius and De Wette, gave long chapters to the easy task of proving from overwhelming classical testimony that the Bible blundered almost every time it mentions an Egyptian custom. According to this great scholar, the statement that the Egyptians built with brick in ancient times, used asses, cultivated the vine, and used costly materials in such constructions as the ark and the tabernacle, proved that the author of the Pentateuch was 'an absolute stranger to Egypt.'" C. H. S. Davis, *Ancient Egypt in the Light of Modern Discoveries* (Meriden, Conn., 1892), p. 311.

[6]Robert C. Webb, in *Era*, Vol. 17 (1914), p. 313, commenting on an article in the *Survey* magazine of November 1913. Webb notes, in the *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 435, that after the great promises made before its publication, Spalding's book has turned out disappointingly thin and skimpy.

[7]N. L. Nelson, in the *Era*, Vol. 16, pp. 606f, was more outspoken than the others: ". . . a jury of Gentiles, prejudiced, ill-tempered and mad with the pride of human learning."

[8]B. H. Roberts, in *Deseret News*, Dec. 19, 1912, p. 11; cf. Junius F. Wells. *ibid.*, p. 4. The editorial to which the *Times* referred was of Dec. 17, 1912, p. 4.

[9]*The New York Times Magazine*, Part 5, Sunday, Dec. 29, 1912.

[10]J. F. Wells, in *Deseret News*, Dec. 19, 1912, p. 4.

[11]*Deseret News*, Dec. 17, 1912, p. 4.

[12]Bishop Spalding's attacks in *The Spirit of the Mission*, October 1912, are cited by R. C. Webb in the *Era*, Vol. 17, pp. 565ff; S. A. B. Mercer's long attack in Spalding's own paper, *The Utah Survey*, Vol. 1 (Sept. 1913), pp. 3-36, has been reprinted photomechanically along with the Spalding book, Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., 1965.

[13]B. H. Roberts, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 310.

[14]Samuel A. B. Mercer, *Utah Survey*, Vol. 1, p. 36.

[15]*Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 25.

[17]Robert C. Webb, *Era*, Vol. 17, p. 316: "In the Spalding literature the public has been thoroughly indoctrinated on the sufficiency of scholarly opinions, which, as we read, are 'always accepted *without question* unless there is grave reason to doubt.'" Italics added.

[18]Mercer, *The Utah Survey*, Vol. 1 (1913), pp. 12-13.

[19]C. R. Dechert, in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 5 (1965), pp. 32f.

[20]Arnold Lunn, *Science and the Supernatural; A Correspondence Between Arnold Lunn and J. B. S. Haldane* (New York, 1935), and *The Flight from Reason* (New York: Dial Press, 1931), Ch. xi.

[21]R. Good, *The Listener*, May 7, 1959, p. 797.

[22]Sir Gavin de Beer, *The Listener*, July 3, 1958.

[23]Robert C. Webb, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 435.

[24]F. S. Spaulding, *Utah Survey*, Vol. 1, p. 3.

[25]Mercer, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 30.

[26]Spalding, *loc. cit.*

[27]Mercer, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 30.

[28]Samuel A. B. Mercer, *Era*, Vol. 16, p. 613.

[29]G. A. Kerkut, *Implications of Evolution* (Oxford, New York: Pergamon Press), p. 195.

[30]N. Pirie, in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1959, p. 373.

[31]T. E. Peet, *Egypt and the Old Testament* (Liverpool University Press, 1922), p. 30.

[32]A. H. Sayce, *Monuments, Facts and Higher Critical Fancies* (4th ed., London, 1910), p. 19. The first edition was 1894.

[33]B. H. Roberts, *Era*, Vol. 16, pp. 310-11.

[34]Parley P. Pratt, *The Millennial Star*, Vol. 3 (1842), p. 47.

[35]Editorial in *Warsaw Signal*, Sept. 19, 1845, p. 2.

[36]*Brigham Young History*, Dec. 15, 1844 (ms. in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City).

[37]Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 8 (1860), p. 9.

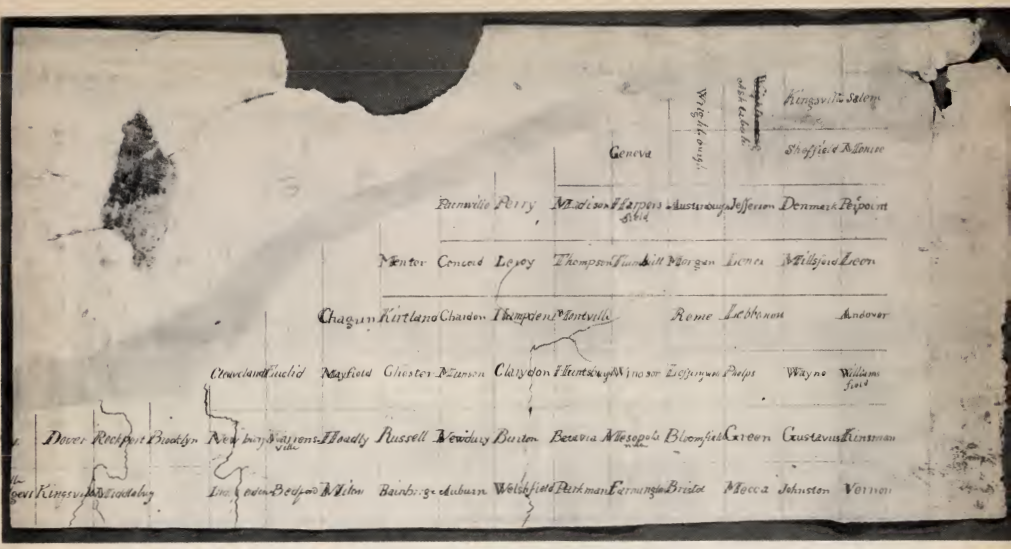
[38]*Ibid.*, Vol. 10 (1863), p. 266.

[39]This will become immediately clear to one inspecting James R. Clark's *Pearl of Great Price Bibliography* (Provo: BYU Extension Publications, 1965), every single item of which deals only incidentally and peripherally with the basic issues of authenticity raised by the Facsimiles.

[40]George Reynolds, *The Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Co., 1879), p. 1.

[41]Charles E. Haggerty, *A Study of the Book of Abraham* (BYU Thesis, 1946), pp. 83-84.

[42]*Ibid.*, p. 82.



Photograph above shows an apparent map that was drawn on backing paper to which was attached one of pieces of papyrus recently rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and presented to the Church.

Eternal Gifts

By Susan Broschinsky
Age 19

If I were an inventor
And I could invent,
The thing I'd invent would be

Something as deep and as strong and as
pure as the tide coming in from the sea.

If I were a painter
And I could paint,
The painting that I would do

Is to blend all the beauty of God's lovely
Earth with the radiant freshness of dew.

If I were a musician
And I could compose,
The music I would bring

Is the joy from the birds and the babbling
brook and the chapel bells when they ring.

If I were a speaker
And I could speak,
The words that I would say

Would come from the soft whispering breezes
at the tender waking of day.

And all of these things that I would have,
even though they be so few,
I'd carefully wrap in eternal truth, and
then I would give them to you.