PAPYRI UNDERMINE NEGRO DOCTRINE

The Mormon Prophet David O. McKay made this statement in a letter dated November 3, 1947:

I know of no scriptural basis for denying the Priesthood to Negroes other than one verse in the Book of Abraham (1:26); however, I believe, as you suggest, that the real reason dates back to our pre-existent life. (Mormonism and the Negro, by John J. Stewart and William E. Berrett, Part 2, page 19)

Although the President of the Mormon Church could use this verse from the Book of Abraham in defense of the Church’s anti-Negro doctrine in 1947, today the Mormon leaders find themselves faced with a serious problem, for the Book of Abraham has been proven to be a spurious work. Wallace Turner wrote the following in the New York Times:

San Francisco, July 14 — Papyrus fragments about 2,300 years old have created bitter wrangling among intellectuals of the Mormon world. The argument is theological and archeological, but it could turn sociological by undermining the scriptural basis for the Mormon’s discrimination against Negroes.

Since the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York gave the fragments to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints last November, the ancient documents have reopened old disputes about the divinity of the inspiration of Joseph Smith Jr., the Mormon Prophet.

The papyri are part of an Egyptian scroll acquired by the Mormons in 1835 and translated by Smith as the Book of Abraham, one of the Mormons’ sacred works. . . .

It had been assumed for decades that all of the original papyri were destroyed in the Chicago fire. The discovery last year that 11 papyrus fragments in the Metropolitan Museum had been involved in the production of the Book of Abraham was an electrifying event for Mormon intellectuals. . . .

The attack has come from within the Mormon community, from scholars who were born into Mormonism but who no longer believe. Most of the 2.5 million Mormon church members have paid scant attention.

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, now in its third year as the single nonchurch-controlled publication aimed at Mormons, devotes a section of its summer issue to examining the papyrus controversy. The editors are devout Mormon scholars.

But one article in Dialogue was written by two heretics notorious to the church establishment in Salt Lake City. They are Jerald Tanner, who left the church several years ago, and Grant S. Heward, recently excommunicated.

They maintain that one of the fragments, when compared with the Smith manuscript of the Book of Abraham, shows this:

“Joseph Smith apparently translated many English words from each Egyptian character. The characters from fewer than four lines of the papyrus make up 49 verses of the Book of Abraham, containing more than 2,000 words.”

They argue that “the Egyptian characters cannot conceivably have enough information channels (component parts) to convey the amount of material translated from them.”

The church’s answer, also in Dialogue, came from Dr. Hugh Nibley, a faculty member of the church’s Brigham Young University.

In the working paper used by the Prophet Joseph, Dr. Nibley wrote, the Egyptian symbols were only headings. “Today nobody claims that Joseph Smith got his information through ordinary scholarly channels,” he said. (New York Times, Monday, July 5, 1968)

NELSON REPUDIATES BOOK

It was over twenty years ago that Dee Jay Nelson began his study of the Egyptian language and religion. Reed Neuberger, Mr. Nelson’s Business Manager, gives this information:

(Continued on page 2)
Dee Jay’s research in Egyptology began . . . when he was discharged from the U.S. Submarine Service. After making a superficial study of ancient languages in the States he decided to add some dimension to his scant knowledge, so he traveled as a stoker in the black bunkers of a freighter to Egypt where he attached himself to the fallahin crew of Hussein Ibrahim, excavation foreman working under Zakaria Goneim, at Memphis. The late Zakaria Goneim was for many years keeper of antiquities at the Necropolis of Saqqara. Dee Jay studied three forms of the ancient language under this famous Egyptian Egyptologist. . . . His studies have taken him several times to Europe and six times to the Middle East where he has conferred with experts . . . His discoveries inspired King Farouk to present him with a small collection of Egyptian antiquities which he has added to over the years.

Reed Neuberger gave this information which was published in the Montana Arts, vol. 20, no. 1, page 21:

Dee Jay Nelson is an internationally-known lecturer on archaeological and natural history subjects and has presented just over 4,000 lectures in four countries and 46 states. . . .

In the past ten years the Nelsons have made six trips to the Middle East to film historic relics and to conduct archaeological excavations. Two of these have been in Egypt, one at Giza and the second at Saqqara. Among their discoveries were a set of bronze plates inscribed with ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics dating from about 1,400 B.C. These are now a part of their own private collection of antiquities.

Mr. Nelson, an Egyptian philologist by avocation, reads, writes and speaks ancient Egyptian, being skilled in reading hieroglyphics, hieratic and Coptic. His original researches include the first translation of the “The Egyptian Book of Life, . . .”

Mr. Nelson has become a nationally known explorer naturalist. He is a member of the Adventurers Club and gives lectures on the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1957 he was invited by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to make the first motion picture of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Since Dee Jay Nelson is an Elder in the Mormon Church, he has taken a great deal of interest in the Book of Abraham. At that time he had only the Facsimiles in the Book of Abraham with which to work.

Dr. Hugh Nibley, of the Brigham Young University, learned of Mr. Nelson’s abilities and felt that he would be “enormously useful to the Church.” On January 4, 1968, Mr. Nelson visited with Dr. Nibley at the Brigham Young University and examined the papyri. Dr. Nibley agreed that Nelson should translate the papyri and sent a note to N. Eldon Tanner (a member of the First Presidency) stating that “it would be a good idea to let Prof. Dee J. Nelson have copies” of the papyri. After completing the translation, Mr. Nelson contacted us and asked if we wanted to print it. He felt that Dr. Nibley seemed to be stalling and that his people should know the truth about the papyri; therefore, he decided to let us publish his findings.

Evidently the Mormon leaders did not want their people to know the truth about the papyri, for the Church’s newspaper, Deseret News, would not allow us to advertise Mr. Nelson’s translation. Strange as it may seem, however, Dr. Nibley gave his endorsement to Mr. Nelson’s work:

The publication of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papryi has now begun to bear fruit. Two efforts at translation and commentary have already appeared, the one an example of pitfalls to be avoided, the other a conscientious piece of work for which the Latter-day Saints owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Dee Jay Nelson. . . . This is a conscientious and courageous piece of work . . . Nelson has been careful to consult top-ranking scholars where he has found himself in doubt. He has taken the first step in a serious study of the Facsimiles of the Pearl of Great Price, supplying students with a usable and reliable translation of the available papyri that once belonged to Joseph Smith. (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring, 1968, pages 245 and 247)

Dr. Nibley also stated: “It would now seem that the Latter-day Saints are being pushed by force of circumstances through the door they have so long been reluctant to enter. And to Mr. Dee Jay Nelson goes the credit of being the first to make the plunge” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring, 1968, page 254).

Dee Jay Nelson’s plunge into the study of Egyptology and the Book of Abraham, however, has forced him to reject the book. After many years of study, Mr. Nelson has come to the conclusion that the Mormon Church must give up the Book of Abraham. In a letter dated July 13, 1968, he stated:

I have been swamped lately by letters and long distance telephone calls from troubled people. Almost every one of them asks if I really believe that the Book of Abraham is untrue and each seems almost pleadingly eager for me to defend it. To each I have said that I do not believe it.

Mr. Nelson informed us that in one week he “received 33 letters and 19 long distance calls about the Book of Abraham and the papyri.” Previous to this he had counted 40 letters in a “two month period.” Even though Mr. Nelson has been busy answering questions, he has completed two new books which show why the Mormon Church must repudiate the Book of Abraham. These books are entitled, The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2 and Joseph Smith’s “Eye of Ra,” A Preliminary Survey and First Translation of Facsimile No. 2 in the Book of Abraham.

In the Introduction to The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2, Mr. Nelson states:

My views are as sympathetic to the Latter-day Saints Church teachings as they can be without compromising the accepted and proven principles of Egyptology . . . I find myself standing precariously between two poles. Truth will triumph in the end.

IDENTIFICATION CORRECT

In the Salt Lake City Messenger for March, 1968, we stated: “The fall of the Book of Abraham has been brought about by the identification of the piece of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham.”

Dee Jay Nelson confirms the fact that the piece of papyrus Joseph Smith used as the basis for his Book of Abraham is among the papyri which the Metropolitan Museum gave to the Mormon Church in November of 1967. He states:

What do the newly discovered “Metropolitan Papyri” have to do with the Book of Abraham? The original ancient Egyptian text from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham has been found! A substantial part of it can be seen in column 1 (right hand) on the smaller Hor Sensen Papyrus Fragment (unillustrated) . . .

DIALOGUE

The Summer 1968 issue of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought contains a great deal of interesting information on the Mormon Papyri. Besides translations of the Papyri by top Egyptologists (John A. Wilson and Richard Parker), this issue contains an article by the R.L.D.S. Church Historian Richard P. Howard. Also included is an article by Grant Heward and Richard Parker, this issue contains an article by the R.L.D.S. Church Historian Richard P. Howard. Also included is an article by Grant Heward and Jerald Tanner and a rebuttal by Dr. Hugh Nibley.

Because this issue contains so much material which is related to our work we have decided to sell it. The price is $2.00 for each copy. We cannot give any discount to dealers, and those who want back issues will have to write directly to the publisher.
How do we know that Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham from column 1 of the Hor Sensen Fragment No. 1? Joseph Smith tells us that it is so in the most positive of ways by supplying a list of the ancient characters and attaching to it the “translation.” This list of characters, though crudely copied, precisely matches the first two lines of hieratic characters in column 1 on Hor Papyri Fragment No. 1. Joseph Smith’s character list and the attached “translation” is found in the notebook entitled Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language. Before the disclosure that the Joseph Smith Papyri had been found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, I had succeeded in identifying the characters accompanying Joseph Smith’s “translation” as traditional hieratic and had, in spite of the poor quality of the copy, identified several individual characters, but it was Grant Heward who later pointed out to me that the characters drawn by Joseph Smith in the left hand margin of the Grammar and Alphabet were the same as in the Original Hor Sensen text.

The fact is indisputable. The “translation” starts on page 3 of the Grammar and Alphabet and almost exactly matches the published version of the Book of Abraham beginning with Chapter 1, verse 4 and ending with Chapter 2, verse 5. We can be absolutely sure that Joseph Smith intended the “translation” to match the characters written down the left margin because beginning on page 8 (there is some inconsistency in his page numbering) he again lists the characters in the margin and repeats the “translation” almost word-for-word. The groups of marginal characters are in each instance represented by the same “translations.” If the characters were irrelevant and independent of the “translation,” as some have suggested, they would not have been so meticulously placed and identically oriented in each of the two “translations.” This fact proves without a doubt that the “translation” relates to the marginal characters and to no others. (The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2, pages 13-14)

A FALSE TRANSLATION

In The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2, Dee Jay Nelson devotes 10 pages to the “Sensen” text and proves beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith’s translation of it—i.e., the Book of Abraham—is completely false. On page 14 he states:

Let us compare a portion of Joseph Smith’s Grammar and Alphabet Book of Abraham “translation” with a traditional translation. The words which I have marked Nos. 5 and 6, according to Joseph Smith read, “Now after the priest of Elk Kee nah was smitten that he died there came a fulfilment of those things which were spoken unto me concerning the land of Chaldea, that there should be a famine in the land; and accordingly a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea and my father was sorely tormented because of the famine, and he repented of the evil which he had determined against me, to take away my life: But the records of the fathers even the patriarchs concerning the right of priesthood the lord my God preserved in mine own hand: Therefore a knowledge of the begining of creation and also of the planets, and of the stars, as it was made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day.” This is a substantial “translation” (130 words) to be represented by 4 perfectly normal hieratic characters which to any trained Egyptian philologists transiterate MS N (mes en) and mean “offspring of” or “born of.” Word No. 7 is the personal name of the mother, T3Y - Hbyt (Tai-Khebit), yet Joseph Smith tells us that these precise characters mean, “And I shall endeavor to write some of these things, upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me. Now the Lord God caused the famine to be sore in the land of Ur insomuch that my brother died: but Terah my father yet lived in the land of Ur of the Chaldees. And it came to pass; that I Abram took Sarai to wife and Nohor my brother took Melkah to wife who was the daughter of Hanan” (85 words). Compare these two parts of Joseph Smith’s “translation” with the Book of Abraham, Chapter 1, verse 29 through Chapter 2, verse 2.

On page 16-17 of the same book, Mr. Nelson states:

It was determined by a careful count that in current printed editions of the Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham, Chapter 1, verse 4 through Chapter 2, verse 5 there are precisely 1,125 English words. These were derived from 46 margin characters accompanying the two Grammar and Alphabet “translations.” This last figure is only approximately correct. . . . If 46 is the correct number, the ratio of English words to Egyptian characters is 25 to 1. I have never heard of a written language, ancient or modern, which was this compact. Is this ratio realistic? Is it possible to convey simple thoughts with a veritable mountain of words. I was sure that the message in the “translation” could be expressed more simply and this might make the ratio more feasible. To test this theory I used word count from the Landa Data Center in California and put my problem to them. They agreed to program a computer to the task of calculating the mathematical possibility that the first two lines of column 1 of the Hor Sensen Fragment could produce the required minimum number of words to convey the message in the Book of Abraham, Chapter 1, verse 4 through Chapter 2, verse 5. The machine used was a Sigma 7 multi-use time sharing environment computer manufactured by the Scientific Data Systems Corporation, Los Angeles, California.

I asked the operator to simplify the thoughts in the 1,125 word Book of Abraham “translation” without sacrificing any of the basic meanings. The computer answer was 482 words which means that each Egyptian character is supposed to translate into just over 10 English words. The ratio is still fantastic though we have given Joseph Smith’s claim the benefit of the doubt by reducing the English “translation” to its simplest form. This 10:1 ratio includes the proper nouns in the Book of Abraham. Between Chapter 1, verse 4 and the of Chapter 2, verse 5 there are 65 of them. These contain approximately 296 English vocabularies excluding those least audible connecting vowels. The only reasonable way to represent proper names in a translation is transliterate them. The name of the god Mahmaackrah has 10 letters representing 7 vocabables and it is repeated three times in the “translation.” Shagreel, a proper name with 8 letters, has 6 vocabables. Elkennah has 5 vocabables and it is repeated in the 33 verses five separate times. The 46 marginal Grammar and Alphabet characters can not duplicate the vocabables in the proper names in the “translation” and even if they could that would leave 1,060 words unaccounted for.

A SECOND MEANING?

Dr. Hugh Nibley, the Mormon apologist, has gone so far as to suggest that the “Sensen” text may have a second meaning unknown to Egyptologists: . . . you very often have texts if double meaning . . . it’s quite possible say, that this “Sensen” papyrus, telling a straightforward innocent little story or something like that, should contain also a totally different text concealed within . . . they [the Egyptian] know what they’re doing, but we don’t. We don’t have the key. (Speech by Dr. Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, May 20, 1968)

Dr. Nibley states that Joseph Smith treated the characters as super-cryptograms:

It has long been known that the characters “interpreted” by Joseph Smith in his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar are treated by him as super-cryptograms; and now it is apparent that the source of those characters is the unillustrated fragment on which the word Sen-ten appears repeatedly. This identifies it as possibly belonging to those writings known as The Book of Breathings, though that in turn is merely “compilations and excerpts from older funerary spells and burial formulas.” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1968, page 249)

Dee Jay Nelson shows that Dr. Nibley’s suggestion that the Sensen text might have a “different text concealed within it” is absolutely ridiculous:

Some say Joseph Smith did not translate the literal meaning of those two Hor Sensen lines but rather the crypto-meaning. This is not even remotely possible. Cryptograms invariably had meanings allied to the literal meanings. In any case, the complex idea in Joseph Smith’s “translation” outnumber the elements in the hieratic characters which could contain the cryptogram code. It is mathematically impossible to express the total complexities of Joseph Smith’s “translation” with the characters involved. (The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2, page 14)

A PERSONAL GOD?

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.
A PAGAN TEXT

In the book, Joseph Smith's "Eye of Ra," Dee Jay Nelson shows that what Joseph Smith claimed was the Book of Abraham was in reality a pagan text which was written more than a thousand years after the time of Abraham:

Biblical experts believe that Abraham lived sometime around 1800 B.C., but the calligraphy, spelling and contents of the Hor Sensen Papyrus give every indication that it was not written until nearly the time of Christ (possibly shortly after). Egyptologists believe that the Sensen texts (Book of Breathings) were not even composed until about the Seventh Century B.C. There are inconsistencies here. To compound the divergency, the traditional translation of the Sensen funerary text deals with matters unrelated to the subject matter of Joseph Smith's "translation." I have read several publications by learned members of the Church who insist that the papyrus found in the Egyptian catacomb was not actually written by the hand of Abraham but that it was a copy of an original work by him. I can not read this meaning into the statement which I repeat for your consideration . . . "Translation of the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus and found in the catacombs of Egypt." Even if one concedes to the viewpoint that the papyrus possessed by Joseph Smith in the early Nineteenth Century was a copy and not the original, one is faced with the unmistakable fact that this ancient document deals with pagan gods and pagan beliefs without mentioning Abraham or anything even remotely associated with him. I have already given reasons why it is unlikely that a hidden message or cryptogram is in this text. Certainly it could not convey such an irrelevant account as is contained in the Book of Abraham. The title of this longer manuscript is quite explicit in stating that this "translation" which Joseph Smith did had been taken from "writing (s)" which were "upon papyrus."

This leaves no doubt as to where the Book of Abraham message reposed. The specific papyrus referred to is the Hor Sensen Papyrus which had been "found in the catacombs of Egypt." If we accept Joseph Smith's claims we are forced to the conclusion that the Hor Sensen Papyri in addition to conveying a normal Book of Breathings message also tells in cipher a part of the history of Abraham. If the many other papyri which have been found inscribed with this text contain the same coded history of Abraham and he was the author of the first of these from which all others were copied this would be very real condemnation of the ancient Patriarch because religious meanings of the Book of Breathings (Sensen) are as pagan as can be and flaunt religious practices which were most abhorrent to Abraham. (Joseph Smith's "Eye of Ra," page 25)

To be well informed about the papyri question the reader should have both of Dee Jay Nelson's new books, The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2, and Joseph Smith's "Eye of Ra." We highly recommend both these books.

RIDICULOUS IDEAS!

After we published the last issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we received the following letter:

I've read your articles and in spite of everything you said I testify I know the Book of Abraham is the Word of God. If I was President McKay I would order that Grant S. Heward be assassinated.

In a letter dated July 20, 1968, this same man stated: "God knows I don’t really want the murder of Mr. Heward." Instead, he had another solution. He felt that the President of the Church should order that the papyri be destroyed:

I've come to the conclusion that the manuscript found was not the manuscript the Prophet Joseph Smith used. I think it is a forgery to force the Church to give the Negroes the Priesthood. If I was President McKay I would have the manuscript destroyed.

We do not feel that this man is typical of the Mormon people. In fact, his letters show evidence that he is not a well-adjusted person. Nevertheless, his thinking concerning the Book of Abraham is somewhat similar to that of many other Mormons. They would not go so far as to suggest that the papyrus or Grant Heward be destroyed, but they feel that the Book of Abraham is the "Word of God" and that any evidence to the contrary must be ignored. Dr. Nibley’s suggestion that the papyrus might have a second meaning is almost as ridiculous as the idea that it is a "forgery." And his suggestion that we ignore the evidence furnished by the papyrus and judge the Book of Abraham by its similarity to a number of old apocryphal writings is preposterous. The Mormon people cannot afford to wait for "years" while Dr. Nibley searches through these old "legends." Now is the time to face this problem. The evidence furnished by the original papyrus is very clear. The Book of Abraham is a spurious work. It has no historical basis, and it is plain that it is the work of Joseph Smith’s imagination! Truth now demands that the Mormon people repudiate this book and the anti-Negro doctrine contained in its pages.

WHICH WAY TO HAPPINESS?

J. B. Phillips made this statement concerning the sad condition of the world:

The diagnoses of the world’s sickness (and, therefore, of the individuals who comprise the world) is that the power to love has been wrongly directed. It has either been turned in upon itself or given to the wrong things. The outward symptoms, and the results, of this misdirection are plainly obvious (at least in other people) in what we call "sin" or "selfishness." The drastic "conversion" which God-become-Man [Christ] called for is the reversal of the wrong attitude, the deliberate giving of the whole power to love, first to God, and then to other people. Without this reversal He spoke quite bluntly of a world doomed to destruction. (Your God Is Too Small, page 121)

Myron Augsburger wrote:

True love cannot be expressed for things, for things only serve personal ends and affection for things is turned inward and is closed and selfish. Love for a person is outgoing and genuine as it cares to share relationship rather than to use the person . . . Only the born-again person knows the transformation of divine love through the indwelling Spirit, and can express a measure of the love that Jesus commanded toward both friends and enemies. . . . The evidence that one has been delivered from the selfishness of sin is the expression of Christian love. The Christ-indwelled person is a disciple of the inner life, one whose motive is the glory of his Lord. (Plus Living, pages 25, 26, 27 & 45)

SPECIAL OFFER ON "CASE"

Our most important work on Mormonism is entitled, The Case Against Mormonism. In this work we have covered such subjects as: changes in Mormon publications, changes in Joseph Smith's revelations, Joseph Smith's First Vision and the Book of Mormon. We plan to have a great deal of information concerning the papyri and the Book of Abraham. In fact, we have already completed 32 pages on this subject.

The first volume is now finished, and we have completed 144 pages in the second volume. The remaining pages will be mailed out as soon as they are completed. To receive both these volumes and a vinyl loose-leaf binder the customer would normally pay $7.90. We are having a special, however, and if these two volumes are ordered before October 15, 1968, the price will be only $6.95.

ORDER TODAY!

Another book, The Mountain Meadows Massacre, has sold out. This makes 21 publications which are no longer available. Since we have no plans to reprint these books they have become collector’s items and will become more valuable as time goes on. For instance, the book 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon, originally sold for $5.00, but there are a number of people today who would be willing to pay $25.00 to obtain a copy.

A number of our books are almost sold out; therefore, this may be your last chance to order them. PLACE YOUR ORDER TODAY!

* Donations *

A number of people have made donations to help us in our work. We are always glad to receive these, but we should probably warn our readers that they cannot be deducted from their income tax.