

FALL of the BOOK ABRAHAM

Dr. Hugh Nibley, who is supposed to be the Mormon Church's top authority on the Egyptian language, made this statement:

... a few faded and tattered little scraps of papyrus may serve to remind the Latter-day Saints of how sadly they have neglected serious education . . . Not only has our image suffered by such tragic neglect, but now in the moment of truth the Mormons have to **face the world unprepared**, after having been given a hundred years' fair warning. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter, 1968, pages 171-172)

Recent developments with regard to Joseph Smith's Egyptian Papyri have demonstrated the truth of Dr. Nibley statement. Since the day the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented the papyri to the Church, the Mormon leaders have made one mistake after another until they have painted themselves into a corner, and truth now demands that they repudiate the Book of Abraham and renounce the anti-Negro doctrine contained in its pages.

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. Below is a photograph of the fragment.

The identification of this fragment as the original from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham has been made possible by a comparison with *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*—a document published by Modern Microfilm Co. in 1966. Dr. James R. Clark, of the Brigham Young University, give us this information:

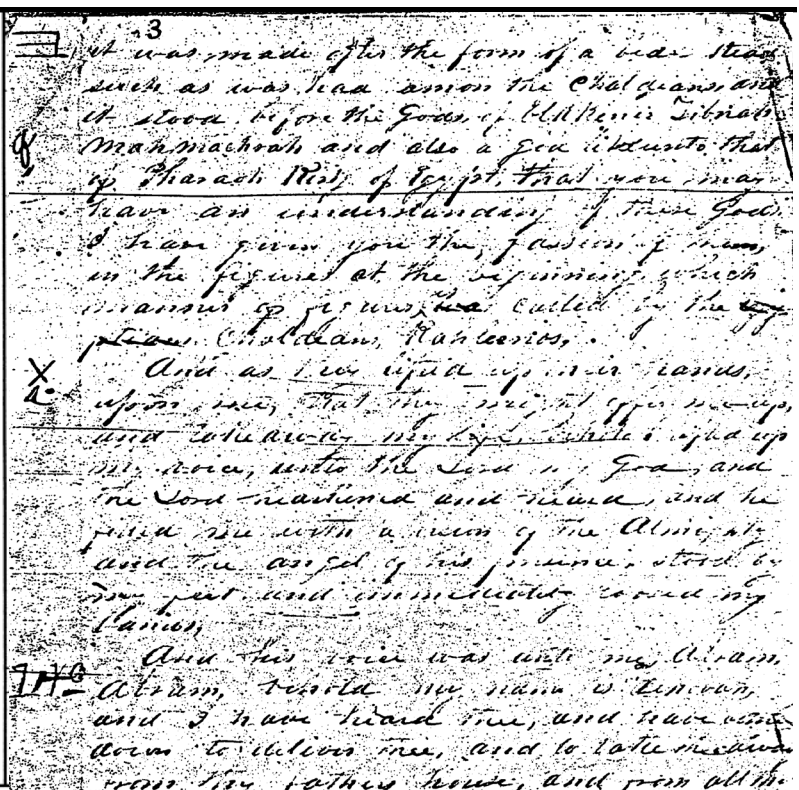
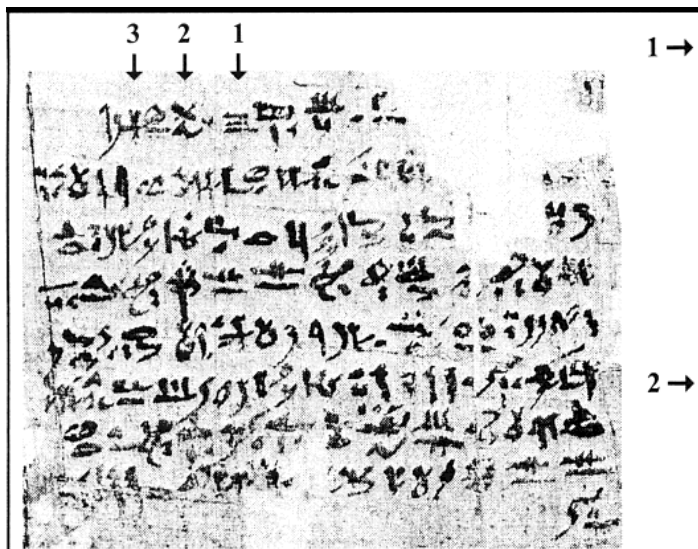
... there are in existence today in the Church Historian's Office what seems to be two separate manuscripts of Joseph Smith's translations from the papyrus rolls, presumable in the hand writing of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery; . . . One manuscript is the Alphabet and Grammar . . . Within this Alphabet and Grammar there is a copy of the characters, together with their translation of Abraham 1:4-28 only. (*The Story of the Pearl of Great Price*, Salt Lake City, 1962, pages 172-173)

The Mormon leaders were either not aware of the fact that the gift of papyri included the fragment which was the basis for the text in the Book of Abraham, or they hoped no one else would notice it. The following statement appeared in the Mormon paper, *Deseret News*: "As far as has yet been determined, the papyri do not contain any of the original material translated as the Book of Abraham itself" (*Deseret News*, November 28, 1967). Before publishing photographs of the papyri, the *Brigham Young University Studies* had advertized that they were going to print pictures of the Book of Abraham Papyri. When the photographs appeared there was an apology which read:

Our calling them the Book of Abraham Papyri in some of our advertisements did not reflect the official Church identification which is the present title we use: *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*. We regret the error. Ed. (page 179)

The Mormon publication, *Improvement Era*, February, 1968, contains color photographs of the papyri. The fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham is found on page 41—the very last photograph. It is labeled: "XI. Small 'Sensen' text (unillustrated)."

All of the first two rows of characters on the papyrus fragment can be found in the manuscript of the Book of Abraham that is published in *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*. Grant Heward has done further research regarding this matter. He has copied the characters from pictures of another manuscript of the Book of Abraham at the Brigham Young University. This manuscript goes further than the one in the "Alphabet and Grammar." Mr. Heward has found that the characters on this manuscript continue in consecutive order into the fourth line of the papyrus. This would bring the text to Abraham 2:20 in the *Pearl of Great Price*. If Joseph Smith continued to translate the same number of English words to each Egyptian character in the chapters which followed, then the text for the entire Book of Abraham is probably contained on this one fragment of papyrus.



Above is a photograph of the right side of the original fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith was supposed to have translated the Book of Abraham.

To the right is a photograph of the original manuscript of the Book of Abraham as it appears in *Joseph Smith's Egyptian and Grammar*.

We have numbered some of the characters on the first line of the fragment of papyrus so that the reader can compare them with the characters found in the handwritten manuscript.

THE DILEMMA

In 1966 Grant Heward, a man who had done missionary work for the Mormon Church, prepared a paper in which he criticized Joseph Smith's translations of the Egyptian language. He distributed his paper at the April, 1967 Conference of the Mormon Church. On June 21, 1967, he was excommunicated from the Mormon Church. This was probably one of the greatest mistakes the Mormon leaders have ever made. Mr. Heward has continued his study of the Egyptian language. He was able to identify the name of the mummy mentioned in the Mormon papyri. Henry G. Fischer, Curator of Egyptian Art at the Metropolitan Museum, confirmed the identification in a letter dated December 8, 1967:

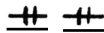
It is very astute of you to have recognized the name of the original owner of some of the papyri that have recently been given to the Latter Day Saints. Your copies are very good indeed, both of the woman's name and that of her father. (Letter from Henry G. Fischer to Grant Heward, dated December 8, 1967)

Mr. Heward has carefully examined the piece of papyrus that has been identified as the source of the Book of Abraham, and he feels it is probably a part of the Egyptian "Book of Breathings." The following information concerning the "Book of Breathings" is given by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge:

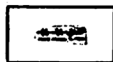
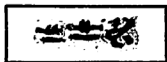
Of special interest among the works which were popular in the Ptolemaic and Graeco-Roman periods, and probably later, is the "Shai en Sensen," or "Book of Breathings." In this composition we find ideas and beliefs which were derived from the Book of the Dead, . . . (*Book of the Dead, An English Translation . . . of the Theban Recension*, . . . New York, 1951, Introduction, page xlvi)

It is very interesting to note that Dr. Nibley has already labeled the fragment of papyrus Joseph Smith used as the basis for the Book of Abraham as "XI. Small 'Sensen' text (unillustrated)" (*Improvement Era*, February 1968, page 41).

One of the meanings of the Egyptian word "sensen" is breathing. It is written in hieratic as follows:



The reader will find the word "sensen" on the fourth line of the papyrus identified as the original used by Joseph Smith as the basis for the Book of Abraham. This word is used as a part of the title "Book of Breathings." Below is a photograph of a small portion of the text from the "Book of Breathings" compared with a portion of the papyrus Joseph Smith used for the Book of Abraham. The reader will note the striking similarity between the two. The portion on the right is taken from the Papyrus of Kerasher, British Museum, No. 9995. The portion on the left is taken from the fourth line of the papyrus Joseph Smith used in his production of the Book of Abraham.



The reader will note that Joseph Smith used less than four lines from the papyrus to make 51 verses in the Book of Abraham. These 51 verses are composed of more than 2,000 English words! A person does not have to be an Egyptologist to know that it would be impossible to translate over 2,000 words from a few Egyptian characters. Common sense tells us that this would be absolutely impossible. Therefore, it is obvious that Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham is a spurious work.

The Mormon leaders are now confronted with a very serious problem. If they maintain that the fragment of papyrus contains the story found in the Book of Abraham they will find themselves challenging the science of Egyptology. Many members of the Mormon Church want to know the truth concerning the Book of Abraham especially since it is the source of the anti-Negro doctrine. It has been rumored that *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (a publication that is not controlled by the Mormon leaders) is planning to publish a translation of the papyri. One of the sponsors of this publication has confirmed this rumor. In a letter dated February 14, 1968, he stated that a number of Egyptologists are translating the papyri and that they "are going to publish the translations in *Dialogue*." Since we now know that the fragment of papyrus which Joseph Smith used for the Book of Abraham is among this papyri, this should prove to be very interesting.

Some of our readers may want to subscribe to *Dialogue*. The mailing address is PO Box 2350, Stanford, California 94305.

* * NEW BOOKS * *

The Mormon Papyri Question, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A 28-page pamphlet dealing with the recent discovery of the Mormon papyri. Proves that Joseph Smith was not able to translate Egyptian and that the Book of Abraham was a work of his own imagination. What the Mormon leaders claimed were the writings of Abraham and Joseph in Egypt turn out to be nothing but parts of the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Very revealing. Price: 50¢ — 3 for \$1.00 — 10 for \$3.00 — 20 for \$5.00.

The Negro in Mormon Theology, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A 58-page pamphlet. Most important material which appeared in *Joseph Smith's Curse Upon the Negro* is included in this pamphlet. Also contains new material. Alvin R. Dyer's speech, which was "not" meant for the investigator, is printed in full. Price: 50¢ — 3 for \$1.00 — 10 for \$3.00 — 20 for \$5.00.

New Light on Mormon Origins From The Palmyra (N.Y.) Revival, by Rev. Wesley P. Walters. A devastating blow to the First Vision story. One of the best works on Mormonism. A 26-page pamphlet. Price: 15¢ — 7 for \$1.00 — 15 for \$2.00

NIBLEY RETREATS

Although Dr. Nibley is still trying to maintain that the Book of Abraham is authentic, it is obvious that he is retreating from many of the positions that the Church previously held regarding this matter.

Mormon writers used to claim that Joseph Smith understood the Egyptian language and that his "Egyptian Alphabet" was the very key to the translation of the Book of Abraham. Dr. Nibley, however, now maintains that Joseph Smith did not understand the Egyptian language and that his "Egyptian Alphabet" is worthless:

Which brings us to the subject of *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Grammar*, . . . This writer, however, has **never spent so much as five minutes with the Egyptian Grammar**, and does not intend to unless he is forced to it. . . . Joseph Smith **never pretended to understand Egyptian**, nor that the Book of Abraham was a work of his scholarship: . . . (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter, 1968, page 176)

In a letter dated February 8, 1968, Dr. Nibley stated:

Joseph Smith **played around** with Egyptian documents, but by his own admission he was only **trying** to read them We tell about this in the forthcoming *Era* for March. A lot of questions have to be answered in this business. . . . The wonderful thing about these papyri is that they raise so many interesting questions. You want the answers all at once, but that would spoil all the fun. (Letter dated February 8, 1968)

To begin with the Mormon leaders claimed that Joseph Smith had the very original papyri which Abraham and Joseph wrote upon. Egyptologists, however, claimed that the facsimiles proved the papyri were of a later date. Dr. Nibley tries to bring the Church's position into line with the opinions expressed by Egyptologists by stating:

The commonest objection to the authenticity of the Facsimiles is that they are of too late a date to have been drawn by Abraham. But Joseph Smith **never claimed that they were autographic manuscripts or that they dated from the time of Abraham**. (*Improvement Era*, February, 1968, page 20)

Dr. Nibley is certainly wrong about this matter. Joseph Smith did claim that they were autographic manuscripts. Josiah Quincy claimed that Joseph Smith told him the following:

"That is the **handwriting of Abraham**, the Father of the Faithful," said the prophet. "This is the **autograph of Moses**, and these lines were **written by his brother Aaron**." (Figures of the past as quoted in *Among the Mormons*, pages 136-137)

In 1840 Joseph Smith was quoted as making this statement:

"These ancient records," said he, "throw great light on the subject of Christianity . . . I will show you how I interpret certain parts. There," said

he, pointing to a particular character, “that is the **signature** of the patriarch **Abraham.**” (*Quincy Wig*, October 17, 1840, page 1, as quoted in *Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone*, by Sidney B. Sperry, page 52)

Joseph Smith claimed that the two rolls of papyrus which the Mormons purchased in 1835 contained the writings of Abraham and Joseph:

I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the **writings of Abraham**, another the **writings of Joseph of Egypt**, etc., . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 236)

Egyptologists claim that all Joseph Smith had was papyri containing Egyptian funerary texts or portions of the Book of the Dead. Now that the original papyri has been located the Mormon leaders are almost forced to admit that at least part of it is from the Book of the Dead.

One of the pieces of papyrus that has been located contains a drawing of a snake standing on legs. In 1835 the Mormon leaders identified this as being from the “Book of Joseph.” In fact, Oliver Cowdery (one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon) claimed that “The **serpent, represented as walking**, or formed in a manner to be able to walk, standing in front of, and near a female figure, is to me, one of the greatest representations I have ever seen upon paper, or a writing substance; . . .” (*Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 2, page 236). The Mormons evidently considered the drawing of the serpent on legs to be of importance, for a copy of it was included in Joseph Smith’s “Egyptian Alphabet.” At a Pearl of Great Price Conference, held on December 10, 1960, Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, of the Brigham Young University, displayed the drawing of the snake on legs and stated: “Here **Eve** is apparently talking to the serpent. Notice, the serpent is on legs!” (*Pearl of Great Price Conference*, December 10, 1960, 1964 edition, page 8)

In the *Mormon Papyri Question* we stated:

If the Mormon leaders continue to maintain that this drawing is part of the “Book of Joseph,” they will be expected to furnish proof that it was written by Joseph in Egypt. . . . If, on the other hand, the Mormon leaders admit that it is from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, they will cast a shadow of doubt on Joseph Smith’s work. (*Mormon Papyri Question*, page 17)

Evidently the Mormon leaders have chosen to “cast a shadow of doubt on Joseph Smith’s work,” for in the *Improvement Era*, February, 1968, they admit that the drawing of the snake on legs is “from the **Book of the Dead**” (page 40).

When Dr. Nibley was asked if the papyri contained the Book of Joseph, he replied:

If the papyri contain any of the Book of Joseph it is not a part that has been translated. (Letter dated February 8, 1968)

We wonder how far the Mormon leaders can retreat on this issue without admitting that the Book of Abraham is a spurious work.

We have been doing research with regard to the authenticity of the Book of Abraham for a number of years and feel that we have found some very important material. We were planning on presenting this material in a later volume of the *Case Against Mormonism*, but because of the importance of the papyri find and the discussion concerning this matter we have decided to begin work on it immediately. Therefore, the remaining pages (112 are now completed) of volume 2 of the *Case Against Mormonism* will be devoted to this subject. We feel that all of our readers should have a copy of this work so that they can receive the pages as they are printed. The regular price for volumes one and two (which includes a beautiful vinyl loose-leaf binder) is \$7.90. At the present time, however, we are having a special. If the two volumes are ordered before April 30, 1968, the price is only \$6.95.

SMOKE SCREEN

Even though the papyri were lost for a number of years, Joseph Smith included three drawing in his Book of Abraham, and also gave a translation of much of the material which appeared in these drawings.

In 1912 F. S. Spalding sent the facsimiles from the *Pearl of Great Price* to a number of the most noted Egyptologists. These Egyptologists examined the facsimiles and Joseph Smith’s interpretation of them and declared that his interpretation was fraudulent. Letters from these Egyptologists are published in the book *Joseph Smith, Jr. as a Translator*, by F. S. Spalding.

Dr. Nibley seems to feel that by attacking Spalding and his book he can create a great smoke screen to cover up the fact that he is not able to defend Joseph Smith’s translations of the Egyptian language. Dr. Nibley has been extremely unfair in this attack. He even criticizes F. S. Spalding for the Church’s dishonesty. Speaking of the facsimiles that Spalding sent to the Egyptologists, Dr. Nibley states:

. . . the **miserable copies** that Bishop Spalding circulated among his jury of experts made a very poor impression, and their **raw clumsiness** was in every case attributed to the Prophet himself. . . . It makes all the difference in the world what particular text a scholar has to work with, as a comparison of the recently discovered original of Facsimile 1 with the copies of it that Spalding sent to the critics should make clear to anyone. (*Improvement Era*, February, 1968, pages 20-21)

Because Dr. Nibley does not make this matter clear, the reader would get the impression that Spalding altered the copies that he sent to the Egyptologists. Now, what was it that Spalding sent to the Egyptologists anyway? It was the *Pearl of Great Price*—the official publication of the Church—which contains the facsimiles. After Dr. Arthur C. Mace (Assistant Curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of Egyptian Art) examined the facsimiles, he wrote a letter to Spalding in which he stated:

“I return herewith, under separate cover, the *Pearl of Great Price*. The ‘Book of Abraham,’ it is hardly necessary to say, is a **pure fabrication.**” (*Joseph Smith, Jr. as a Translator*, page 27)

This statement proves that it was the Church’s printing of the *Pearl of Great Price* which was submitted to the Egyptologists. Dr. James R. Clark, of the Brigham Young University, states that it was the “1907 printing” of the *Pearl of Great Price* that the Egyptologist examined. (*Story of the Pearl of Great Price*, page 61)

Now, why should Dr. Nibley make a point out of the fact that Spalding submitted “miserable copies” to the Egyptologist, when it was the Mormon leaders themselves who made the changes and alterations in the facsimiles? Isn’t this being very unfair?

In the *Brigham Young University Studies* Dr. Nibley admits that the facsimiles which the Church now publishes in the *Pearl of Great Price* are not accurate:

The *Pearl of Great Price* itself admirably illustrates the issue. The Facsimiles now in use are **extremely bad reproductions, far inferior** to the first engravings published in 1842. Am I, then, as a member of the Church bound to consult the present official edition and that only, and regard it as flawless, bad as it is, because it is the official publication of the Church? (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter, 1968, page 177)

We are glad that Dr. Nibley has made this statement, for it is certainly the truth. But, we ask, why did he not include it in his article in the *Improvement Era*? As his article stands in the *Improvement Era* the reader would get the impression that F. S. Spalding made the changes, whereas the truth is that the Mormon leaders are responsible.

Actually, accurate copies hurt the Church’s position more than they help it. In the *Mormon Papyri Question*, page 8, we show that photographs of the original papyrus from which the Mormons copied Facsimile No. 1 have been submitted to Egyptologists, and they have denounced it in the same manner that the Egyptologists did in 1912.

Because of Dr. Nibley’s distortions of the truth and because of a large demand we have reprinted the book *Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham*. This book contains F. S. Spalding’s work, *Joseph Smith, Jr. as a Translator*; and *Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian*, by Samuel A. B. Mercer, Ph.D. Price: \$1.50—3 for \$4.00—5 for \$6.00—10 for \$9.00.

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone. ■

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. ■

CONTENTS OF PAPYRUS

In our work *Case Against Mormonism* we plan to have a great deal of information concerning the papyri which have recently been presented to the Mormon Church. We hope to have pictures and translations of these papyri. In the meantime, Grant Heward has given us a rendition of a portion of the papyri for publication in this *Messenger*. Even though this is just a rough rendition, it will give the reader a good idea of what is contained in the papyri.

Mr. Heward has given us this statement to publish with his rendition of the portion which deals with the subject "Transforming into a Swallow":

The difficult choices of hieroglyphic rendering from the hieratic were many times made easier by careful comparison with hieroglyphic texts of two Books of the Dead papyri as well as fragments from four coffin texts. My English rendering was guided by the translations made of the two papyri. This rough English rendition was completed February 26, 1968.

Below, on the left side of the page, the reader will find a photograph of the papyrus which deals with this subject. Since the papyrus was cut or broken off in the middle of the text, it was necessary to put part of another photo with it to complete the text. These photographs are found in the *Improvement Era*, February 1968, page 40E and 40F.

On the right side of the page the reader will find that Grant Heward has transcribed the hieratic text into hieroglyphs. Alan Gardiner gives this explanation for this procedure:

Individual hieratic hands differ as all handwriting is apt to differ; for this reason Egyptologists, before translating a hieratic text, habitually transcribe it into hieroglyphs, just as the modern printer sets up a modern author's manuscript in type (*Egyptian Grammar*, by Alan Gardiner, third ed., page 10).

Mr. Heward's rendering of this text is as follows:

Transforming into a Swallow

Here begins the spells for making transformations:

The spell for making the transformation into a swallow. . . The Osiris daughter Min, justified, born to Neshonsu, justified, says: I am a swallow, I am a swallow. I am that scorpion, the two daughters of Ra. Hail, gods with sweet aroma. (Hail) flame, that comes out of the horizon. Hail you in the city. I have brought the keeper from the midst of his domain. Give your hands. Let me pass the days in the flames of purification. I have advanced with a message. I have come holding the report. Open up to me. How shall I tell what I have seen? I am like Horus, governor of the boat, when the right side of his father was given him. Set, that son of Nut, was under the fetters he made of Osiris. He who is in Sehem (inspected) me. I stretch out my arms over Osiris. I have advanced for the examination. I came to speak. I am he that goes to be judged — I come forth magnified at the gate of Nebeder. I am purified at the great Uaret. I have put away my wickednesses. I have put away utterly my offences. I have put away all the taints of evil that concerns me upon the earth. I have purified myself. I have made myself like God. I completed the journey. I am like you. I have come forth by day. I have advanced on my legs. I have attained mastery over my way. . . God of light, I know the hidden roads and the gates of Sehet Aaru. I live there. I, even I have come, I have overthrown my enemies upon the earth, although my body is a wrapped mummy.

If this book be known by the deceased, he shall come forth by day from Khert-Neter, and he shall go in (again) after he hath come forth. If this spell is overlooked (by the deceased), he shall not go in again after he hath come forth (and he) shall not know (how) to come forth by day.

Mr. Heward does not claim that his rendition is perfect, and it may be that a few changes will be made at a later date. However this may be, it is obvious that the papyri contain only Egyptian funerary texts and have nothing to do with Abraham or Joseph as the early Mormon leaders taught.



A false balance is abomination to the Lord; but a just weight is his delight. (Proverbs 11:1)