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John Gee

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**Author(s)** John Gee

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**Abstract** Review of *The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham: A Study of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri* (1990), by James R. Harris; *For His Ka: Essays Offered in Memory of Klaus Baer* (1994), edited by David P. Silverman; and *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism* (1995), by H. Donl Peterson.

**James R. Harris.** *The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham: A Study of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri.* Payson, Utah: Harris, 1990. 97 pp. Illustrated, \$9.95.

**David P. Silverman, ed.** *For His Ka: Essays Offered in Memory of Klaus Baer.* Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1994. xviii + 332 pp. Illustrated. Index of key Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic words and phrases, and index of texts and objects cited.

**H. Donl Peterson.** *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995. 302 pp., with subject index. \$21.95.

Reviewed by John Gee

## Telling the Story of the Joseph Smith Papyri

The story of the Joseph Smith papyri has been told many times but rarely well.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, two of the three studies under review here are important steps forward and will be considered in turn. Someday, perhaps, someone will write an accurate account of the papyri that is as interesting as the story. The present review is perhaps too critical of writers who will likely never write on this

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<sup>1</sup> Important previous studies are James R. Clark, *The Story of the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955); Keith Terry and Walter Whipple, *From the Dust of Decades: A Saga of the Papyri and Mummies* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968); Jay M. Todd, *The Saga of the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969); H. Donl Peterson, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 36–46; Jay M. Todd, "Papyri, Joseph Smith," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1058–60.

subject again, but it is so because their works will doubtlessly be extensively quoted.

### **How Not to Get Your Message Across**

James Harris's self-published volume contributes some very interesting items to the discussion on the book of Abraham. Unfortunately, it is doubtful that anyone will ever find them or use them because of the volume's major flaws. Most of these flaws—which plague nearly every page of the book—could have been corrected had the author had the benefit of three things: (1) a good editor, who would have insisted on complete bibliographic references and a consistent style and tone; (2) higher quality production values, that might have made sure that the pictures were in focus and that consistent type faces were used throughout; and (3) an understanding of the Egyptian language, since, regretfully, every one of the author's own transcriptions, transliterations, and translations of Egyptian—and not a few of those that he attributes to others—is incorrect. For the want of these things, the author's every positive contribution to the study of the book of Abraham is buried under such a mountain of errors that it is difficult to see how anyone is supposed to extract from his book what is useful: Egyptologists would probably have difficulty seeing past the manifold mistakes, while Latter-day Saints will probably have difficulty recognizing those mistakes. Latter-day Saints might also feel uncomfortable with the author's claim to be "a special witness" (Harris, p. 88), since that term is normally used only of the Apostles and the Seventy (D&C 27:12; 107:23–26).

To assist those interested in making use of the book, I will provide a partial list of what is usable: (1) The bibliography is often useful, though this is scattered throughout the book (often cited in the text or pictures) and is often dreadfully fragmentary. (2) The collection of hypocephali is possibly the largest collection in print, but it is rendered generally useless through Harris's cut-and-paste approach that results in something resembling a display of dissected frogs with all the stomachs carefully shown in one place, all the hearts in another, and all the intestines in a third. This might be useful if the question was one of identification of the various parts, but it fails when one wants to know how the whole

thing fits together. Unfortunately not all parts of all hypocephali are shown; some useful information seems to have been left on the cutting-room floor. (3) The subject matter of the pictures is generally good, though some pictures are not identified, many are out of focus, and some are completely irrelevant. (4) Some of the given historical information is not usually considered in this context, some of the given information is not completely reliable, and a complete discussion of any historical aspect of the papyri, the so-called Kirtland Egyptian papers, or the book of Abraham is absent. Those interested in accurate historical information or Egyptological discussions will have to turn elsewhere, such as the other two studies under review.

### **The Latest Egyptological Treatment of the Subject**

The latest entry in a series published by the prestigious Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization*, is the memorial volume for Klaus Baer. The late Professor Baer is most noted in Latter-day Saint circles as Hugh Nibley's Egyptian teacher<sup>2</sup> and for his study of the Joseph Smith papyri. This volume features many important studies, and I would like to highlight several whose importance to readers of this review should be underscored: Edward Brovarski's study of Abydos in the Old Kingdom contains a nice overview of the role of the viziers in the Old Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Janet Johnson shows how all "annuity contracts" in ancient Egypt are connected with marriage.<sup>4</sup> Robert Ritner's publication of the statue of Besa in the Oriental Institute Museum not only shows the preoccupation during the Libyan period with genealogy, but also sheds some light

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<sup>2</sup> Hugh Nibley was, incidentally, Klaus Baer's first student. His second was David Larkin, now retired from the University of California at Berkeley. Sadly, essays of neither of these men were included.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Brovarski, "Abydos in the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period, Part II," in *For His Ka*, 15-44.

<sup>4</sup> Janet H. Johnson, "'Annuity Contracts' and Marriage," in *For His Ka*, 113-32.



on the selection of Nebwenenef as High Priest of Amon by oracular means.<sup>5</sup>

Eric Doret's study on some of the inscriptions of Ankhtifi<sup>6</sup> is a response to a study of Harco Willems.<sup>7</sup> What makes it interesting for Latter-day Saints is that Doret accepts Willems's analysis of the phrase *zḥ.t ḥpš=f* as referring to ritual slaughter of humans.<sup>8</sup> However, Doret differs from Willems by arguing that "the curses addressed to those who might desecrate any part of the tomb are therefore not linked with cult festivals, during which, and were it only symbolically, punishment was inflicted."<sup>9</sup> The ongoing discussion of whether or not, or under what circumstances, Egyptians practiced human sacrifice<sup>10</sup> has some bearing on the book of Abraham.

These studies accentuate the Egyptological researches of Baer's numerous students, yet they are not what Baer was noted

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<sup>5</sup> Robert K. Ritner, "Denderite Temple Hierarchy and the Family of Theban High Priest Nebwenenef: Block Statue OIM 10729," in *For His Ka*, 205–26.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Doret, "Ankhtifi and the Description of His Tomb at Mo'alla," in *For His Ka*, 79–86.

<sup>7</sup> Harco Willems, "Crime, Cult and Capital Punishment (Mo'alla Inscription 8)," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 76 (1990): 27–54.

<sup>8</sup> Doret, "Ankhtifi," 80 n. A.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>10</sup> On the affirmative side: Dieter Jankuhn, "Steckt hinter dem Gott 'Rwtj' eine Erinnerung an den rituellen Königsmord?" *Göttinger Miszellen* 1 (1972): 11–16; Jean Yoyotte, "Héra d'Héliopolis et le sacrifice humain," in *Annuaire, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études* V<sup>e</sup> section 89 (1980–81): 31–102; Anthony Leahy, "Death by Fire in Ancient Egypt," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 27 (1984): 199–203; Georges Posener, *Le Papyrus Vandier* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1985), 32–33, 75–77; Mark Smith, *The Mortuary Texts of Papyrus BM 10507*, Catalogue of Demotic Papyri in the British Museum 3 (London: British Museum, 1987), 90 and n. 372; Anthony Leahy, "A Protective Measure at Abydos in the Thirteenth Dynasty," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 75 (1989): 41–60; Willems, "Crime, Cult and Capital Punishment," 27–54; Robert K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1993), 162–63. On the negative side: L. Störk, "Gab es in Ägypten einen rituellen Königsmord?" *Göttinger Miszellen* 5 (1973): 31–32; David Lorton, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 20 (1977): 18; and apparently Doret, "Ankhtifi," 81 (who seems to think it only occurs symbolically and certainly not in association with any festival).

for in Latter-day Saint circles. In the words of Terry Wilfong: "Perhaps no work of Klaus Baer attracted more outside attention than his article 'The Breathing Permit of Hôr: A Translation of the Apparent Source of the Book of Abraham,'"<sup>11</sup> an elegant translation of some of the Joseph Smith papyri owned by the Mormon Church."<sup>12</sup> We could quibble with Wilfong's assessment because of his apparent ignorance of the name of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but more significantly we should note that, as is almost admitted by Wilfong, the papyrus Baer translated was not *P. Joseph Smith XI-X* but *P. Louvre 3284*; where *P. Joseph Smith XI-X* matched *P. Louvre 3284* the translation of the latter was put in italics. This is not to impugn Baer's work in the least; he was clear about what he was doing, but others, including Wilfong, are less clear about what Baer did. One of the problems that many have in discussing *P. Joseph Smith XI-X* is that it is an abbreviated text. *P. Louvre 3284* has the full text, of which *P. Joseph Smith XI-X* contains phrases that are usually not even complete sentences.

Due to Baer's work on the Joseph Smith papyri, John A. Larson, the archivist of the Oriental Institute, has gathered together information on the Joseph Smith papyri for an Egyptological audience.<sup>13</sup>

Larson's work is an important advance in work by Egyptologists on this subject because of his attempt to remain neutral on the topic and not to antagonize Latter-day Saints by his writings. Nonetheless, he unavoidably reveals his own opinions and biases on several topics, best encapsulated as follows:

When they are judged according to the standards of modern professional Egyptology, Joseph Smith's translations can, at best, be described as unorthodox. Nevertheless, the position of the Mormon prophet is

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<sup>11</sup> Klaus Baer, "The Breathing Permit of Hôr: A Translation of the Apparent Source of the Book of Abraham," *Dialogue* 3/3 (1968): 109-34.

<sup>12</sup> Terry G. Wilfong, "The Egyptological Papers of Klaus Baer in the Oriental Institute Museum Archives," in *For His Ka*, 323.

<sup>13</sup> John A. Larson, "Joseph Smith and Egyptology: An Early Episode in the History of American Speculation about Ancient Egypt, 1835-1844," in *For His Ka*, 159-78.

secure within the early history of American speculation about ancient Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

Speculation, however, is not the same thing as translation, and in drawing "a comparison of Joseph Smith's translation with those of a modern professional Egyptologist,"<sup>15</sup> Larson has begged the crucial and controversial question of whether the two translations are of the same text (the same mistake might have been made in the index of texts and objects cited). Larson unavoidably reveals his own biases because on some issues it is impossible to take a neutral stand, but significantly he shows that it is possible to deal with the subject without being inflammatory toward a group of more than nine million that has been known to fund such things as archaeological expeditions and publications in one's field.<sup>16</sup> Larson has made long strides from the strident rhetoric of S. A. B. Mercer, or Albert Lythgoe, for example. Egyptologists should follow Larson's lead in this matter, and Latter-day Saints should be grateful.

Larson's "Select Bibliography of the Joseph Smith Papyri" wisely avoids most extremist publications. Unfortunately, it is also twenty years out of date; while there is nothing before 1964, there is also nothing listed after 1975. Curiously, Larson also omitted an entire year of Nibley's series "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" from May 1969–April 1970. He has also strangely omitted a work that has appeared in mainline Egyptological journals on the subject.<sup>17</sup>

Larson also uses the worst illustrations of the facsimiles from the book of Abraham instead of using the original woodcuts, which have been in every English edition of the Pearl of Great Price since 1981, are included in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 160 n. 2.

<sup>16</sup> See Aziz S. Atiya, ed., *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, 6 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 1:LXV.

<sup>17</sup> G. E. Freeman, "The Osiris-Sheshonq Hypocephalus," *Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities Newsletter* 5/2 (December 1974): 4–9. Sadly, also missing is Michael D. Rhodes, "A Translation and Commentary of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus," *BYU Studies* 17/3 (1977): 259–74. While Rhodes definitely has a Latter-day Saint point of view, he did a more thorough job than did Freeman.



and are even included in books Larson lists in his bibliography.<sup>18</sup> The crucial importance of using the original woodcuts rather than second- or thirdhand copies has been pointed out in Egyptological literature where photocopies of the originals have been published.<sup>19</sup> The Oriental Institute and its Epigraphic Survey pride themselves on setting the standard for meticulous detail in epigraphic and facsimile work,<sup>20</sup> thus making this failure both disgraceful and inexcusable.

Larson's work consists mostly of quotations from Joseph Smith's journal entries that deal with the papyri. He uses as his text not Dean Jessee's exemplary critical editions of the journals and histories,<sup>21</sup> but those of the *History of the Church*,<sup>22</sup> supplemented by Scott Faulring's edition of the journals in the footnotes.<sup>23</sup> Larson's statement that "all excerpts from *Smith Diaries* [i.e., Faulring's edition—Larson has introduced an unnecessary, and potentially both confusing and misleading, ghost reference here] are transcribed exactly as published, including strike throughs, underlining, etc." is not true; *all* underlining is Larson's, which he has introduced to show where Faulring's edition differs from the *History of the Church*, but unfortunately he

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<sup>18</sup> Todd, *The Saga of the Book of Abraham*, 230–32.

<sup>19</sup> Freeman, "The Osiris-Sheshonq Hypocephalus," 4–9. Reuben Hedlock's woodcut is plate 2.

<sup>20</sup> The Epigraphic Survey's method is described in Ricardo A. Caminos, "The Recording of Inscriptions and Scenes in Tombs and Temples," in *Ancient Egyptian Epigraphy and Palaeography* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976), 10–11. Caminos's disparagement of the Epigraphic Survey's method seems to stem from his own quarrels with the Oriental Institute, which led him to leave the University of Chicago, complete a second dissertation with Sir Alan Gardiner (Ricardo A. Caminos, *Late Egyptian Miscellanies* [London: Oxford University Press, 1954]), and publish the work from his first (Chicago) dissertation with the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome; Ricardo A. Caminos, *The Chronicle of Prince Osorkon* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1958).

<sup>21</sup> Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92); Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984).

<sup>22</sup> B. H. Roberts, ed., *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976).

<sup>23</sup> Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

relegates the original to the footnotes.<sup>24</sup> Larson also too easily accepts Faulring's occasionally misleading use of explanatory brackets, which Latter-day Saint historians will find as irritating as Egyptologists find the use of Budge or Mercer. Curiously, Larson's bibliography actually contains better treatments of the subject than his article.

Larson's study is a florilegium, not a critical study. For example, the study quotes two different versions of the same meeting of Joseph Smith with Josiah Quincy and Charles Francis Adams; the discrepancies in these versions show the need for caution in using many of the sources. Compare the description of the authorship of the papyrus given by these two men with what Joseph Smith himself published about the same subject.

**Joseph Smith:** "purporting to be the writings of Abraham, while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus."<sup>25</sup>

**Charles Francis Adams:** "written by the hand of Abraham."<sup>26</sup>

**Josiah Quincy:** "That is the handwriting of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful."<sup>27</sup>

The statements by Adams and Quincy can be seen as progressive garblings of Joseph Smith's published statement. Yet the garbling significantly affects the meaning. Thus Josiah Quincy's statement has been wrongly taken to prove that Joseph Smith thought that Ptolemaic or Roman period manuscripts were actually in Abraham's handwriting, but Joseph only seems to have made a statement about to whom the manuscript attributed its authorship. Quincy's other statements that he both writes about and attributes to Joseph Smith indicate that he wished to make fun of the prophet and was hardly a dispassionate reporter of events. Quincy and others reporting about the papyri from their conversations with Joseph Smith or from secondhand comments even

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<sup>24</sup> See for example, Larson, "Joseph Smith and Egyptology," 165 n. 19, in which Larson tacitly introduces underlining. The underlined word is worth emphasizing, but the emphasis is Larson's. See also *ibid.*, 165 n. 21.

<sup>25</sup> *Times and Seasons* 3/9 (1 March 1842): 1, cited in *History of the Church* 4:524.

<sup>26</sup> As cited in Larson, "Joseph Smith and Egyptology," 173.

<sup>27</sup> As cited in *ibid.*, 172.

from Joseph's friends or family are not necessarily accurate in their reporting of details and must be used with extreme caution in trying to reconstruct Joseph's understanding of the papyri, particularly when they contradict statements Joseph himself published about those papyri. In general, when visitors describe what they themselves saw, they are firsthand sources; when they report what someone says about the papyri, they are secondhand or hearsay sources.<sup>28</sup> For example, when Quincy reports that "the parchment last referred to showed a rude drawing of a man and woman, and a serpent walking upon a pair of legs" we may conclude that he is describing a particular vignette on an actual papyrus. Although there are some similarities between this description and vignettes in *P. Joseph Smith IV* (man [Ptah] and woman) and *P. Joseph Smith V* (woman and serpent walking on a pair of legs), this could likely be a reference to portions of papyri that we do not at present have. His attributions of "handwriting" and "autograph," however, may be discounted as hearsay. To date, no study of the Joseph Smith papyri has considered all statements about the papyri and critically analyzed them to sift eyewitness accounts from hearsay.

One regrettable drawback of Larson's study is its incompleteness. There are early newspaper accounts describing the papyri in Ohio that he missed.<sup>29</sup> He has missed almost half a dozen references to the papyri by Joseph Smith in 1835–36 alone.<sup>30</sup> Larson asserts that "there seems to be no published record of the westward movement of the mummies and papyri with the Mormons from Kirtland, Ohio, into Missouri,"<sup>31</sup> ignorant of published

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<sup>28</sup> The methodological point has been made before by Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 152–53, and throughout 151–75.

<sup>29</sup> Conveniently gathered in H. Donl Peterson, "The Mormon Mummies and Papyri in Ohio," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio*, ed. Milton V. Backman (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1990), 123–38.

<sup>30</sup> For instance Joseph Smith's journal entries for 3 October 1835, 23 November 1835, 25 November 1835, 15 December 1835, and 20 December 1835; Larson's record of a 31 December 1835 entry ("Joseph Smith and Egyptology," 166–67) is a ghost entry (see *ibid.*, 167 n. 28).

<sup>31</sup> Larson, "Joseph Smith and Egyptology," 169.

sources that discuss precisely that.<sup>32</sup> Several significant non-Mormon sources also describe the papyri during the Nauvoo period.<sup>33</sup>

Larson has made a stride forward, especially for an Egyptologist.<sup>34</sup> Getting accurate information into the hands of Egyptologists should be an improvement, since, I regret to report, the most ridiculous statements about the Joseph Smith papyri often come not from anti-Mormons but from Egyptologists, mainly because they know next to nothing about them. For instance, I heard one great and learned Egyptologist, whom I will not embarrass by naming, emphatically state that the Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon from the Book of the Dead.<sup>35</sup> I am more than willing to consider this Egyptologist's opinions within his sphere of expertise, but currently the Joseph Smith papyri are clearly outside it.

Unfortunately, some Egyptologists have printed their comments, so they cannot be kept anonymous. One scholar trained in Egyptology recently wrote the following:

In Kirtland, Ohio, he [Michael Chandler] sold at least part of this collection, reportedly for six thousand dollars, to members of the Church of Latter-day Saints, whose leader, Joseph Smith, "translated" a copy of the Book of the Dead included in the sale as a hitherto

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<sup>32</sup> For example, the record of Anson Call, Manuscript Journal, summer of 1838, in Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), 98.

<sup>33</sup> Conveniently gathered in Todd, *The Saga of the Book of Abraham*, 218-74.

<sup>34</sup> Consider the fanciful garbling of history in Freeman, "The Osiris-Sheshonq Hypocephalus," 6-7.

<sup>35</sup> In response to the comment by the above-mentioned Egyptologist, François Neveu give an impressively accurate description of the Book of Mormon. Obviously, knowledge varies from individual to individual. The Joseph Smith papyri are not generally an object of study by Egyptologists and information about them is not generally part of their training.



unknown work written by the Hebrew patriarch Abraham (see fig. 2 [facsimile 2]).<sup>36</sup>

Any count of the mistakes in this one sentence is embarrassingly high. The sale amount is over twice the actual price (\$2400). The name of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is given inaccurately. Most critics of Joseph Smith identify the text they think Joseph translated as a Book of Breathing. And the *pièce de resistance* is the identification of a hypocephalus as a Book of the Dead. Larson's work might have saved this poor professor from making a fool of himself in print. Sadly most Egyptologists have failed to make any more effort than this archaeologist to get their facts straight.

### The Legacy of Donl Peterson

Many deficiencies in historical sources present in Larson's study are remedied in H. Donl Peterson's new volume. We are fortunate that Peterson finished the manuscript of his *magnum opus* before his death. Book of Abraham studies have lost a singular individual who has made his own particular and lasting contribution to the field. Most of what we know about the journey of the Joseph Smith papyri from Thebes to Kirtland and many details about the journey from Kirtland to Salt Lake City we owe to the dedicated researches of Donl Peterson and his assistants.

Although Peterson was not particularly prolific,<sup>37</sup> talented, or well trained, his work is not only important but sets a significant

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<sup>36</sup> Bruce G. Trigger, "Egyptology, Ancient Egypt, and the American Imagination," in *The American Discovery of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Nancy Thomas (New York: Abrams, 1995), 22.

<sup>37</sup> His bibliography, so far as I have been able to compile it, is as follows: *Moroni: Ancient Prophet, Modern Messenger* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1983); *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987); "Sacred Writings from the Tombs of Egypt," in *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations From God*, ed. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 137-53; "The Mormon Mummies and Papyri in Ohio," in *Regional Studies*; "Antonio Lebolo: Excavator of the Book of Abraham," *BYU Studies* 31/3 (1991): 5-29; "Moroni: Joseph Smith's Teacher," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: New York*, ed. Larry C. Porter, Milton V. Backman, Jr., and Susan Easton Black (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young

example. Back in 1967, when the papyri appeared on the scene again, Peterson discovered a large gap of basic information that needed to be filled and spent the rest of his life trying to fill it. Granted, few people doubted the authenticity of the Joseph Smith papyri. Still, thanks to Peterson, we can now trace the provenance of the papyri from Antonio Lebolo's excavations in Thebes to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio. In fact, thanks to Peterson's work we now know more about the provenance and travels of the Joseph Smith papyri than about any other comparable find.<sup>38</sup> Where he could not read the Italian documents, he got someone who could. It is sad that some of his colleagues continue to recycle old lectures and Sunday School lessons into publications when there is still much basic work to be done and when the materials for this work are mostly within an hour's drive of their homes. Donl Peterson has provided an example of what can be done with some effort.<sup>39</sup>

Peterson actually has at least three stories to tell: The story of the Joseph Smith papyri, the story of the publication of the book of Abraham, and the story of his research into these topics. In telling these three stories as well as making accessible several unpublished or inaccessible primary sources, Peterson jumps around a great deal, unfortunately sometimes making a very interesting story flat and confusing in the process. Chapters 8–14 are the most confused in ordering, whereas chapters 15–19 have the smoothest flow.

Despite the book's problems, Peterson has done us all a great service by publishing many new primary sources here for the first time. Not only that, at important points Peterson makes some

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University, 1992), 49–70; *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> And several finds are comparable. I reported one in "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 35–42. A more exhaustive treatment of this papyrus archive appears in William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.18.5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 3398–412. The whole article, comprising pages 3380–684—indeed, the whole volume—may be profitably consulted.

<sup>39</sup> For instance, how many of the apostles of this dispensation have been the subjects of even basic biographies, much less good ones?

insightful observations that are exactly right. Noteworthy are the following:

1. "The present text of the book of Abraham does not deal with Abraham while he was [in] Egypt, but only some preliminary experiences he has prior to going there. He was on his way to Egypt from Ur, by way of Haran, with a stop in Shechem, when the story ends" (Peterson, p. 153). This observation shows why much of the criticism of the book of Abraham is misguided and moot. To take a recent example, one Egyptologist kindly informed Latter-day Saints that a place name Ur in the land "of the Chaldees" was not attested as an Egyptian personal name in Abraham's day, or even in the New Kingdom.<sup>40</sup> But why should it be? Are we supposed to be grateful to this man for proving that Ur of the Chaldees (along with everywhere else visited by Abraham in the present book of Abraham) was not located in Egypt?

2. It is normally assumed that if the book of Abraham were written by Abraham on papyrus, that that papyrus was left in Egypt when the patriarch moved back to the land of Canaan. "However, it is possible that the sacred writings of the two prophets [Abraham and Joseph] were not left behind in Egypt" (Peterson, p. 34). Peterson suggests seven different scenarios for how they could have arrived back in Egypt (Peterson, pp. 34–35). I have, independently, made the same suggestion, with several different scenarios.<sup>41</sup> Two of Peterson's scenarios involve transmission via Christianity, an unlikely possibility, since the papyri date somewhere between the third century B.C. and the late first century A.D. at the latest.<sup>42</sup>

3. Peterson (p. 176) brings forth cogent evidence that "discredits Michael H. Chandler's claims to any blood relationship with Antonio Lebolo." One of Donl Peterson's objectives was to prove that Chandler's story was correct. "It is painful to conclude," he reports, "but my research leads me to believe that Chandler fabricated that part of the report" (Peterson, p. 256).

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<sup>40</sup> Stephen E. Thompson, "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham," *Dialogue* 28/1 (1995): 154.

<sup>41</sup> Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," 72–73.

<sup>42</sup> I have previously pointed out (*ibid.*, 71 n. 272) that the conventional dating of the papyri has been questioned. I have been working on the problem and will publish the results when I stop running across new information.



Chandler also lied about how he obtained the mummies and exaggerated information about the excavation of the mummies and papyri. These stories have been faithfully repeated through the years, and there is thus no reason to be puzzled (as Peterson is) when someone like Parley P. Pratt gives the story from memory and includes inconsistent details (Peterson, pp. 178–83). The sources that Peterson uncovered in his researches are more reliable than Chandler. And Chandler may not have been the only one who exaggerated their story of how they were instruments in getting the papyri into Latter-day Saint hands.<sup>43</sup> If we remember that Chandler and Lebolo were not Latter-day Saints and that we do not have to expect them to live by the standards of the Latter-day Saints (which even Latter-day Saints too often struggle to maintain), then we perhaps will not feel the need to exonerate Lebolo for his attempted murder of Belzoni, or Chandler for lying.

### Recommendations

If the most disappointing feature of Larson's work is that he has nothing new to say, since no evidence that he presents has not been published in this connection before or been available for years, the same cannot be said of Donl Peterson's work, which anyone doing serious research on this subject will simply have to have, if only because it contains extensive quotations of primary sources or generally inaccessible works. Larson's work does do a great service by providing some generally accurate background information to an audience that has not had access to it before in a nonpolemical manner. Despite any drawbacks, I can recommend both Larson's and Peterson's work for different reasons; Harris's work, however, needs to be used with extreme caution. More work in this area that is both interesting and accurate is still desired.

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<sup>43</sup> After working through Henry Fischer's meticulous notes in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Aziz Atiya's correspondence with Fischer on the matter, I find it impossible to believe that Fischer did not know that the Metropolitan owned the papyri and knew exactly what they had. I find Atiya's story repeated in Peterson, *Story of the Book of Abraham*, 238–42, truly incredible. I understand Fischer was justifiably furious at Atiya's story.