A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price: Part 5: Facsimile No. 1, A Unique Document (Continued)

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A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price
By Dr. Hugh Nibley

PART 5

FACSIMILE NO. 1
A Unique Document

Scenes from the Grand Temple of Philae show various lion-couch drawings, informing us that not all such scenes depict embalmment. Critics have scoffed at Joseph Smith's declaration that Facsimile 1 is a sacrificial scene, not an embalming scene.

- Hand or Wing? The earliest and latest scholarly critics of the facsimiles have insisted that the bird in Facsimile 1 should have a human head. Though the bird's head, being on the edge of the papyrus, was broken off even before it was mounted, enough of the neck fortunately remains to show that it never bore a human head. And so the original again comes to the rescue to refute the Approved School Solution.

Another near miss has preserved just enough of "Abraham's" hands to show us that they were hands—both of them. This is a critical point on which Professor Parker's interpretation must stand or fall. He tells us that "the apparent upper hand is part of the wing of a second bird..." In favor of such an interpretation is only the fact that two birds are represented in approximately the positions indicated in a number of other drawings showing men on lion couches. Of course, if all lion-couch figures were accompanied by two birds, then we would be pretty well stuck with a second bird; but actually the two birds are the rare exception, one bird being the rule, though three are fairly common. More to the point, in all documents obtainable in which birds appear regardless of their number, their wings are drawn according to the same artistic convention, exactly as the wings...
on our Facsimile 1 have been drawn, and no wings are to be found done in the manner of Professor Parker’s hypothetical second bird.

But if we are not required by statistics to supply a second bird, the same statistics are even less in favor of a second hand, which if it really exists makes our picture quite unique. So the issue is still in the balance until we take a closer look—and then the wing disappears.

1. First of all, the immediate proximity of a real bird to the imaginary one shows us clearly enough how this particular artist draws wings, and his method is in total agreement with all wing-drawing in those compositions which show hawks hovering over people’s middles. Dr. Parker himself tells us that the two birds in this particular picture are sisters, and indeed, they usually figure as identical twins. Why then should they be drawn, as nowhere else, according to different conventions and as different types? The accompanying illustrations will show how closely the two birds resemble each other when they appear together as a pair.

2. The position of the priest’s arm and whatever he is holding interferes drastically with the act of prostration indicated by Professor Parker. There is nothing like the feet of the figure on the couch, scenes; when the central bird is present, the Amuk priest always stands well off to one side, beyond the feet of the figure on the couch, holding his hands upraised before his face, or bearing oil and bandages. When the priest stands by the supine figure, as he does here, there is never a second bird present. Indeed, one can hardly reconstruct the scene according to Professor Parker’s directions without getting a startling, unique, and original result.

3. But if our two birds’ wings do not match, the two hands most certainly do: (a) By an odd coincidence, they are exactly in the right position and at the right angle to represent a pair of hands. (b) As a magnified view of the hands will show, they are drawn exactly alike: the upper hand has strange twig-like fingers—six of them, not counting the thumb, and so also the lower hand, which no one will deny is a hand, has the same number of just such twig-like fingers. (c) Furthermore, examination of the original document makes it clear that the fuzzy or dotted sketching of part of the fingers of the upper hand is due entirely to the fraying of the papyrus fibers near the broken edge and is not an attempt to represent feathers. (d) The thumbs of both hands are strongly and unmistakably marked and drawn just alike, both being designated by short, heavy lines stand...
pinion of a hawk's wing so strangely designated? Eminent Egyptologists are used to studying original documents, and Dr. Parker was understandably reluctant to base interpretations on poor reproductions; properly photographed or magnified, the two hands stand out clearly for what they are.

4. But if only one hand is raised by the reclining figure, where is the other hand? Professor Parker knows where it should be: "... the left arm of Osiris is in reality lying at his side under him." In reality? In all the representations in which Osiris raises a hand, the other hand and arm are clearly shown beneath the body, the fingers reaching well down below the hip almost to the knee in an ample space provided for them between the body and the couch. And all that is precisely what we do not find in our papyrus—here, "in reality," there is no arm or hand under the body, and no room is provided for them, though more than enough of the papyrus is preserved to show where they should be.49

5. And then there is the matter of the knife. Since Professor Parker's attention was directed entirely to photographs of the papyrus, as was proper, and not to the facsimile, he makes no mention of the knife in the priest's hand. Of course, if his interpretation is correct, then there was no knife, and we must allow Dr. Lythgoe's claim that the Mormons have drawn it into the hand of the priest. But the other experts saw nothing wrong with the knife. Back in 1903 Budge's colleague at the British Museum, Henry Woodward, saw in Facsimile 1 "an embalmer, knife in hand, preparing to disembowel a dead body to embalm it!"50 Von Bissing saw "the soul leaving the body the moment when the priest is opening the body with a knife for mumification."51 And at the present time Professor George R.

Honey-lemon prunes: Place 1 package (1 lb.) flavorful Del Monte Prunes in small saucepan with 4 lemon slices; add 2½ cups water. Cover. Simmer 20 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in ¼ cup honey. 5 servings.

Spiced-lemon prunes: Place 1 pkg. (1 lb.) Del Monte Prunes in mixing bowl, with 3 whole cloves, ½ stick cinnamon, 1 lemon slice, and 2⅛ cups hot water. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Remove lemon, cloves, and cinnamon before serving. 5 servings.

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Hughes of the Oriental Institute at Chicago obliges with an explanation: "The embalming of a deceased person, or rather the operation preparatory to mumification. (1) The deceased’s soul or spirit . . . it is usually shown as a human-headed bird. . . . [Fac. 1, Fig. 3] is the embalmer-priest who is usually shown wearing a jackal-headed mask. . . . He has in his hand a knife ready to make an incision in the abdomen." 52

Thus, the knife remains a respectable object and fits nicely into an embalming scene. What made Lythgoe suspicious was the peculiar form of the knife, and rightly so, since it was badly copied in the reproduction Spalding sent to him. In the 1842 engravings the thing has a different shape, like a thin crescent moon. Here we are speculating, to be sure, but not without some reason, for Herman Kees suggested that the knife used by the Egyptians for human sacrifice had to be shaped like a thin new moon. 53 and in one of the oldest Abraham legends we are told that the knife used by the patriarch to sacrifice Isaac "was a sharp knife, lusting after flesh, and crescent-shaped like the new-moon." 52 But more of this later.

Unique, Uniquer, Uniquest: At this point, we are not ready to discuss the significance of the oddities in the facsimiles of the Book of Abraham; our first concern is simply to show that such oddities do exist, and thereby refute the most serious charge against Joseph Smith, that of mistaking thoroughly typical and commonplace documents for something unusual. The facsimiles are in fact most unusual documents, all three of them. The only one over which we have any real control at present is Facsimile 1, and of this we have not been able to discover a single one of the supposedly "innumerable" and "identical" parallels. We are not referring to minute differences of detail, but to major and conspicuous discrepancies. We have dug up over a hundred lion-couch scenes, many of which may be considered significantly like our papyrus. 54 But how do they compare with it? That is the question.

In the past those who have really wanted to blast the Pearl of Great Price out of the water have printed reproductions of just any hypotheces or lion-couch scene with the calm assurance that the mere sight of anything that looks like any of the facsimiles would be enough to spread consternation among the Saints and forever disqualify any and all statements of the Prophet. The idea that these various documents might be subjected to serious comparative study with a real interest in the myriad questions they raise was the farthest thing from the minds of those who published them.

Whenever like but not identical documents are placed side by side for study, two problems present themselves: (a) to explain the resemblances between them, and (b) to explain the differences. The favorite game of comparative scholarship since the mid-nineteenth century has been the hunt for resemblances while discounting differences, a practice cultivated to a fine art by the evolutionists and very well and clearly demonstrated by the critics of the Book of Abraham. These latter constantly pointed to the general resemblance of the facsimiles to other documents while stubbornly refusing to acknowledge any of the conspicuous points of difference, attributing everything simply to bad copying. But however "suspicious" and even "damning" the resemblances may appear, it is not enough to say, for example, that since ancient myth and ritual are full of remarkable parallels to the death and resurrection of Christ, the New Testament
must be rejected as history. To do that is to overlook both the great number of interesting hypotheses capable of explaining the supposedly devastating resemblances and the no less numerous questions raised by the swarming discrepancies and contrasts.

"Well-known" was a favorite expression of these critics, and we are still being told that Facsimile 1 is "a well-known scene from the Osiris mysteries" (Parker) and that it belongs to "a well-known class of documents" (Young), as if that explained everything. But we cannot drop the discussion there; just as Egyptologists had to learn by long experience that it was unwise to label everything found in a tomb as funerary in nature, so the student is admonished today not to leap to conclusions every time he sees a lion-couch. A useful study reminds us that the expression "he who is on his couch" can refer to anything from Osiris in the Underworld to a solid citizen taking 20 winks on a warm afternoon.\(^5\) It is surprising how often an otherwise well-known scene is converted by a few minor alterations into something not at all well-known, as when by altering the names of participants "the Cairo papyrus has seriously distorted the meaning of the ritual," which is otherwise a well-known scene,\(^6\) or when a well-known scene from the Book of the Dead loses its well-known meaning by another such change of names: "It would be easy to find numerous parallels to each of these figures," writes G. Nagel of the scene, "but that would not mean much,"\(^7\) i.e., the numerous parallels no matter how well-known are not enough in themselves to identify every scene in which they occur. N. M. Davies reports on another document, "wholly conventional in its subjects," which isn't conventional at all because it "displays certain details and peculiarities of treatment that are, so far as my knowledge goes, unique."\(^8\) The substitution of one divinity for another in a series of lion-couch scenes changes the normal resurrection motif, according to Derchain, to "an astral or calendrical myth" with special emphasis on the flooding of the Nile,\(^9\) and by another such alteration the figure on the couch ceases to be Osiris and becomes a dead person "identified with a complex entity" who remains quite mysterious.\(^10\)

Such alterations, which convert familiar scenes into unfamiliar ones, are by no means more radical than those that confront the stu-

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* Richard L. Evans

The Spoken Word

The "get-out-from-under" attitude

There is sometimes evident an attitude of wanting to get out from under, wanting not to be accountable to anyone. Young people, for example, sometimes choose to move away from home and family and friends. Work, education, opportunities in other areas are often good reasons. But to leave just to cut loose, just to go it alone, just to be free from being accountable to anyone may well not be wise. And before we feel we want to get away, to get out from under, we ought honestly to make sure we don’t want it for the wrong reasons. No one is always safe. No one can know when he may become ill, or have an accident, or find himself in some serious situation. No one knows all the answers. No one can be sure he is self-sufficient. Besides, others have much invested in us. Others have taught us, trained us, nourished and loved us, and given us part of their lives—parents, teachers, doctors, friends, family have done this and much more, and they have a right to an interest in us, and we have an obligation to recognize that right. There is also the fact that if we are alone and without the interest of others, we could become indifferent and deteriorate. Much of our performance is for others and not for us. We do our best when others expect it of us. If life were simply a matter of satisfying our selfish selves, there wouldn’t be much progress or improvement. The faith and interest of others leads us to be better—and surely we wouldn’t, for the wrong reasons, want to separate ourselves from stabilizing factors and influences, and place ourselves in a position that would make it easier to lower standards or lose the most precious things a person can possess: virtue, honesty, honor, respect, excellence of purpose and performance. Almost anything can happen to almost anyone, and the "cut loose," "get-out-from-under," "leave-me-alone" attitude, in this sense, isn’t sensible or safe. To cite a significant sentence: "There is no such thing in human existence as being so high you’re not responsible to anybody."\(^1\)

\(^1\)Lawrence A. Appley, Managers in Action.

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A close examination of Fac. 1 shows the above as Abraham’s hands, and not wings, and is sometimes shown as a sequel to it.

3. Then there are many resurrection or resuscitation scenes, such as the famous “Awakening of Osiris” in the Temple of Apet at Luxor: “The Neter [god] is beginning to move himself, bending his right arm and raising his left foot.”

4. There are a number of procreation scenes in which the mummy is begetting his divine successor or reincarnation.

Now the question is, to which of these well-known scenes or classes does our Facsimile 1 belong? This is exactly what the experts have never been able to agree on. Some have designated it most emphatically as an embalming scene; others like Breasted saw in it a resurrec-
tion, and now Professor Parker tells us it is a mystic marriage. All the authorities have good reason for their opinions; the elements of all the episodes are undeniably present in our little sketch, or else experienced scholars would not have seen them there so clearly. But which is the predominant theme? The difficulty of answering that question is quite enough in itself to brand our document as unique. And now some European scholars are suggesting a new and neglected category for some of the lion-couch spectacles, namely, that they are really sacrificial scenes. This, of course, rings a tiny bell for Joseph Smith, and we shall have to look at these new studies quite closely. Until now none of the critics of the Joseph Smith papyri has bothered to mention them.

To show how hard it is to pin down our facsimile, we invite the reader to compare it with the closest parallel in our collection. An Egyptologist may be able to explain the significance of an arm or a bird (though it is precisely in matters of significance that the experts have always disagreed most widely among themselves, and still do), but any intelligent child can usually spot an arm or a bird when he sees one in a picture, and it needs no trained specialist to recognize at least a dozen points of difference between our two sketches when they are placed side by side. Notice that in the non-Mormon papyrus (1) the bird is in a different position, there being no bird at the head of the mummy; (2) Anubis has both hands raised, not one hand lowered; (3) the figure on the couch has only one hand raised, while (4) the bird above him has a proper wing, not something that looks like a hand; (5) the man on the couch wears no clothes, (6) but does wear the nfm's headdress and rests his head on a pillow; (7) his left arm and hand are plainly visible, held well apart from his body; (8) two ladies are in attendance; (9) a figure with a Horus mask is also assisting; (10) there are no Canopic jars under the couch, there is no crocodile, and no pylons, etc.; (11) stereotyped and familiar inscriptions accompany the drawing—the inscriptions on the Mormon papyrus are completely different; (12) Anubis is quite differently attired.

The swift passing of a season is always sobering—for "time," said Benjamin Franklin "is the stuff life is made of." And while we have a conviction that in the eternal sense time is limitless, what we can now foresee passes swiftly. And yet often we splinter it away with less thought, less purpose, less accomplishment than time is entitled to.

"At times," said Emerson, "the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles." It is true that other people splinter our lives into trifles if we let them, and often we ourselves do the same. Often we let our lives be cluttered with encumbrances—with bits and pieces and paraphernalia—with "emphatic trifles," as Emerson said. And while we don't want to be slaves to unreasoning routine, we ought to recognize the waste when time is not well used—for "time," said Diogenes, "is the most valuable thing that a man can spend.

"Don't waste time," pleaded Arthur Brisbane. "Don't waste it in idleness; don't waste it in regretting the time already wasted; don't waste it in distraction; don't waste it in resolutions a thousand times repeated, never to be carried out. Don't waste your time. Use all of it. Sleep, work, rest, think. Save part of the time of yesterday by saving part of the money earned yesterday.... The best of us have already wasted time enough.... Remember that however much time you have wasted already, you have time enough left [for some accomplishment and recovery] if you will use it.... while life and time remain." Passing and trivial things should not be allowed unduly to take us away from more productive pursuits, nor should we let others often distract us with trifles that take us away from our work. "At times the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles."
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in the two pictures. One could easily add to the list, but it might
well be objected that this is only
one document chosen for compari-
son, even if it is the nearest one in
general appearance, and that
among the numerous other lion-
couch scenes are those in which
each single element in the Joseph
Smith papyrus could be matched.
But this is not so; on many points
our little sketch remains quite
unique. Here are some of them:
1. Question: Of the hundred
other figures on lion-couches, how
many have both hands raised? An-
swer: None. Professor Parker is
therefore statistically justified in
being suspicious. So we pursue
our statistics further:
2. How many of these figures
have one hand upraised without
having the other clearly visible,
placed under the body in a space
provided for it? Answer: None,
though we know of one example in
which the hand is shown beside
the body, but very clearly shown,
almost touching the knee.
3. How many other scenes show
the figure on the couch clothed in
the manner here shown? Answer:
None. All are either nude or fully
invested as mummies.
4. In how many is this figure
wearing anklets or slippers? An-
swer: None.
5. In how many are the couch,
the figure on the couch, and the
priest out of line with each other
in the strange manner of the Abra-
ham papyrus? Answer: None; we
have no replicas in which the artist
has made any such blunder or any-
thing comparable to it.
6. How many have crocodiles
beneath the couch? Answer: None.
7. How many have hatched lines
designated as “expans”, or fir-
mament”? Answer: None of the others
has such a design.
8. How many have the twelve
gates or “pillars of heaven” or any-
thing like them? Answer: None,
9. How many show the lotus and offering table, otherwise common in Egyptian religious and secular scenes? Answer: None.

10. How many show the resurrection, procreation, or embalming scene without the presence of the two ladies (Isis and Nephthys) and/or other dignitaries? Answer: None.

11. Granting Dr. Parker’s reconstruction, when a bird is shown flying over the middle of the couch, how often is Anubis in the position shown? Answer: Never.

12. How often is any bird shown with wings drawn in the manner Professor Parker indicates? Answer: Never.

13. How many have inscriptions matching those in the Pearl of Great Price papyrus? Answer: None, though nearly all of them have stereotyped inscriptions designating the nature of the scene.

So our manuscript is different. But is it significantly different? In looking at it beside the others, we miss the august figures of the gods standing by and the solemn religious dignity they give to the other compositions as they kneel in mourning, stand guard, raise hands in praise, or make magical passes. At the same time we are impressed by the rather massive additions—the unfamiliar writing that frames the scene on either side, and the stage-like foundation of elements found in none of the other papyri. True, every individual sign and figure can be matched rather easily somewhere else, just as every word on this page can be found in almost any English book, but it is the combination of perfectly ordinary signs that makes extraordinary compositions, and we may well repeat the words of Professor Nagel: “It would be easy to find numerous parallels to each of these figures, but that would not mean much. . . .” For the combination here is different. We have just noted that for an Egyptian document to be considered unique, it does not have to be spectacularly different from all others: it can resemble scores of others in almost every particular and still have a message to convey that is quite distinct from theirs. Whether our facsimiles belong to this maverick type remains to be seen. But what we have seen is that one of them, at least, the one with which we are at present concerned, departs from the standard patterns in so many particulars as to render it worthy of closer attention than anyone has so far been willing to give it.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES


«In the copies at our disposal (see note 54 below) are only two scenes with two birds in them, as against seven with three birds, 22 with one bird, and one with five birds.

«Professor, loc. cit., supra, note 23; Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians (London, 1904), Vol. 2, pp. 254-58. ‘Isis and Nephthys were . . . associated inseparably with each other . . . and in all important matters . . . they acted together.’ ” Ibid., p. 256.

«The reproduction here given, after Lanzone, Dizionario, Plate CXX, is the nearest thing to the Mormon papyrus.

«Reproduced in Erik Iversen, in Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, Vol. 15 (1929), p. 17, Fig. 4.

«In Spalding, op. cit., p. 30.

«Hughes, in letter cited above, note 37.


«V. S. Colenfischweil, Catalogue General des Antiquites Egyptiennes du Musee de Caire, Papyrus Hieratici (1937), p. 153. Here the hieroglyph for “coach” is the lion-coach. “It is difficult to say (writes Colenfischweil) whether the designation of ‘he who is on the coach’ refers to the dead god Osiris. One could just as well think of the king (or, less probably, of some ordinary individual), who was thus placed beside the deceased in ‘protection of the gods.’ “On the couch in the Underworld, E. N. Gardner, Espaard-Oefenritual, Vol. 2, p. 13.


A Dream Grown Tall
By Florence Pedigo Jansson

An oak is but a dream grown tall,
An acorn’s upward thrust,
A high resolve that shaped itself
To action born of trust.

An oak is sturdiness endowed
By roots of mighty length
That hold its aspirations high
And give it inner strength.

October 1968