



Type: Magazine Article

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## The Book of Abraham - Its Genuineness Established, Chapter XIII

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Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. XLI, No. 13 (Mar. 31, 1879),  
pp. 193–195

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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**Abstract:** Scientific Objections to the Prophet's Translations of the Book of Abraham —M. Deveria's Translation.

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THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS  
MILLENNIAL STAR.

"HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD, O YE NATIONS, AND DECLARE IT IN THE ISLES AFAR OFF, AND SAY, HE THAT SCATTERETH ISRAEL WILL GATHER HIM, AND KEEP HIM, AS A SHEPHERD DOTH HIS FLOCK."—*Jeremiah xxxi, 10.*

No. 13, Vol. XLI.

Monday, March 31, 1879.

Price One Penny.

THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM—ITS GENUINENESS ESTABLISHED.

BY ELDER GEORGE REYNOLDS.

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CHAP. XIII.

*Scientific Objections to the Prophet's  
Translations of the Book of Abraham  
—M. Deveria's Translation*

In the year 1855, Messrs. Remy and Brenchly, two French travelers, visited Utah. On their return to Paris they carried with them a copy of the Book of Abraham, which they placed in the hands of "a young savant of the Museum of the Louvre, M. Theodule Deveria," with the request that he would translate it. This he attempted to do. Messrs. Remy and Brenchly afterwards published an account of their travels, and embodied therein M. Deveria's *soi-disant* translation. They pretend to consider that the disclosures made by the scientific translation should place the Book of Abraham in the catalogue of pious frauds, that have so often disgraced the history of religion. We come to an entirely opposite conclusion, and claim that so far as M.

Deveria's translation is concerned, if it does anything, it substantiates the statements of the Prophet Joseph with regard to the true meaning of the papyri. Two things, however, have to be remembered, the first that the Egyptian hieroglyphics had at least two, (but more probably three,) meanings, the one understood by the masses, the other comprehended only by the initiated—the priesthood and others; which latter conveyed the true though hidden intent of the writer. The second consideration is, that when M. Deveria made his translation, egyptiology, as a science, was in its babyhood. Since then highly important discoveries have been made in this branch of literature, which have greatly changed the conclusions of earlier students. But even to-day the science is so inexact, that but a few weeks ago the *Deseret News* published an anecdote to two eminent egyptologists, who unitedly [came to the conclusion that the hieroglyphics on the wrappings of a mummy they

were examining, proved the deceased to have been a great warrior or king amongst the ancient Egyptians. On removing the inner bandages, the body proved to be that of a woman. If the scientists of to-day make such egregious blunders, what may we expect from Messrs. Remv and Branchley's young savant of 20 years ago, before Osborn, Smyth and others had made the important discoveries that are almost revolutionizing the ideas of the learned on ancient Egypt and its literature.

We will now draw attention to a few of the difference between the two translations.

The Prophet Joseph Smith states that Plate I represents an idolatrous priest attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice to his gods. M. D. affirms that it represents the resurrection of Osiris. We ask, if it is a representation of a resurrection, what is the priest doing with a knife in his hand? Osiris was not resurrected with a knife, but Abraham would have been slain with one if God had not delivered him. And it is a somewhat remarkable fact, that the original Egyptian hieroglyphic for the verb *Nobem*, to rescue, to deliver, was a bedstead-shaped altar with a bird flying above it, just as represented in Plate I, of the angel of the Lord rescuing Abraham. Is it not probable that the hieroglyphic had its origin in this very circumstance?

Joseph, the Prophet, says fig. I represents "the angel of the Lord." M. D. states that it is "the soul of Osiris under the form of a hawk (which should have a human head)." Fig. III, the Prophet states, is "the idolatrous priest of Eikenah." M. D. says it is "the god Anubis (who should have a jackal's head)," and in other places he makes substantially the same statement, that a certain figure represents somebody or something, or would do so, if it were different. This puts us in mind of a little story. A certain clergyman was visiting the home of one of his parishioners, when he noticed a little son of his host very busily engaged, first intently eyeing him, and then working away at a slate he held in his hand. Suspecting what he was doing, the clergyman

asked the boy if he was not drawing his portrait, and finding his suspicions were correct, he asked to see it. With some reluctance the boy consented. After looking at it a moment, the clergyman exclaimed, "Why, this is not like me!" and received in reply the very consoling answer, "Well, I guess it's not, suppose I put a tail on it and call it a dog." So M. Deveria wants to put a head or tail on some of these characters, and then call them Osiris, Anubis, or some other god. Anything to beat revelation.

In a great many instances, though the wording in the inspired translation varies greatly from the scientific attempt, yet the idea is almost identical. Placed together, they substantiate the statement of an eminent modern writer on Egyptian literature, who declares that at first sight the religious branch of this literature "seems to proclaim the Egyptians the most polytheistic of men, but a more careful examination leads to the supposition that the various gods were only intended to bring out in symbol and in allegory the various qualities and manifestations of one great God, incarnate, eternal and omnipotent." Joseph's translation conveying the higher though hidden meaning, and M. D. the presumedly literal intent of the hieroglyphics. For instance, fig. 9, Plate I, is stated by the Prophet to represent "the idolatrous God of Pharaoh." M. D. calls it "the sacred crocodile, symbolic of the god Sebat." Sebat was certainly a god to Pharaoh, so wherein lies the difference? Again, fig. 3, Plate II, "Is made to represent God sitting upon his throne, clothed with power and authority, with a crown of eternal light upon his head." The scientist says it is "The god Ra, the sun, with a hawk's head, seated in his boat." What great difference is there in the idea? and how did Joseph Smith know that it represented God (call him by what typical name you like), if not by revelation? What is there in the figure of a cow (fig. 5), to convey the idea to an unlearned man that it had reference to the hosts of heaven? yet both translations distinctly convey that idea. Figs. 12 to 20 (Plate II), Joseph says will be

given in the own due time of the Lord. M. D. does not attempt to translate them, he says they are "illegibly copied," "cannot be deciphered," "illegible in the copy," etc., and so gets out of the difficulty, but not without insinuating that the MSS. have been "intentionally altered," but what earthly reason there could be for the "Mormons" attempting to alter them is beyond our comprehension. At any rate he does not translate them. As a sample of how M. D. twists definitions on purpose to give a different translation from that of the Prophet, we have an instance in Plate I, in the figures representing the gods of Elkanah, Libnah, Mahmackrah and Korash, which our French savant states represent the Canopian vessels or jars. And what are the Canopian jars? Certain jars found at Canopus, a city at the mouth of the Nile, and because the learned did not, nor do not now, know with certainty their intent,\* they called

\* See article Canopus in American Cyclopaedia.

them after the place where they were found. But because they were found at Canopus, is it any reason that they should not be the gods Joseph Smith represents them to be? The learned believe them to be gods, but their researches result in no definite conclusions. The Prophet Joseph associates them with the god of the ruler of Egypt, which statement, placed along side of the fact that they were found in Egypt, gives strength and consistency to his translation. M. D.'s translation is simply begging the question, so far as attempting to prove the inaccuracy of Joseph's translation is concerned.

We have probably given more attention to M. Deveria than his production deserves, but as he is the only person, so far as we have learned, who has attempted to disprove the inspired translation of the papyrus, on scientific grounds, we have thought it well to show how utterly he has failed in his attempt.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## PERSECUTIONS AND CALUMNIES.

✓ (85)  
SALT LAKE CITY,  
March 8th, 1879.

*To the Latter-day Saints:*

In conformity with a suggestion and a command given by the Prophet Joseph Smith, March, 1839, (New Edition Doctrine and Covenants, page 389,) the Council have proposed to gather up and preserve a history of all the facts pertaining to the various persecutions and proscriptions endured by the Latter-day Saints, not only in Missouri, but in all other places, from the organization of the Church to the present, including the sufferings endured by the Saints, the outrages and abuses inflicted upon them by their enemies, the calumnies and opprobrium heaped upon them in libellous publications, as well as a careful and truthful history of bodily injuries sustained, unjust imprisonments inflicted, mur-

ders and other infamies, together with the loss of personal and real property.

It would be proper also to have copies of all Congressional and other legislative acts, wherein special, inimical or unjust legislation has been had, as well as the action of courts, wherein vindictive, unjust, judicial proceedings have been instituted. We are desirous that a truthful record may be had, in convenient form, for reference when needed for the purposes indicated in the commandment referred to. It would be well also to give the names of the libellers and defamers of the Latter-day Saints and of all who have taken an active part in the mobbings, proscriptions, persecutions, and prosecutions, as well as of their aiders and abettors.

Elder A. M. Musser is appointed to attend to this labor, under the direction of the Council and the Church.