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## "The Sacred Books of the 'Mormons'": A Letter and a "Protest Against Misrepresentation"

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# "The Sacred Books of the 'Mormons'"

## A Letter and a "Protest Against Misrepresentation"

BY STERLING B. TALMAGE, B. S., CURATOR OF THE DESERET MUSEUM

[The letter and protest were written by the author in reply to an article by Professor Edgar J. Banks, in the *Christian Herald*, which letter is herewith reproduced, together with comment upon it by the editor of the *Christian Herald*.—THE EDITORS.]

April 2, 1913.

The Editor, The Deseret News, City:

Dear Sir—In the *Christian Herald* of Jan. 29, 1913, appeared an article entitled "The 'Sacred Books' of the Mormons," under the name of Prof. Edgar James Banks, of Toledo University. So many misstatements were in the article, and the treatment of the subject was so surprisingly unscientific, coming from an educator, that I thought a brief reply would not be out of place, so, on Feb. 26 last, I sent the manuscript, now handed to you herewith, to the *Christian Herald*, asking them to publish it in the interest of fairness; in accordance with the usual custom, I enclosed stamped and addressed envelope, with the request that they notify me of the acceptance or rejection of my article. After waiting two weeks, I wrote a letter of inquiry, and received, on March 27, the following reply:

"THE CHRISTIAN HERALD,  
"Bible House, New York City, March  
22, 1913.

"Mr. Sterling B. Talmage, Deseret Museum, Vermont Building, Salt Lake City, Utah:

"Dear Sir—Your article on "The Sacred Books of the Mormons" which discussed a previous article by Professor Banks has been sent to that gentleman with the request that he should prepare a reply or rejoinder to appear simultaneously with yours, in the event of our deciding to publish it. As the article was largely personal we consider it only fair to have the criticism and reply both go together.

"Yours very truly,

"THE CHRISTIAN HERALD.  
(Signed) "Geo. H. Sandison,  
"Editor."

Prof. Banks, however, did not see fit to prepare a rejoinder. On March 31, my manuscript was returned to me by the *Christian Herald*, accompanied by the following note:

"THE CHRISTIAN HERALD,  
"Bible House, New York City, March  
26, 1913.

"Mr. Sterling B. Talmage, Deseret Museum, Vermont Bldg., Salt Lake City, Utah:

"Dear Sir—We regret that we cannot devote space to the enclosed. It has been read by Prof. Banks, who does not consider that its publication

would throw any new light on the present controversy.

"Yours very truly,

"THE CHRISTIAN HERALD."

I submit the article to you, thinking it may be of interest to those who have been following the Book of Abraham controversy.

In view of the superficial study Prof. Banks has evidently given the question, I doubt that he is qualified to judge what would or what would not "throw light upon the present controversy." His refusal to prepare a rejoinder to my article indicates that he realizes the difficulty of patching up any sort of a plausible reply, in the light of the expose of his careless and unscientific methods of argument. But what is perhaps more to the point, the editors of the *Christian Herald*, which is supposedly a paper devoted to the cause of truth, prefer to stand responsible for the false statements made by Prof. Banks after their falsity has been pointed out to them, rather than open their columns to the truth, if this truth shows any likelihood of inculcating a desire in the minds of the *Herald* readers to study any phase of "Mormonism" rationally and without prejudice.

An editorial in the same issue of the *Christian Herald* contained a quotation from a letter written by Bishop F. S. Spalding to that paper. It reads:

"My object in writing the pamphlet was not to inform the world that Joseph Smith's translations were inaccurate, and that therefore his claim to be a prophet of God was invalid, but to try to convince the Mormons themselves of those facts. The rest of the world has long ago made up its mind. Writing and action, which can be described as 'attack,' no more affects the Mormon in his belief than they affected the early Christians in theirs. The value of the pamphlet and the literature which may grow out of it is to be measured entirely by its effect upon the Latter-day Saints."

It may be of interest to consider at this date, nearly four months after the appearance of Bishop Spalding's pamphlet, just what its value is. "measured entirely by its effect upon the Latter-day Saints." And if, perchance, we could now get the bishop to express his own opinion of the value of the literature which has grown out of

his booklet, measured entirely by this same standard, we might get something of surpassing interest.

Respectfully,

STERLING B. TALMAGE.

Mr. Talmage's reply referred to in the foregoing letter follows:

"THE 'SACRED BOOKS' OF THE MORMONS."

(A protest against misrepresentation.

By Sterling B. Talmage, B. S., curator of the Deseret Museum.)

An article under the above caption, from the pen of Prof. Edgar J. Banks, of Toledo University, appeared in the Christian Herald of Jan. 29, 1913, purporting to be an additional argument in favor of Bishop Spalding's recent denunciation of the Book of Abraham, but in reality little more than a passing notice of the Bishop's pamphlet, without raising any new points. The only new thoughts expressed in the article are decidedly original with the author, and so inconsistent with known history as to call for a word of protest against their presentation under the guise of fact.

The whole article shows that the author's acquaintance with the "Sacred Books of the Mormons" is decidedly superficial and apparently derived from hearsay only, and evinces a lack of careful study and painstaking verification of facts which seems remarkable in view of the author's scientific standing. An editorial footnote characterizes Prof. Banks as "one of America's most distinguished archeologists," and gives a list of his accomplishments along the line of archeological research. A perusal of the article itself makes one wonder whether that explanatory note was not inserted in self-defense by the editors of the paper, that they might not be open to the charge of publishing an amateurish review of Bishop Spalding's recent pamphlet, supplemented by a few notes from some encyclopedia, and with a liberal sprinkling of purely imaginative matter.

True, the literary style of the article referred to is finished, but the author's palpable exaggerations and feeble presentation of unsupported arguments rob the article of most of its force as an argument against the divinity of Joseph Smith's work.

The first thing that strikes one in reading over this article is the number of things which the writer says can be "seen at a glance" by a mere tyro in Egyptology. Thus we are told that "The most elementary student of Egyptian may see at a glance from the translation that Smith had not the slightest knowledge of the Egyptian language, or history, or burial customs, and that the source of his inspiration

was equally ignorant of these things." Also "A mere glance at Smith's drawing, crude as it is, convinces the student of Egyptian burial customs that the Mormon prophet understood absolutely nothing of what he attempted to copy and to explain." And in reference to a certain figure "Any student of Egyptology can see at a glance that it is but the Egyptian sun-god in his boat," and more to the same effect. Apparently the author considered a superficial glance at Bishop Spalding's pamphlet sufficient, for he has simply appropriated some of the ideas expressed by the jury of scholars, altered the wording slightly, supplemented this with a few purely imaginary items of "Mormon" history, and presented this to the unsuspecting editors of The Herald as his own work. NOT ONE NEW ARGUMENT against the Book of Abraham is given; every one has been already published AND REFUTED.

Heretofore, the discussion has been conducted in a spirit of apparent fairness, but this author shows his lack of careful study by boldly asserting, on no authority but his own, that Joseph Smith has "altered the drawings to suit his purpose," an accusation that has not been made before, on account of its palpable absurdity. Poor drawing has been charged, even to the extent of rendering some characters illegible. All this is admitted, for they were almost surely copied by one who knew nothing of the principles of Egyptian writing, but intentional alteration is a new accusation. We might, ask, if Joseph Smith intentionally altered these copies of the papyri, why was he not consistent? Why did he not alter the figure of the "angel of the Lord," in the first plate, and give it some other head than that of a bird of prey? Why did he not alter figure 4 of the third plate, and make it look more like a prince and less like a woman? The "mere glance" on which the author places so much stress might lead one to believe that many characters had had their meanings guessed at, but as Dr. Robert C. Webb pointed out in his masterly article in The Deseret News of Jan. 18, 1913, Joseph Smith's explanations are ALL CONSISTENT WITH THE EGYPTIAN EXPRESSION OF IDEAS, and as Joseph Smith did not have access to any of the scholars' store of Egyptian knowledge, which had not yet been made public, he was, if not inspired, "an unusually successful guesser." A few cases in point might emphasize this.

Take for instance figure 4 on the hypocephalus, which the author "saw at a glance" was "the Egyptian sun-god in his boat." The writer did not

see fit to inform his readers that this figure is a numerical sign representing a million, and that the boat is known as "the bark of millions of years;" also he failed to state that Joseph Smith interpreted this as "also a numerical figure in Egyptian, signifying one thousand." There is a difference between a thousand and a million, surely, but Joseph Smith further explains that it is in accordance with the measurement of time on a planet where a day corresponds to a thousand years on earth, and so his thousand, according to this measurement of time, corresponds EXACTLY to a million years on earth. A remarkable coincidence, surely, and one that will require a modification of Prof. Bank's statement that Joseph Smith's translation "has not a vestige of truth in it." Dr. Webb makes the pertinent statement, "It is a curious fact that one having 'no connection with . . . European scholars' should have suspected that any numeral whatever was indicated by this figure."

Another instance demanding some explanation other than ridicule is found in figure 8 of the first plate, and figure 6 of the hypocephalus. In one case, Joseph Smith interprets the figures as four idolatrous gods, and in the other he says the picture "represents the earth in its four quarters." Prof. Banks says they are "pictures of the four jars which contained the soft part of the body when it was prepared for burial by the mummy maker," and he omits all mention of the second interpretation. Dr. Budge in the *Book of the Dead* says of these four canopic gods: "Originally they represented the four pillars which support the sky, or Horus. Each was supposed to be lord of one of the quarters of the world, and finally became the god of the cardinal point." Then he goes on to explain that the human entrails were, at a later stage of Egyptian history, placed in jars surmounted by the heads of these gods. Dr. Budge says, "The god of the North protected the small viscera. The god of the East protected the heart and lungs. The god of the South protected the stomach and small intestine. The god of the West protected the liver and gall bladder." The names which Joseph Smith is said to have originated for these deities are of little consequence. The essential point is that he interpreted them as four idolatrous gods which represented to the Egyptians the four quarters of the earth—precisely the gist of Dr. Budge's explanation. If, as the author states, "the Mormon prophet understood absolutely nothing of what he attempted to copy and explain" there remains the question of how Joseph Smith got at the explanation which is borne out by the

later researches of the closest students of Egyptian myths and religion.

In a few points relating directly to Egyptology, this "distinguished archeologist" shows us his distinguishing characteristic—that his imagination overrules his sober judgment; he says "there were none to challenge his [Joseph Smith's] translation," and fondly proceeds to imagine that none will challenge his own explanations; consequently, he makes a number of statements which would cause even Dr. Spalding's jury of capable scholars to marvel.

We are told that Egyptian hieroglyphics are now "as intelligible as an English newspaper." Dr. Mace, one of the bishop's "capable scholars," says "Egyptian characters can now be read ALMOST as easily as Greek." These two statements are not QUITE the same, and furthermore, Dr. E. A. Wallis Budge, one of the greatest living authorities on Egyptology, says, "It must not be imagined for a moment that everything relating to the Egyptians is known, for it is not. Much has still to be done in many branches of the science. . . . What Egyptologists have already made out from the monuments and papyri is but an earnest of what is yet to come." ("The Dwellers on the Nile," p. 16.) The latest edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910) says, regarding Egyptian translation, "The meaning of many words may be still unknown, and many constructions are still obscure; . . . The Egyptologist who has long lived in the realm of conjecture is too prone to consider any series of guesses good enough to serve as a translation." (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, 1910, article on Egypt, p. 58.)

We wonder if the writer of the article in question has as much trouble with his English newspaper—for such an inference might be drawn from his words. Two explanations suggest themselves; either the writer's early education was so sadly neglected that newspaper writing is now like hieroglyphics to him, or else he is the great unrecognized authority on Egypt, and knows more than Dr. Mace, and Dr. Budge, and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* together. But both such suggestions will finally give way to the explanation that the author did not know and did not verify what he presents as fact. Is this another case of a little knowledge being a dangerous thing, or did Bishop Spalding make a huge mistake in not passing by his eight capable scholars, and getting the opinion of this man who can do more in reading Egyptian than anyone else has ever claimed was possible?

Dr. Mace also speaks of about 40 of the hypocephali being known in museums, all being "similar in character," whereas the article in question refers to them as "stock hieroglyphs" and leads one to believe that all are identical (except as to age) and can be bought by the hundred. As a matter of fact, it is doubtful whether any two that have been studied are exactly alike. But the writer, with the disregard for consistency which characterizes his whole article, shows two hypocephali which are different in many essential details. (Both these, by the way, are stated in the descriptive line accompanying them to be from the Pearl of Great Price—the editors evidently absorbed some of the author's carelessness.) And thus the author refutes his own claim, for the two hypocephali, one which accompanied the Book of Abraham and the other from a picture published in the New York Times of Dec. 29, 1912 and said to be a facsimile of a papyrus in the Berlin museum, are, while similar in general design, different in so many details as to disprove the author's statement that the disks "are nearly alike, varying only slightly with the period from which they come."

We are also informed that the first plate which accompanied the Book of Abraham is "one of the stock pictures used at most Egyptian burials," whereas a careful search through two versions of the Book of the Dead, one by Dr. E. A. Wallis Budge and the other by Dr. Charles H. S. Davis, fails to show one picture that resembles this plate in essential details. This wholesale multiplication of identical copies exists solely and wholly in the author's imagination. Men have been known to see double under certain extraordinary circumstances, but the provocation must be great indeed to make a man see thousands of exactly identical hypocephali! Prof. Banks is accredited with much success in discovering and digging out Egyptian mummies, but he seems to be quite out of his element when it comes to digging out authentic information.

The author's disregard for facts relating to Egyptology is only exceeded by his supreme self-confidence in attempting to discuss certain phases of "Mormon" history without taking the trouble to learn anything about the subject. In all seriousness he makes statements which have scarcely any foundation in fact. His account of the claims of the "Mormons" concerning the origin of their sacred books is unmistakably his own invention—and this from a man who accuses Joseph Smith of altering the papyri to suit his purpose! Passing over his mention of polygamy as a present-day practice, which only shows him to be twenty

years behind the times, we are confronted with certain assertions that could be made only through ignorance, as no man of science would knowingly make false statements when their refutation was in print before he was born. We are told that the plates of the Book of Mormon were brought down from heaven by an angel and delivered to Joseph Smith, while the "Mormon" prophet's own statement is that he dug them up with his own hands from the spot where they had been buried by their last mortal custodian centuries before, and that he was directed through divine revelation to the spot. We are informed also that Joseph Smith translated the hieroglyphs which accompanied the Book of Abraham "through the aid of an Egyptian mummy," and in another place "by the help of a mummy," a fabrication pure and simple, as the only connection between the mummy and the papyri is that they were buried together. If the author had taken the "mere glance," which he mentions so often, at "Mormon" history, he would have known better; instead, he let his imagination run riot; and in publishing these statements under the name of science, he is libelling science, and Mormonism, and the Egyptian mummies all at once. Not only that, but his reference to "The Book of Abraham, published under the title of the Pearl of Great Price," shows that he could never have examined the book; for the Book of Abraham is but one of four subdivisions in the Pearl of Great Price, comprising only 25 pages, including the accompanying cuts with their explanations, out of a total of one hundred two in the Pearl of Great Price. And most significant of all, the published plates CONSTITUTE NO ESSENTIAL PART OF THE TEXT OF THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM, but are merely pictures or pictographs which accompanied it.

An editorial note asks "Will their [the "Mormon's"] faith stand the shock of such revelations?" Their faith has been subjected to just such "revelations," based on misinformation and distorted facts, for more than four score years. A philosopher once gently expressed his opinion of those who rush in where angels fear to tread, by saying "He that judgeth a matter before he heareth it is not wise." We wonder what he would have said of this author who not only judges before he hears, but publishes an article which shows so plainly that the writer has not even studied the "Sacred Books of the Mormons" which he professes to discuss, and exhibits such amazing disregard for accepted facts concerning the science in which he ranks as a specialist. Such fabrica-

tios, groundless charges, and gross exaggerations may have weight with people who only read one side of a question, but in this day when intelligent men like to study what they read, any writer should remember that it is at least desirable to know something concerning the subject on which he presumes to speak.

#### PROF. BANKS' ARTICLE.

Under the title "The 'Sacred Books' of the 'Mormons,'" Prof. Banks wrote in *The Christian Herald* as follows:

It has been estimated that something like 20,000,000 of Egyptian mummies have been discovered. Thousands of those best preserved are now in the show-cases of the various museums of the world. In the tombs with the mummies were countless other objects. There were paintings on the walls, chairs and tables, jars containing the parts of the body which were removed when the mummy was prepared, mummy cases gaudily colored with funeral scenes and hieroglyphic inscriptions, and in the cases along with the mummies were papyri. Beneath each mummy's head, like a cushion, was a little disk of clay or papyrus, covered with mythological pictures and with a stereotyped hymn. The disks, found in great numbers, are nearly alike, varying only slightly with the period from which they come. "Hypocephali," they are called, because they were placed beneath the head. Like the mummies, the objects found with them have been scattered abroad, and in the museum at Cario any tourist may purchase as many of them as he will.

The inscriptions on the disks and the mummy cases, of course, could not at first be read, nor could the mythological pictures accompanying them be understood until the inscriptions could be read. However, in 1799 the famous Rosetta Stone was discovered, and Champollion, a French scholar, began the slow process of deciphering its hieroglyphic inscription with the aid of the accompanying Greek translation. The process was so slow that it was not till 1841 that a grammar of the Egyptian language appeared. Then the progress in the study of the language was rapid; the strange hieroglyphics became as intelligible as an English newspaper, and the mythological scenes were clearly understood.

About 70 years ago, before the ancient Egyptian language could be read, Mormonism appeared. Its founder, Joseph Smith, presented his followers with two books, which he claimed were of divine origin. The Book of Mormon, so he claimed, he copied from plates of gold which an angel brought to him in New York State. The book pretends to be a history of the American Indians and of a race of white people who lived in America before its discovery by Columbus. The testimony of 11 men,

who claimed that they had seen the plates of gold or the angel, was sufficient to convince Smith's followers that the book was truly of divine origin. Such testimony is always a purchasable commodity. However improbable or impossible it may seem that an angel brought down from heaven inscribed plates of gold to Smith, the final test of the truth of Smith's claims must come from the history of the American Indians and from the alleged white race. As yet scholars know little of the early history of the Indians, and the white race seems to have been imaginary. Therefore it is impossible at present to prove or disprove the veracity of the claims of Smith and of the 11 witnesses.

The second book, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, contains the divine laws, which, so Smith claims, God delivered to him orally. It is the laws of this book which sanction plural marriages. There were no witnesses to hear the voice of God delivering the laws to Smith. We have only Smith's own word, and to his followers that seems to have been sufficient. Therefore at present it would be difficult to prove the truth or falseness of Smith's claims.

However, there is a third Mormon book, *The Book of Abraham*, published under the title of *The Pearl of Great Price*. It is a new history of the formation of the world, from Abraham, given to Smith through the aid of an Egyptian mummy. It contains Smith's alleged translations of some Egyptian documents relating to Abraham in Egypt, and some illustrations representing God and Abraham and various dieties, which are called Egyptian. The Book of Abraham was Smith's weak point. He did not foresee that in time the Egyptian hieroglyphs on the millions of objects in Egypt would become as clear as English characters; that the Egyptian drawings would be perfectly intelligible, and that the deception would become like an open book.

Some time about 1835, Smith, so he writes in his diary, received from Michael H. Chandler some mummies and two or three pieces of papyri. They were ordinary mummies, just like the millions of others found in Egypt, and the papyri contained the stock inscriptions and drawings which were placed in the tombs of all mummies. Remember, that at that time the first Egyptian grammar had not appeared; the only Egyptian scholars were Champollion and two or three others who were trying to guess at the meaning of the Egyptian characters, with the aid of the Greek translation on the Rosetta Stone. Though the Egyptian language could not yet be read, Smith, an American, without the aid of the Rosetta Stone, but by means of a special "revelation," or by the help of a mummy, translated the disks, and thus the Book

of Abraham was given to his followers. There were none to challenge his translation, for then none could read the Egyptian, and so the matter was dropped. Since then the Egyptian language has become perfectly intelligible, and recently Bishop Spalding of Utah asked the leading Egyptian scholars to verify or disprove Smith's translation.

If it were not for the prominence that Mormonism has attained; if it were not for the debauching polygamous practices which it sanctions, Smith's translations of the Egyptian documents, and his explanation of the drawings, would be simply ludicrous and unworthy of serious notice. The most elementary student of Egyptian may see at a glance from the translation that Smith had not the slightest knowledge of the Egyptian language, or history, or burial customs, and that the source of his inspiration was equally ignorant of these things. Yet it was all taken seriously by his followers.

One of the drawings in *The Pearl of Great Price* represents, so Smith says, Abraham lying on an altar about to be sacrificed by a priest. Near by is the angel of the Lord and four gods whom Smith calls by peculiar names, in the form of jars with covers shaped like the heads of animals. There is no inscription accompanying the drawing, but Smith is inspired to interpret the picture. Go to any Egyptian museum and look at the papyrus or the mummy cases, and you will find practically the duplicate of this drawing over and over again. It was one of the stock pictures used at most Egyptian burials. Smith, however, slightly altered his copy of it to suit his purpose. From the Egyptian Book of the Dead and other Egyptian writings, it is absolutely known just what the picture meant to the Egyptians who made it. Smith's Abraham on the altar is but a common mummy upon its bier. The figure at his side to whom Smith has given a knife and whom he calls a priest of Elkenah is the Egyptian god Anubis, the protecting god of mummies. The four dieties which Smith says are standing by the sacrificial altar, and for whom he has originated the names Elkenah, Mahmackrah, Korash and Pharaoh, are pictures of four jars which contained the soft part of the body when it was prepared for burial by the mummy-maker, and like all such jars, their covers were made in the forms of the heads of a man, a hawk, a jackal and a baboon, the four sons of the Egyptian god Horus. Such jars are found in abundance, and are to be seen in most collections of Egyptian antiquities. Pictures of them are frequently drawn upon on the papyrus. The object which Smith calls Abraham in Egypt is simply a table covered with lotus flowers. The hawk which he describes as "the Angel of the Lord" is the

Egyptian Horus, representing the soul of the dead man hovering over the body. Thus a mere glance at Smith's drawing, crude as it is, convinces the student of Egyptian burial customs that the Mormon prophet understood absolutely nothing of what he attempted to copy and to explain.

Another drawing in *The Pearl of Great Price* shows, so Smith says, Abraham seated on Pharaoh's throne. Behind him stands the king; before him is a prince of Pharaoh, the servant Shulem and a slave. Here Abraham, on the throne of Egypt, is said to be discoursing on the principles of astronomy. Above and below the picture are hieroglyphic characters. The original of Smith's crude drawing is a common stock picture from the tombs; its meaning is thoroughly understood. The seated figure is not Abraham, but the Egyptian god Osiris, before whom the dead were brought for judgment. Behind him stands his wife Isis, and before him, conducted by two figures, is the soul of the dead man. Again Smith mistakes a table covered with lotus blossoms for Abraham in Egypt.

The third drawing in Smith's *Pearl of Great Price* is a poor copy of the most common hypocephali, the little disks which were placed beneath the heads of the mummies as cushions, and which are therefore found in the greatest abundance. They are covered with stock pictures and with hieroglyphs containing selections of a hymn to the sun-god. Some of the hieroglyphs of Smith's copy are so crudely drawn that they are scarcely recognizable. Upon the disk, says Smith, is a picture of "God upon his throne, clothed with power and authority, with a crown of eternal light upon his head." Any student of Egyptology can see at a glance that it is but the Egyptian sun-god in his boat. The Mormon prophet's explanations of the other pictures on the disk are equally absurd, and his translation has not a vestige of truth in it. To call it self-delusion would be charitable indeed.

*The Pearl of Great Price*, unfortunately for the fame of the Mormon prophet, thus contains in itself tangible evidence, showing where it came from and how it came. It proclaims itself a fraud clearly and unmistakably, in terms which cannot be denied. What value, then, shall we place upon the words of the Mormon prophet when he tells of other sacred Mormon books, that God dictated one of them to him orally, and that he copied another from plates of gold which an angel brought down to him from heaven? There is but one answer.

#### THE EDITORIAL COMMENT.

The editor of the *Christian Herald* commented upon Prof. Banks' article,

under the heading, "The 'Mormon' Hieroglyphs," as follows:

The three hieroglyphs on page 83 of this issue are referred to by Professor Banks in the foregoing article. Dr. Flinders-Petrie discredits Smith's interpretation of the central diagram, and says it is a well known Egyptian hieroglyph, showing Anubis preparing the body of the dead; the bird is the hawk of Horus, the four gods (as Smith presumed them to be) are four funeral jars for use in embalming. The diagram to the right on page 83 was interpreted by Joseph Smith as follows. Fig. 1, the First Creation, nearest to the divine abode, Fig. 2, Olibish holding the key of power, as revealed to Abraham; Fig. 3, God on his throne with the crown of eternal light upon his head; also the grand key-words of the priesthood as revealed to Adam in Eden; Fig. 4, the firmament; Fig. 5, Enish-go-on-dosh, a governing planet, said by Egyptians to be the sun. A number of the characters in this diagram were noted by Smith as mysteries yet to be revealed. The diagram on the left (page 83) is from the Berlin museum collection. It is one of the common circular discs, thousands of which have been found under the heads of mummies in Egypt. They are stock hieroglyphs, used by embalmers for almost all entombments. The illustration on this page, showing five figures, is from the Book of Abraham, and was interpreted by Joseph Smith as follows: Fig. 1, Abraham sitting on Pharaoh's throne, wearing a crown representing priesthood; Fig. 2, Pharaoh; Fig. 3, emblem signifying Abraham in Egypt; Fig. 4, one of Pharaoh's princes; Fig. 5, Shulen a servant of Pharaoh; Fig. 6, Olimlah, a slave. Abraham is discussing astronomy in the king's court. Of this remarkable interpretation, we need say nothing further than that Flinders-Petrie declares it is a very common scene, typifying the dead before the judgment seat of Osiris. The figures are: 1, Orisis; 2, Isis; 3, the stand of offerings; 4, the goddess Nebhat; 5, the dead person; 6, the god Anubis, the conductor of the souls of the dead.

Less than two years ago, Elder Brigham Roberts, one of the ablest defenders of Mormonism, made a statement that the Mormon books "must submit to every test, literary criticism with the rest. . . . The book is flung down into the world's mass of literature and here it is; we proclaim it true, and the world has the right to test it to the uttermost in every possible way." Now, the world has taken him at his word and has tested the validity of the Book of Abraham. A group of eminent Orientalists, including Dr. A. H. Sayce of Oxford, England, Dr. Flinders-Petrie of London University, Professor James H.

Breasted of Chicago University, Dr. Arthur C. Mace of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, Dr. John Peters of the University of Pennsylvania, Professor C. A. B. Mercer of Western Theological Seminary, Dr. Edward Meyer of the University of Berlin, and Professor Von Bessing of the University of Munich, have examined the hieroglyphic illustrations in the Book of Abraham. These distinguished men, each of whom has large experience in Egyptian research and Oriental literature, united in pronouncing Joseph Smith's translations absurd and inaccurate throughout. Dr. Mace calls the Book of Abraham "a pure fabrication" and Professor Mercer says the translations of Joseph Smith are "undoubtedly the work of pure imagination." These expert opinions from the highest sources are now supplemented by a remarkable article from the pen of Professor Edgar J. Banks,\* whose contributions on archeology (many of which have appeared in this journal) have been the product of a lifetime of exploration and study.

Right Rev. F. S. Spalding, Bishop of the Diocese of Utah, through whose instrumentality the whole question of the validity of Joseph Smith's translations has been publicly raised, writes to *The Christian Herald*:

"My object in writing the pamphlet was not to inform the world that Joseph Smith's translations were inaccurate, and that therefore his claim to be a prophet of God was invalid, but to try to convince the Mormons themselves of those facts. The rest of the world has long ago made up its mind. Writing and action, which can be described as 'attack,' no more affects the Mormon in his belief than they affected the early Christians in theirs. The value of the pamphlet and the literature which may grow out of it is to be measured entirely by its effect upon the Latter-day Saints."

This is a very generous attitude. Bishop Spalding is simply taking Elder Roberts at his word and submitting the "Mormon" literature to the highest test. To an unbiased mind, the result is conclusive. But, while the world may have a passing interest in the discussion, to the "Mormons" themselves it should be a vital issue. Will their faith stand the shock of such revelations?

\*Professor Edgar James Banks is one of America's most distinguished archeologists. He conducted excavations at Birsyva (1903), making discoveries dating back to 2800 B.C.; was field director of Babylonian expeditions, and has explored extensively in Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, etc. Is professor of languages and archeology in Toledo University, Ohio.