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## "The Book of the Dead"

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Judged by results, it seems to be a very satisfactory body of belief, indeed!

What then is the sum of the whole matter? This: We are asked to "re-adjust" the body of our belief because Joseph Smith its early founder was not an inspired translator; who was not an inspired translator of the Book of Mormon, because he did not translate correctly the Book of Abraham; and the reason why we know he did not translate the Book of Abraham correctly is that learned men say he did not translate correctly a very small part of that book! Here is a string of inferences for you! The conclusion is out of all proportion to the first fact. What a crushing

burden the innocent and diverse testimony of those eight scholars is made to carry! Overlooking all the evidential facts in favor not only of the divinity of the Book of Mormon but also of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the bishop has gone on complacently piling inference on inference till he has a superstructure of argument that on first glance is really disconcerting. But never was a conclusion more tortuously reached. Never was man asked to give up a belief that satisfied him, on slighter grounds.

No intelligent Latter-day Saint will feel called upon to "repudiate" anything through any such process of reasoning as this of the Bishop's!

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### "The Book of the Dead."

BY LEVI EDGAR YOUNG, M. A.

"The Book of the Dead," said by some scholars to be the oldest book in the world, is a collection of writings on religion and morals, written and compiled in the earliest ages of Egyptian history. The authors of the collection of books were priests and prophets of the inhabitants of the Nile valley, whose civilization dates back at least four thousand years before Christ. One of the titles which the ancient Egyptians gave this book was "The Per-em-Hru," the translation of which has caused no end of controversy. Possibly the best interpretation of it is: "The Books of the Going Forth From Darkness to Light." These books were composed in something of the spirit as were the books of the Old Testament. They were to direct the children of the gods to their future life. Used for a period of over four thousand years, they were engraved in parts on tombs, obelisks, and monuments; and written on papyrus rolls, that were buried with the dead. They were also often engraved upon the walls of pyramids and the exteriors of sarcophagi. Many parts have been found

engraven upon plates, of gold and brass.

In order to understand what influence the "Book of The Dead" had in the history of Egypt, it is necessary to know something about the different periods of Egyptian history.

There were two principal periods of Egyptian history, before the time of Christ. The first is called the Memphite period which lasted from about 4,000 B. C. to 2,500 B. C. The second was the Theban, which flourished at the time of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt. It was during the Memphite period that the pyramids were built, near the old city of Memphis, located near the mouth of the Nile river. At this time, the Egyptians built great irrigating canals and large reservoirs, and developed the science of astronomy and mathematics. They were taught the circumference of the earth, and its relation to the diameter, and computed the distance of the planets from the sun, which they regarded as the center of the universe. With all this knowledge of the Egyptians pertaining to Astronomy, it is interesting to note here that Abraham

carried to them a still greater knowledge of the mathematical sciences, for Josephus, the historian of the Jews, says:

"For whereas the Egyptians were formerly addicted to different customs, and despised one another's sacred and accustomed rites, and were very angry one with another on that account, Abram conferred with each of them, and confuting the reasonings they made use of every one for their own practices, demonstrated that such reasonings were in vain and void of truth; whereupon he was admired by them in those conferences as a very wise man, and one of great sagacity, when he discoursed on any subject that he undertook; and this not only in understanding it, but in persuading other men also to assent to him. He communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy; for, before Abram came into Egypt, they were unacquainted with those parts of learning; for that science came from the Chaldeans into Egypt, and from thence to the Greeks also."

They no doubt had beautiful buildings and carried on an extensive commerce and trade upon the Mediterranean sea, and with peoples further up the Nile. It was during this period that the "Book of The Dead" was compiled, for the Egyptians had a wonderful system of religion, and a high standard of ethics. They had their philosophers and magicians, who have left us their writings and moral codes, which are intensely interesting in that they show that those very ancient people had a high regard for morals. One of these manuscripts may now be seen in the national library at Paris. It is called the "Prisse Papyrus," and contains eighteen pages of beautiful writing in a latter Egyptian hieroglyphic. It is a copy of the Papyrus of "Ptah-Hotep," who was a royal prince of the Memphite period, and a teacher of high morals. He must have been a wealthy land owner, and had many slaves and servants, whom he admonished to learn of the gods of men. Here is an example of what he has written:

"Do what thy master says to thee,

Doubly good is the precept of our father, from whose flesh we come forth. What he says to us, let that be in our heart, so as to greatly satisfy him, that we may do more for him than he has said. Truly a good son is one of the gifts of God. . . . For his master, he does what is satisfactory, putting himself with all his heart in that way, through that (i. e. by these lessons) shall be caused that thy body will be in health, that the king will be satisfied with thee under all circumstances, and that thou obtain years of life without failure. This has caused me to acquire upon the earth one hundred and ten years of life, with the gift of the favor of the king among the first of those that their works have made noble."

A few sentences taken at random are:

"Love for the work which they do, this brings men to God."

"If thou hast the position of a leader, making plans, go forth at thy will Do perfect things, which posterity will remember; not letting prevail words which multiply flatteries, raise pride, and produce vanity."

The central figure of the ancient Egyptian religion was Osiris. He was the god who presided over the destinies of men, and had control of death, the resurrection, and the souls and bodies of all children of the earth. It is in the 125th chapter of the "BOOK OF THE DEAD" that we obtain a splendid idea of the power of Osiris, and his influence as a god upon the thoughts of men. It contains the prayer which a deceased person made when he came into the hall of Maati, before the throne of Osiris. He said:

"Homage to thee, O great God, thou Lord of Truth. I have come to thee, my Lord, and I have brought myself hither, that I may see thy beauties. I know thee, I know thy name. I know the names of the two and forty gods, who live with thee in this hall of Maati, who keep ward over those who have done evil, who feed upon their blood on the day when the lives of men are reckoned up in the presence of Osiris. In truth I have come to thee. I have brought Truth to thee. I have destroyed wickedness for thee."

These words were followed by a statement of offenses which he had not committed. Some of them are as follows:

1. I have not sinned against men.
2. I have not wronged my kinsfolk.
3. I have not committed evil in the place of truth.
5. I have not committed acts of abomination.
7. I have not caused my name to appear for honors.
8. I have not domineered over slaves.
10. I have not defrauded the poor man of his goods.
13. I have caused no man to suffer.
14. I have allowed no man to go hungry.
15. I have made no man weep.
18. I have not filched the offerings in the temples.
24. I have not cheated in the measuring of grain.
25. I have not filched land, or added thereto.
26. I have not encroached upon the fields of others.
29. I have not taken away the milk from the mouths of babes.
38. I have not repulsed the god in his manifestations. I am pure. I am pure. I am pure. I am pure.

According to the belief of the Egyptians, every person consisted of three parts: a mortal corruptible body called the Cha; a living spirit called the Ba; and a protecting spirit, called Ka. At death Ba left the body in the form of a bird, but the Ka dwelt in the tomb with the body. At any time, it could enter the body and reanimate it. The Ka, however, might leave the tomb at times. The living spirit was to return in time for the clean and pure body. For this reason, the Egyptians embalmed the body as no other people in the history of the world.

"The Book of the Dead" explains all these beliefs, and the 125th chapter quoted above, is the most celebrated in giving one an understanding about the gods, and the ethical principles of the Egyptians. Osiris is the judge of the dead. He has a heaven for his dwelling place. He holds councils with his other gods, and not only rules the Nile valley, but other lands as well. "Certain of the gods sat as a court with Osiris, as the presiding judge, and judged and punished those men, who in the flesh acted contrary to the laws laid down by the good deities as to the

proper duties of religion and morality."

"The Book of the Dead" consists of "a long series of spells, and incantations, and rhythmical formulae, which were recited by the priests for the benefit of the dead." But the book, taken as a whole, shows that the Egyptians had conceptions of the great fundamental laws of morality, such as truth, justice, etc. Life everlasting could only be obtained by those who had lived a righteous life upon the earth, and who had been declared to be speakers of the truth in the hall of Osiris.

There are four ancient editions of the "Book of the Dead:"

I. The first edition is in hieroglyphics, about 3,500 B. C., and is designated by scholars the Heliopolitan version. Five copies have been preserved upon the pyramid tombs of the Pharaohs.

II. The Theban version, of about 2,000 B. C., when Thebes was the center of Egyptian civilization. This was written upon papyri in hieroglyphs.

III. Another version similar to the Theban, written upon papyri in hieroglyphs and in the hieratic, or where the characters are joined together.

IV. The Saitic version, made about the year 600. The copies are written sometimes in hieroglyphs, at other times in the hieratic script.

An English translation of the book has recently appeared by Dr. E. A. Wallis Budge, keeper of the Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities in the British museum. It has also been translated by German, French and Russian scholars into their respective languages. One can find a very good explanation of the book in any up-to-date history of Egypt, particularly in Dr. Isaac Myer's "Oldest Books in the World." The G. P. Putnam's Sons Co. has recently issued a beautiful edition of the "Book of the Dead," edited in English by Charles H. S. Davis. The edition is well illustrated with 99 plates, reproduced in fac-simile from the Turin papyrus and the Louvre papyrus.