REALITY QUEST

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THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

So what if Joseph Smith never had the *First Vision*. This still doesn't negate the written words which are accepted as the "scriptures of God", and which are known to have come from the inspired pen of Joseph Smith.

The truth is, Joseph Smith seldom wrote anything himself. He always had an appointed scribe at his side when he gave a revelation who wrote what Joseph said and then allowed him to review it before publication.

The Book of Mormon was written by scribes who wrote what Joseph Smith told them to and then allowed him to make changes as he thought were necessary. The original manuscript of the Book of Mormon was changed and edited many times before we got what is presented to the world now. (We'll get to this later)

In the early 1800's, Antonio Sebolo, a french traveler, was excavating some ancient catacombs in Egypt and found some mummies in coffins. It is reported that he died and willed the mummies to Mr. Michael H. Chandler.

Chandler was an entrepreneur who travelled throughout the United States exhibiting his mummies for a fee. It's assumed that he had exhausted his ability to draw crowds, because he wanted to sell the mummies.

When Chandler inherited the mummies, he opened the coffins and found two rolls of papyrus. Somehow Chandler caught wind that there was this man in Kirtland, Ohio, who claimed to be able to translate ancient documents with the aid of God. This was a great opportunity for Chandler to get rid of his diminishing business.

Chandler went to Kirtland and sold the mummies to the Church for a substantial amount of money at that time.

Joseph Smith took the papyrus from the coffins and, "...I commenced the translation of some of the characters of hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, ect..." (History of the Church, vol. 2, p.236)

What a find Joseph Smith had acquired. Miraculously, the government of Egypt had overlooked the find of Antonio Sebolo and allowed him to exhume two coffins which contained, according to Joseph Smith, the bodies of an Egyptian king and the ancient writings of three of the greatest men in religious history, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph. Wow! The Lord does work wonders.

Joseph Smith worked many months on the papyrus translation which included some ancient drawings, and in 1842, published his translation of *The Book of Abraham*.

Joseph Smith also used the mummies to get gain by charging the public 25 cents to view them. One observer, Josiah Quincy, states:

"the prophet referred to his miraculous gift of understanding all languages... "And now come with me," said the prophet, 'and I will show you the curiosities." ... "These are mummies,: said the exhibitor. "I want you to look at that little runt of a fellow over there. He was a great man in his day. Why, that was Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt!" Some parchments inscribed with hieroglyphics were then offered us.... "That is the handwriting of Abraham, the Father of the faithful," said the prophet. "This is the autograph of Moses, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron. Here we have the earliest account of the Creation, from which Moses composed the First Book of Genesis."... We were further assured that the

prophet was the only mortal who could translate these mysterious writings, and that his power was given by direct inspiration. (Among the Mormons, pp. 136-137)

Surely, this claim and subsequent translation of the papyrus would have proved to the world that in fact, Joseph Smith was God's chosen servant on earth.

I did a little probing into the manuscripts of Joseph Smith's translation of the papyrus and found out some startling things:

I found what has been called by church historians as Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. In this document, J. Smith formed his own Egyptian alphabet by the characters he took off the Egyptian papyri. He copied some of the characters off the parchment and then gave the translation for them.

What astounded me, and I being very knowledgeable about foreign languages and how they are translated, was that he got a tremendous amount of words and meaning from each Egyptian character. In fact, he had got 5,470 words from only a few characters in the Egyptian language.

There was no doubt in my mind at this time that Joseph Smith had made up his translation and ascribed it to some of the characters found on the papyrus he found in the coffins. But, how was I going to prove it to the outside world?

Little did I know, because the truth was always suppressed by the Church, that the truth that I discovered had all ready been published to the world, but somehow overlooked by the "sheep" who were so fervently looked after by the "sheepherds of the Church".

On November 27, 1967, the Deseret News reported:

NEW YORK- A collection of papyrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art... Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing he called "Facsimile NO. 1" and published with the Book of Abraham.

"Great!" I thought. Now I could verify that Joseph Smith's Alphabet and Grammar which is being suppressed by the Church is a true rendition of his translation of the papyri. Sure enough, it was.

Joseph Smith used four lines from the papyrus to translate the whole Book of Abraham. Incredible. However, this only wet my insatiable appetite to find out more about The Pearl of Great Price, which is the book of scriptures which contains J. Smith's translations of the papyri.

I put on my thinking cap and found an infallible way to prove if Joseph Smith actually knew what he was doing when he supposably translated the papyri.

In the Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith included three "facsimiles" which he directly copied from the original papyri. Why not take a copy of these and send them to different egyptologists around the world and see what they think about Joseph's explanations of the facsimiles. I must choose renown men who live in different parts of the world and who in no way can communicate with one another and as a group, bias one another. If they agree that Joseph's explanations are true, then there would be no doubt of his abilities as a prophet and translator of ancient documents.

Well, upon doing more research, I found out that someone had beat me to it.

In A Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 2, p.138, we read:

"In 1912 a wide-spread interest was awakened in the Book of Abraham by the publication of a brochure, by Rev. F.S. Spalding.... The bishop submitted the facsimiles of some of the parchment pages from which the book of Abraham had been translated to a number of the foremost of present day Egyptian scholars."

Of course, the Church would never publish what the conclusion of Spaulding's research was, but I had access to the Church's records and I found that not only did all the Egyptologists of 1912, state that Joseph Smith's explanations of the facsimiles were "ludicrous", but the Church had done its own investigation into the facsimiles using its Egyptian experts from B.Y.U., and to the leaders' surprise, their own Egyptologists determined that Joseph Smith made an incorrect explanation of the facsimiles.

What a blow to the Church. So what did they do, they suppressed the whole matter and threatened excommunication to anyone that espoused the idea that Joseph Smith made up his translation of the Egyptian papyri.

Dr. A. Sayce of Oxford, England, said, "It is difficult to deal seriously with Joseph Smith's impudent fraud... he has turned the Goddess into a king and Osiris into Abraham."

Dr. James H. Brested of Haskell Oriental Museum, University of Chicago, said:

"...these three facsimiles of Egyptian documents in the Pearl of Great Price depict the most common objects in the mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith's interpretations of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrates that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization."

When the ancient Egyptian people buried their dead, they included in the coffin what is known as "The Egyptian Book of the Dead". This book was suppose to be a guide book to the afterlife. Without this sacred book, the dead would not know what to do when they passed over into the world of the dead.

When Antonio Sebolo, and then Michael Chandler, found the papyri in the coffins of their mummies, they found the same thing that has been found in most other Egyptian coffins exhumed in the 19th and 20th centuries- *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*. For this reason, neither men thought much of the documents. Antonio Sebolo obviously had discovered many coffins with the exact same documents and had determined they were of no value to him.

When Joseph Smith opened the coffins, he found what ever he decided it would be to perpetuate a religion he felt God had commanded him to give to the world.

Henry B. Iring, a renown scientist and recent Mormon General Authority, had this to say about the controversy during a symposium on the Book of Abraham:

"I don't care if Joseph Smith got the translation of the book from a bill of sale of some tares of wheat in the lower nile. The book is an inspired work of god"

Most Mormons will blindly follow Iring in his ignorance and will always maintain a strong testimony of a book written by and for their prophet, Joseph Smith Jr..

It became obvious to me that if Joseph Smith had used deception in his presentation of his religious ideas through the *Book of Abraham*, then *The Book of Mormon* was nothing more than the same.

It didn't take me long into my investigation of *The Book of Mormon* that I found out enough evidence to reach the conclusion that indeed, like Mohammed, and more recently, David Koresh, Joseph Smith used his charisma and intelligent ideas to subject many people to his self-proclaimed propheticness. Like the former, the latter believed with all his soul that God had inspired him to write and present to the world the things that he did.

REALITY QUEST

(SUPPLEMENTAL)

April 23, 1994

MOM DIANE & GRANDMA J.

My natural mother's name is Elizabeth Diane Jorgensen, born April 23, 1941.

It was just recently that I saw her again after about 15 years and hopefully began a mother/son relationship with her which will benefit us both in future years.

When I was about four years old, my mother and father were divorced. My mother decided to let my father have custody of Mike, Cory, me, and Jody, and she kept Alesa. Why she did this, I am not quite sure, however, I have always had the curiosity that any child might have towards his or her parent.

To the best of my understanding, my mother gave us to our father, because she felt like we could have a better life with him. This selfless sacrifice must have been one of the hardest decisions she has ever made in her life.

I have not discussed the reasons why with her, or even why she and my dad were divorced, yet I have always cared and loved her as my mother.

Since my memories of her are vague and almost non-existent, I am unable to write much about her. I hope that she will open up to me in the coming years and tell me how she is, what she thinks, and what her perspective of the experiences in her life are.

Nevertheless, because of my mother I have come to know one of the most, yea, the most, respected individuals I have ever come to know on this earth. I have studied the lives of many great men and women who were thought to be the "cream of the crop", but these accolades were given by those who knew them personally. Having had no interaction with them and not knowing them personally made it hard for me to grasp the reality of their greatness. In my life, however, I have come to know an individual who if I had to pattern my life and thoughts after anyone, it would be her.

Her name is Abigail Lee Jorgensen; known to me as Grandma J..

I have not known anyone with the wit, the love, and understanding of my dear Grandmother.

As I grew up with my brothers and sisters, we always looked forward to our visits to Grandma J.. Some of the most memorable moments in my life were ones spent at 1028 South 900 West, in Salt Lake City, Utah; Grandma's house.

She used to give us boys 10 cents each and walk us past Jordan Park, over the train tracks, and into a small store where we eagerly spent our small fortune.

I will always remember sleeping over at Grandma's. As she tucked us into bed, she would bend over and whisper one of her many wonderful sayings. The nearby train would sometimes blow its whistle just as she would whisper to me; and she would say, "Toot, toot! Good-night Chris, Good-night!" What a wonderful feeling.

I will never forget how many times she won-always! I remember Grandma bragging to us that we could stack up as many books as we wanted and she would take off her shoes and jump over them. My brothers and I started with many books; when we noticed the still confident look on her face, we proceeded to stack anything we could find on top of the books. By the time we were done, there was a six foot pile of everything but the kitchen sink-it was attached and probably too heavy for four young boys, and a little girl to lift. We mocked our Grandmother as we stood back in defiance of any possibility that she could take off her shoes and jump over them. Grandma took off her shoes, and to our surprise, jumped over them. She commented that she didn't specify what "them" meant. We meant the pile. She meant her shoes. What a sage of a woman.

We were pretty obnoxious when we were at Grandma's, away from the scrutiny of our dad, but I can never remember Grandma losing her temper or getting upset with us. Every single memory of her that I can recall are ones of the kindest, gentlest gray haired lady that I have ever met.

Her gray hair, which is really stark white, to me resembles a pure and simple woman who has been through the waves of life, but has mastered the surf. My respect for her comes in her respect for everyone else. Never have I heard her cut down another because of their lifestyle or beliefs. She is very unmaterialistic and humble in her attitude toward her worldly possessions, which if chopped up and made into miniature possessions would probably keep a family of mice below the poverty line.

She is the only relative I have, besides my mother, that has never cut me down or ridiculed me for the unorthodox lifestyle I lead. She treats me as if I were as normal as she. I only wish my normalcy matched hers. She's the best.

My love and respect for my grandmother is enormous. Of lately, I haven't had the opportunity to tell her of my respect and love. She gets this newsletter, so I hope this short accolade can represent my gratitude to her for giving me my mother who gave me life and allowing me to be me and loving me the same. I hope it fulfills the purpose I intended for it by sharing with all who know me who it is that I have chosen for my idol and mentor.

Thank-you, Grandma J.! I'll love you forever.