

The Closer Look Series

RLDS and the Pearl of Great Price

The *Pearl of Great Price* is a collection of Joseph Smith's "odds and ends." It was first published by the LDS (Utah Mormon) church in 1851. They still accept the entire book as scripture, whereas RLDS do not. But RLDS actually *do* accept most of the book—either as scripture or as authentic church history. The *Pearl of Great Price* is divided into four sections.

■ **Book of Moses.** Chapter 1 is a revelation, received June 1830, giving prophetic support for Joseph's altered KJV Bible now called the *Inspired Version*. It was not included in any *Doctrine and Covenants* until the RLDS 1864 edition as Section 22. Chapters 2-8 comprise Genesis chapters 1-8:18 of the *Inspired Version* used by the RLDS. The entire *Book of Moses* is actually accepted by RLDS as scripture.

■ **The Writings of Joseph Smith.** The first subsection of this is Matthew 23:39-24:56 of the *Inspired Version*. The second subsection is excerpts from Joseph's 1838 *History of the Church*. These are also accepted by the RLDS, though the latter is not technically regarded as scripture *per se*, but is considered the legitimate history of Joseph Smith and his early church.

■ **The Articles of Faith.** This document is a statement of faith included in an 1842 response to inquiries by John Wentworth, editor of the *Chicago Democrat*. RLDS usually refer to this document as the *Epitome of Faith* and often distribute it in a poster or framed picture format. This statement contin-

ues to be embraced by both RLDS and Mormon churches.

■ **The Book of Abraham.** In the mid-1830s a man named Michael Chandler had a touring exhibition of four Egyptian mummies and several papyri found with them. Having heard of Joseph's reputation as a translator, Chandler came to Kirtland, Ohio to see if Joseph could translate these papyri. Joseph quickly identified one to be the writings of Abraham and another to be the writings of Joseph of Egypt. Excited about the prospects of Joseph translating more ancient documents, the church purchased the papyri from Chandler for a sizeable sum.

■ Egyptian would not be able to be translated by American scholars until 1837 when the "Rosetta Stone" research became available in English. Joseph first attempted to construct an Egyptian alphabet and grammar. This attempt failed, so Joseph resorted to "inspiration," a method with which he was very familiar. Since no one else could decipher Egyptian at that time, what did he have to lose?

■ Through inspiration Joseph "translated" the papyri purported to be the writings of Abraham. The writings of Joseph of Egypt were left untranslated. His translation became known as the *Book of Abraham*, which the church began promoting as legitimate scripture. It was first published in the *Times and Seasons* beginning March 1, 1842.

■ Unlike his *Book of Mormon*, whose plates were supposedly taken away by an angel when it was complete, Joseph left enough of a trail to evaluate his effectiveness in translating the *Book of Abraham*. Joseph included 3 facsimiles of the Egyptian hieroglyphics he had translated in the book's first publication in the *Times and Seasons*. The first scholarly review of Joseph's translation was printed in 1861 by Jules Remy, a Frenchman who wrote a book about his visit to Salt Lake City. He took the hieroglyphics to Theodule Deveria at the Louvre, who translated them. That translation was published parallel to Joseph's in Remy's *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City*. Deveria's translation was vastly different. He claimed they were merely Egyptian funeral documents, unlike the Biblical content which Joseph had ascribed to them.

■ In 1966 University of Utah Professor Aziz Atiya recognized Joseph's papyri in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. After proving the documentation of the papyri, the museum sold them to the LDS church. Egyptologists again examined them and again they proved to be funeral documents.

■ **Why Does It Matter?** RLDS have carefully insulated themselves from Joseph Smith during the "Nauvoo era" of the church, 1839-1844, because of esoteric practices such as baptism for the dead and polygamy that developed during that era. The blatantly fraudulent *Book of Abraham*, however, was produced *in the middle of 1835*. This was while his loyal followers were sacrificing their china to finish the beloved Kirtland Temple (RLDS). The temple's dedication service, considered a spiritual high point, wasn't until March 1836.

■ If Joseph Smith was willing to deceive his followers with the *Book of Abraham*, what does that say about his willingness and ability to do the same with his other "scriptures?" What does it say about his fundamental integrity as a man, let alone as a "prophet" of God?

God is NOT the author of confusion.
Read Galatians 1:6-9.

This tract was condensed from
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THE FORGOTTEN MORMONS**
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Bringing followers of Joseph Smith
into the Light of Christ

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