



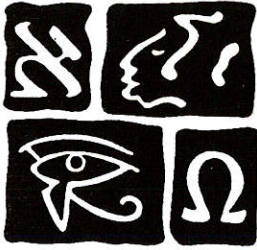
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Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

N-PEA

Hugh W. Nibley
**Pearl of Great Price
Papyri**

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PEARL OF GREAT PRICE PAPYRI

Well, I'm supposed to talk about what I've been up to when I went back East this time. I was invited to go back. They said you might as well come back and have some fun. It will be very informal. No charge for anything--all facilities, anything I wanted to use and everything like that. So that was nice. And the first problem is getting a room. And this is the way the Lord works in a mysterious way. of course, all rooms are going, you have to have put down \$50.00 a year before at least to hold the room, so I marched right in. Look I said, "look I am not a student, I have no priorities. I am nothing around here. I am just going to be around here for a little while." So a tall fellow called Turkington came in and he said "what do you want?" I said "I want a room." And he said "well here take this over to Mrs. Stevens." I took it to Mrs. Stevens and I got the best room in the place--cheap, student rate. The first day I just breeze in. Well, I decided the Lord wants me up here for some reason or other. And it's true.

Well, to show that I was there for serious purposes, though, I thought I should register for a few things. I meant to be serious. After all if I valued their product. So I did take Prof. Baer's class on Middle Egyptian Biography. There were seven people -- all professionals, they had all had at least five years graduate study in Egyptian. I thought this is really going to be something, you know. But along towards the end of the semester, I was pulling ahead very nicely. And the other was Professor Wilson. He was finished. He wasn't going to give any more -- John Wilson -- but one girl, an archeologist -- needed it rather badly, of course, and the earliest Egyptian inscription, so I thought it was a wonderful opportunity. So I was in Professor Wilson's class. He was lots of fun and so was Baer.

We started out with reading the story of Chinua, and, of course, you have five manuscripts. So I said "Here is Manuscript B & R. This is a good one. I'll just stick to this one." I was going along. First day he asked "well what about the others?" "What do these say?" Well they were lousy obviously. Buy bad copies. Well that had nothing to do with it. The worst manuscript can have a very good reading and the best manuscripts can have a very bad one. There is no excuse. You must always read everything that is available.

We had to take all five manuscripts all the way through. There were great differences between them and so forth. But this was necessary. You see you had to do everything just this way and then we ended up with Elbresan inscription, which is very badly damaged--a very long one. But very badly damaged all over this tomb. So, I thought again, "Well, here I get out of this." This is a relief. All these blank spots. The first thing "Well come on what next?" "Well the blank." "Well, put what would be there." And I was expected to supply that there, and of course, on other tombs it was formulaic naturally what would you expect to be there. You can't make out for sure what's there, but your business is to know what was there. What must have been there. What you think would have been there makes the best possible guess, and to do that you have to look up a lot of other tombs. In other words, a blank in the

record is no excuse. The fact that you have an inferior manuscript is no excuse. It is up to you to do what you are supposed to. Well, every seven years I am reminded what real study is like, and it is very refreshing. And when you come back here, what a contrast.

But they were all very good, very alert, and, as I say, they were all professionals in both these courses. But it was very interesting. Because I was I was asking for no mercy, I felt, I was being carried along for nothing I should at least do my work. And since I had nothing else to do and that's a good advantage--well except for some stuff I was writing. I could spend all my time on it. I was able to prepare the lessons--that was nice. But we don't--if we study the right way, it would be a different story around here. Well, now for example, Professor--we went through a lot of inscriptions with John Wilson. The point was, he would spend--both these men would spend hours and hours and hours preparing for the class--as much as any of the students. Wilson would produce every single reference available in the language to every word. If there was the slightest anomaly. If there was a different possible interpretation, if within the last year or two some geographical factor may have changed the interpretation of some text, he would know about it. And he would start out--they were long classes, both were two hour affairs--he would have to know every possible text for every piece of information having any bearing whatever upon this particular inscription. So he would fill the boards and boards and then he would turn it over and write on the other side and then on the other side. And this went on with every possible reference to this inscription. Well, that's the way we should do it. If you're going to do it, you should do it completely so someone won't have to come along and do it all over again later. And that was always an eye opener, always helpful and so forth.

Well, the main purpose in there, the main thing that interested me, of course, was this Pearl of Great Price, and that information was confidential and the reason it is confidential now is because those people don't want to discuss it. I just blundered on the scene and all that was necessary was my presence there because my usefulness was purely due to the fact that I was there and nothing else in the world.

You can see that what I want to discuss are these manuscripts not because I can contribute something but, because I believe they can contribute something. And if it ever comes to a discussion, we can force them to be honest, because they've accused Joseph Smith of being a fraud, you see. And that puts them on the spot, too. And in the process of discussion, inevitably, in a very short time--and this was what was so nice taking a subject like say like Egyptian where you must admit all the time, I mean the best men must admit the great gaps and defects of our knowledge. And when you transfer this over, say, to discussions of Pearl of Great Price. Well dealing with texts that have been known, with texts that have been read over and over again in classes--now some of them for over a hundred years, like The Albersha, the earliest of the Pegan scriptures ever discovered, for example. Well even there, the whole thing is still up in the air. Half the things they're talking about you don't know and so much of it is speculation. It's quite delightful. Now if you transfer something like that to an entirely new and exotic--a strange document of a late period like those Pearl of Great Price things, nobody knows what they're

talking about; and they would be very embarrassing and they don't want to discuss it. This is the main thing, so I don't have to worry about that, see. If they say boo, we say boo, and then the cat's out of the bag, and we have got to talk about it and they don't want that to happen. Because I say in the course of any discussion that's what the purpose of discussion is-- to discover the gaps and defects in our knowledge. And that can be an uncomfortable situation, especially if there's much at stake. Just for the sake--this is one of the things you see. An Egyptologist is one person who is interested in knowledge for knowledge's sake, and he has no ulterior interests, he has no axes to grind or anything and so forth. So he has taken an out-of-the-way subject which is off the beaten path, so he won't get involved in anything that will get anybody excited or that will stir up prejudices or anything like that. And what does he do? He walks right into the Pearl of Great Price. Well, if they can possibly help it though, in other words, they won't touch that because it will get them involved, and they can't help that. The gaps and defects are all right as long as we don't bring them in--as long as you're not discussing something upon which a lot depends.

Well, people have appealed to authorities in the case of the Book of Mormon, say, and the Pearl of Great Price not for the purpose of starting discussion then, nor for stirring up investigation, but of stopping all discussion and squashing all investigation. See here's an authoritative statement on it. Five men have said this, all eight authorities have said this about the Pearl of Great Price--that ends it. There will be no more talk about it. These are the experts, who are we to criticize? We can't discuss these matters. This is now beyond discussion, and we will talk about it no more. This has been the purpose of the critics of the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price through the years in consulting those who are considered to be leading authorities--to get their word for it so they wouldn't have to discuss it any more. So that amateurs or anybody else wouldn't come into it, but, of course, in these matters we're all amateurs. But their purpose being to avoid discussion--again you see we can count on their silence--and especially if the expert themselves want to avoid discussion, and the very people who want it the most. When authorities speak things are settled but as long as things are open to discussion things are not settled--but they want these matters to be settled you see. Moreover, you never can tell where a discussion will lead. This is one of the delightful things about it you see. (Borrowing from Hoffer's philosophy here.) You can never tell where a discussion will lead. If it is a good one, you're always bound to find out something and get surprises and as soon as we talk seriously about the Book of Mormon, who has ever been willing to discuss the Book of Mormon seriously? You can't do it. The man who would come nearest to it would be Albright, and yet he would drop it like a hot potato. You see, as soon as personality comes in. It's a funny thing. You can study the Koran all your life but if you even open the Book of Mormon you're suspect. Isn't funny? Your reputation is in danger. And you can study any other religious belief you want without being viewed as a possible heretic or somebody who's flirting with dangerous ideas. But the funny thing is if they even find out that a certain person is reading the Book of Mormon, he will be in trouble, probably; which is very strange isn't it? Since science is to welcome all things and discuss them, the Book of Mormon is supposed to be particularly vulnerable, they would be willing to discuss this and settle it once for all. But the point is, that discussion never settles

anything once for all, it just leads to more problems and that's its purpose actually.

So since we can never tell where these discussions are going to lead us, all critical discussion is dangerous to authority and scholarship. There are no final statements in these fields, of course, they are only problems which are explained by theories and then you discuss the theories that lead not to solutions but only to more problems. Even a casual look, say, at these documents of the Pearl of Great Price, you still have two reactions. The one is full of a lot of nonsense. The other is "But, hey wait a minute. How did he happen to get this right, you see? There are a number of surprising things he got right there. And you can pin anybody on those and from there on the thing is in the fire because you can easily enough explain how he got things wrong. We can all get things wrong, but how did he get certain things right. What are the chances there? And you feed that through a computer and see what the chances are that you would get that right. Now there are lots and lots of things in the Pearl of Great Price, and I know this happened. Now, I suppose we should mention these documents later. But even a casual reader will see that Joseph Smith does hit the nail on the head and it only takes a few of these to embarrass the hostile critic. Now the men of 1912, the eight men to whom Bishop Spalding of Salt Lake appealed didn't know what they were talking about. (I mean by present day standards, you can see that quite plainly.) They were fighting with straw men. But that's exactly what they're doing today. Men who wanted to take up. And they soon found out they were fighting with straw men and that wanted to leave it alone. The fact that we just don't understand so much about so many doctrines. The basic concepts, for example, of Egyptian religions--they have all changed now--the interpretation of things have changed completely since Morris and Chairmack and people like that who have been doing sensational work over recent years. The whole picture has changed and remember there is no translation in the Pearl of Great Price--there is no translatable document. There is only an interpretation of these forms.

Now it would appear from what has been discovered now that Joseph Smith did not alter the facsimile--as it has been argued by all those men. Well, Joseph Smith has changed them around, but they haven't been altered. Moreover, today they were what is known as a multiplicity of approaches. One period, one faction, one group, one school. One will interpret on document one way and another will interpret it another way and they are equally accurate and equally acceptable; but quite different ways of viewing the same document. The multiplicity of approaches was--the term was used by Frankfurt, but it had been long suspected--and now everybody accepts it quite generally. Once you have said you cannot say it, this does not mean you cannot signify this because it signifies that and I can show you that it signifies that. Well, of course, it signifies that but it can also signify this. There is your multiplicity of approaches. If you can do that quite freely, one symbol can be used in many ways and combination to present ideas and it's quite a popular trick with the ancients to do that. They love to double meanings. They love things to represent a number of things at once. They speak in types and images and in shadow, allegory comes later but they speak in types and images and they want you to interpret a number of things a number of different ways. In Egyptian it is very, very common, for example, to use a name or a work that is a play on words to explain something and you'll do that and you have to

expect that to be a play on words even though you are supposed to understand the word literally, too. They use their words as different.

There is one family in which the father and five sons all had exactly the same name. And they write the history of this family. This is one of the longer inscriptions. Well, you can imagine how confusing it is because everybody has the same name. There are six people and not a double name--not Jr. or anything like that--to distinguish. They all just had one name. Well, the Egyptians like that sort of thing. They think it is sort of fun to call everybody in the house Joe. And they do the same thing in the Coptic document. For example, once you read a Coptic document, you know what he's talking about. He says "Well--he's talking about Mother Hubbard and every time we come to Mother we put X and Hubbard we'll put Y but since you know that X means Mother why bother about Hubbard at all. But let's just use another X for that. And before you know it. you get a document that is nothing but X's and yet you can read it. That's the funny thing. As long as you know what the writer had in mind, if you don't, of course, you might just be stuck--not even try. Because you have to know what he had in mind.

I think the things you're interested in are questions about the Pearl of Great Price documents and things like that and this is the embarrassing situation there, why it is so confidential. All the parties concerned know about these documents is that they exist and they have known it for along time. In fact the men from back East have known it since 1902 that the original manuscripts of the Pearl of Great Price were not destroyed at all. They're in the hands of the heirs of the Bidamon family. Some of them were sold in 1947, including one of the facsimiles of Joseph and hieroglyphics and they're being kept by people who are very anxious that the Church shouldn't find out about their existence. That's why they haven't been able to talk about it you see. They were offered rather cheaply for sale. They got them in '47 for only a few hundred dollars and now were offered very cheaply to anybody except the Latter-day Saints. They mustn't know we are even interested. It is rather silly. Because they know if anyone would be interested, we would be. And this is rather funny too. The manuscripts were divided up among Bidamon's heirs. His housekeeper got one third on them and it was her son, after she died in '47, who sold these documents. And as I say, this is a striking thing, too, if these documents are so damning, the fact that they have been known since 1902 and haven't been publicized against the Church is most interesting. In fact, they have been held back almost with the hysterical fear that Mormons should even find out that they exist. And if you ask them why--and I did ask someone who didn't know I was a Mormon incidentally--he said "We don't want any discussion of the Mormons because they will start stirring things up. This will become a matter of public discussion. It will become a scandal, the institution might get involved and we don't want to get involved in religious discussions." And this is exactly the way the critics of the Book of Mormon and so forth--"if you will accept my word as authority to be final and not offer to discuss anything any more or talk about these then I will give you a signed statement the Book of Mormon is a fraud, but I'm afraid it may involve me in rebuttal and somebody will reply and then we're off. And we don't want that to happen." So that's what's happening here. This stuff is being held back.

They were first brought to the attention of the Church by an outsider who was snooping around back there looking for other things in 1966 and he recognized some of the Pearl of Great Price materials there. As I say, it has been known--I mean Professor Wilson, Baer, Hughes--they've known about these things for a generation now, a long time back. They know they were there and have decided it was a conspiracy not to mention them. The fact that they are now for sale but not to the Mormons and that their purpose is to avoid discussion. So I say, there is nothing much I can say about these. I'm not supposed to talk about them. Because you're not supposed to know. I don't know. I don't know who has them. See I could find out easy enough but I don't want to know, you see, because they say as soon as they find out that any Mormon knows where this is they will refuse to sell. That is why they're not asking. Fortunately, we have our agents who are dealing with people--as you know, where the Church is everywhere we have contacts. You would be amazed. The Lord arranges these things anyway and everything falls into order when the due time comes. I mean this will be arranged and we'll get the stuff I'm sure about that. (Question). Well that doesn't make any difference. We've got excellent photographs of the whole shabang now and they're stored there as a whole series--them including some others.

The surprising thing again when you start out looking for these, the first thing is well somebody made a very bad bungle with the plates, with our facsimile in the Pearl of Great Price and they have. And if you had these, things look much clearer and much better and this, of course, is one of the reasons you haven't heard from the boys back there, because this has been known just about a year now that they have come out in the open like this. Now I don't know whether it should be announced that these things are around and do exist. I say, everybody who's concerned goes around pretending that this just doesn't exist. They just look the other way and it may go away, this sort of thing. This is the way they feel about it you see. If you just don't talk about it. It may go away. We won't have to worry about it.

QUESTION: Now you are talking about the actual manuscript?

ANSWER: The actual manuscripts of the Book of Abraham including one of the facsimile and quite a variety of other writings. Quite a variety.

QUESTION: Do you have any idea how much of the original manuscript of the Book of Abraham is still in existence?

ANSWER: It would seem to be--let me see about how much as is there--we have about-- that's about 13 pages of stuff--but about one third of it. See because it was divided up in three batches and just one third has been run down. But now the rest may be available you see because it remains in private hands still--Bidamon's heirs. Now here's--what his name--at Chicago there, Dallin Oaks, who is a professor of law there and who spends a lot of time in the archives looking up legal records. It would be no trouble for him to run down the probate and the accounts of who got this stuff and could find out into whose hands these other records fell. He would just go back to this Widow Clark was her name and who this stuff was willed to. And then we could get it from them personally. Only a third of it got in the hands of this insti-

tution back there. And they're the ones who are getting so excited about it.

QUESTION: Hopefully, though, but surely you got into some kind of discussion with Baer or Wilson about these documents.

ANSWER: Oh, heavens yes, Oh yes, of course.

QUESTION: Well, then why didn't you simply photograph them.

ANSWER: This is the surprising thing. That's all very well but the point is that we want to get our lunch hooks on the documents, see. The photographs aren't good enough for us. They're a good thing to have, you see. We want to put them where no body can play around with them any more because some of them have been fiddled with. You can see that you see. A part is broken off of one and somebody had supplied it with pencil and immediately they said "Ah ha, see Joseph Smith did that and then it goes, and Joseph Smith did that. And I said "Now you went with me and you saw a portrait of Emma Smith with this in the Background and it was hanging on the wall there and the artist painted it from the original which she kept in her house. "Lucy Smith you see." And yes." And I said "You recognized that as the original picture we took measurements of it and everything." "Yes." "In that painting had it been altered like this?" "No." All right then, it wasn't Joseph Smith who altered it. It has happened since then. But things like that you see. They could--as long as they're in their hands they could fiddle around.

QUESTION: I was there with John Wilson at the time he was studying with Dr. Preston. You say that he knew at that time that these documents existed?

ANSWER: He may not. But he knew that they knew as late as that.

QUESTION: But that is one reason, I guess, I never got anything out of him though.

ANSWER: Yes, they clam up on that.

QUESTION: By the way, though, some of this material that is in the book that is in the Egyptian Grammar you might have read he had photographed. I put some of that high writing material in the hands of a scholar--a high ranking scholar. He was tremendously impressed, but he died and I had a hard time.

ANSWER: This is the sort of thing that happens, too, because our main go between for this whole deal--the one man we are depending on--our key man--between the whole thing is very sick at present. In fact, he is very ill and they're hoping he pulls through.

The worst thing here is you see that this stuff is-- even if you say the very minimum which you can--you see immediately it's exaggerated and all sorts of stories go around. I mean that happens in anything you talk about. I mean you can't report the most innocent, the most factual, the most clear and simple tale without having it distorted within a week beyond recognition and this always happens. So just so there are enough of these versions and they are conflicting enough to cancel each other out, you won't worry about this

See. We have to make these discounts and so forth. But I think, well, now if it hasn't leaked out here, it certainly leaked out there. But back there, you see, back there they're willing not to say another thing about this. They're willing, as I say, to wish it would go away and not say anything about it. It won't be taken up until these things do come into the hands of the Church. If we advertise--now this is another thing they say. Surely, they say, surely your Church doesn't want to get hold of these and have these freely discussed. You might be a black eye from this. And I say "you couldn't be further from the truth. That is the very thing we want to do is to discuss these things." They are the ones who were worrying about the black eye. They try to discourage it, dissuade it. They don't want to discuss it. Well, let's talk about the weather then--anything else. But until we have them we can't force a discussion, and we don't want to force the discussion. Prematurely it would be bad. It's always premature anyway. The only way we are going to get to anything anyhow is to get some sort of serious talk going about these things. But to keep it serious is very hard where people have these prejudices to begin with. And prejudice is not a crime. We all view every new piece of evidence in view of the framework we are already operating in. And they do the same thing. Of course, they do. They will do anything not to accept Joseph Smith's story. They are used to any framework but that. And they are not finding it as easy as they thought they would. They thought it would be a push over. They thought it would just be a matter of a week--the first week--but suddenly another week went on, and then suddenly they gave it up, and they wouldn't follow it up. So they ran afoul somewhere. As I say, you don't have to go very far with this to see that Joseph Smith had a way of finding things out.

QUESTION: You say you've got a photograph of one of the facsimile?

ANSWER: Yes, among other things.

QUESTION: Which facsimile?

ANSWER: Number one. The first one, the sacrifice. The 1842--the Hedlock reproduction in the Times and Seasons is rather a good one. But...

QUESTION: It's quite accurate then.

ANSWER: We shouldn't use this one. We shouldn't use this one at all. But the 1842 one is very good. It's much better than this one. Far better. It tells you a lot more--this one doesn't. The '51 is no good at all--and then later this 1912 reproduced in '51.

QUESTION: Doesn't it correspond very well to the Book of the Dead? The figures in there, the interpretation...?

ANSWER: Well, again this is the thing. You have a scribe who is using conventional forms and he's using then the only way they can, you see. The study of Egyptian canon is a new thing just since World War II. And we realize all the canons--every Egyptian scribe had a large book and all his ideas had to be drawn in the correct way. And if he wished to convey an idea, he could use them in unusual combinations, which were very rare with these

later scribes anyway--they didn't want to work. (And very few people would exercise any originality.) But he would have to express it in these set canonical forms. And that's what you have to do here--you are just using set forms is all. And this is the mistake you will find, for example, in the second edition. The engraver's knife slipped and in the next edition the engraver matched it by this. So you get a Babylonian pointed tail that looks very unegyptian. Well, you don't find this in any of the early facsimiles at all. It's a nice round tail in the 1842 edition. So there are these other things. The knife is quite different. Well, all sorts of things are different. But, yes, they used familiar conventional figures. This is what everybody showed, you see. A writer said, "oh this is typical for the Book of the Dead, this sort of thing." Well, of course, it is. But notice in what unconventional way they are. For example, it was suggested by three or four of the men in 1912 that Joseph Smith had actually put clothes on this man. But now we know from the original that he hadn't. Those clothes were part of the original. Well, that's extremely important. That is not a mummification, you see. You don't mummify a person who is fully clothed and wearing sandals or wearing slippers, in his right mind. That put the whole thing in a different light. And well, somebody played around--probably Joseph Smith. Well, now you see, he didn't. It was the original scribe who put it there. So that's why it is valuable to have the original documents, to see that nobody has been fiddling with them. You can see where someone has. If the head is broken off here, for example, and somebody has drawn it in with pencil. And the arms of the mummy are missing--they have been taken off. And somebody has drawn skeleton arms in there too. But again from the Lucy Mack picture when Joseph Smith had them the arms are still there. But all those men in Chicago said, "Oh no, Joseph Smith drew those in, that pencil work is his." And they are not his at all. And so all these things come up.

QUESTION: Why did the Lucy Mack picture have this in the background?

ANSWER: This is an interesting thing. It was in 1906, Preston went back with President Joseph F. Smith and they went to see the head of the bank there. His name was Smith--Zacarias or something like that--and he was a cousin of Lucy Mack's granddaughter and she had this picture in her house. And they went out and the Church wanted to buy it. They couldn't, but they were allowed to take a photograph and it is now up in Brother Lund's office. And I went up with Baer and we showed it to him. And he went over it very carefully. And he said, "yes, this is obviously the authentic original papyrus. The artist is rather a good one and carefully copied it. He had it on the wall, proudly on display there, you see, in it's original form. So these things can be controlled that way. Now what can we say about these things yet? Well, then the time comes, I say, in the meantime we accumulate ammunition. There is nothing wrong whatever with having our own ideas, all sorts of fantastic ideas. The only way you discover things, and then discuss them and discover where we were wrong and where we were right. And, nothing is wrong with this at all. The new book of Abraham wouldn't be put into our hands. And it was put there with a challenge, you see. If the world can find out about these things, welcome it. If you can find out about it, good. The Lord says he's not going to tell you, but if you can do it, all right. And some things, on the other hand are not to be revealed at the present time. But to break these down element by element and discuss them this way and

that--that's a long story. And I've done it. I mean, I have a whole book that was supposed to come out last August on all this stuff, and I'm glad it didn't come out, because of the stuff that's come out since then. This is a very important thing. A whole new literature of early Hebrew-Abraham legend has come out, beginning with the discovery of the Abraham apocalypse in 1927, Genesis apocalypse in 1950 and so forth. Now in the Abraham literature you have this whole story about this king--this pharaoh--who wanted to sacrifice Abraham. And Abraham was saved by an angel when the knife was at his throat. And the Pharaoh was then convinced and wanted to join Abraham's church. And Abraham wouldn't let him, and the king felt insulted. He wanted Abraham's priesthood and allowed him to sit on his throne and carry his insignia. Abraham wouldn't exchange the honor, so he was ordered out of the country in disgrace. This story in considerable detail is told, you, see, in all these old Jewish stories. So the Jews actually had a legend that Abraham went through all this. And that the Pharaoh tried to sacrifice him, who was also a ruler incidentally. And this gets things very complicated. Because it now mixes in with monuments and _____. You have monuments referring to this same story now. You have monuments referring to the very same story now and it's... and so as I say, we have to hold back with all these goodies until the time comes and to bring them out all at once. But it will only be partial, anyway. In the meantime, I say, there is no harm in talking about these things.

QUESTION: How many--apparently Bidamon had three heirs himself...?

ANSWER: The fact that this is exactly one third of the stuff. Yes, he did divide it. One third went to his housekeeper you see. Now the other two thirds would have been divided differently I suppose. But he had this old faithful housekeeper who had stuck with him all his life and so forth. And he left a third to her and that's what they got. That's what survived--that's what we know about. But what's happened to the other heirs? Where are they? The problem is to run them down now.

QUESTION: Well did Bidamon have other children besides...

ANSWER: Yes he did, there are other members of the family, and the other two thirds definitely was willed to other members. And we have to run them down.

QUESTION: He had an illegitimate daughter who lived with Emma there in the house.

ANSWER: Well, that's interesting. Somebody better--I suppose Brother Oaks has found out about that now.

QUESTION: She called Emma grandma. (interruption... She called her mother.) No, she called her grandma didn't she. She lived in the house.

ANSWER: She might have got something, then.

QUESTION: I wondered. Did he have any children outside of this?

ANSWER: Well, according to what these people say, the rest was divided up among the members of his family. Now we don't know whether it was in equal portions or what. It could all in lump have gone to somebody else or something. But if you go into the court's records you could find out from his will who he did dispose if it. This is what they want to find out and it shouldn't be too hard.

QUESTION: Now what about the Reorganites. Will they have any part in this?

ANSWER: Yes. This is another reason you see. Another reason we have to shut up about it. I think they have known about it longer than we have, but they haven't been able to get anywhere on this. And this is rather interesting. They may have caught the other two thirds incidentally, as far as that goes. They would be holding them back. See all the conspiracies on earth. Well, when you consider the risk these things undergo anyway--isn't it marvelous that they have survived after all this. Everybody thought the Chicago fire had eaten them up and everything else. So, if the Lord wants to--He speaks you see in these particular documents about things to be brought forth in due time and not for the present and so forth. And so obviously he has something up his sleeve. And we can trust Him to do his own work. He'll do it. Yes, it'll come out when the time comes and in his own way too. Probably a big surprise. It'll be something you don't expect at all--something you never knew about.

QUESTION: Brother Nibley, is there any indication that we are getting manuscripts of legislative rules in Chicago then or are these something aside from the records of Joseph...?

ANSWER: Apparently not. Apparently that's another thing entirely. Again there is no evidence they ever got out there. No it stayed in the family, you see, because it was only divided up later on. They kept them pretty well together, I'm sure of that. Because they took very good care of these things--this is another thing. They're beautifully preserved. These things are very brittle you see, and could have been destroyed very easily by being kicked around. But they weren't.

QUESTION: Do you think there are many more manuscripts?

ANSWER: Yes, about three times as many as we have. And the fact that they took such good care of them gives us heartening reason for supposing that they valued them and were not willing to see them get wasted or lost. So they have been preserved. And, yes, they figure now--Baer made a very accurate count--he went through a lot of old collections, museums, family collections and he has a lot of information he won't let me have now, but he has listed quite an impressive number of documents that go back to Joseph Smith. He really had quite a collection there. Surprising not just Egyptian either. Some Armenian some Arabic and everything else.

QUESTION: When did Bidamon die?

ANSWER: His housekeeper died in '47. I don't know when he did. I don't know _____ at all. His housekeeper died in '47, yes. The housekeeper's

son, excuse me. It was her son that sold them just before he died in '47. And he was the son of the housekeeper. Now when she died, I don't know but he got them from her.

QUESTION: He married Emma in December of '47 and they were still alive. They built this house in '69.

ANSWER: We are talking about 1947. The son of the housekeeper of Bidamon's.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: (Ellis Rasmussen)

ANSWER: Isn't that annoying, you see. But I say what would be the safe thing to say about this?

QUESTION: I would not announce it.

ANSWER: I know the brethren don't want it announced. I know the General Authorities don't know about it--only one or two knows about it. The other day Brother Brown called me and asked if there was anything to this rumor that some of it had survived. President Brown's secretary called me. "Is there anything to this rumor that something has survived?" He had never heard about it. Even the General Authorities don't know about this at all.

QUESTION: It's all over, Hugh.

ANSWER: I know it is, I know it is. Well President Tanner was the man to whom this outsider came. He came to President Tanner and me and at the same time and we met in President Tanner's office. And then he produced these photographs and things like that, and said is there anything in this?" And he said, "Well is there?" and he said they want a particular price. And President Tanner asked me, "What would you be willing to pay for this." And I said "Exactly the price they were asking right to the penny." So he said, "That's right, that's the answer." And it's a very good one. It's a very reasonable one they would be willing to sell it. And then, see, I went to visit in August, I went over to Estes Park where there's a house--the family has had it there since the 1880's, one of the oldest houses there. And he had a pile of that stuff there and he's getting his correspondence from everywhere. And the Tanner's are pushing him. People are pushing them all the time. They want to push them into this controversy and they don't want to get into this controversy. It's very amusing. Everybody's working on it--nobody wants to let on. And he had at that time--he had a very impressive collection there. But these things he didn't know about. Now he was able to match mine with some others. He said here were some others he knew about, but he hadn't seen these before. So it's building up to quite a formidable pile of stuff.

QUESTION: I'm sure you have followed this lead.

ANSWER: Well, and then there's this girl--and Caswall tells about it--and then there's this girl who tells about her visit to Lucy Mack. And telling her that this is the mummy of Ornidus. And there were four mummies against

the wall and all this sort of thing. She kept them--she kept this very close and she kept the collection together and was very proud of it. I don't know whether the Mummies would have survived or not, but it's the documents that interest us. Now the documents are interesting. They are different types by different hands. There's one very nicely written; another very badly written, and some are rather sloppy, rather hasty copies--copies of older documents. And they're very puzzling. I mean, the long documents as soon as you start reading the thing you immediately start thinking are these new Hebrew apocalypses, and Hebrew legends of Abraham. Well there might be something behind them after all. Because they are telling the same story that here we're getting in Egyptian text. Dating them is going to be a problem. There is a great deal of disagreement about dating them.

QUESTION: How much more extension?

ANSWER: I think much more extension. I think that's the surprising thing. It would be quite a stately volume--it would be about the size of the Book of Mormon if you got the whole thing.

QUESTION: Oliver Cowdery--he said it would be several volumes.

ANSWER: Really, that's quite possible. I was absolutely astounded by the richness of the stuff. This is the surprising thing, you see.

QUESTION: You have only to read the columns in the Book of Abraham.

ANSWER: That's right. Now we have a hieroglyphic document here but we also have hieratic. Most of it is hieratic--most of the texts are hieratic that we have. And there's some Hebrew and there's some later stuff all mixed together with a collection picked up at down there.

QUESTION: In the material, is the grammar, so-called grammar?

ANSWER: Well, I'm not talking about Joseph Smith's grammar, just this new stuff which I have photographed.

(DISCUSSION)

ANSWER: Oh yes, in the grammar, it's very rich there.

QUESTION: What about the Book of Joseph?

ANSWER: The question is--is that he translated. You see, that he translated from a text. That was not revealed, you see. We should have a text from that--wasn't that translated from a text. Or we may get the Book of Joseph. I mean, he did have the text of the Book of Joseph. That may be one of these, as far as we know.

QUESTION: _____?

ANSWER: That must be in existence that being the prize of the lot. Here you have more controls and things like that, too. There have been some new hypocephali discovered and this still remains the prize. They are all unique; there are no two of them that are alike. But this one is a real gem. That's a pretty good reproduction that one of Hedlock there--the '42 edition. Judging from this reproduction which is very good--not this one but the '42 one--that can be used. And that can be the '42 one can be read but the other one can't be, incidentally. The old Times and Seasons--you can read that--and it talks about the things it's supposed to talk about, too. And then we run into some real surprises.

QUESTION: And did you say that the Book of Joseph manuscript was there?

ANSWER: No, it could be because we haven't even gone through them yet, you see. All this stuff is just waiting there and piling up and everybody's waiting to see who'll jump first and who it's going to go to.

QUESTION: If the man is willing to sell them, what are we waiting for?

ANSWER: He won't sell them to Mormons. Whatever happens. He is determined that they shall not fall into the hands of the Mormons. We are not supposed to know they even have them. They have kept that secret for 60 years--for 65 years.

QUESTION: Who's this coming to President Tanner?

ANSWER: Well, he's our go-between.

QUESTION: He had the photographs then?

ANSWER: Yes, he had the photographs and he is...

QUESTION: Well, wouldn't he buy them and then try to sell them to us?

ANSWER: Well, that's exactly what we want him to do. And what he wanted to do. He was willing to give the Church the service for nothing to get these. And then he was ready for the deal with them and then he got sick you see.

QUESTION: Who's this fellow that's sick?

ANSWER: This is him. He's a man of great experience. He knows a great deal about documents and manuscripts. He found this because he was looking for more stuff. Odds and ends and all sorts of stuff. He's a dealer that deals in these things and he knows a great deal about them. He recognized this and the value of it and he thought the people who had it did not recognize the value of it. And he didn't suggest it to them and they know that he's not a Mormon, so he's the one we were hoping to close the deal through. But that still hangs in the fire, until he gets well.

QUESTION: _____ beautiful harmony now between the Pearl of Great Price _____.

ANSWER: They lean over backwards. Remember this is one thing, in this field, they are constantly assailed every day by letters as we are here, you see, from crackpots. Everybody has his weird idea about the Egyptians, and they get so extremely cautious. Talk about the , they are so touchy about these matters they suspect anything like that. So they have to lean way over backwards, though they themselves are quite willing to discuss these things. And this is delightful about Wilson himself. He loves to make fun of his own pedantry. And he has really mellowed, he has really changed in recent years compared to what he wrote in his books a few years ago when he was an extremely rigorous Bacemain formalist and authoritarian scientist and strict evolutionist and so forth. Well, he's not that anymore. He's quite different now. He sort of laughs at all that now. The certitudes of another day. There was never--Brother Sperry could have told us this, too--there was never a more dogmatic man than Baer. He knew the answers. Now they are scared to death about their museum today, for example.

