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Title Approach to John Gee, *Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri*

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Abstract Review of *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (2000), by John Gee.

Approach to John Gee, *Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri*

Hugh W. Nibley

Since the beginning, the Pearl of Great Price has been waiting in the wings, held in reserve for a special time. It would seem that time is now, for within a decade of the publication of the Joseph Smith Papyri in 1968 (after their rediscovery in 1967),[1] strange and portentous things have happened.

In the first place, the study of Egyptology has undergone a sudden change from Erman's withering contempt of the intellectual and religious preoccupations of the Egyptians to the so-called "New School," a band of Egyptologists, mostly in the north of Europe, who view the Egyptians as both wise and honest in their rational quest for eternal life. This shift was soon followed by an intense study of the Egyptian Wisdom literature, brought on by the long-delayed recognition of the peculiarly close association between the Wisdom of the Egyptians and that of the Hebrews. This, in turn, created a lively debate as to which came first, a debate which ended after several years with general agreement in favor of Egypt. Meantime, tensions and conflict between modern Israel and Ishmael carrying on the ancient feud have put us into the picture—we are back where it all started.

It is interesting that Joseph Smith has given us two examples relevant to the subject: Both Abraham and Nephi were Hebrews, and yet

1. "New Light on Joseph Smith's Ancient Papyri," *Improvement Era* 71/2 (1968): 40–41.

Review of John Gee. *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri.* Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000. x + 67 pp., with reading list and glossaries. $12.95.

both wrote in Egyptian; both men wrote in the first person for their posterity "that should come after them" to warn and to guide them. Such was the very essence of the famous Egyptian Wisdom literature.

The Book of Abraham emphasizes the timing of various events, putting the finger on our own time, after noting that certain things "*ought* not to be revealed in the present time" (Fac. 2, figs. 9–11). Meantime, "If the world can find out these numbers, so be it" (Fac. 2, fig. 11). Finally, many passages "will be given in the own due time of the Lord" (Fac. 2, figs. 12–21). And others are "to be had in the holy temple of God" and "cannot be revealed unto the world" (Fac. 2, fig. 8). Everything is directed to the present reader with a sense of urgency—all this is going somewhere, and things are coming together with us.

And so before we take another step, it would be wise to consult the essentials brought together by John Gee, who always gets to the point and tells the reader exactly what he needs to know, before parties get confused, pompous, or contentious. Really a must.