

Appendix V

Criticisms of Joseph Smith and the Book of Abraham

I. Understanding the Critical Literature.¹

Part of any commentary on the text of the Book of Abraham, in the sense we described in the introduction, must take into account the various kinds of literature surrounding it. A significant portion of that literature is of a critical nature and so we must consider at least some of its arguments, however unusual or untutored. This literature is very large in terms of page counts, but fairly small in terms of content since much of it is repetitious.

Joseph Smith's work as a translator of the Egyptian texts that came into his possession in 1835 has been "exposed" by a variety of critics. The critics range from the supreme amateur Egyptologists of the late 19th and early 20th century to certain evangelical Christians and others who might accurately be described as professional anti-Mormons.

Since criticisms leveled at Joseph Smith and the Book of Abraham are often criticisms of the character or mental state of Joseph Smith, it is of some importance to examine the credentials of critics and their motivations. Aside from that, we will select a few points most frequently brought up about the Book of Abraham: there is no attempt to be comprehensive here since the evidence is not all in.

Generally, the critics have aimed their unfavorable observations at more or less the same points. That is, they focus on Joseph Smith's alleged errors as a translator in relation to the three papyrus facsimiles [we include facsimile 2, though it may not have been papyrus]. Additionally, some of Joseph Smith's critics censure his supposed involvement with those documents that they claim to be his working tool for the translation effort behind the Book of Abraham, which we have designated the EAG. Naturally, the word "translation" is used by such persons in a sardonic sense.

As a rule, the critical literature in regard to the Book of Abraham may be classified by source:

α. Religious critics who are either offended by Joseph Smith's claims generally, the general doctrinal stance of Mormonism, have a genuine concern the Mormons must be doomed to Hell because of their faith in Smith's claims and ideas, or find a convenient podium in anti-Mormonism for one reason or another.

β. Scholars who approach the Book of Abraham either out of genuine curiosity or at the request of other interested parties. This group subdivides into those with an interest only in the JSP and those who also promote the idea that Smith was a quack.

γ. A diverse group consisting of ex-Mormons or lapsed-Mormons who wish to share the reasons for their loss of faith or continue a relationship of curiosity about Joseph Smith's history and motivations.

The literature from β is small and for the most part has already been referenced in the commentary in some way. We focus here mostly on the other two segments of the literature. Much of it may be classified with a general template. Many of the arguments in this group date from virtually the time of first publication. They usually resurface every few decades. Some of what follows constitutes a summary of facts already treated in the commentary. In brief then, the arguments run like this:

1. The Book of Abraham claims to be (more properly Joseph Smith claims it to be) the translation of an autograph ² of Abraham, which came into Joseph Smith's possession, this autograph having been written by Abraham while he was in Egypt.
2. The EAG (perhaps more properly the KEP), demonstrate that Joseph Smith thought the Book of Abraham was contained in a short segment of a papyrus roll: the Hor Document of Breathing made by Isis. [Coenen, 1998.] Some fragments of this text, are currently in the possession of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and have been published by them at various times, beginning in the February 1968 *Improvement Era* magazine, two months after they were returned to the Church by the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. The particular fragments usually said to be relevant are those numbered I, XI and X. To assure an accurate reference point, we refer to plates 1, 2 and 3 of Nibley, 2005. Fragment I is clearly the prototype for Facsimile No.1 in the Book of Abraham and was connected to the breathing text at some time before being snipped off.
3. These fragments have been translated and are shown to have nothing to do with Abraham. Here the argument becomes a bit more subtle and occasionally the details are confused. However, here are the essential points behind the usual claims:

(A) We have the Egyptian text from which the Book of Abraham *must have* come.

(B) The Book of Abraham [Joseph Smith's version] is not what comes from the Document of Breathing made by Isis. Among some of Smith's religious critics this can be expressed in rather dramatic language.

The breathing document, reattached to JSP I would look like this:



Figure V-A. Copyright © 1968, Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

High resolution images are available in Rhodes, 2002; Nibley, 2005.

4. It then follows that Joseph Smith was deceived (or was a fraud) in claiming that he had translated an ancient text about Abraham from these bits of papyrus because these fragments contain nothing about Abraham. For most Mormons of course, it really is irrelevant which one of these alternatives might be true. We note an addendum is added to this argument: the JSP is 2000 years too late to be an autograph of Abraham.

Joseph Smith's γ -critics sometimes add that this supports the humanist rejection of supernaturalism and hence that there are no such persons as "prophets" who can, by supernatural means, discern the meaning of ancient documents in a language they do not know. Actually, this is really a hypothesis for γ -critics making the arguments somewhat circular. Joseph Smith's α -critics believe the same thing (there are no prophets beyond those of the OT perhaps), but generally do not say so.

5. Finally, this leads to the conclusion that Joseph Smith was no prophet.

Joseph Smith's α -critics generally add the following item:

6. Mormons should repudiate Mormonism and adopt (usually) some form of Protestant fundamentalism. ⁽³⁾

Given points 1-6, the α -literature ⁽⁴⁾ often engages in various speculations about the psychology of Mormons.

Among γ -critics there seem to be some individuals formerly steeped in the faith and who have a more than superficial knowledge of the tradition of the LDS Church. Having given up the faith, in an attempt to perhaps assuage guilt or to satisfy a fascination with their abandoned religious feelings/traditions, they choose to study Mormonism as a way of mimicking the authoritative voice without bearing the burden of responsibility.

We note one little irony: Protestant fundamentalist critics of Joseph Smith and the Book of Abraham solemnly accept the declarations of scholars and historians when they are critical of Joseph Smith's productions, but avoid noticing that these same scholars also want to jettison things near and dear to the hearts of most α -critics. ⁽⁷⁾

An argument typically included as part of points 3 and 4 above, augmented by the rediscovery of the parts of the JSP, ⁽⁸⁾ generally runs like this:

- (a) Facsimile No.1 of the Book of Abraham comes from Joseph Smith's breathing document, which he acquired from Chandler. [See historical notes for the story.]
- (b) Facsimile No. 1 is directly referenced in the Book of Abraham text as an illustration from the life of Abraham. ⁽⁹⁾

(c) Facsimile No. 1 and its ilk date from after 600 BCE. [The Joseph Smith Document of Breathing probably dates from a few hundred years before beginning of the common era. Coenen, 1998.]

(d) Figures in Facsimile No. 1 are shown to be unrelated to the text of the Book of Abraham by Egyptologists.

(e) Facsimile No.1 was damaged either by Joseph Smith or his assistants or before it came into his possession and was improperly restored by him. [So Joseph Smith was not inspired.]

(f) Abraham lived [probably] before 1700 BCE.

Therefore:

(g) Facsimile No. 1 could not be authored by Abraham, or be part of a copy of an Abrahamic document because of the dating problems- and JSP I's attachment to the breathing document, combined with its reference in the text offered by Joseph Smith as the Book of Abraham shows again that he thought (or fraudulently claimed) that the Book of Abraham text came from the breathing document. Moreover, critics point out that the prototype of Facsimile No. 3 was attached to the end of the breathing document, with JSP I at the beginning, so the Book of Abraham text must have been thought (or stupidly made out) by Joseph Smith to be in the middle.

See point 6 above for the conclusion.

Another related argument is applied to Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham:

(h) Facsimile No. 2 [a hypocephalus] is found redrawn and filed with BAmS-4.

(i) The drawing shows that portions of the hypocephalus were damaged [missing from the original].

(j) Joseph Smith filled in the missing portions with nonsense material [copied hieratic from the Hor Document of Breathing made by Isis.]

(k) Hence, Joseph Smith didn't understand Egyptian.

(l) Therefore Joseph Smith had no prophetic insight, etc.

These items will be referenced as 3(a) - 3(l).

Variations on these themes could be added, but they form the essential core of most α - γ -literature on Joseph Smith and the Book of Abraham.

α - γ -literature often ignores nearly all of the scholarship done on the Book of Abraham during the last forty years. This allows writers to concentrate on rehashing arguments that have circulated for more than a century prior to that scholarship.

The reader may have already observed that most of the arguments outlined above have already been answered in various notes in the commentary. However, we will review some of these

points below. Meanwhile, we think that the outline above summarizes the α - γ -literature more effectively than the literature itself in most cases.

II. Analysis.

First, consider assertion 1.

The current (1981 edition) Book of Abraham head-note, [not evidently a portion claimed to be translated by Joseph Smith⁽¹⁰⁾] reads:

A Translation of some ancient Records, that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt. - The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon papyrus.

This is the current introduction to the book as found in the Pearl of Great Price. However, in TS-1 we have

A Translation of Some ancient Records that have fallen into our hands, from the Catecombs[sic] of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham, while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon papyrus.⁽¹¹⁾ [Emphasis added.]

That is, Smith very carefully designates the papyrus as one that purports to be an autograph of Abraham, a very common claim of ancient manuscripts, which are yet far removed from the original author.⁽¹²⁾ While some α -critics claim a distinction without difference here, that demonstrates simple bias or a lack of training. Smith himself makes no claim here that the documents he had were autographs.⁽¹³⁾ They were copies from the land of copyists.⁽¹⁴⁾ α -critics like to point to Josiah Quincy's record of his interview with Joseph Smith, where he has Joseph claim that various papyri contain signatures of Moses and other ancients as proof that Joseph Smith thought or claimed that he had autographs. However it is clear that Quincy was exaggerating for effect. Another diarist present at the same interview tells us that Joseph Smith made no such claim.⁽¹⁵⁾

Next, 2. Did Joseph Smith actually think he (or did he try to tell his gullible drones⁽¹⁶⁾ that he) obtained the Abraham text from the little breathings papyrus? Both α & γ Critics may claim this is so, since *some* manuscripts of the text have some characters from the breathing text written beside some paragraphs from the Book of Abraham on pages of the manuscript⁽¹⁷⁾. This is supposed to show that the scribes thought they were deriving, or (apparently by engaging in mind-reading of the dead), that Joseph Smith claimed he had derived, from the single character, the juxtaposed text. Critics point out then how foolish such an assertion is -- deriving paragraphs from a single character--of course it would not have been obvious to someone like Oliver Cowdery or Warren Parrish who at least had some familiarity with Hebrew and although both later fell from favor, never publicized the idea that Smith was playing the same games they did with the Book of Abraham text and the Document of Breathing made by Isis.

One of the other principals, W. W. Phelps a relatively well-educated man, never questioned such a scheme in Smith.⁽¹⁸⁾ More than one Egyptologist now recognizes that the assertion that the breathings text was thought or is thought now to be the source of the Book of Abraham is incorrect.⁽¹⁹⁾ The only way scribes like Phelps and Cowdery might have believed such a proposition is that they felt revelation was involved, not a standard translation effort. Indeed, that was Parrish's position even after he became Smith's enemy. The translation did not take place as some kind of guessing-game. Anyone vaguely familiar with the Book of Mormon translation events would recall that this correspondence exercise is just the sort of thing Oliver Cowdery might try or encourage others to try with the already translated text in hand, given the reasons for

his own failure in contributing beyond scribal work to the Book of Mormon translation. ⁽²⁰⁾ Mormons will recall the admonition: "you must study it out in your mind." It is difficult to see why anyone would object to such experimentation, given that there were no hieratic or hieroglyphic dictionaries at hand. The results of the exercise were never put forward as anything to be taken seriously. They were essentially forgotten by everyone until 1935 when Sydney Sperry found them in the archives of the LDS Church.

The Egyptian materials (aside from the JSP collection), which appear to be related to the Book of Abraham and held by the LDS Church, can be inventoried as:

Inventory of Book of Abraham and Egyptian Manuscripts in the possession of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

(LDS Church Historical Dept. Salt Lake City, Utah),⁽²¹⁾

Egyptian manuscripts (contain copied Egyptian characters with some English except # 10): Filed as MS 1295, folders 1-9. Also see MS 2339.

Egyptian Ms. 1, ca. 1836/7. 1 vol. 31 x 20 cm. Ms. Manuscript notebook entitled "Grammar & alphabet [sic] of the Egyptian language," in the handwriting of W. W. Phelps and Warren Parrish.

Egyptian Ms. 2, ca. 1836/7 2 leaves. 33 x 20 cm. Ms. Manuscript entitled "Egyptian counting," in the handwriting of W. W. Phelps. Characters with English explanations.

Egyptian Ms. 3, ca. 1836. 4 leaves. 32 x 20 cm. Ms. Manuscript entitled "Egyptian alphabet," in the handwriting of W. W. Phelps.

Egyptian Ms. 4. ca. 1836 leaves. 33 x 20 cm. Ms. Manuscript entitled "Egyptian alphabet," Text by Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith. (Does not contain odd explanations of # 3.)

Egyptian Ms. 5, ca. 1835. 4 leaves. various sizes. Ms. Manuscript in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. Top has deteriorated, similarity between Mss. 4 and 5 indicates it was probably titled "Egyptian alphabet."

Egyptian Ms. 6, ca. 1836/7 1 vol. 20 x 13 cm. Ms. Titled "Valuable discovery of hidden [sic] records . . ." (this title apparently in the handwriting of Joseph Smith²²) English contents are in the hand of Oliver Cowdery.

Egyptian Ms. 7, ca. 1836/7 1 vol. 20 x 16 cm. Ms. English contents in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. Verso cover has "F.G.W." and "Williams" on it.

Egyptian Ms. 8, ca. 1836/7 1 leaf. (1 fold.) 32 x 40 cm. Ms. Egyptian characters by unknown person.

Egyptian Ms. 9, ca. 1836/7. 1 leaf. 33 x 19 cm. Ms. Characters by unknown person.

Egyptian Papyri 10, n.d. 1 leaf 33 x 20 cm. Ms. Egyptian Papyrus attached to a sheet of paper. Not presently filed with the other mss.

Book of Abraham manuscripts: [See page xxi for further details.] Filed as MS 1294, folders 1-4, Archives.

Manuscript 1, [BAms-1] ca. November 1835. 10 pages. 32 x 20 cm. Ms. Translation of the Book of Abraham, 1:1 to 2:18 in the handwriting of W. W. Phelps and Warren Parrish (Parrish' portion was apparently copied from BAms-3 below.) Obtained from Wilford C. Wood, 1937.

Manuscript 2, [BAms-2] October 1835. 4 pages. 33 x 19 cm. Ms. Book of Abraham, 1:4 to 2:6 in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams. The earliest of the Kirtland copies.

Manuscript 3, [BAms-3] ca. November 1835. 6 pages. 32 x 19 cm. Ms. Book of Abraham, 1:4 to 2:2 in the handwriting of Warren Parrish.

Manuscript 4, [BAms-4] ca. 1841. 18 leaves. 29 x 20 cm. Ms Book of Abraham, recto: 1:1 to 2:19 (part 1, 14 pages), recto: 3:18 to 3:26 (part 2, 2 surviving pages [numbered 7 and 8]) in the handwriting of Willard Richards. Includes (verso of page 2, part 1) explanations of figures in Facsimile No. 1 in the hand of Willard Richards, except explanation of fig. 12 is shorter. Other loose pages, c. 1842, various sizes. "A Fac-simile from the Book of Abraham," no. 2. Engraved by Reuben Hedlock. Broadside. 32 x 19 cm. Facsimile from the Book of Abraham with explanation of the characters in hand of Willard Richards. On verso is a letter, dated August 1, 1843, to Clyde Williams Co., Harrisburg, Pa., signed by Joseph Smith and W. W. Phelps. The latter broadside has been re-filed as MS 155, Box 2, Joseph Smith Collection, Archives. [Several such broadsides are found among documents from this period, for example in Box 4, folder 5, verso contains notes from a sermon.]

Manuscript 5, [BAms-5] ca. 1841. Diary entries of William Ivins Appleby see commentary for details. Contains a portion of chapter 1 of the Book of Abraham text as well as what seem to be some of the explanations of the facsimiles, including facsimile 2.

Manuscript 6, [BAms-6] ca. 1845. Thomas Bullock entry in the manuscript history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Who was responsible for the so-called Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar portion of the KEP if it is not in Joseph Smith's handwriting? Egyptian symbols are found in this "Grammar," but they are merely listed according to their position (the scribes use the term "degree") on the papyri ⁽²³⁾ sometimes with a suggested experimental vocalization attached. ⁽²⁴⁾

Making Joseph Smith responsible for this Grammar is essentially arbitrary and no scholar with genuine credentials supports it. ⁽²⁵⁾ For the most part the chief object of critics has been BAms-1, the ms most critics believe to be Joseph Smith's effort to show that the text came from "the Hor Document of Breathing made by Isis for her brother Osiris." But as we have shown before, BAms-1 actually appears to be the attempt of Joseph's associates to understand the materials they had, including the *already translated* text. Indeed, BAms-2 precedes it. ⁽²⁶⁾

The facts show that Joseph Smith evidently claimed an Egyptian source other than the little breathing document. Some α -critics are contemptuous of this ⁽²⁷⁾ and want to insist that the papyri in possession of the LDS Church are the papyri from which Joseph Smith claimed the Book of Abraham came, and that scholars who have argued for another (missing) papyrus are just running scared. This is important to α -critics so that they can point out that the Book of Abraham is not

(obviously) what the Hor Document of Breathing made by Isis text contains in the Egyptian-English translation.

But, as noted, the evidence seems to lead to an altogether different conclusion.⁽²⁸⁾ To review only a portion of that evidence: by 1842, the fragments we now have from the JSP were apparently mounted in "a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics."⁽²⁹⁾ The next year, in 1843, a non-Mormon named Charlotte Haven visited Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, and wrote a letter to her mother about it.⁽³⁰⁾

Haven writes:

Then she [Lucy Mack Smith] turned to a long table, set her candlestick down, and opened a long roll of manuscript [this was not a modern document - moreover, old papyrus scrolls can be remarkably well preserved and "rollable"], saying it was "the writing of Abraham and Isaac, written in Hebrew and Sanscrit [*sic*]," and she read several minutes from it as if it were English. It sounded very much like passages from the Old Testament-and it might have been for anything we knew-but she said she read it through the inspiration of her son Joseph, in whom she seemed to have perfect confidence. Then in the same way she interpreted to us hieroglyphics from another roll. One was Mother Eve being tempted by the serpent, who-the serpent, I mean-was standing on the tip of his tail, which with his two legs formed a tripod, and had his head in Eve's ear.⁽³¹⁾

The picture of a serpent Haven described fails to match any of the Joseph Smith papyri which came from the Metropolitan Museum.⁽³²⁾ According to this contemporary non-LDS source, there were at least two long rolls left after the present fragments of the Joseph Smith Papyri were mounted. If the claim of some critics is correct and there were only two papyrus rolls from the beginning of Joseph Smith's ownership of the papyri, we must conclude that JSP I-XI were not on them and that only the outer portions of the rolls were taken off to preserve them and that the bulk of these rolls remained intact.⁽³³⁾

Another eyewitness from the Nauvoo period supports the same conclusion, i.e., that the Book of Abraham text was thought to come from something other than JSP I-IX: "Oh, here is the Pearl of Great Price," said Brother Horne, picking up that book. "I've seen these records with my own eyes," referring to the Book of Abraham, "and handled them with these hands. Mother Lucy. . . showed them to me. . . . The records which I saw were some kind of parchment or papyrus (which verifies that the "manuscript" seen by Haven was a papyrus roll) and it contained writing in red and black. Mother Lucy told me that one [scroll] was the writings of Abraham and the other the writings of Joseph, who was sold in Egypt."⁽³⁴⁾

Evidence for additional papyri may also be found from the surviving fragments. Egyptian papyrus documents almost always belong to one person.³⁵ The breathing document was the property of Hor, son of Osoroeris and Tykhebit,³⁶ a Book of the Dead belonging to Tsemminis³⁷ another Book of the Dead property of one Neferirtnoub,³⁸ the hypocephalus of Sheshonq³⁹ and a scroll of Amenhotep.⁴⁰ Precisely what was on these papyri is impossible to say.⁴¹

Hugh Nibley cites a personal reference [from an uncle, Preston Nibley] to scrolls clearly different from the recovered papyri. In 1906, while visiting Nauvoo, President Joseph F. Smith related to Preston Nibley his experience as a child of seeing his Uncle Joseph in the front rooms of the Mansion House working on the Egyptian manuscripts. According to President Smith, one of the rolls of papyri "when unrolled on the floor extended through two rooms of the Mansion House."⁽⁴²⁾ Anyone who has been in the building (preserved by the Community of Christ Church) can see that a scroll of considerable size was seen. Clearly it was an impressive experience for the (then) boy.

This would have been sometime between 1843 when the Mansion House was completed⁽⁴³⁾ and the Prophet's death in June 1844, years after other parts of the papyri had been cut up and placed under glass. Cf. *ANP Improvement Era* 71 (March 1968): 17-18, and Nibley, 1979, 6-7.⁽⁴⁴⁾ We can conclude that:

- 1) There was much more papyrus available than we have now.
- 2) Haven saw a long unrolled scroll after other papyri (JSP among them) were cut up.
- 3) It is clear from the Smith, Horne and 'M' accounts that Haven's "manuscript" really was a roll of papyrus.
- 4) The Joseph F. Smith account, while not contemporary, was not given under duress (there was no pressure from critics about what sort of papyri Joseph Smith had), was clearly impressive to the then boy (anyone who has been to the Mansion House knows what this means) that he recalled such details without prompting and clearly supports the fact that long scrolls were intact after 1842.

It is clear therefore that

- Joseph Smith had a much more extensive collection of papyri than the current fragments. [We deal with the part of 3 concerning Facsimile No.1 below.]
- The Book of Abraham text was claimed to arise from, not the little breathings text,⁽⁴⁵⁾ but long rolls which have rubrics (and evidently **not** JSP V – moreover, the breathings text has no rubrics.)

Hence what might be called the *manuscript argument*, contained in points 1-4 of section I above is effectively disabled. That particular argument must therefore be classed as speculation from individuals who have a subjective interest, sincere or otherwise, in concluding that Joseph Smith was a fraud or was deceived himself. This seems to include virtually all α -critics. [See 6a-b above for example.]⁽⁴⁶⁾

III. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo Artist in Residence.

Let us now consider 3a-3k. First, 3a is evidently correct, for one of the papyrus fragments (JSP I) appears to be the prototype of Facsimile No. 1. An important question in examining the validity of this argument is the condition of JSP I when it came into Joseph Smith's possession. A number of writers have claimed that the papyrus was in its present incomplete condition when Joseph Smith acquired it, and was completed by Joseph Smith to its present state. They give several reasons for this assertion, which we have called

3f:

A. The JSP I in its current state has missing portions when compared to facsimile 1, including the head of the standing figure, the arms of the reclining figure, the head of the bird figure, the end of the extended arm of the standing figure. Joseph Smith's critics claim that he filled these in incorrectly for Facsimile No. 1 is too unusual and "does not conform to Egyptian canons."

B. On the papyrus backing, where portions of the papyrus are missing, figures are drawn by a modern artist- making the figures conform to Facsimile No. 1. [See fig. 1A.]

C. Examination of JSP XI which was originally attached to JSP I shows that the missing portion continues smoothly from I to XI and so it is conjectured that the papyrus was damaged when unrolled or before.

D. Thus the papyrus was never complete, and Joseph Smith completed it incorrectly.

The obligatory conclusion is obvious.

E. Joseph Smith had no prophetic insight into the papyri, etc.

However, although there have been several suggestions by various critics concerning how the papyrus "ought" to look, none of these fit the state of affairs better than what exists in Facsimile No. 1. One common alternate completion consists in having only one hand of the supine figure raised and instead of having another upraised arm connect with the hand-like figure on the papyrus, it is suggested that the disconnected hand is really a bird wing. This is preposterous to anyone who takes the trouble to examine the papyrus drawing carefully. There is thumb on the wing (and if Egyptian canons are supposed to guide us, this never happens). The thumb is not visible on the woodcut version. Where does the other hand go, if it is not upraised? Why it is drawn to grasp an erect phallus! But this is equally ridiculous, for no Egyptian ithyphallic figure is ever drawn with clothes on and the supine figure in JSP I surely has clothes on. Furthermore, no papyrus exists which shows a figure on a lion couch as ithyphallic.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Critics complain that Joseph Smith's facsimile version of JSP I has the standing figure with a human head, identifies him as a "priest" with a sacrificial knife in his hand.⁽⁴⁸⁾ But there is evidence that JSP I was actually intact with figures just as Joseph Smith had it portrayed by his woodcut artist in Facsimile No. 1.

First, one anti-Mormon contemporary of Joseph Smith observed the papyrus and that the "priest" figure clearly has a knife in his hand-not in a crude add-on sketch.⁽⁴⁹⁾ William Appleby tells us the same thing. Next, it's clear that Joseph Smith is entirely correct in identifying the standing figure as a *priest* not Anubis. Priest with Anubis mask or priest without mask, Joseph Smith is right.

So Facsimile No.1 could indeed be a correct reproduction of an intact JSP I. JSP I was originally attached to the breathings text, and therefore critics assert that the breathings text was the source of the Book of Abraham since JSP I shows up in the published Book of Abraham and is apparently referenced in the text of the Book of Abraham. Of course the Book of Abraham text *does* mention a sacrifice vignette, with gods "before" an altar, all of which more or less fits the description of JSP I (sans person, priest, hawk, etc.). If the text was on one of the long scrolls already shown to exist⁽⁵⁰⁾, then Joseph Smith could have noted the reference in the text and inserted JSP I for an unavailable drawing. More likely, the ancient transmitters of the text used the contemporary milieu, using stock Egyptian illustrations in their transmission of the text. [For example, Barney, 2005, 114f.] Drawings in Egyptian stories are often far separated from the text, and even not in the same text, and given that Joseph Smith realized the text was not from an Abrahamic autograph.⁽⁵¹⁾ It would have been a reasonable step to go to JSP I. Moreover, as we have shown, while the figures on Facsimile No. 1 are unusual⁽⁵²⁾ those same features fit with Egyptian practice contemporary with the dating of the JSP. Meanwhile, the text of the book itself has the clear ring of authenticity in its correspondence with period literature, about which Joseph Smith would not have known. John Gee⁽⁵³⁾ has noted:

1. The Book of Abraham has close affinities to a large number of apocryphal and Egyptian writings to which Joseph Smith could have had no access.⁽⁵⁴⁾

2. Abraham claims that his story starts out near a place called "Olishem" (Abraham 1:10), and that place name is indeed attested in newly discovered inscriptions from approximately Abraham's time.⁽⁵⁵⁾
3. There is little evidence to place Abraham's Ur in southern Mesopotamia, but there is good reason to locate Ur in the north, near the site of Olishem.⁽⁵⁶⁾
4. Many of Joseph Smith's interpretations of the facsimiles have been shown to be in the general ballpark although "there has been little or no work done on [these types of texts by Egyptologists] since the end of the last century."⁽⁵⁷⁾
5. The astronomy detailed in the Book of Abraham does not match the heliocentric astronomy of Joseph Smith's or our own time, but can be consistently interpreted as a geocentric astronomy like that characteristic of the ancient Mediterranean world.⁽⁵⁸⁾
6. David Cameron discovered an Egyptian lion couch scene much like Facsimile No. 1 explicitly mentioning the name Abraham.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Assertion 3(g) is actually consistent with the fact the Joseph Smith realized the text he had was **not an autograph**.

Assertion 3(j) is also actually an evidence that Joseph Smith was not a charlatan.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Smith gave instructions to his woodcut engraver on the missing portions of Facsimile No. 2, evidently telling him to insert some characters for the sake of aesthetics⁽⁶¹⁾ but Joseph Smith made no attempt to interpret those characters on the facsimile, which he certainly would have done if he was as daring and/or as stupid as many critics style him.⁽⁶²⁾

IV. Something Completely Out of Date.

Accusations have been made that the Book of Abraham literally does not square with what we don't know about the ancient Near East. Yes, there are accusations of anachronisms in the text. The following list is a sample of supposed anachronisms⁽⁶³⁾.

1) The name *Pharaoh*. The name occurs thirteen times in the Book of Abraham text and more in the facsimile Explanations.

This is hardly important. There is in fact no evidence that the name was not in use well before the 18th dynasty. In any case for a 19th century publication, the use of "Pharaoh" to designate the king of Egypt falls well within the bounds of a normal translation for a biblically literate audience (Gen. 12:15f.) Modern usage of the term for Egyptian kings makes its use in the Book of Abraham appropriate in any case. Some have interpreted the text as saying that "Pharaoh" was the proper name of the original male ruler descended from Ham, but the name is said to mean, for the writer, "king of Egypt." (Abraham 1:20). The use in the text is simply a translation and the name is used even by modern Egyptologists for the Egyptian rulers from the first dynasty.

2) The name *Egyptus*.

The Book of Abraham says the name is Chaldean. In fact the text likely refers to the name Siptah, and Egyptes (published as Egyptus.) There is no contest about Egyptus being a Greek name. A critic of Joseph Smith⁽⁶⁴⁾ even notes the connection between Egyptus and the name hwt-k3-ptah, "the house of the ka of Ptah" how would Joseph Smith have connected Egyptus with Siptah?? But can we say with any assurance that the name does not exist in another language? To do so implies

knowledge of every possible language. Here it seems Joseph Smith would be damned no matter what he did. Putting things in terms his readers understand is dubbed anachronistic, introducing new terms is called gibberish.

3) Reference to *Chaldeans*.

The people historians name as the Chaldeans first appear in written records around 900 B.C. though they are clearly well established by this time. Their earlier history is obscure. Those the Book of Abraham identifies as Chaldean may or may not be these same people. The recent appearance of civilizations (at Ebla for example) from the dust in the regions northeast of Egypt makes it apparent that an argument from silence against the Book of Abraham's use of the term is unwise. As A. R. Millard has said, "Naming a place after a people whose presence is only attested six or seven centuries later than the setting of the story need not falsify it. A scribe may have replaced an outdated name, or people of [a group] may have resided in the area long before their name is found in other written sources."⁽⁶⁵⁾ The Chaldean city of Ur of the biblical patriarchal narratives has been thought since the early 20th century to be identified with the Sumerian Ur, a site in southern Iraq northwest of Basra. Before then, the site was considered to be near to Harran. In fact, evidence has surfaced in recent times that Abraham's Ur may indeed be in this northern area. Evidence for the northern Ur (in the area of Harran - northeastern Syria in terms of present boundaries) is recent. Stone tablets discovered in the region of Harran, (at Ebla about 120 miles due north from Damascus) many dating back to the third millennium B.C., contain place names corresponding to Abraham's father (Terah), grandfather (Nahor) and great grandfather (Serug). Whether this northern Ur is the Ur of Abraham is not a settled fact, but the discoveries at Ebla give credence to this idea, and the biblical evidence points clearly to a northern site. Chaldeans do not seem to have existed at the southern Ur until much later than Abraham. However, some ancient texts indicate they were in the north at the time of Abraham. But, they are not well understood and what exactly the relationship with Egypt may have been is unknown - the Book of Abraham tells of a close relationship, one that we can document, with peoples in the "neighborhood" of Harran, the area of a proposed northern Ur. This would explain Abraham's repudiation on entering Canaan (Abraham 2:18) - Egyptian influence was almost certainly strong there.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Evidence for Egyptian influence and cultural exchange in the area, whether northern or southern Mesopotamia, certainly exists especially for the northern site. Middle Kingdom records give hints of such influence, and during the period of the Hyksos kings there is also evidence of exchange in both directions.⁽⁶⁷⁾

4) Reference to Egyptian influence in Chaldea.

The record is sparse, but there is no reason to deny that Egyptian religion had influence in the homeland of Abraham. This is dealt with in the commentary [see remarks about Chaldea].

5) Reference to Facsimile No. 1 which dates from after 600 B.C.E.

There are reasonable explanations for such reference.⁽⁶⁸⁾

Finally, there is another important and rather obvious explanation for the use of terms which seem anachronistic. This rests on the idea that the text was redacted in the second temple period, an idea which is quite reasonable in light of many points already discussed. These include the evident acknowledgement of Joseph Smith himself that the text "purported" to be the writings of Abraham (not Joseph Smith), the dating of the JSP and the linking of the text with second temple period documents including the DSS. Issues, traditions and terminology important to an editor in this period may surface in the text. None of the claimed anachronisms would be out of place in a text from this time. Indeed their very presence may bolster such an idea. Such a textual theory requires further development but is also suggested by the text structure itself. For Mormons this is not at all unusual. The editorship of Mormon, who often has a benevolent bias in his interpretation and

selection, frequently shows through the Book of Mormon text. That the same situation exists in biblical texts is beyond dispute.

The sighing and eye rolling of Joseph Smith's critics over all these issues is theatrical. Anyone willing to consider the situation with an open mind ⁽⁶⁹⁾ will find the evidence places his claims clearly within the realm of possibility if a priori bias is discarded. This is all the Mormons would ask, and indeed, all that they would expect.

Notes

1. One critic, at the end of a long recital on how in his view a "historical" Book of Abraham conflicts with established textual criticism of Genesis creation accounts and therefore must be fictional, reveals that for him prophecy and revelation cannot exist, at least in the usual sense employed by Latter-day Saints. So we discover that the book really had no chance from the beginning, beyond being a pious fiction (for such critics the words "inspired fiction" do not mean fiction revealed from God, but rather "fiction that inspires" in some sense or other).

Unfortunately for this kind of critic, the ground of scholarship is one that is constantly in motion and "critical methodology" is a shifting sand that will drown most any house built there, eventually. Of course, in a sense, this is the whole idea for this kind of critic, they don't want scripture to be authoritative. That way anything goes, scripture study is just an intellectual exercise, not a quest to understand life or how to live (Cf. Nibley, 1955). Fawn Brodie, perhaps the most famous of the modern anti-Mormons once accused Joseph Smith of borrowing chunks of the Book of Abraham from Thomas Dick. This is the kind of accusation typical of many "scholarly" (naturalistic) treatments of the book. A little research beyond Brodie's blithely superficial mention-in-passing, shows that the two are really poles apart. Her charge amounts to "Smith used some words that Dick used, [words used in common discourse] so he used Dick's ideas to mold the Book of Abraham." There is no suggestion that Joseph Smith's friends may have noticed some kind of similarity *to what their Prophet had already done* and then pointed it out. The only possibility is that Joseph Smith was indebted to Dick (or whoever). Naturally, he used practically everything else in the world depending on which critic you choose. Joseph Smith has been and continues to be characterized as any number of contradictory bundles of mendacity, sincerity and crude cleverness. [See remarks in the commentary and references below for a more detailed treatment of Smith vs. Dick via Brodie.]

2. The term "autograph" means the original text actually written by the claimed author. For example, the autograph of the book of Matthew in the NT would be an original ms as written or dictated by Matthew himself. No autographs or fragments of autographs from the books of the Bible are known to exist. Indeed, the earliest biblical ms known before 1947 was the Ryland fragment (pap. 458 Rylands Library, Manchester, England)- a portion of Deuteronomy- found (in all places) with an Egyptian mummy from the second temple period!

3. Here we can mention Luke P. Wilson and the variously named Institute for Religious Research and Utah Missions, Inc. and others such as the late "Dr." Walter Martin. Then there are the evangelical hired guns like the late Wesley P. Walters and their assistants among various lapsed Mormons.

4. Unfortunately this literature is often purposefully deceptive. It frequently treats evidence with either reckless ignorance and indifference, willful misunderstanding and sometimes purposeful alteration of data. A good example is one author who quotes one of Charlotte Haven's letters describing Lucy Mack Smith's demonstration of the papyrus. Latching on to Haven's mention of *Isaac* (which was hearsay at best), the book then ignores the eyewitness testimony of what Haven

actually saw and regards the whole description as therefore impeached. This sort of thing can make sarcasm become an art-form for the serious student.

5. The now debunked form of positivism and claims of objectivity dating to Bacon in their modern form and displayed in these works are treated in Novick, 1988. See also Buskirk.

6. See for example, Midgley, 1995, 229-297.

7. We have in mind some of the former or cultural Mormons writing today about an ahistorical (but inspired!) Book of Mormon. And, the Mormon Minimalists, who hope "that Book of Mormon scholarship can mold a purer faith and a nobler Mormonism." "I believe that a spiritual trek is at hand for Mormonism and that the scholar's word will be one of those guiding the church's[sic] future." [Mark D. Thomas, "Scholarship and the Book of Mormon," in *The Word of God*, ed. Dan Vogel, 76.] Latter-day Saints may recognize this path as one already well worn by the 4th century remains of the Primitive Church. No trail blazing is required here. Mr. Thomas and others of this opinion do not mean the congenial sort of "apologist drivel" that bolsters the old and sagging tradition of 19th century Mormonism, but a *Jesus Seminar* sort of stripping of the privilege of Mormon myth.

8. The title Papyrus Joseph Smith, refers to those fragments publicized by Dr. Atiya and donated to the LDS Church in 1967 with the lone addition of the so-called "Church Historian's fragment," Egyptian ms 10 [Atiya, 1970], and generally to the other still missing papyri Joseph Smith received from Michael Chandler although we are ignorant of what these missing papyri may contain in some respects. [See Gee, Eyewitness, fig. 3, for one possible expansion.]

9. Actually, this is not strictly true. The text tells about a representation of the attempted sacrifice of Abraham, but it nowhere mentions Facsimile No. 1 as the actual implied drawing. There is nothing to prevent Facsimile No. 1 from being simply an insertion of an available similar drawing for one that was not found with the text of the record. Indeed, Joseph Smith never directly explained his use of the phrase "facsimile from the Book of Abraham." Facsimile No. 2, is not part of any scroll or text that might have been identified with the Book of Abraham. Facsimile No. 2, while explained by Joseph Smith as being related to the Book of Abraham, contained none of the Book of Abraham text and was also published as a broadside, separately from any text. Nevertheless, Joseph Smith still identifies it as being a drawing related to the Book of Abraham and according to his explanations it was, i.e. it suggests ideas related to those of the Book of Abraham text. The same thing applies to Facsimile No. 3; it was published with the Book of Abraham text, but contains none of the Book of Abraham text, and like Facsimile No. 2 it is not mentioned specifically *in* the text. Obviously, Joseph Smith meant the facsimiles as illustrations for or additions to the text, but he clearly understood that texts may pass through many hands, some of them editorial, before reaching the modern light of day. P. Joseph Smith dates from after 300 BC. Whence, any Book of Abraham text was a copy of another earlier text, perhaps many scribes removed from any Abrahamic autograph. Ancient scribal understanding, intent, or ignorance can be inferred, but not known, without revelation and revelations don't often waste time with that sort of thing. Joseph Smith understood this perfectly, as a look at "The Words of Mormon" in the Book of Mormon will show. So, who can say that Facsimile No. 1 was actually the drawing referred to in the text of the Book of Abraham? Answer: No one. No one denies it contains elements like those mentioned in the text, but that is an entirely different assertion. Compare Joseph Smith's [Willard Richards] journal for March 4, 1842 - the phrase "in the original" referring to the papyrus text is clearly used in the sense of the original published introduction to the Book of Abraham: the "original" simply means the papyrus source for the facsimiles, etc., not some autographic text of Abraham. Having said this, it becomes obvious that whether the scribe intentionally referred to the present priest-sacrifice vignette or not, it forms the required illustration in a legitimate way. See note 16 below.

10. The introduction occurs as a preface to some manuscripts of the text, not in others. Four mss exist, none of the full text, they end roughly at chapter 2 verse 18 of the presently published text. [BAms-4 has a short portion of the middle of chapter 3.] William Appleby included a copy of a portion of an unknown ms in his journal and the Church historians copied TS-1 into the ms history for 1842.

11. TS-1, March 1, 1842. It should be clear from the weight of evidence presented in the commentary that Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Abraham, whether by inspiration or otherwise [e.g., Warren Parrish's letter to the Painesville *Republican*]. Critics of the book who want to hope that Sidney Rigdon or someone else wrote it are simply out of luck. A statement made by Joseph in the March 15 edition of TS-1 saying he was not responsible for material in earlier editions has no reference to the Book of Abraham as the journals of Wilford Woodruff, Joseph Smith himself and others demonstrate. In fact this statement by Joseph Smith really refers to a somewhat risqué wedding announcement in the Feb. 15 issue, which was composed by one of the print shop boys and went into print uncaught by the proofreader. The paper changed editorial hands during the period of the Feb. 15 issue and neither editor [Robinson or Smith] wanted to be blamed for the ad.

12. Biblical examples abound, essentially every book of the bible volunteers the same information, and the practice was very common among the Egyptians, the land of recopying and reproducing manuscripts ancient even in their own time.

13. Here is where critics want to claim that Joseph Smith thought [or lied to the effect that] the papyri he had were actual autographs of Abraham. What they fail to acknowledge is that what Joseph Smith claimed was the most obvious thing in the world. If anyone can find a reliable source which states unequivocally that Joseph Smith claimed that the portion of the papyri had by him and *currently in possession of the LDS Church* were autographs of Abraham, it would be a real find, because no such statement is known to exist. What *do* exist are statements from Joseph Smith's friends about what they thought along with the claims of critics and more or less ignorant bystanders. None of the people in a position to know, for example Wilford Woodruff or Willard Richards indicate that Joseph Smith explicitly identified the breathing document, or any of the other papyri currently owned by the LDS Church, as written on by Abraham himself. Furthermore, the same caution should be exercised with regard to any of the papyri Joseph Smith had, whether recovered or not, especially where information has passed through the hands of Joseph Smith's enemies who hoped to make him appear a fool. Instead, Joseph Smith's only official statement is the one found at the beginning of the text: the papyri he had, or the record he translated *purported* to be written by Abraham himself. Indeed, Joseph Smith was careful to put distance between these Egyptian artifacts and *any* biblical character. When some wags began to circulate the idea that Joseph claimed the mummies that came with the papyri purchased from Chandler were famous biblical characters, church leaders quickly put a stop to it. To continue to insist that Joseph Smith claimed he had autographs is simply unfounded in reliable testimony.

14. Egyptians were most careful to preserve and recopy records they possessed. A well-known example is the shabaqo stone, text dating probably from the Old Kingdom, surviving text evidently written during New Kingdom times. Other examples abound, The Book of the Dead contains much from the coffin texts, which depend in turn on pyramid texts, etc. But quite often we find texts from near Roman times certainly researched from much earlier documents or just copied from them. [E.g., Kitchen, 1986, 378-383.]

15. Quincy's attempts at sarcasm and his portrayal of Joseph Smith as a shrewd lunatic are coherent with his odd claims about Joseph Smith's remarks on the papyri. Charles Adams, Quincy's companion, describes this portion of the interview: "He then took us down into his mother's chamber [in the Mansion House] and showed us four Egyptian mummies stripped and then undertook to explain the contents of a chart of manuscript which he said had been taken from the bosom of one of them. The cool impudence of this imposture amused me very much. 'This,' said he, 'was written by the hand of Abraham and means so and so. If anyone denies it, let him

prove the contrary. I say it.' Of course we were too polite to prove the negative, against a man fortified by revelation.'" (Diary of Charles Adams, May 15, 1844, in Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society vol. LXVII, 1952 p. 285) [Quincy's account is found in his book, "Figures of the Past" published in 1883, 386-387] Adams' testimony of Joseph Smith is that Joseph claims the translation he gave was correct, the "written by the hand of Abraham" portion is no more than Smith offers at the front of the *Times and Seasons* publication of the Book of Abraham - we can excuse Adams for leaving out the more precise version found in TS-1. There is no headline material mentioned such as the personal signatures of Abraham, Moses and Aaron, etc. that Quincy adds and anti-Mormons love to quote. The Mormons do not claim that Joseph Smith had no ancient texts. Quite the contrary, they *do* believe he had texts. But the *original* signatures of Moses and Aaron? If textual criticism is to be applied to Joseph Smith's work, it only seems fair to point out that it is a two-edged sword. The journalistic "quotations" of Smith in the past - when contrasted with the "official" statements- leave much to be desired.

16. Once again, one of the most glaring errors made by many critics of Smith's work with the papyri is the assumption that he had, and essentially worked only with, the Horos Document of Breathing made by Isis.

Anson Call's listening to a long ms, taking about two hours to read requires that the Book of Abraham itself was much longer than the portion we now have. It would conservatively indicate a narrative four times longer than TS-1.

While at Far West I happened in John Corls [Corrill's] or the Church store and my attention was called by Vincent [Vinson] Knights who was opening some boxes of goods. Says he, "Joseph will be much pleased with these. He has been very uneasy about the translation of the Bible and the Egyptian Records. Hear they are." Placing them on the table, he said to me, "If you will take one of these, I will the other and we will carry them over to Joseph's office." There we found Joseph and six or seven other brethren. Joseph was much pleased with the arrival of the books, and said to us, "Sit down and we will read to you from the translations of the Book of Abraham." Oliver Cowdery then read until he was tired when Thomas Marsh read making altogether about two hours. [Anson Call manuscript journal, page 9, *Archives*.]

Call was at the "Church Store" to collect goods he had purchased in Kirtland and shipped to Far West. Joseph Smith had arrived in Far West on the 14th and Call sometime after the 20th of March.

Warren Parrish, one of the scribes in the BAMss, after leaving the Church wrote a letter to the anti-Mormon editor of the Painesville Republican. In this letter he makes absurd accusations about Smith, but admits that he "set by his side and penned down the translation of the Egyptian Heiroglyphicks [sic] as he claimed to receive it by direct inspiration of Heaven." Even Parrish, then one of the principals in the EAG production, admits that Smith produced the Book of Abraham, not by the dubious speculations in the EAG, but by claimed inspiration of heaven. Parrish was willing to perjure himself in the most blatant way in this letter. If he knew anything truly untoward about Joseph and this episode he surely would have said it. He was after all, intent on throwing suspicion on Joseph, instead of himself, for the banking problems in Kirtland.

Anti-Mormon writer/former part-time high school teacher/prison guard Charles Larson displays the first four pages of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers, Book of Abraham manuscript 1 [BAMs-1], "showing Book of Abraham material translated from Egyptian characters drawn on the left side of the page" (pp. 45-48 of Larson). On the first page of the manuscript (p. 45) we see that the top half of the page is in the uneven handwriting of W. W. Phelps. The second half of this page as well as the other pages displayed are in the smooth, straight, even handwriting of Warren Parrish. In fact, a straight edge held at the bottom of any line of letters in Parrish's writing shows that they

line up almost perfectly. The careful student will notice that the hieratic characters do not line up the way the English text does; the deviation gets worse the further one goes down the manuscript. Therefore, it seems apparent that the hieratic characters were not written at the same time as the English text. But the English text is smooth and evenly spaced; there is no cramming or additions (as there are in Phelps's handwriting). If the hieratic were added first, the text would have to adjust to fit the available space." [Gee, Tragedy, 115]

Given the number of scrolls available and the observations of eyewitnesses, it is clear that there was much more Egyptian material available to Joseph Smith than was recovered in 1967. [Gee, Eyewitness, 188f.] Indeed in 1856, an expert and competitor of Champollion himself who examined part of the papyri had by Joseph Smith shows that the breathing document was merely a small text attached to a larger one whose title is unknown (see Appendix IV). It would be coherent Egyptian practice to have Facsimile No. 1 in front of the breathings text yet refer to the later text on the same roll which was lost in the Chicago fire of 1871. Indeed, breathing documents have very different vignettes attached to them, if any. [Gee, 2005.]

It is clear that at least the first part of the Abraham text was available before an "Alphabet and Grammar" was even considered, because Oliver Cowdery quotes from it in September 1835. [*Improvement Era* 7 (1904), 942; Parrish was not involved until Nov. 1835.] Moreover the BAmss word "shinehah" appears in the D&C text approved August 17, 1835. BAmss-1 (that Book of Abraham ms in the LDS Church archives regarded by critics as revealing Smith's claim of translating the breathings text as the Book of Abraham text) could not have been produced (if indeed it was produced with the direct knowledge of Joseph Smith—we know nothing of that) until Parrish came on board as a scribe, not for two months or more. Hence Joseph never used or claimed to use this dubious document for translating anything, nor did his scribes ever make that claim and in fact, they did not do it. "Having fun with papyrus" is about all that can be said about the EAG at present.

Eliza R. Snow wrote that Joseph Smith said [sermon of April 28, 1842 - see *PJ* or *WJS* under date] that many, even some among his closest confidants, would run off pretending that the Church depended solely upon their labors, claiming as their own revelations things that Smith had taught them. It is entirely probable that documents of the EAG in the KEP are not Joseph Smith's work, but they fit instead the mold of independent thinkers who wanted to try their hand at Smith's "calling" and claim perhaps a little glory for themselves – *indeed both Cowdery and Parrish had invitations to try*. [See notes 20 and 26 below and commentary note 34.] The hieratic-matching process in some of the mss: BAmss-1, shows that the Egyptian characters were inserted after copying the text. It was a guessing game. But whatever else it was, no one *ever* claimed this matching game was a revelatory process, and certainly not binding on the Mormons.

17. BAmss-1. See page xxi. See Baer, 130-132.

18. Phelps and the other scribes for the mss all turned against Joseph Smith within roughly two to three years of the time the Egyptian materials came into Smith's hands. They never claimed Joseph lied about the Egyptian work. Phelps makes it clear in his own hand that paragraphs of English do not come from single Egyptian symbols (in Egyptian ms 3: Nibley, 1971, 374.)

19. Zondhoven, *Annual Egyptological Bibliography* 1977, 180-81.

20. The phrases from D&C 8:1 and D&C 9:8 come to mind. Oliver's own desire to be Joseph Smith's equal is well documented. While Cowdery was nowhere near as upset by Joseph Smith's work beyond the Book of Mormon as David Whitmer, his actions sometimes show his discomfort at being "left behind." [Crawley, 1980; also 1997, p. 14.] It is somewhat ironic that Warren Parrish received a similar revelation to that of Cowdery with regard to translating ancient languages [see Smith's ghostwritten journal entry for November 14, 1835].

21. Compare Nibley, 1971, 351. This list does not include the JSP, except Egyptian ms 10. Phelps could not have worked on these mss after April 9, 1836 when he left Ohio; indeed, he does not seem to have been involved with the Egyptian materials after October 1835. By the time Joseph Smith went to Missouri, Phelps had already had serious difficulties with the Church and was excommunicated in March of 1838. Williams was Joseph's "scribe" until November 1835 when Parrish took over the duties. [This also suggests BAmS-2 as earlier than BAmS-1 for example.] By the fall of 1837 all the Kirtland scribes were out of the picture (including Cowdery who left prior to September 17, already apparently out of sorts with Smith), but little significant work seems to have been done on "translation" of the Egyptian materials after October 1835, until Joseph Smith settled in Nauvoo. In any case, it seems definite that at least the first half of the present text of the Book of Abraham was in place by September 1835 and most probably more than that even by July. No work seems to have been done after November 1835 until 1841-42. [See commentary notes 34, 35, 58, 164, 223.]

22. Egyptian ms 6 contains handwriting identified as possibly being that of Joseph Smith. A closer examination suggests this may not be the case. Variations of habitual markings such as the connection between the letters A and I and other script characteristics compared with known examples of Joseph Smith's writing from the same time period (July 1835) indicate that possibly a third party involved, as yet unidentified. This is not unusual in the ms collections connected to Joseph Smith. There are a number of as yet unidentified hands.

23. This use of the term "degree" was first noted by John A. Tvedtnes in 1969: Tvedtnes, in *Proceedings of The Book of Abraham Symposium*, University of Utah Institute of Religion. Tvedtnes and Richley Crapo have experimented with a "code" explanation for the Book of Abraham text re: the breathings text. This work has not been widely accepted, but has not been refuted by critics either. Some critics note that Baer did not think the notion was worthy of consideration, but he was not acquainted with the complete data. See Richley H. Crapo and John A. Tvedtnes, "A Study of the Hor Sensen Papyrus," Newsletter & Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology (hereinafter NPSEHA) No.109, Oct.25, 1968. Reprinted in its entirety in Jay M. Todd, *The Saga of the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1969); Richley H. Crapo and John A. Tvedtnes, "Rediscovery of Smith Papyri Affects Book of Abraham," LDSSA Commentary, March 27, 1969; Richley H. Crapo and John A. Tvedtnes, "Papyri Give Further Book of Abraham Insight," LDSSA Commentary, May 1969; Richley H. Crapo and John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hor Sensen Papyrus as a Mnemonic Device: A Further Study," NPSEHA No. 114, June 2, 1969. Reprinted in Jay M. Todd, *The Saga of the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969). John A. Tvedtnes, "The Use of Mnemonic Devices in Oral Traditions, as Exemplified by the Book of Abraham & the Sensen Papyrus," NPSEHA No.120, April, 1970.

24. Nibley 1971.

25. Joseph Smith evidently did not recognize the attempt at an Egyptian alphabet and grammar in Kirtland at all. An entry in his journal dated long after the Kirtland period reads: "Wednesday, [November] 15 [1843]. P. M. At the office. Suggested the idea of preparing a grammar of the Egyptian language."

The *History of the Church* ms for the Kirtland period suggests attempts at a grammar. [See *HC* 2:235-236.] If Joseph Smith was involved at all, the earlier attempt was evidently regarded as completely unsuccessful. Indeed, this is understandable since hardly anything was done in Kirtland except to list some Egyptian characters together with what are various speculations about them. Joseph never presented these to his followers as revelation or even spoke about these speculative investigations to his closest associates in Nauvoo. If he was as deceptive or deceived as most α -critics paint him, surely he would have used these items (assuming he actually knew what was in all of them) as some kind of proof that he could find the correct meaning of Egyptian writing.

But the History entry about the Kirtland "Egyptian Alphabet" very likely did not originate with Joseph Smith at all. The July 1835 history ms which later became *HC 2:235-236* was not composed or dictated by Joseph Smith. Willard Richards wrote this part of the ms history during September 1843. Richards was not one of the participants in the 1835 July happenings. Nor did he consult Joseph Smith if his diary of August-October 1843 is to be believed. He was on his own in writing the ms history text for there was no Joseph Smith diary kept in July 1835. So where does Richards get his information for recording the history of this period? His sources are easily traced: Kirtland High Council minutes, serials, letterbooks of Smith and diaries of active missionaries at the time. But these contain no reference to the so-called grammar and alphabet at this period. However, his assistant, who helped arrange the material for the history during September 1843 was none other than W. W. Phelps. Phelps *was* a participant in July 1835. But what did he do then? Answer - he probably watched Joseph Smith translate:

The last of June four Egyptian mummies were brought here; there were two papyrus rolls, besides some other ancient Egyptian writings with them. [The breathings text, other rolls, hypocephali??- there were at least three rolls altogether as indicated by the *Telegraph* inventory; see also Gee, Eyewitness, fig. 3.] As no one could translate these writings, they were presented to President Smith. He soon knew what they were and said they, the "rolls of papyrus," contained the sacred record kept of Joseph in Pharaoh's Court in Egypt, and the teachings of Father Abraham. God has so ordered it that these mummies and writings have been brought in the Church, and the sacred writing I had just locked up when your letter came, so I had two consolations of good things in one day. These records of old times, when we translate and print them in a book, will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon. There is nothing secret or hidden that shall not be revealed. [W. W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, July 20, 1835, *Archives*]

Phelps did not translate any text. Perhaps he wanted to legitimize his later work on the "alphabet" by giving Richards this information for the July 1835 time-frame, or perhaps his memory was simply fuzzy. Phelps' own correspondence says nothing of a "grammar" or "alphabet" during this period and his little 1835 diary ends prior to July. Smith *never* mentions it happening anywhere! When Smith's diary is active later in the year in October (1st), the grammar is mentioned, but by one of the people who actually wrote in it- Cowdery- not Joseph Smith. Later, Warren Parrish was clerk for the diary when the grammar is mentioned (Nov. 17, 1835) but it is mentioned in this way: "exibited the Alphabet of the ancient records" but this text was modified from its original reading: "exibited some of the ancient records." Parrish was one of the Book of Abraham copyists too by this time. [See note 16, this appendix.]

All this may help us understand why Joseph Smith would say something about *possibly* doing an alphabet and grammar in Nauvoo. He did not recognize the Kirtland effort as his - if there was a "grammar" effort then, or at most that it was simply experimentation by the group. It is clear that the text was already in hand as evidenced by Cowdery quoting from it in September before any work with the records is mentioned after July: No contemporary evidence for the EAG experiments exists in the July time frame. The scribe who produced BAmS-2 was using the already translated text, perhaps with more that we do not have [see note 16, A. Call's account] possibly trying to make some kind of connection with the writing on the papyri. Later references to translation in Joseph Smith's journal make no mention of using this "alphabet and grammar" to *do* anything, if it even existed by then. See diary entries of Nov. 19, 20, 24, 25 - on the 26th the scribes were "transcribing characters from the papyrus." This last entry may suggest when exactly an "alphabet" had its beginnings. The notes here and elsewhere in the commentary provide concrete evidence that the text of the Book of Abraham was produced in July 1835. The speculations in the Egyptian manuscripts owned by the Church are just that, speculations by the interested parties.

Another mistake often made by Joseph Smith's critics is to connect the mentioned alphabets or grammars in the *History of the Church*, with that portion of the KEP known as the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. The currently held documents named as an Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar were not done under Joseph Smith's *guidance* and as critics of Joseph Smith are ready to inform us, *they certainly do not constitute anything like an Egyptian grammar.*

26. Here, some critics of Joseph Smith may engage in a sort of visionary experience themselves where they tell us precisely which manuscripts came from which and whether they were dictated by Smith, or copied from another manuscript, in addition to some mind-reading about what the intentions of the principals happen to have been. The evidence shows that most of these ideas are unfounded. So, let's use a little clairvoyance ourselves. Why *would* the scribes pick on the breathings text as a candidate for a correspondence exercise? The answer seems obvious: the text of the book references a drawing like JSP I. So the Egyptian source must be next to it right? Unfortunately, the scribes may have made the same incorrect assumptions that latter day critics make. The puzzling nature of hieratic insertions has been discussed at length. The old warning to Cowdery "you must study it out in your mind," clearly played a role in the scribal efforts. Members of the The Church of Jesus Christ may find it difficult to understand the egalitarian nature of Joseph Smith's leadership experience in these early days. But the record shows he often, not just in this case, allowed (or at least did not protest) a free hand with his associates in serious, even revelatory matters. The dating of the BAmss shows this, where BAm-2 is the earliest surviving ms (October 1835). It shows clear evidence of the text being copied from another manuscript, presently unavailable and unknown. BAm-1/3 were almost certainly written in 1836 and there is no evidence they were done under direct supervision of Joseph Smith, indeed, they were probably independent efforts. The reasons for these kinds of exercises are not always clear, but several episodes of this sort point to a desire both to allow his compatriots to test themselves against what Joseph had produced (LDS D&C 20, 67 and 109 come to mind) and perhaps to avoid appearing the tyrant in such matters. His early colleagues often regarded themselves as more equals than assistants. Witness the inclusion of the *Lectures on Faith* with the revelations, a package almost certainly authored by Sidney Rigdon, and sections authored by Oliver Cowdery being included in the Doctrine and Covenants for example LDS D&C 134 and a since removed "Article on Marriage", both apparently in Joseph's absence. Moreover, the JST manuscripts suggest that Sidney may have contributed many minor changes himself – a situation that should be further explored. LDS D&C 102:10-11 was more a representation of how things stood in Kirtland than an innovation. See note 34 in the text and Joseph's remarks at the important April 6, 1837 priesthood meeting at Kirtland. [HC 2:475-477; *Messenger and Advocate* 3 (April 1837), 486-7; *PJ* under date; also Joseph's discourse of January 21, 1844.] The Hiram Page episode, the Partridge – Rigdon controversy and many other incidents show how difficult it was to come to an understanding of revelation in the Church and Joseph's relative position in relation to other Church leaders. [See LDS D&C 28 and the Annotated History of the Church at www.boap.org, chapter 20, note 3.]

27. See for example Charles M. Larson, . . . *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, (Grand Rapids: Institute for Religious Research (Gospel Truth Ministries??), 1992). Apropos is his view of Edward H. Ashment, an insurance salesperson in California who was once a Latter-day Saint and did graduate work in Egyptology at the University of Chicago. "Larson's view of [Edward H.] Ashment is ambivalent at best. He cannot seem to make up his mind whether Ashment is 'a respected LDS Egyptologist' (p. 128), a fellow apostate (pp. 147-78), or one of a number of 'LDS apologists' (p. 164). When Ashment agrees with Larson, Larson speaks well of him; when Ashment does not, Larson does not." (Gee, 1995, 101 n24)

28. The Mormons should not hope for miracles here: Joseph Smith's critics do not really base their objections to him on the Book of Abraham. Those real objections are an entirely different and often unnamed (in the context of the Book of Abraham) set of complaints. For example Dale Morgan's statement, "With my point of view on God, I am incapable of accepting the claims of Joseph Smith and the Mormons, *be they however so convincing.* If God does not exist, how can

Joseph Smith's story have any possible validity? *I will look everywhere for explanations except to the ONE explanation that is the position of the Church*" [as quoted in Gary F. Novak, FRB, 8 no.1 (1996) p. 147, emphasis added.]

29. Caswall, 1842, 406.

30. Gee, Tragedy, 107f.

31. Haven, 623-24. Critics of Joseph Smith want to explain this away by saying there are mistakes in the identity of persons or languages in the letter. But this hardly explains the clear recollection of a *scroll* not glass slides. Scrolls were clearly available after some of the papyrus had been cut up. Even critics [Charlotte Haven thought the Mormons were real oddballs] can tell the difference between glass slides and long scrolls unrolled before their eyes. Haven saw two scrolls unrolled. The original inventory given in the Painesville Telegraph clearly states the existence of at least three different scrolls. Therefore there were at least three scrolls available to Joseph Smith and possibly more. Thus, while some of the papyri were dismembered and placed under glass slides, two scrolls remained intact. [Painesville *Telegraph*, March 1835] See above ". . .there is still more. . ." Examination of the Church Historians Fragment shows evidence of even more material. When Quincy and Adams visited Smith, Adams noted that Joseph Smith [unrolled] a "chart" of manuscript (typical reference to rolled map or ms), this was in 1844 [see note 15]. Also see 'M's account of Lucy Mack Smith's "tour" of the papyri.

32. "There is a slight resemblance to a scene in Papyrus Joseph Smith V, but the walking serpent there is not "standing on the tip of his tail," his tail does not form a "tripod" with his two legs, and his head is at nobody's ear." Gee, Tragedy, n39, 33; Gee, Tragedy, 107.

34. Horne, 1893, 585. See note 14.

35. Exceptions may be found in Alan H. Gardiner, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies* (Bruxelles: Fondation Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth, 1937). It must be noted, however, that these are a completely different type of document than those attested in the present collection of the Joseph Smith Papyri. Gee, Tragedy, n42.

36. JSP I, X, and XI. Coenen, 1998, 1110. Osoroeris is a name of prominence in Ptolemaic Thebes, holders of the title First Prophet of Amon were often called by this name.

37. Joseph Smith Papyrus II, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, and IX. Gee, Tragedy, n44.

38. JSP IIIA-B. Gee, Tragedy, n45.

39. Facsimile No. 2.

40. KEP, Egyptian Manuscript #6, page marked number 1.

41. Gee, Tragedy, 108; Gee, Eyewitness, 178.

42. Nibley 1968, "Phase I," 101

43. The Smith's moved in around August 31, 1843.

44. n36 of Gee, Tragedy.

45. Here we must emphasize for the benefit of those critics of Joseph Smith still stuck on the EAG, or BAmS-1, that Joseph Smith did not write them and that it has been clearly shown that the text of the Book of Abraham was laid down long before BAmS-1 (or2) or the EAG. Furthermore, it is clear that Smith himself put no stock in the EAG. Critics must realize that to continue to stonewall on these issues leaves them open to the worst charge of all: the obfuscation they claim for Joseph Smith! Once and for all, the EAG and BAmS-1 are not relevant to the source of the Book of Abraham and Joseph Smith never thought the book arose from the little breathing document. Given that the Book of Abraham text was hours worth of reading in its ms form in 1838, this die-hard claim of critics assumes a position outside the rational. For such critics, just as for librarian Dale Morgan, *any* explanation must be accepted before Smith's (see note 28).

46. See note 14 above.

47. "To restore a lacuna without the aid of revelation, however, careful comparison to parallel texts must be done in order to show that the restorations are even possible. The characters [on JSP I above the figures] are in vertical columns marked by vertical lines to either side of the text, a practice reserved for cases where there is more than one column of text. Given at least two columns of text, there is no room for the bird hovering over the figure. A hand is the only reasonable restoration." Gee, *Tragedy*, 101.

Anti-Mormon writers quote early evaluations of some Egyptologists like Baer and Parker to the effect that the supine figure is ithyphallic [*Dialogue*, Autumn 1968, p. 119, for example] but this was without due consideration of elements in the drawing. Critics of Joseph Smith often shy away from later scholarship on the facsimiles, and show a penchant for misinterpreting or misquoting the rest.

48. One visitor to Nauvoo during the lifetime of Joseph Smith describes being shown "a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphs. . . . Pointing to the figure of a man lying on a table, he [the Mormon guide] said, 'That is the picture of Abraham on the point of being sacrificed. That man standing by him with a drawn knife Henry Caswall, in Caswall, 1842, 406. Though Caswall freely embellished his accounts later (see Hugh Nibley, "The Greek Psalter Mystery or Mr. Caswall Meets the Press," *CWHN* 11:304-406); this one is contemporary, and from his description of Joseph Smith Papyrus IIIA-B we know that he had seen the papyri and not just the Book of Abraham facsimiles. If Caswell had seen the JSP I in its current state, he would have noticed that there was no visible knife. Whence, he observed JSP I in much better condition.

Caswell notes that Egyptian materials had been cut up into sheets and placed under glass by this time, including Facsimile No. 1. Caswell specifically notes the presence of the knife. A later visitor to Joseph Smith (who also regarded him as at least a religious "quack") observes what are clearly the same papyri under glass – Haven's and Joseph F. Smith's observation of long scrolls after this cutting up took place clearly shows that other extensive material existed. William Appleby [see commentary note 164] also observed the priest with a knife in JSP I. [Christine Seeber, "Maske," *LÄ* 3:1196-99. Gee, *Tragedy*, 102. Also see Gee, 1995, 79-82; Gee, *Eyewitness*, 186.]

Joseph Smith could hardly have known that a real Egyptian-trained priest would have a shaved head; compare the beautiful illustration from a contemporary (with PJS) Book of the Dead fragment (ca. 200 BC), belonging to Paheby, son of Ankhpakhered and Takhebyt. [1921.90.1a, Carlos Museum, Emory University.] Note the interesting coincidence of names with this Book of the Dead and JSP. [See commentary note 299.] Priests shaved every third day to ensure cleanliness in the performance of rituals. [Temple purity is illustrated in Gee, 2004, 101.] The priest figure in facsimile 1 is bald indeed.

49. See note 37. Note also Gen. 41:14.

50. The Hor Document of Breathing was estimated by Klaus Baer to have been 155cm long in its pristine state. Hardly the very long scrolls Joseph Smith had in 1843. [Baer, 1968, 127 n113.] If the scroll was longer than this, then the breathing document was probably removed as being the outside deteriorating portion. The remaining scroll was left whole. Was the Book of Abraham contained on such a portion? Evidence points this way. See Appendix IV under date 1856. Also Gee, *Eyewitness*, 188f.

51. See the discussion above and *ANP*. We suggest JSP dates from after 600 BCE (possibly between 100 and 200 BCE.) This points to the consistent conclusion that the material is a handed down version of the original text, with any number of provenance possibilities, one likely case is that of transport to Egypt by Jewish migration. See Nibley, 1981; Gee, 1995; Gee 2000. The text was copied there using stock Egyptian Greco-Roman scribal drawings, etc. [See commentary notes on the facsimiles; also Barney, 2005.]

52. See *ANP*, a source more or less completely neglected by critics, but the respected Klaus Baer thought it should be required reading for Egyptologists to help them avoid the "pompous ass" syndrome. [Klaus Baer, letter to Hugh Nibley, 10 August 1968, in the Archives of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, quoted in Gee, "Tragedy" n15.] It would certainly be good medicine for Joseph Smith's critics, although Nibley rather humbly refers to these early articles as biding time until deeper work on the newly discovered papyri could be done. See Nibley, "An intellectual autobiography," in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1978), pp. 115, 212, 233n1. Also, Nibley, 1980.

53. Gee, *Tragedy*, 117.

54. See *TELA*. Nibley, 1981. Several of these writings are listed in E. Douglas Clark, "Abraham," in Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:7-9; also Clark, "Abraham's Vision of the Heavens," in *Astronomy, Papyrus and Covenant* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2005).

55. Lundquist, 1985, 225- 37. The citation of u-li-si-imki looks rather removed in Nar-m-Sin b 5.2.13 (= UET I 275.2.13), but this is only because Lundquist, following Hans Hirsch ("Die Inschriften der Knige von Agade," *Archiv fur Orientforschung* 20 [1963]: 74), has transliterated the signs without taking into regard the fact that for the place and time the si sign should be read sh (Wolfram von Soden, *Das akkadische Syllabar* [Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1948], 43; the im sign can also be read em; *ibid.*, 73), leaving the reading as u-li-sh-em. The area is also particularly prone to the Canaanite shift, which would render the name as "Olishem." To Lundquist's citation of E. Kautsch and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 48-49, add Sabatino Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages: Phonology and Morphology* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980), 48-49. Gee, *Tragedy*, n64.

56. Hoskisson, 1989, 119-36.

Critics invariably ignore the evidence that the text of the Book of Abraham is ancient. Parallels with literature that Joseph Smith could not have known about, abound. Nibley, 1981, *ANP* and *TELA*; Gee, et al., 2005.

57. It is only in the last thirty years that the Greco-Roman period has found interest among some Egyptologists. Gee, 2005; Rhodes, 1977, 274. A more recent work on Facsimile 2 is Hugh Nibley "One Eternal Round: The Significance of the Egyptian Hypocephalus" (taped series of twelve lectures, 27 June-27 September 1990, available from F.A.R.M.S.). For an interpretation of only certain figures, Gee, 1991. Indicative of the general neglect of the documents is the article on

hypocephali in the standard Egyptological lexicon, only four sentences long, one of which is: "Eine K[opftafel] findet sich kurioserweise auch unter den 3 hl. Bochern der Mormonen" (among the three holy books of the Mormons belongs, curiously enough, a hypocephalus); Dieter Kessler, "Kopftafel," LÄ, 3:693. Rhodes' updated version of his hypocephalus paper is Rhodes, 1994. Freeman, 1974, contains a translation of part of facsimile 2, but gets most of the history wrong.

58. William Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and John Gee, " `And I Saw the Stars . . . ': The Book of Abraham and Geocentric Astronomy," presented at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, August 1991. Published in revised form in Gee et al., 2005.

59. For the discovery, see Gee, References, 1991, 1, 3. More recently, Gee, 1992, 60-2. Essential additional reading is Gee, 1995, 19-84.

60. It seems ludicrous that Joseph Smith could not discern the difficulties his claims would cause him.

61. See Joseph Smith's journal entry [written by Willard Richards] for March 4, 1842. Some of Smith's critics whine about Joseph Smith being dishonest and passing off Facsimile No. 2 as a completely accurate reproduction. But however badly they want this to be true, it just isn't so. His later followers might have tried to claim it was accurate, but he never did. He produced, or one of his assistants produced, an aesthetically pleasing symmetrical document (by the way, the boat in the upper right quadrant is correct, even if an early perhaps pre-publication drawing [see commentary fig. 3] does not show it) and Joseph scrupulously avoids claiming to translate or explain any resulting gibberish! He's not trying to deceive anyone, as much as some critics would like to make it so.

62. See Joseph Smith's explanation in the Pearl of Great Price. He carefully avoids giving any explanation of the added characters- they were clearly placed there to make the figure appear presentable. While many Mormon's have thought Joseph was being mysterious when he said "if the world can find out these numbers . . ." Maybe he is just being honest? And some free-thinkers might see just the slightest bit of humor there. It is unfortunate that the woodcut craftsman Reuben Hedlock, did not remain a Mormon. In later years he surely would have debunked unfounded claims had he lived long enough. The discussion of content of the facsimiles and their relation to the Book of Abraham is not as trivial a matter as some critics would have us believe. See Gee, 1995, 2005; Nibley, 1980.

63. For example, Stephen Thompson, "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham," *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1995, 143-160. Thompson also argues that Joseph Smith's interpretations of the facsimiles are altogether at variance with current Egyptological understanding. We feel that the evidence is equivocal, some supports Smith, some does not, and that arguments from silence are not coercive as they seem to be for Thompson. It should be noted that his complaint that LDS scholars appeal to "3000 years of Egyptian religious iconography in an attempt to find parallels which can be pushed prodded, squeezed, or linked, to attempt to justify Joseph's interpretations" is really an unfair characterization and ironically it is precisely what the Egyptians themselves did. With such a fragmentary source record, there is often no real alternative to looking at sources from various periods. Finally, we should note that Thompson, while a former active Mormon, no longer accepts the historical nature of scripture or the divinity of Jesus [Peterson, 1996]. His dancing around the issue of a historical Abraham is a red herring. Thompson has already discarded even the possibility that such a person ever existed, much less that he might have had the experiences rehearsed in the Book of Abraham. α -critics who cite Thompson should wonder how deep they want to wade in that pool. [See Barney, 2005.]

64. See Thompson above.

65. *ABD* 1:38-39 ; see also the discussion in Gee and Ricks, 70-1. Which people “Chaldees” refers to is the issue. The northern site offers a Chaldean candidate much nearer in time to Abraham’s probable lifetime. See the following note.

66. Gordon, 1977, 20 and Tvedtnes and Christensen, 1985; *ANP*, 88ff; de Vaux finds the arguments for various sites for a northern Ur unconvincing -see de Vaux, 1978, Chap. 7 (although de Vaux writes prior to some discoveries that are pertinent to the northern Ur hypothesis). See commentary notes at (1:10) and (1:20). See also Kobayashi, *ABD* 3:58b [commentary note 53]; Gee and Ricks, 71-2; Appendix III.

67. Redford, 1992, chapter 4; also *ABD* 3:546, 1:39b. Redford himself is a minimalist.

68. Many of the sources and legends surrounding Abraham speak of him spending time in On [also known as Heliopolis, a flourishing religious center in Middle Kingdom times -see notes at Facsimile No. 2, where On is actually mentioned and Appendix III.], instructing the priests of Pharaoh. Only the illustration apparently depicted by Facsimile No. 1 is mentioned by Abraham in the text of the Book of Abraham. One possible explanation of the connection between Ptolemaic (or Roman) Egypt and the era of Abraham suggested by the conjoining of the facsimiles and the Abrahamic text is that the text was brought to Egypt by Jewish immigrants during this later period and copied there, or that the text or a copy of it was left by Abraham in Egypt and a later copy found its way into one of the Joseph Smith sarcophagi. This is certainly not an unreasonable suggestion and not without precedent. [Gee, 1991, 47-48; Gee, 1995, 71-74. See also notes at Facsimile No. 2 and Barney, 2005; Gee, 2005.] Others, looking at the relationship of the recovered papyri (examination of the sn-sn document had by Joseph Smith shows that it was arranged with Facsimile No. 1 first, sn-sn text, then Facsimile No. 3) to the present Book of Abraham (Facsimile No. 1, text, Facsimile No. 3) conclude that perhaps the papyrus was merely a stimulus to Smith to receive an actual text (compare D&C 7) - the papyrus illustrations fitting figures drawn or mentioned by Abraham. However, Smith had other papyri, certainly in quite different condition than the fragments recovered so far.

The evidence does not give a clear answer to the question of how the text was arrived at, beyond the fact of Joseph Smith's and other's claims that divine revelation was involved, and perhaps this is part of the reason that many outside, and some inside the LDS Church have simply considered the book to be an unfortunate adventure (see Nibley's remark in commentary note 35). Similarly, the former RLDS Church distanced itself from the Book of Abraham by the time of the 1912 Spaulding attack. *But anyone who looks carefully at the source record will see that Joseph Smith used the Book of Abraham extensively in his teaching from 1838 until his death*, and gave private instruction about it prior to that. Evidence of this is found in the present commentary and *PJ*. Trying to distance Joseph Smith from the Book of Abraham is really impossible. The alternative is to either reject Smith altogether, or take the course of David Whitmer and say Joseph was out of the way by 1831. Cowdery, who was closely involved in the initial Abraham efforts, never had a problem with what Joseph did, and in fact enthusiastically endorsed the work. The Book of Mormon witness, as closely acquainted with the Mormon-plates translation as he was, if the Abraham effort was any less vividly correct to his mind, would surely have announced it to the world in 1838 when he was bitterly opposed and even persecuted by some Far West Mormons.

69. This means the investigator must be willing to consider the distinct possibility that Joseph Smith's religious claims were accurate. Without sincere agreement to this effect in advance, any criticism is tainted. α -critics at least, are unlikely to agree. [See, Introduction, note 6.]