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Translator*

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JOSEPH SMITH, JR.,
AS A TRANSLATOR.

AN INQUIRY CONDUCTED

BY

RT. REV. F. S. SPALDING, D. D.

BISHOP OF UTAH.

With the kind assistance of capable scholars.

With the Compliments
of the Author

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To my many Mormon friends—who
are as honest searchers after the truth
as he hopes he is himself—this book
is dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

Salt Lake City, Utah,
November 1, 1912.

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CHAPTER I.

If the Book of Mormon is true, it is, next to the Bible, the most important book in the world. This fact has been appreciated by the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and by them alone. Their leaders and teachers have defended the authenticity of the book with great earnestness and power. No fair-minded man can read the works of Orson Pratt (perhaps the ablest of all the Mormon advocates), and of Brigham H. Roberts, who, in his "New Witnesses for God," has replied to more recent criticism, without being impressed with their conviction of the truth and value of the Book of Mormon, and their deep sense of duty to persuade others to accept their conclusions. If this book is what it claims to be it throws light upon matters of the first importance.

At the present time, when New Testament scholars, with better linguistic and historic equipment than ever before, are studying the life and teachings of Jesus, the record of His appearance to the Nephites and the version of His teachings preserved by the Nephite scribes would be of great value.

A flood of light would be thrown upon the whole question of Church origins if the account of the organization of the Church in the new world, described in the Book of Mormon, were similar to that in the old.

The value of the Book of Mormon to the archaeologist would be equally great. If this Nephite record be true, we have an account of the civilization in the North and Central and South Americas from "The earliest ages after the Flood to the beginning of the Fifth Century of the Christian Era."¹

The Book of Mormon, were it shown to be true, would give important information to Scientists. The account of the convulsions of nature, which occurred in America at the time of Christ's coming, would compel the geologist to re-examine his theories as to the formation of land and

1. O. Pratt's "Remarkable Visions."

sea, and the astronomer to adjust his laws of the heavens to the wonderful three days' darkness. The botanist and zoologist would have to rewrite the account of the flora and fauna of America. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that those who believe in the truth of this book have been faithful in urging its claim to serious attention.

On the other hand it is inexcusable that the book has never had the serious examination which its importance demands. Professor Orson Pratt was not far from correct when he wrote:

"The great majority of the world, however, reject the Book of Mormon without the least examination as to its claims. They have heard that there was such a book, but they know nothing of its contents, only that it claims to be a divine revelation. They at once reject it as an imposture."²

He says, moreover:

"This book must be either true or false. If true, it is one of the most important messages ever sent from God to man, affecting both the temporal and eternal interests of every people under heaven to the same extent and in the same degree that the message of Noah affected the inhabitants of the old world. If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions who would sincerely receive it as the word of God."²

The dilemma accepted for the book is also accepted for its author. If Joseph Smith is not a true prophet of God he must be an impostor—was a position frankly accepted by this and other writers. As a result it was inevitable that the whole discussion should descend to personalities. Those who attacked the Mormons felt moved to publish everything they could discover or invent to the discredit of "Joe Smith" and his parents, while those who believed in him replied with a partisan record of virtues of life, and miracles of power.

A rather careful reading of the controversy leads this writer to the conclusion that the Latter-day Saints set an

2. "The Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," page 2, Liverpool, 1850; also page 1.

example of dignity and courtesy which their opponents rarely followed. And yet, in the adoption of this unfair method, critics of Mormonism were but following the example of other defenders of their faith against novelty in religion.

CHAPTER II.

It is not the purpose of this book to enter into the discussion as to the truthfulness of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s description of the finding of the Golden Plates in a hill of considerable size, "convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario County, New York," nor of his at last obtaining possession of them, together with the Urim and Thummim and the breastplate, on September 22, 1827.

It is proposed, for the sake of argument, that we admit the truth of the account of the finding of the plates and other contents of the stone box—as printed in the "Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith" in the "Pearl of Great Price," and as described more minutely by Prof. Orson Pratt. No doubt, Mr. Pratt obtained his account from Joseph Smith himself, and his statement is as follows:

"These records were engraved on plates, which had the appearance of gold. Each plate was not far from seven by eight inches in width and length, being not quite as thick as common tin. They were filled on both sides with engravings in Egyptian characters and bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, and fastened at one edge with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters or letters upon the unsealed part were small and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction, as well as much skill in the art of engraving. With the records was found a curious instrument, called by the ancients the Urim and Thummim, which consisted of two transparent stones, clear as crystal, set in the two rims of a bow. This was in use in ancient times by persons called 'seers.' It was an instrument, by the use of which they received revelations of things distant or of things past and future."³

3. "Remarkable Visions," page 6, Liverpool, December 14, 1848.

We have quite another question to ask, and it is one which was asked earnestly by those who were favorably impressed with Joseph Smith's statements about his wonderful discovery. The question is this: "Did Joseph Smith, Jr., translate the plates correctly? This question was asked by Martin Harris, who not only gave the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., and his wife fifty dollars to enable them to escape from the persecution in Manchester, New York, but who also furnished the money to print the first edition of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s translation. To satisfy Mr. Harris' curiosity, the Prophet "drew off from the plates" certain characters and gave Mr. Harris permission to submit them to expert examination. The expert whom Mr. Harris selected, by the advice of Dr. Mitchell, was Prof. Chas. Anthon, of New York.

We have two accounts of Prof. Anthon's opinion. Joseph Smith's own statement, which he says he received from Mr. Harris, printed in "The Pearl of Great Price," is as follows:

"I went to the City of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Prof. Charles Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said they were Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic, and he said they were true characters. He gave me a certificate certifying to the people of Palmyra, New York, that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been transcribed were also correct. I took the certificate and put it into my pocket and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back and asked me how the young man (Joseph Smith) found out that there were gold plates in the place where he found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him. He then said to me, 'Let me see that certificate.' I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying there was no such thing as ministering angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, 'I cannot read a sealed book.'"

Professor Orson Pratt, in his essay on "Prophetic Evidence in Favor of the Book of Mormon," Liverpool, January 15, 1851, reprints from a periodical entitled "The Church Record," the other account of Prof. Anthon's opinion as to the characters copied by Joseph Smith, Jr., from the plates.

"Many years ago, the precise date I do not now recollect, a plain looking countryman (Martin Harris) called upon me with a letter from Dr. Samuel S. Mitchell, requesting me to examine and give my opinion upon a certain paper, marked with various characters, which the Doctor confessed he could not decipher, and which the bearer of the note was very anxious to have explained. A very brief examination convinced me that it was a mere **hoax** and a very clumsy one, too. The characters were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing and presented the most singular medley that I ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted, either through unskilfulness or from actual design, were intermingled with sundry delineations of half moons, stars and other natural objects, and the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican Zodiac."

The question we now ask is "Was the translation of the Book of Mormon correct?" As far as we can discover, no further attempt was made to give an answer to this question from competent linguists. The emphasis was rather placed upon the actual objectivity of the plates themselves, and that end was secured by the exhibition of the plates, first to three and later to eight witnesses,⁴ and the publication of their testimony. This was the logical method of procedure, because there was no scholar living whose opinion would have been of real value, even had all the plates been submitted for his inspection.

4. And also the testimony of eight witnesses: "Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, unto whom this work shall come, that Joseph Smith, Jr., the Author and Proprietor of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated, we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record, with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen: and we lie not, God bearing witness of it."

CHRISTIAN WHITMER,
JACOB WHITMER,
PETER WHITMER, JR.,
JOHN WHITMER,
HIRAM PAGE,
JOSEPH SMITH, SR.,
HYRUM SMITH,
SAMUEL H. SMITH.

Champollion published the first successful steps in the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics in 1822, and little of the language was understood when he died in 1832. The grammar which he began was not completed and published until 1841. The Latter-day Saints, are, therefore, not to be criticised for not giving the world the opinion of scholars upon the translation. Such evidence of the authenticity of their sacred book was impossible. They did the best thing that they could do; they circulated with each copy of the Book of Mormon the testimony of the three and of the eight witnesses.⁴ Though the eight witnesses testify only to having handled the plates and inspected the engravings thereon, "all of which had the appearance of ancient work of curious workmanship," the three witnesses further testify that they "also know that they (the plates) have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us, wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true."

Failing to obtain the opinion of scholars to the correctness of the translation, the Latter-day Saints felt that they had something more impressive, the testimony of divinely inspired witnesses.

4. The Book of Mormon, First Edition, facing page 588: "Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, unto whom this work shall come, that we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, his brethren, and also of the people of Jared, which came from the tower of which hath been spoken; and we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety, that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates, and they have been shown unto us by the power of God and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an Angel of God came from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true; and it is marvellous in our eyes: Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen"

OLIVER COWDERY,
DAVID WHITMER,
MARTIN HARRIS.

CHAPTER III.

The eighth article of faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints distinguishes between the correctness of the translation of the Bible and of the Book of Mormon. While the Bible is accepted as the Word of God, "so far as it is correctly translated," there is no such caution with reference to the Book of Mormon, but the statement, "We also believe the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God," is without qualification.

In thus placing the inspiration of the Book of Mormon upon a higher plane than that of the Bible, the Latter-day Saints are logical. The Book of Mormon was translated by one man, and he was accepted by them as an inspired prophet of God—using the Urim and Thummim.

Of this "sacred instrument," Professor Pratt asks:

"Did ever any inspired man anciently receive a revelation through the sacred instrument which was not given by a power from on high?"⁵

If it be objected that there is no record of the Urim and Thummim being used to produce accurate translations, the Mormon's reply is that God's own voice assured Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris that the translation was by "the gift and power of God," and that, therefore, the "work is true." So strong was their conviction of the superiority of the Book of Mormon, both in the original and in its translation, to the King James Bible, that Prof. Orson Pratt felt justified in writing as follows:

"How are the Protestants then to know without new revelation, that any one book of the Bible was divinely inspired? How do they know but that it was merely written according to the best judgment of the author? The Bible cannot inform them until the inspiration of the Bible be established. If it be admitted that the apostles and evangelists did write the books of the New Testament, that does not prove of itself that they were divinely inspired at the

5. Reply to a pamphlet printed in Glasgow with the "approbation" of clergymen of different denominations, entitled "Remarks on Mormonism," Liverpool, 1849.

time they wrote. They were men subject to like passions with other men and liable to err (except?) when under the direct inspiration of the Spirit. How can it be known without new revelation, that these writers did not sometimes write their own words and opinions instead of the Word of the Lord as given by the Holy Ghost?"⁵

And again:

"From the heterogeneous mass of contradictory manuscripts they give an English translation and call it the Bible; thus leaving millions to guess out the true meaning, and quarrel and contend with each other because they do not guess alike."⁵

And again:

"Satan has taken the advantage of their dark and benighted condition and robbed the world of a great number of sacred books, corrupting those few that remained to such a degree that he has the whole of Christendom quarreling about their true meaning."⁵

The Mormon writers have never been quite consistent in this position, because even Prof. Orson Pratt spends far more time and effort proving the truth of the Book of Mormon from the Bible (faulty and uncertain as it may be as to its original manuscripts and their translation) than in establishing the truth of the Bible from the Book of Mormon. However, since he was endeavoring to convince those who had implicit confidence in the Bible, such a method appeared to him to be the most advisable.

5. Essay No. 3 on Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon, Liverpool, December 1, 1850.

CHAPTER IV.

It is surely clear to the reader that the correctness of the translation of the Book of Mormon is a most important question. It was the conviction that he had been selected by the Almighty to give to mankind this Book which won for Joseph Smith, Jr., the attention of earnest men and gave him leadership over them. If the translation of the plates is inaccurate he did not deserve that leadership. However sincere he may have been in believing in his mission, if the translation he gave to mankind is false, he is shown to have been self-deceived. More than this: The reliance placed upon the witnesses who testified that God's voice assured them that the translation was "by the gift and power of God" is broken down. They, too, were self-deceived. They did not hear God's voice; because God's voice could not have assured them that an incorrect thing was true.

If the Book of Mormon was not a correct translation, and yet Joseph Smith thought that it came to him by inspiration and revelation from God, thoughtful men cannot be asked to accept other revelations which Joseph Smith, Jr., asserted were also given to him by the Deity. If he was self-deceived in regard to his first and most extensive work, how can we be sure he was not also self-deceived in regard to later supposed communications from the Almighty? These questions are most critical, and yet, if the thoughtful Latter-day Saints of today are like those of the past, they will welcome them, because they have always invited investigation.

In a discourse delivered in the Tabernacle at Logan, Utah, Sunday evening, April 2, 1911, reported by Mr. F. E. Barker for the June, 1911, number of "The Improvement Era," Elder Brigham Roberts, perhaps the most candid and able of the living defenders of Mormonism, made this matter clear. After quoting from a pamphlet entitled "**The Bible and the Book of Mormon**" by Rev. Paul Jones, of St. John's Church, Logan, Utah, a statement of his own, that the Book of Mormon of necessity must submit to every test, to literary criticism as well as to every other kind of criticism, Mr. Roberts said:

"I am willing to repeat my statement that the Book of Mormon must submit to every test—literary criticism with the rest. Indeed, it must submit to every analysis and examination. It must submit to historical tests, to the tests of archaeological research, and also to the higher criticism. And, what is more, in the midst of it all, its advocates must carry themselves in a spirit of patience and of courage; and that they will do just as long, of course, as their faith remains true to the book. For many years, after a rather rigid analysis, as I think, of the evidence bearing upon the truth of the Book of Mormon, I have reached through some stress and struggle, too, an absolute conviction of its truth. The Book is flung down into the world's mass of literature, and here it is; we proclaim it true, and the world has the right to test it to the uttermost in every possible way."

CHAPTER V.

We have seen how much depends upon the answer to our question, "Was the Book of Mormon translated correctly?" We have also seen that those who think it was correctly translated, invite and welcome such a question. We accept the invitation in the spirit it is given, and again ask our question, "Is the translation of the Book of Mormon correct?"

In his essay on "Divine Authority," on the question "Was Joseph Smith sent of God?" Apostle Orson Pratt gives as the eleventh reason for answering the question in the affirmative:

"The miracles wrought by Joseph Smith are evidence of no small moment to establish his divine authority. In the name of the Lord he cast out devils, healed the sick, spoke with new tongues, interpreted ancient languages and predicted future events."

What were the "ancient languages" the Prophet translated? Quite clearly other translations than the Book of Mormon are referred to; because Apostle Pratt was too good a logician to think of proving the Book of Mormon by the Book of Mormon itself, especially when he had—as we have just seen—charged Protestant Christians with such

reasoning in a circle about the inspiration of the Hebrew Scriptures. "The interpretation of ancient languages" referred to is considered of a character with casting out devils, healing the sick and speaking with new tongues, and if true, is supernormal evidence of Divine power. Indeed, the "interpretation of ancient languages" is referred to as one of "the miracles wrought by Joseph Smith." To those other translations we therefore turn because they may enable us to answer our question.

Joseph Smith's competency as a translator of ancient languages can be ascertained in but one way. The original texts, together with his interpretations, must be submitted to competent scholars, and if they declare his translation to be correct, then it must be accepted as true. We have seen that an effort was made by Martin Harris—with the approval of Joseph Smith, Jr.—to do this, but at a time when such a test was quite impossible. Such a test of the Book of Mormon could be made today; because the Egyptian language is readily translated by many scholars, but the plates are not available. They are kept by "the heavenly messenger" who delivered them to the Prophet, and to whom they were again delivered up, "and he has them in his charge unto this day." Our purpose will be served equally well if the other translations of the prophet referred to can be examined, and fortunately one of these translations, together with the original text, is available. We refer to "**The Book of Abraham,**" translated from the Papyrus by Joseph Smith. "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."

The Book of Abraham, with three fac-similes of the original Egyptian text of Abraham "written by his own hand, upon papyrus," together with the Prophet's explanation and the translation, is a part of the "Pearl of Great Price," one of the Sacred Books of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The history of this book may also be readily learned, because Mr. Brigham H. Roberts, with scrupulous accuracy, has reprinted, in the second volume of his "History of the Church," the Prophet Joseph Smith's own account of the discovery of the book and its

translation, as first published by him in "Times and Seasons." For the convenience of the reader, this account is reprinted:

"On the third of July, Michael H. Chandler came to Kirtland to exhibit some Egyptian Mummies. There were four human figures together with some two or three rolls of papyrus covered with hieroglyphic figures and devices. As Mr. Chandler had been told I could translate them, he brought me some of the characters and I gave him the interpretation, and like a gentleman, he gave me the following certificate:

"Kirtland, July 6, 1835.

"This is to make known to all who may be desirous, concerning the knowledge of Mr. Joseph Smith, Jun., in deciphering the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic characters in my possession, which I have in many eminent cities showed to the most learned; and, from the information that I could ever learn, or meet with, I find that of Mr. Joseph Smith, Jun., to correspond in the most minute matters.

MICHAEL H. CHANDLER,

Travelling With and Proprietor of Egyptian Mummies."

"Soon after this, some of the saints at Kirtland purchased the mummies and papyrus, a description of which will appear hereafter, and with W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, I commenced the translation of some of the characters of hieroglyphics, and much to our joy, found that one of the rolls contained the writing of Abraham, another the writing of Joseph of Egypt, etc. * * * a more full account of which will appear in its place, as I proceed to examine or unfold them. Truly we can say the Lord is beginning to reveal the abundance of peace and truth."⁷

"The remainder of the month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian Language as practiced by the ancients."⁸

"Oct. 1, 1835—This afternoon I labored on the Egyptian Alphabet, in company with Brothers Oliver Cowdery and

6. History of The Church, Vol. 2, page 235.

7. History of The Church, Vol. 2, page 236.

8. History of The Church, Vol. 2, page 238.

W. W. Phelps, and during the research, the principles of astronomy as understood by Father Abraham and the ancients unfolded to our understanding, the particulars of which will appear hereafter.”⁹

“Saturday, Oct. 24—Mr. Goodrich and wife called to see the ancient Egyptian records, and also Dr. Frederick G. Williams to see the mummies.”¹⁰

“Thursday, 29—While at the Doctor’s, Bishop Edward Partridge came in, in company with President Phelps. I was much rejoiced to see him. We examined the mummies, returned home and my scribe commenced writing in my journal a history of my life.”¹¹

The complete translation of the Book of Abraham, together with the fac-similes, was published in “Times and Seasons” for March 1, 1842, March 15, 1842, and May 16, 1842. It was considered from the first—and it is accepted today—as a revelation from God. “Truly we can say,” wrote the Prophet, “The Lord is beginning to reveal the abundance of peace and truth.”

In the preface to the English edition of the “Pearl of Great Price,” published in Liverpool, July 11, 1851, Mr. Franklin D. Richards describes the book, of which “The Book of Abraham” was a part, as “a little collection of precious truths—that will increase their ability to maintain and to defend the holy faith.” His preface concludes with the following testimony:

“Nor do we conceive it possible for any unprejudiced person to arise from a careful perusal of this work, without being deeply impressed with a sense of the Divine calling and holy ordination of the man by whom these revelations, translations and narrations have been communicated to us. As impervious as the minds of men may be at present to convictions, the day is not far distant when sinners, as well as Saints, will know that Joseph Smith was one of the greatest men that ever lived upon the earth, and that under God he was the Prophet and founder of the dispensation of the fullness of times, in which will be gathered into one all things which are in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.”

9. *History of The Church*, Vol. 2, p. 286.

10. *History of The Church*, Vol. 2, page 291.

11. *History of The Church*, Vol. 2, page 316.

Apostle George Q. Cannon published, in 1888, "The Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet," and his account of the Book of Abraham gives further evidence—most valuable as coming from one who was intimately acquainted with the feelings of his fellow churchmen—that the translation we are considering was believed by Joseph Smith, Jr., and his contemporaries to have been given him by revelation and inspiration:

"While Joseph Smith had been laboring in Kirtland, journeying to and from Missouri, teaching his brethren and being taught of God, there were coming to him, from one of the catacombs of Egypt, the writings of Father Abraham and of Joseph, the governor of Egypt.

"On the 7th of January, 1831, a French traveler and explorer penetrated the depths of a catacomb near the site of ancient Thebes. It had cost him time and treasure and influence to make the entrance. After securing the license to make the researches, he employed more than four hundred men for a period of some months to make the necessary excavations. When he was able at last to stay within this multiplied tomb, he found several hundred mummies; but only eleven of them were in such a state that they could be removed. He carried them away, but died on the voyage to Paris. By his will the mummies were bequeathed to Michael H. Chandler, his nephew, and in search of this gentleman they were sent through Ireland and finally across the sea. After two years' wandering they found their owner. Hoping to discover some treasure of precious stones or metals, Mr. Chandler opened the coffins or embalming cases. Attached to two of the bodies were rolls of linen preserved with the same care and apparently by the same method as the bodies. Within the linen coverings were rolls of papyrus bearing a perfectly preserved record in black and red characters, carefully formed. With other of the bodies were papyrus strips bearing epitaphs and astronomical calculations. The learned men of Philadelphia and other places flocked to see these representatives of an ancient time, and Mr. Chandler solicited their translation of some of the characters. Even the wisest of them were only able to interpret the meaning of a very few signs. From the very moment he discovered the rolls, Mr. Chandler had heard that a prophet lived in the West who could decipher strange languages and reveal things hidden; and failing with all the learned men and having parted with seven of the mummies and some few strips of papyrus, bearing astronomical figures, he finally reached

Kirtland and presented himself to Joseph with the few remaining bodies and with the rolls of manuscript. The prophet, under inspiration of the Almighty, interpreted some of the writings to Mr. Chandler's satisfaction. So far as the learned men of Philadelphia had been able to translate, Joseph's work coincided with theirs; but he went much further, and in his delight, Mr. Chandler wrote a letter to the Prophet certifying to this effect.

"Later, some friends of the Prophet purchased the four mummies with the writings. Joseph engaged assiduously to interpret from the rolls and strips of papyrus. The result of his labor was to give to the world a translation of the Book of Abraham. This book was written by the hand of Abraham while he was in Egypt, and was preserved by the marvelous dispensation of Providence through all the mutations of time and the dangers of distance, to reach the hand of God's Prophet in this last dispensation. By this record the Father of the Faithful makes known what the Lord Almighty had shown to him concerning the things that were before the world was; and he declares that he did penetrate the mysteries of the Heavens even unto Kolob, the star which is nearest the throne of God, the Eternal One. * * * At the time when Joseph, aided by the Inspiration of the Almighty, was enabled to make those translations, he was studying ancient languages and the grandest sciences, while he was also imparting instruction in the school of the brethren at Kirtland, that others than himself might have their minds fitted to grasp the sublimities of truth in theology and history and the laws governing the Universe."¹²

That the prophet most sincerely believed in the authenticity of the Book of Abraham and the correctness of its translation, the testimony of Mr. T. B. H. Stenhouse, an unfriendly critic, is of value. After treating the subject at some length, he concludes:

"The author, notwithstanding, still clings to the assertion that Joseph believed sincerely that he was inspired, and the pride with which he gave this translation to the world supports that conclusion."¹³

12. *The Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, by George Q. Cannon, Juvenile Instructor Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1888, pages 187-188.

13. "Rocky Mountain Saints," page 520.

CHAPTER VI.

It is now clear that in the translation of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, known as the "Book of Abraham," we have just the test we need of Joseph Smith's accuracy as a translator. The original text with the Prophet's translation are available for our investigation. If, in the judgment of competent scholars, this translation is correct, then the probabilities are all in favor of the correctness of the Book of Mormon. If, however, the translation of the "Book of Abraham" is incorrect, then no thoughtful man can be asked to accept the Book of Mormon, but, on the other hand, honesty will require him, with whatever personal regret, to repudiate it and the whole body of belief, which has been built upon it and upon the reputation its publication gave to its author.

There is one possible objection to this argument, which should be considered. In the translation of the "Book of Abraham" no mention is made of the use of the "Urim and Thummim." Does this omission put the translation of the "Book of Abraham" in a different class with that of the "Book of Mormon," and so destroy the value of our test? This cannot be urged. The "Urim and Thummim" quite clearly were but a means to an end, the end being the illumination of the mind of the Prophet. They did not use him; he made use of them. When the revelations and the inspirations came without their use they would be unnecessary.

In the case of the translation of "The Book of Abraham," the thoughtful reader of the preceding pages must conclude that the Prophet Joseph Smith and his associates had no thought that his inspiration and the resulting revelation was of any different character than that which gave to the world the translation of the "Book of Mormon." Believers in the integrity of Joseph Smith, Jr., feel sure that he always used whatever means were necessary to open his mind and heart to divine illumination. We may, therefore, press our question, "Is the translation of the 'Book of Abraham,' which Joseph Smith believed he made—even as he had made the translation of the 'Book of Mormon'—by Divine inspiration, a correct translation?"

This matter, as to whether the "Book of Abraham" was a correct translation, was investigated in 1861 by Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, M. A., and upon the authority of Mr. Theodule Deveria:

"A young savant of the museum of the Louvre,"¹⁴ the translation was declared to be entirely incorrect—and an entirely different translation was published in the investigator's book, entitled 'A Journey to Great Salt Lake City.'¹⁴

It is not strange that this opinion has received but little attention from the Latter-day Saints.

Mr. Theodule Deveria is described as a "young savant"—and, unquestionably, this matter is far too important to depend on the opinion of a youthful amateur. Such an important matter deserves the thoughtful consideration of mature scholars—of the world's ablest orientalists.

It is in the belief that the honest searchers for truth among the Latter-day Saints will welcome the opinions of authoritative scholars, and, if necessary, courageously readjust their system of belief, however radical a revolution of thought may be required, that the following judgments of the world's greatest Egyptologists have been ascertained. The opinions were obtained from the scholars themselves, and in no case did one man know the opinion of another.

It will be seen that there is practically complete agreement as to the real meaning of the hieroglyphics, and that this meaning is altogether different from that of Joseph Smith's translation. For purposes of comparison, the text and Joseph Smith's interpretation is given first.

14. A Journey to Great Salt Lake City, Vol. II, page 539.

A FAC-SIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM.

No. 1.



EXPLANATION OF THE ABOVE CUT.

Fig. 1. The Angel of the Lord. 2. Abraham fastened upon altar. 3. The idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice. 4. The altar for sacrifice by the idolatrous priests, standing before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and Pharaoh. 5. The idolatrous god of Elkenah. 6. The idolatrous god of Libnah. 7. The idolatrous god of Mahmackrah. 8. The idolatrous god of Korash. 9. The idolatrous god of Pharaoh. 10. Abraham in Egypt. 11. Designed to represent the pillars of heaven, as understood by the Egyptians. 12. Raukeyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament over our heads; but in this case, in relation to this subject, the Egyptians meant it to signify Shaumau, to be high, or the heavens, answering to the Hebrew word Shaumayhem.



EXPLANATION OF THE ABOVE CUT.

Fig. 1. Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or residence of God. First in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time. The measurement according to celestial time which celestial time signifies one day to a cubit. One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years, according to the measurement of this earth, which is called by the Egyptians Jah-oh-eh.

Fig. 2. Stands next to Kolob, called by the Egyptians Oliblish, which is the next grand governing creation near to the celestial or the place where God resides; holding the key of power also, pertaining to other planets; as revealed from God to Abraham, as he offered sacrifice upon an altar, which he had built unto the Lord.

Fig. 3. Is made to represent God, sitting upon his throne, clothed with power and authority; with a crown of eternal light upon his head; representing also the grand Key-Words of the Holy Priesthood, as revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchisedeck, Abraham, and all to whom the Priesthood was revealed.

Fig. 4. Answers to the Hebrew word Raukeyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament of the heavens; also a numerical figure, in Egyptian signifying one thousand; answering to the measuring of the time of Oliblish, which is equal with Kolob in its revolution and in its measuring of time.

Fig. 5. Is called in Egyptian Enish-go-on-dosh; this is one of the governing planets also, and is said by the Egyptians to be the Sun, and to borrow its light from Kolob through the medium of Kae-e-vanrash, which is the grand Key, or, in other words, the governing power, which governs fifteen other fixed planets or stars, as also Floese or the Moon, the Earth and the Sun in their annual revolutions. This planet receives its power through the medium of Kli-flos-is-es, or Hah-ko-kau-beam, the stars represented by numbers 22 and 23, receiving light from the revolutions of Kolob.

Fig. 6. Represents the earth in its four quarters.

Fig. 7. Represents God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens, the grand Key-Words of the Priesthood; as also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove.

Fig. 8. Contains writing that cannot be revealed unto the world; but is to be had in the Holy Temple of God.

Fig. 9. Ought not to be revealed at the present time.

Fig. 10. Also.

Fig. 11. Also. If the world can find out these numbers, so let it be. Amen.

Figs. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20, will be given in the own due time of the Lord.

The above translation is given as far as we have any right to give at the present time.

A FAC-SIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM.

No. 3.



EXPLANATION OF THE ABOVE CUT.

1. Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh's throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven; with the sceptre of justice and judgment in his hand.
 2. King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his head.
 3. Signifies Abraham in Egypt; referring to Abraham, as given in the ninth number of the *Times and Seasons*. (also as given in the first fac-simile of this book.)
 4. Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, as written above the hand.
 5. Shulem, one of the king's principal waiters, as represented by the characters above his hand.
 6. Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.
- Abraham is reasoning upon the principles of astronomy, in the king's court.

CHAPTER VII.

OPINION OF SCHOLARS UPON THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM.

"It is difficult to deal seriously with Joseph Smith's impudent fraud. His fac-simile from the Book of Abraham No. 2 is an ordinary hypocephalus, but the hieroglyphics upon it have been copied so ignorantly that hardly one of them is correct. I need scarce say that Kolob, etc., are unknown to the Egyptian language. Number 3 is a representation of the Goddess Maat leading the Pharaoh before Osiris, behind whom stands the Goddess Isis. Smith has turned the Goddess into a king and Osiris into Abraham. The hieroglyphics, again, have been transformed into unintelligible lines. Hardly one of them is copied correctly."

DR. A. H. SAYCE,
Oxford, England.

"I have examined the illustrations given in the 'Pearl of Great Price.' In the first place, they are copies (very badly done) of well known Egyptian subjects of which I have dozens of examples.

Secondly, they are all many centuries later than Abraham. On Number 2, I think there is—so far as the copy shows it—the name of Shishak, a popular name in Egypt from about 950 to 750 B. C., and such seems to be about the date of the other figures.

Third, as to the real meaning of them:

Number 1 is the well known scene of Anubis preparing the body of the dead man:

1. Is the hawk of Horus.
2. Is the dead person.
3. Is Anubis.
4. Is the usual funeral couch.
- 5, 6, 7, 8 are the regular jars for embalming the parts of the body, with the head of a hawk, jackal, ape and man, of which dozens may be seen in the museums.
10. Are the funeral offerings covered with lotus flowers.

Number 2 is one of the usual discs with magic inscriptions placed beneath the head of the dead. Three fine ones of the same nature you can see in my Abydos 1 LXXVII, LXXIX. The figures are well known ones in Egyptian mythology.

Number 3 is the very common scene of the dead person before the judgment seat of Osiris, which occurs in most copies of the funeral papyri:

1. Is Osiris in the usual form.
2. Is Isis behind him.
3. Is the stand of offerings with lotus flowers.
4. Is the Goddess Nebhat or Maat (too badly drawn to know which).
5. Is the dead person.
6. Is the God Anubis, the conductor of the souls of the dead.

The inscriptions are far too badly copied to be able to read them.

To any one with knowledge of the large class of funeral documents to which these belong, the attempts to guess a meaning for them, in the professed explanations, are too absurd to be noticed. It may be safely said that there is not one single word that is true in these explanations.

If any one wishes to verify the matter, they have only to ask any of the curators of Egyptian museums. Prof. Breasted of Chicago, Dr. Lythgoe of New York, or any one else who knows the subject. None but the ignorant could possibly be imposed on by such ludicrous blunders.

Pray make any use you like of this letter."

DR. W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE,
London University.

Since Dr. Petrie refers to two American scholars, Dr. Breasted of Chicago and Dr. Lythgoe of New York, we print their opinions here: Dr. Lythgoe, being in Egypt, his opinion could not be secured, but instead, that of his assistant, Dr. Arthur C. Mace, was obtained:

"May 23, 1912.

"I have been greatly interested in the documents you have sent me regarding the connection of Joseph Smith with the Egyptian materials purchased by his people in 1835, and concerning the whole situation I should like to make the following statement:

"In 1822 Champollion published the first successful steps in the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics. It was only very gradually after this that he gained the ability to read the simpler and clearer sentences in hieroglyphic

records. Little of the language, comparatively speaking, was understood when he died in 1832. He left in manuscript an elementary grammar, which was published by the government, beginning in 1836, and reaching completion in 1841. It would have been impossible for any American scholar to know enough about Egyptian inscriptions to read them before the publication of Champollion's grammar. I may add at this point that American Universities have never until recently given such studies any attention, and there is still only one professorship of the science in the United States, though it is now taught in the leading American Universities.

"It will be seen, then, that if Joseph Smith could read ancient Egyptian writing, his ability to do so had no connection with the decipherment of hieroglyphics by European scholars. Now, according to the statements of Joseph Smith himself, the three Egyptian documents which he publishes in connection with the 'Book of Abraham' in 'The Pearl of Great Price,' were secured by some of his followers, together with some mummies, purchased at Kirtland in 1835. The point I wish to bring out is that the three fac-similes from the 'Book of Abraham' were associated with mummies. This fact is in complete harmony with the further fact that the three fac-similes are part of the usual equipment of the dead in the later period of Egyptian civilization before the Christian era. The three fac-similes in question represent equipment which will be and has been found in unnumbered thousands of Egyptian graves. In accepting them, then, as parts of the 'Book of Abraham,' let it be understood that they were in universal use among the pagan Egyptians, and that for some reason the doctrines of Joseph Smith's monotheistic Abraham were universally accepted and used among the polytheistic Egyptians. In accepting these fac-similes as part of the 'Book of Abraham' it remains then for any one who so accepts them to explain why they were thus universally employed by a people who knew nothing of Abraham's God or Abraham's religion. The point, then, is that in publishing these fac-similes of Egyptian documents as part of an unique revelation to Abraham, Joseph Smith was attributing to Abraham not three unique documents of which no other copies exist, but was attributing to Abraham a series of documents which were the common property of a whole nation of people who employed them in every human burial, which they prepared. This was, of course, unknown to Smith, but it is a fact not only of my own knowledge, but also a commonplace of the knowledge of every orientalist who works in the Egyptian field.

"Taking up these fac-similes now, let us discuss them in order. Number 1 depicts a figure reclining on a couch, with a priest officiating and four jars beneath the couch. The reclining figure lifts one foot and both arms. This figure represents Osiris rising from the dead. Over his head is a bird, in which form Isis is represented. The jars below, closed with lids carved in the forms of animal's heads, were used by the Egyptians to contain the viscera taken from the body of the dead man. This scene is depicted on Egyptian funeral papyri, on coffins and on late temple walls, unnumbered thousands of times. If desired, publications of fac-similes of this resurrection scene from papyri, coffins, tomb and temple walls could be furnished in indefinite numbers.

"Fac-simile Number 2 represents a little disc, sometimes made of metal, sometimes of papyrus, sometimes of woven goods with a smooth stucco surface. It is commonly called among Egyptologists a hypocephalus. It was placed under the head of the mummy and the various representations upon it were of a magical power designed to assist the deceased in various ways, especially to prevent the loss of his head. These did not come into use until the late centuries just before the Christian era. They did not appear in any Egyptian burials until over a thousand years after the time of Abraham. They were unknown in Egypt in Abraham's day.

"Fac-simile Number 3: This scene depicts the god Osiris enthroned at the left, with a goddess, probably Isis, behind him and before him three figures. The middle one, a man, led into the presence of Osiris by the goddess Truth, who grasps his hand, accompanied by a figure represented in black, the head of which probably should be that of a wolf or a jackal, but which is here badly drawn. A lotus-crowned standard (numbered 3) bearing food, stands as usual before Osiris. This is the judgment scene, in which the dead man, led in by Truth, is to be judged by Osiris. This scene again is depicted innumerable times in the funeral papyri, coffins and tomb and temple walls of Egypt. No representation of it thus far found in Egypt, though we have thousands of them, dates earlier than 500 years after Abraham's age; and it may be stated as certain that the scene was unknown until about 500 years after Abraham's day.

"To sum up, then, these three fac-similes of Egyptian documents in the 'Pearl of Great Price' depict the most common objects in the mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith's interpretation of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrates that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these

documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization. Not to repeat it too often, the point I wish to make is that Joseph Smith represents as portions of a unique revelation through Abraham things which were commonplaces and to be found by many thousands in the every-day life of the Egyptians. We orientalists could publish scores of these 'fac-similes from the Book of Abraham' taken from other sources.

"For example, any visitor in a modern museum with an Egyptian collection can find for himself plenty of examples of the four jars with animal heads—the jars depicted under the couch in fac-simile number one. It should be noted further that the hieroglyphics in the two fac-similes from the 'Book of Abraham' (Nos. 2 and 3), though they belong to a very degenerate and debased age in Egyptian civilization, and have been much corrupted in copying, contain the usual explanatory inscriptions regularly found in such funerary documents."

JAMES H. BREASTED, Ph. D.,
Haskell Oriental Museum, University of Chicago.

"I return herewith, under separate cover, the 'Pearl of Great Price.' The 'Book of Abraham,' it is hardly necessary to say, is a pure fabrication. Cuts 1 and 3 are inaccurate copies of well known scenes on funeral papyri, and cut 2 is a copy of one of the magical discs which in the late Egyptian period were placed under the heads of mummies. There were about forty of these latter known in museums and they are all very similar in character. Joseph Smith's interpretation of these cuts is a farrago of nonsense from beginning to end. Egyptian characters can now be read almost as easily as Greek, and five minutes' study in an Egyptian gallery of any museum should be enough to convince any educated man of the clumsiness of the imposture."

DR. ARTHUR C. MACE,
Assistant Curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Department of Egyptian Art.

TWO OTHER AMERICAN SCHOLARS' OPINION IS GIVEN.

"The plates contained in the "Pearl of Great Price" are rather comical and a very poor imitation of Egyptian originals, apparently not of any one original, but of Egyptian originals in general. Apparently, the plate on page 50 represents an embalmer preparing a body for burial. At the head, the soul (Kos) is flying away in the form of a bird. Under the bed on which the body lies are the canopic jars to hold the organs and entrails removed from the body in the process of embalming. In the waters below the earth I see a crocodile waiting to seize and devour the dead if he be not properly protected by ritual embalming against such a fate.

"The latter (page 62) is also connected with burial, a representation of the life of the deceased on earth. The hieroglyphics which should describe the scenes, however, are merely illegible scratches, the imitator not having the skill or intelligence to copy such a script.

"The name 'reformed Egyptian' is, if I forget not, a term used in the early days of Egyptian study, before much was known, by certain persons to designate one form of Egyptian script. The text of this chapter, as also the interpretation of the plates, displays an amusing ignorance. Chaldeans and Egyptians are hopelessly mixed together, although as dissimilar and remote in language, religion and locality as are today American and Chinese. In addition to which the writer knows nothing of either of them."

DR. JOHN PETERS,
University of Pennsylvania. In charge of expedition
to Babylonia, 1888-1895.

"After examining 'The Pearl of Great Price,' by Joseph Smith, Salt Lake City, Utah, The Deseret News, 1907, and in particular the three fac-similes, Nos. 1, 2 and 3, I am convinced that the following are facts:

"1. That the author of the notes on the three fac-similes had before him Egyptian inscriptions, either on papyrus or some other material, or else fac-similes of such inscriptions. Compare, for example, No. 2 with the fac-similes of similar hypocephali in W. M. F. Petrie's Abydos, Pt. 1, 1902, Plate LXXVI, LXXVII and LXXIX, in which are sections exactly corresponding to sections in this fac-simile (No. 2).

"2. That the author either knew Hebrew or had some means of arriving at, at least, an elementary knowledge of that language. Compare for example, the transliteration and translation רַקִּיעַ in No. 1, note 12, although the transliteration 'Rankeeyang' is far from accurate.

"3. That the author knew neither the Egyptian language nor the meaning of the most commonplace Egyptian figures; neither did any of those, whether human or Divine, who may have helped him in his interpretation, have any such knowledge. By comparing his notes on fac-similes Nos. 1, 2 and 3 with any elementary book on Egyptian language and religion, and especially by comparing the notes on No. 2 with the explanation of the above named plate on page 49 ff. of the work of Petrie already named (the explanation is by A. E. Weigall, Chapter V), this becomes unquestionably evident.

"In general, it may be remarked that his explanations from a scientific and scholarly standpoint are absurd. Compare No. 1, note 1; No. 2, notes 4, 8, etc.; No. 3, notes 2, 4, 5. The word 'Jah-oh-eh' in note 1 of No. 2, which he calls an Egyptian word (!) is his faulty transliteration of the Hebrew יְהוָה. If Abraham wrote anything while he was in Egypt, it would most likely have been written in the Cuneiform, as that was the lingua franca of his day and his own native language.

"Many proofs of the correctness of the above three conclusive points may be offered if desired. A criticism in his explanations could be made, but the explanatory notes to his fac-similes cannot be taken seriously by any scholar, as they seem to be undoubtedly the work of pure imagination."

REV. PROF. C. A. B. MERCER, Ph. D.,
Western Theological Seminary, Custodian Hibbard
Collection, Egyptian Reproductions.

Two German Scholars, Drs. Meyer and Von Bissing, give their opinion as follows. Dr. Edward Meyer, University of Berlin, is one of the foremost of living historians:

"The Egyptian papyrus which Smith declared to be the 'Book of Abraham,' and 'translated' or explained in his fantastical way, and of which three specimens are published

in the 'Pearl of Great Price,' are parts of the well known 'Book of the Dead.' Although the reproductions are very bad, one can easily recognize familiar scenes from this book: 'the body of the dead lying a ba' (bier). The canopic jars containing the entrails under it; the soul in the shape of a bird flying above it, and a priest approaching it, or Osiris seated on his throne, Isis behind him, the Goddess of Righteousness with the feather on her head awaiting the deceased from the throne of Osiris."

DR. EDWARD MEYER,
University of Berlin.

"I have been interested since a long time in the Mormons and Joseph Smith's supposed translations of Egyptian texts. A careful study has convinced me that Smith probably believed seriously to have deciphered the ancient hieroglyphics, but that he utterly failed.

"What he calls the 'Book of Abraham' is a funeral Egyptian text, probably not older than the Greek ages. His figure 1 should be commented upon as follows:

"The dead man (1) is lying on a bier (4) under which are standing the four canopic jars (5-8) and before which is standing the offering table (10). The soul is leaving the body in the moment when the priest (3) is opening the body with a knife for mummification. Fig. 3 may be part of the same papyrus—the Goddess Maat (Truth) is introducing the dead (5) and his shadow (6) before Osiris (1) and Isis (2) before whom an offering table stands (3).

"It is impossible from Smith's bad fac-similes to make out any meaning of the inscriptions, but that they cannot say what Smith thought is clear from the certain signification of the figures 1-5. 6 only may be interpreted in different ways, but never as Smith did.

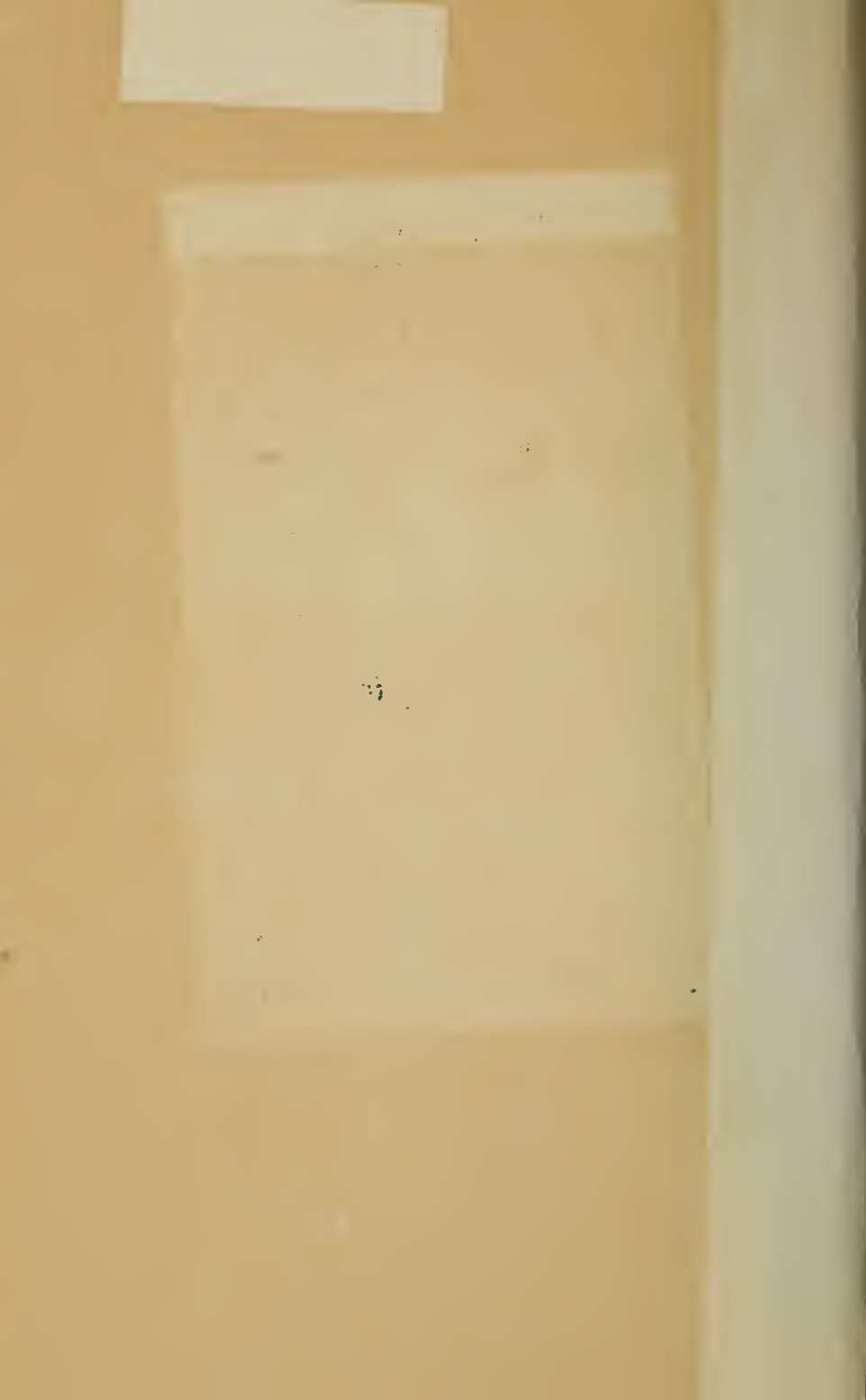
"Fig. 2 is copied from a hypocephalus of the ancient Egyptians, a magical book on which Dr. Birch has often written in the proceedings of the Biblical Archaeological Society, and Dr. Leamans in the Actes des Congress des Orientalistes of Leyden. None of the names mentioned by Smith can be found in the text, and he has misinterpreted the signification of every one figure: Fig. 5 is the divine

cow of Hathor, 6 are the four children of Horus as the Canopic Gods, 4 is the God Sokar in the Sacred Book, etc.

"I hope this will suffice to show that Jos. Smith certainly never got a Divine revelation in the meaning of the ancient Egyptian Script, and that he never deciphered hieroglyphic texts at all. He probably used Athenasius Kirsher the Jesuit's work, and there found a method of reading the old Egyptian signs very much like his own."

DR. FRIEDRICH FREIHEER VON BISSING,
Professor of Egyptology in the University of Munich.







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	DEC 17 1986	DEC 28 1993
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