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Joseph Smith and Egyptian Artifacts

A Model for Evaluating the Prophetic Nature of the Prophet's Ideas about the Ancient World

Kerry Muhlestein

Joseph Smith's collection of Egyptian antiquities has been the point of much interest, both in his day and ours. Among those things that piqued great attention during the Prophet's lifetime, and continue to do so today, are his explanations of the drawings (known as vignettes when referring to ancient Egyptian literature) on the papyri he possessed and the connections he made between the papyri, mummies, and biblical characters. While we have few statements directly from Joseph Smith himself, there are a number of accounts from people who heard either first- or secondhand the Prophet's ideas about his collection of antiquities and the meaning of the vignettes on the papyri. Evaluating the pertinent accounts and what they tell us either about the contents of the papyri or Joseph Smith's prophetic abilities, or both, can become a byzantine endeavor, with no clear-cut way of determining which statements are historically reliable and which are not.

Even more important is the confusion that results from not knowing which of the Prophet's purported statements about Egyptian drawings are prophetic and which might not be. Joseph Smith either authored or approved of the descriptions of Facsimiles 1, 2, and 3 that were published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842, as will be further discussed in this paper. Apart from these explanations, we have no other recorded statements from Joseph Smith about the meanings of the Egyptian vignettes on the papyri he possessed. At the same time, we have several accounts of those who heard Joseph Smith express explanations of various vignettes on these papyri. While the explanations associated with Joseph Smith and published in the *Times and Seasons*, which have now become part of the

Pearl of Great Price, carry with them the weight of his prophetic mantle, it is less clear how descriptions of other drawings on various fragments, which were never refined or published, should be understood by Latter-day Saints, especially since we have only hearsay accounts of these descriptions. In this paper, I will explore various options regarding how believers and nonbelievers might assess noncanonical statements reportedly made by the Prophet about the ancient texts and vignettes he possessed. Given Joseph Smith's far-ranging enthusiasm for things of the ancient world,¹ it is further hoped that this paper will be one step forward in creating a paradigm that could be used to filter through the Prophet's expressions about the ancient world in general, thus adding to a larger and hopefully ongoing dialogue about such issues.

In the interest of full disclosure and intellectual honesty, I understand that researchers and readers must also address point of view, or bias. It is impossible to approach this subject without bringing to the task a mindset through which a researcher filters all of the historical evidence and with which he or she creates paradigms of how to use and interpret the evidence. This is true of any historical issue² but is especially so when it impinges on religious beliefs.³ Thus, those who do not believe Joseph Smith was a prophet who translated ancient texts by the power of God will be unable to avoid seeking first for explanations to support that opinion.⁴ Those who do believe in the inspired ability of

1. As evidenced by the papers in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2015).

2. Antonio Loprieno, "Slaves," in *The Egyptians*, ed. Sergio Donadoni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 186.

3. See Rachel Cope, "Hermeneutics of Trust vs. Hermeneutics of Doubt: Considering Shaker Spirituality," *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 3, no. 1 (2013): 56–66; see also E. H. Carr, *What Is History? The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge January–March 1961* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1986).

4. For a discussion of the hermeneutic of doubt, or "school of suspicion," see Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Dennis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); also on an approach of distrust leading to methodological atheism, see Stuart Parker, "The Hermeneutics of Generosity: A Critical Approach to the Scholarship of Richard Bushman," *Journal of Mormon History* 32, no. 3 (2012): 12–27. See also Steven C. Harper, "A Seeker's Guide to the Historical Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," *Religious Educator* 12, no. 1 (2011): 169–72, where he speaks of a hermeneutic of suspicion as opposed to a hermeneutic of trust. Of course it is hoped that both

Joseph Smith will likewise more readily seek and more easily conceive of theories that naturally stem from that perspective. Therefore, I wish to be clear that I begin with the presumption of Joseph Smith's prophethood. In order to properly evaluate my writings, readers will need to understand that this is my point of view.

My experiences, both those of intellectual endeavor and those of a revelatory nature, cause me to approach this research with full confidence in the prophetic abilities of Joseph Smith. Therefore, I desire to use all of my academic training to more fully understand the perspectives that could account for the evidence at hand, while admitting that I more easily understand perspectives that match my original assumptions as framed by my religious point of view. No historian can avoid this. At the same time, I am attempting to fairly represent all points of view to the best of my ability and earnestly hope that those who approach the work from a different perspective will do the same.

I also wish to be very clear that I do not have the ability or desire to represent the point of view of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham Young University, or any subsets of those entities. None of the models presented below should be taken as anything other than the attempt of one scholar to sift his way through possible approaches in handling the evidence that lies before us. This is not an apologetic effort but rather an attempt to understand information and ideas that are important to my faith community and to any scholars who are interested in that faith or its community. Exploration and enhanced understanding is the goal.

By examining the Prophet's reported statements about his Egyptian antiquities, this paper takes one step toward evaluating Joseph Smith's statements about antiquity. The ideas presented here are intended to be only a small piece of what will hopefully be a larger conversation.

believers and nonbelievers will allow evidence to affect their views and beliefs. At the same time, the initial choice of belief or nonbelief regarding the possibility that Joseph Smith could be inspired is so large that it influences how most data is interpreted. If one believes it is impossible for Joseph to have received inspiration, one will interpret all evidence differently than someone who thinks he has received, or that he could receive, inspiration. Individuals who choose the latter viewpoint have a range of ways they can interpret evidence. While categorizing people as either believers or nonbelievers is surely an oversimplification—for people can be persuaded and can change their minds—still, the initial starting point is so important that this simplification is useful for this paper.

In order to assess Joseph Smith's ideas about his antiquities, the contents of his papyri and the meaning of their vignettes, we will have to take four steps: (1) We must understand what antiquities he acquired and how he acquired them. (2) We must explore the historical accounts of what he is reported to have said about these antiquities, especially what he thought the vignettes on them represented but including what he thought about his antiquities in general. (3) After this, we can compare the historical statements with modern academic ideas about his antiquities and the meanings of the vignettes. (4) We can then propose models about how to evaluate those statements.

STEP ONE:

BRIEF HISTORICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

In July 1835, Michael Chandler arrived in Kirtland, bringing with him four mummies and a small collection of papyri. The day after his arrival, he met with Joseph Smith, who was allowed to take the papyri home with him to study.⁵ Soon the Mormon Prophet announced that the papyri contained the writings of Abraham and Joseph.⁶ He arranged to purchase the papyri and was soon busy translating.⁷ Years later, some of his translation was published in the *Times and Seasons*.⁸ More of the translation was promised⁹ but never came. It is not clear whether Joseph

5. See Edward Tullidge, "Dr. John Riggs," *Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine* 3, no. 3 (1884): 282–83.

6. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 2:236 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*). Original source is Manuscript History of the Church, Book 1, p. 596, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as CHL).

7. It is not completely clear whether or not Joseph Smith discovered that the writings of Abraham and Joseph were on the papyri before or after the scrolls were purchased. On the timing of the purchase of the papyri and the translation and publication of the Book of Abraham, see Kerry Muhlestein and Megan Hansen, "The Work of Translating: The Book of Abraham's Translation Chronology," in *Let Us Reason Together: Reflections on the Life of Study and Faith, Essays in Honor of Robert L. Millet*, ed. Spencer Fluhman and Brent L. Top (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2015), 140.

8. "The Book of Abraham," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 704–6; "The Book of Abraham," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842): 719–22.

9. "We would further state that we had the promise of Br. Joseph, to furnish us with further extracts from the Book of Abraham. These with other articles that we expect from his pen, the continuation of his history, and the resources

Smith published all he had translated at that point or if he had already translated more but was never able to publish it. In any case, the *Times and Seasons* publications of excerpts from the book of Abraham eventually worked their way into the booklet entitled *The Pearl of Great Price*,¹⁰ which was later canonized.¹¹

Published alongside the text of the book of Abraham were facsimiles of some of the vignettes on the papyri, accompanied by explanations of them.¹² While we do not know if Joseph Smith is the original author of these explanations,¹³ we know he participated in preparing them and gave them editorial approval. For example, on March 1, 1842, his journal records that he was at the printing office “correcting the first plate or cut of the records of father Abraham, prepared by Reuben Hedlock for the *Times and Seasons*.”¹⁴ The next day he wrote that he served for the first time as the editor of the *Times and Seasons*, reading through the proofs “in which is the commencement of the Book of Abraham.”¹⁵ Published in the March 1 issue of the *Times and Seasons* was this statement: “This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand responsible for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforward. I am not responsible for the publication or arrangement

that we have of obtaining interesting matter; together with our humble endeavors, we trust will make the paper sufficiently interesting.” Editor [John Taylor], “Notice,” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 6 (February 1, 1843): 95.

10. Joseph Smith, *The Pearl of Great Price, Being a Choice Selection from the Revelations, Translations, and Narrations of Joseph Smith* (Liverpool: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1851).

11. It was canonized in 1880. See Journal History of the Church, October 10, 1880, 4, CHL. See also H. Donl Peterson, “The Birth and Development of the Pearl of Great Price,” in *Studies in Scripture: Volume 2, The Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall Books, 1985), 8–22.

12. “A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 1,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 703; “A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 2,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842): insert; and “A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 3,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 14 (May 16, 1842): 783.

13. As has been pointed out by John Gee, “Joseph Smith and Ancient Egypt,” in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 437–38.

14. Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, vol. 2 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2011), 39, spelling corrected.

15. Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals, Volume 2*, 39.

of the former paper: the matter did not come under my supervision.”¹⁶ While this statement makes it clear that Joseph Smith was involved in approving the content of the paper, the statement was smaller and more concise than what the Prophet had originally intended to be put in the paper. The letter he originally dictated for the newspaper, probably edited down due to size constraints, was more explicit:

A considerable quantity of the matter in the last paper. was in type, before the establishment come into ~~our~~ My hands,— Some of which went to press. without ~~our~~ my recivecd, ~~or~~ knowledge ~~Thh~~ and a multiplicity of business= while enteri[n]g on the additional care of the editorial departmet of the Times & Seasons. mu[s]t be my apology for what is past.—

In future, I design to furnish much original matter, which will be found of enestimable advantage to the saints, – & to all who — desire a knowledge of the kingdom of God.— and as it is not practicable to bring forthe the new translation of the Scriptures. & varioes records of ancint date. & great worth to this generation in ~~book~~ <the usual> form. by books. I shall prenit [print] specimens of the same in the Times & Seasons as fast. as time & space will admit. so that the honest in heart may be cheerd & comforted and go on their way rejoici[ng].— as their souls become expanded.—& their undestand[ing] enlightend, by a knowledg of ~~what~~ Gods work through the fathers. in former days, as well as what He is about to do in Latter Days—To fulfil the words of the fathers.—

In the penst [present] no. will be found the Commencmet of the Records discovered in Egypt. some time since, as penend by the hand. of Father Abraham. which I shall contin[u]e to t[r]anslate & publish as fast as possible till the whole is completed.— and as the saints have long been anxious to obtain a copy of these rec[o]rds, those are now taking this times & Seasons. Will confer a sp[e]cial favor on their brethren, who do not take the paper, by infor[m]ing them that. They can now obtain their hearts.¹⁷

16. The heading over this section reads, “Tuesday, March 15, 1842,” though it was printed in the March 1, 1842, edition of the paper. See *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 710.

17. Joseph Smith to *Times and Seasons*, c. March 1842, 1–2, Joseph Smith Collection, CHL, available online at Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-times-and-seasons-circa-march-1842?p=1>.

Here it is even clearer that Joseph was taking personal charge of what would be printed in the newspaper, especially in connection with the writings of Abraham.

Joseph Smith's involvement with the publication continued. On March 4, he worked again with Reuben Hedlock preparing the cut for the second facsimile.¹⁸ On March 9, he examined the copy of the *Times and Seasons* in which that facsimile would be published.¹⁹ All of this taken together suggests that Joseph Smith was most likely the author of the explanations. Even if someone else originally penned them, at the very least Smith was involved in the process, was familiar with the text, and approved the publishing of the explanations as they stood.

After Joseph Smith's death, his mother took care of the antiquities.²⁰ When Lucy Mack Smith died, the Prophet's widow, by then remarried, sold the mummies and papyri to Abel Combs.²¹ Most of this collection was in turn sold to a museum, and eventually was burned in the Great Chicago Fire.²² Unknown to Latter-day Saints, Combs had given a few fragments to his housekeeper, and in due course these made their way to the Metropolitan Museum of New York. In 1967, the museum presented them to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,²³ which continues to hold and preserve them today. These eleven papyri fragments are commonly known as JSP (Joseph Smith Papyri) I through XI and are readily available for viewing on the Internet.

While a great deal has been written about the eleven papyri fragments the Church now owns, most of these writings have been concerned with

18. Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals, Volume 2*, 40.

19. Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals, Volume 2*, 42.

20. As evidenced in sources such as "A correspondent of the Albany Atlas, writin from Nauvoo," *Cleveland Daily Herald*, September 13, 1845, 1; Miss F. J., "Visit to Nauvoo," *Ladies' Magazine* 11 (1846): 134–35; and M, "Correspondence of Friends' Weekly Intelligencer," *Friends' Weekly Intelligencer* 3, no. 27 (October 7, 1846): 211. See also H. Donl Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 215–16; and John Gee, "Some Puzzles from the Joseph Smith Papyri," *Farms Review* 20, no. 1 (2008): 115.

21. H. Donl Peterson, "The Mormon Mummies and Papyri in Ohio," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio*, ed. Milton V. Backman Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1990), 132–33.

22. Peterson, "Mormon Mummies and Papyri," 133–34; Peterson, *Story of the Book of Abraham*, 212–16.

23. Peterson, *Story of the Book of Abraham*, 236–42.

the few fragments that are associated with the original drawing of Facsimile 1.²⁴ Their relationship with the Book of Abraham continues to be researched and debated.²⁵ Less work has been done on Joseph Smith's views concerning the rest of the papyri, especially his ideas about the drawings, or vignettes, present on the papyri. Yet these less-studied views are worth exploring, both because they shed some light on Joseph Smith's feelings about the antiquities he possessed and because they are part of a larger picture of nineteenth-century ideas about Egyptian artifacts in general.

STEP TWO: THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS

As we work toward creating models that can be used to evaluate Joseph Smith's ideas about antiquity, we must now examine the historical records that report what he thought about his antiquities. Let us begin by looking at statements about the vignettes on the papyri he owned. The accounts that contain explanations of these vignettes span nearly the entire length of time during which Joseph Smith possessed his papyri. They come from a variety of people who had a corresponding assortment of familiarity with the Mormon prophet and things of the ancient world and a wide spectrum of views on his prophetic abilities. If Joseph Smith had commented on any of the statements others had made about his views on the papyri, either to correct or confirm such statements, we would have a better idea of how reliable the accounts are. Unfortunately, we have found no such comments from the Prophet and

24. The facsimiles that appeared first in *Times and Seasons* and later in the Pearl of Great Price were produced from woodcuts made of the original drawings on the papyri.

25. See, for example, Gee, "Some Puzzles from the Joseph Smith Papyri," 113–37; Kerry Muhlestein, "Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: Some Questions and Answers," *Religious Educator* 11, no. 1 (2010): 90–106; and Kerry Muhlestein, "Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: A Faithful, Egyptological Point of View," in *No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2011), 217–43; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Case against Mormonism*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1968), 2:159, 3:1–52; Hugh Nibley, "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price: Part 1, Challenge and Response," *Improvement Era* 71, no. 2 (1968): 14–21. Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Institute for Religious Research, 1992).



must do our best to determine the reliability of each statement, as will be discussed below.

Accounts Reporting Statements about Fragments

Name	Date of viewing	Date of source	Name of source
Oliver Cowdery	1835	1835	<i>Messenger and Advocate</i> 2, no. 3.
Henry Caswall	1842	1842	<i>City of the Mormons</i> , 22–23
Sarah Leavitt	c. 1837	1875	“History of Sarah Studevart Leavitt”
William Appleby	1841	1848	Autobiography and Journal
Charlotte Haven	1843	1890	<i>Overland Monthly</i>

Oliver Cowdery’s Statement

The earliest of the pertinent documents does not purport to be an account of Joseph Smith’s interpretations. Instead it was written by Oliver Cowdery within a few months of acquiring the papyri. Cowdery did not claim he was sharing Joseph Smith’s interpretation but rather may have been the originator of the views he expressed in his writings. However, it is clear that Joseph Smith was at least nominally involved in the history Cowdery was trying to record. We know this because Smith divided responsibilities for writing histories between Cowdery and others²⁶ and because Cowdery wrote that Joseph Smith was assisting him with those historical writings.²⁷ While it is likely that at this time Cowdery’s interpretations were shared with Joseph and closely aligned with his understandings, the most we can say is that these were views Cowdery held after having worked closely with Joseph Smith on the papyri.²⁸

26. Karen Lynn Davidson and others, eds., *Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 38.

27. Davidson and others, *Joseph Smith Histories*, 39–40.

28. As evidenced by the October 1, 1835, journal entry: “This after noon labored on the Egyptian alphabet, in company with brsr O[liver] Cowdery and W[illiam] W. Phelps: The system of astronomy was unfolded.” Dean C. Jessee,

Cowdery provided an extensive description of the papyri in the *Messenger and Advocate*.²⁹

Upon the subject of the Egyptian records, or rather the writings of Abraham and Joseph, I may say a few words. This record is beautifully written on papyrus with black, and a small part, red ink or paint, in perfect preservation. [He then described in several paragraphs the story of how the records were obtained.]

The language in which this record is written is very comprehensive, and many of the hieroglyphics exceedingly striking. The evidence is apparent upon the face, that they were written by persons acquainted with the history of the creation, the fall of man, and more or less of the correct ideas of notions of the Deity. The representation of the god head—three, yet in one, is curiously drawn to give simply, though impressively, the writers [*sic*] views of that exalted personage. The serpent, represented as walking, or formed in a manner to be able to walk, standing in front of, and near a female figure, is to me, one of the greatest representations I have ever seen upon paper, or a writing substance; and must go so far towards convincing the rational mind of the correctness and divine authority of the holy scriptures, and especially that part which has ever been assailed by the infidel community, as being a fiction, as to carry away, with one might [*sic*] sweep, the whole atheistical fabric, without leaving a vestige sufficient for a foundation stone. Enoch's Pillar, as mentioned by Josephus, is upon the same roll. . . . The inner end of the same roll, (Joseph's record) presents a representation of the judgment: At one view you behold the Savior seated upon his throne, crowned, and holding the sceptres of righteousness and power, before whom also, are assembled the twelve tribes of Israel, the nations, languages and tongues of the earth, the kingdoms of the world over which satan is represented as reigning. Michael the archangel, holding the key of the bottomless pit, and at the same time the devil as being chained and shut up in the bottomless pit.³⁰

Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 67.

29. For information about Oliver as editor, see John W. Welch, "Oliver Cowdery as Editor, Defender, and Justice of the Peace in Kirtland," in *Days Never to be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery*, ed. Alexander L. Baugh (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009), 255–60.

30. Oliver Cowdery, "Egyptian Mummies—Ancient Records," *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 3 (December 1835): 234, 236.



Joseph Smith Papyrus VI (left) and V (right), which contains a figure of a walking serpent. Courtesy Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Joseph Smith Papyrus (JSP) V has a vignette that might be what Oliver identifies as Enoch's Pillar and another vignette that depicts a walking serpent speaking with a figure Oliver would think of as a woman.³¹ JSP IV, upper left image, contains a depiction of three people seated together that may be what Oliver thought of as the godhead.³² JSP III contains some elements that might match his description of an enthroned Christ and a chained Satan.³³ Of course, he may have been referring to depictions we no longer have, since none of the vignettes on the extant papyri fully fit this description. However, the descriptions hold enough in common with a later account given by Henry Caswall, which does seem to fit JSP III, that it is possible Cowdery was interpreting JSP III but was doing so in a way that does not match well with what we see in that drawing. The similarity between the accounts of Cowdery and Caswall also lends weight to the notion that others, perhaps including Joseph Smith, held these same interpretations about the meaning of the figures on the vignettes. However, there are enough differences between Cowdery's and Caswall's descriptions to make it equally or perhaps more likely that they were describing two different vignettes. Because of the similarities, it is important to compare the two accounts.

Henry Caswall's Account

Henry Caswall visited Nauvoo in 1842, more than six years after Cowdery's description of the papyri was published. Caswall was hoping to meet the Prophet and see the antiquities. Joseph Smith was not in town during part of his visit, but Caswall was able to prevail upon a storekeeper to let him in to see the antiquities. He recorded his visit thus:

31. Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 155, sees this as the vignette referred to. While my comparisons have been done independently, others have also looked at what remaining vignettes match these descriptions. In particular, see Jay M. Todd, *The Saga of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 194; and John Gee, "Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence of the Joseph Smith Papyri," in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, Donald W. Parry, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000).

32. Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 155, independently suggests this may be the case.

33. Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 205–6, argues for this.

He led me to a room behind his store, on the door of which was an inscription to the following effect: "Office of Joseph Smith, President of the Church of Latter Day Saints." Having introduced me, together with several Mormons to this *sanctum sanctorum*, he locked the door behind him, and proceeded to what appeared to be a small chest of drawers. From this he drew forth a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics. These had been unrolled from four mummies, which the prophet had purchased at a cost of twenty-four hundred dollars. By some inexplicable mode, as the storekeeper informed me, Mr. Smith had discovered that these sheets contained the writings of Abraham, written with his own hand while in Egypt. Pointing to the figure of a man lying on a table, he said, "That is the picture of Abraham on the point of being sacrificed. That man standing by him with a drawn knife is an idolatrous priest of the Egyptians. Abraham prayed to God, who immediately unloosed his bands, and delivered him." [I refer to this as Caswall's first description.] Turning to another of the drawers, and pointing to a hieroglyphic representation, one of the Mormons said, "Mr. Smith informs us that this picture is an emblem of redemption. Do you see those four little figures? Well, those are the four quarters of the earth, And do you see that big dog looking at the four figures? That is the old Devil desiring to devour the four quarters of the earth. Look at this person keeping back the big dog. That is Jesus Christ keeping the devil from devouring the four quarters of the earth. Look down this way. This figure near the side is Jacob, and those are his two wives. Now do you see those steps?" "What," I replied, "do you mean those stripes across the dress of one of Jacob's wives?" "Yes," he said, "that is Jacob's ladder." "That is indeed curious," I remarked; "Jacob's ladder standing on the ground, and only reaching up to his wife's waist." [I refer to this as Caswall's second description.]³⁴

A number of things must be considered as we read this account. First, Caswall describes two different portions of papyri, taken from two different drawers. Second, since Caswall got these reports from the storekeeper and another Mormon who presumably got their information from Joseph Smith, this is a thirdhand account of what Joseph Smith said about the meaning of these drawings. Also, one must take into account that Caswall's book is generally anti-Mormon.³⁵ Thus we

34. Henry Caswall, *The City of the Mormons; or, Three Days at Nauvoo in 1842* (London: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1843), 22–23.

35. On Caswall's visit, see John W. Welch, "Joseph Smith's Awareness of Greek and Latin," in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient*

cannot simply take the source at face value. However, counter to this perspective is the first description, which seems to be of the original papyrus drawing of Facsimile 1. This first portion of the description provided by Caswall matches perfectly with what Joseph Smith had published about that facsimile only one month earlier.³⁶ Such precision and reliability suggests that we can place a certain amount of trust in Caswall's second description.

This description seems to be of JSP III. It should be noted that Caswall said several fragments were shown him. These, he said, came from a chest of drawers and were mounted in what looked to be picture frames. He then gave detailed descriptions of two different papyrus fragments from two of the drawers of this chest. It seems most likely, then, that both of these fragments were mounted in picture frames. When we consider that JSP III was mounted in just such a way,³⁷ and that Caswall's description matches so well with the vignette depicted on JSP III, I believe it is very likely that we are reading an account of what Caswall heard others say was Joseph Smith's interpretation of JSP III, an interpretation that describes some of the figures as being Christ, Satan, the four quarters of the earth, Jacob, his wives, and Jacob's ladder.

As noted above, there are a few similarities between Caswall's second description and that which was given by Cowdery. Cowdery's description does not mention Jacob, but it does describe Christ on a throne with scepters of power. This description could match JSP III, but in a way that differs from Caswall's description of which figure represented Christ and what role the Savior was fulfilling. They both describe Satan being held back, though they differ as to who is holding him back. They also both include enough elements that are not in common that it seems more likely they are describing two different vignettes. It is also possible that Cowdery was relating his own interpretation of the vignette, that Caswall provides a third-hand account of Joseph Smith's interpretation, and that Joseph and Oliver differed somewhat on their ideas as to what the vignettes meant. Another possibility is that Cowdery's description

World, 312–14; also Craig L. Foster, "Henry Caswall: Anti-Mormon Extraordinaire," *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1995–96): 152.

36. See "A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 1," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 703.

37. See Kerry M. Muhlestein and Alexander L. Baugh, "Preserving the Joseph Smith Papyri Fragments: What Can We Learn from the Paper on Which the Papyri Were Mounted," *The Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22, no. 2 (2013): 67.



Joseph Smith Papyrus III. Courtesy Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

represents his and Joseph Smith's thinking soon after acquiring the papyri and that Caswall's account conveys how that thinking evolved over six years. It is also possible that Cowdery and Caswall just remembered things differently from one another. We do not have enough evidence to designate one of these options as much more probable than the others.

Sarah Leavitt's Description

Caswall's account that Jacob's ladder was believed to be depicted on the papyri is confirmed from another description, the result of a visit by Sarah Leavitt five years before Caswall's visit, in about 1837. When writing many years later, Leavitt says, "We went into the upper rooms, saw the Egyptian mummies, the writing that was said to be written in Abraham's day, Jacob's ladder being pictured on it,³⁸ and lots more wonders that I cannot write her[e], and that were explained to us."³⁹ It is not clear who told Leavitt that Jacob's ladder was depicted in the Egyptian vignettes. Presumably this was the same depiction that Henry Caswall was shown years later, indicating that this idea was at least somewhat prevalent and was held for some time.

William I. Appleby's Record

Further ideas about the meanings of these Egyptian vignettes were conveyed by William I. Appleby, who visited Joseph Smith and was shown the papyri in 1841. While Appleby finished his autobiography in 1848, he seemed to be quoting from his own journal, suggesting that he wrote the account of his visit much closer in time to the actual event than 1848. He says:

There are also representations of men, beasts, Birds, Idols, and Oxen attached to a kind of a Plough, and a female guiding it. Also the serpent when he beguiled Eve. He appears with two legs, erect in the form and appearance of man. But his head in the form, and representing the Serpent, with his forked tongue extended. There are likewise, a representation of an Alter erected, with a man bound and laid thereon, and a

38. It is, of course, unlikely for the papyri to have been created in Abraham's day and also include a picture of Jacob's Ladder, since Abraham was dead before Jacob had his vision.

39. Sarah Studevant Leavitt, "History of Sarah Studevant Leavitt," April 19, 1875, Americana Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 7.

Priest, with a knife in his hand, standing at the feet, with a dove over the person bound on the Altar, with several Idol Gods, standing around it.

A Celestial Globe, with the planet “Kolob” or first creation of the Supreme Being, a planet of light, which planet makes a revolution once in a thousand years—Also, the Lord revealing the Grand Key Words of the Holy Priesthood to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchizedeck, Abraham, and to all who the Priesthood was revealed. Abraham also in the Court of Pharaoh sitting upon the Kings throne reasoning upon Astronomy, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven, with the scepter of Justice and Judgment in his hand. And King Pharaoh, standing behind him, together with a Prince—a principal Waiter, and a black slave of the King.⁴⁰

Some of Appleby’s writings about the vignettes convey only description without explanation, such as listing that there were birds,⁴¹ oxen, and a plough.⁴² Other portions of this writing contain descriptions and explanations that fit perfectly with the published facsimiles and their explanations, though Appleby certainly had a published version of these explanations with him as he wrote this.⁴³ Thus he could have used the published facsimiles as a source for these descriptions rather than his memory. The account also supplies us with one explanation that is not part of the facsimiles. Appleby informs us that there was a legged

40. William I. Appleby, *Autobiography and Journal, 1848–1856*, 72–73, July 6, 1848, CHL, spacing corrected.

41. There are some human-headed birds that Appleby may have referenced here, such as on JSP IV and VI. It is more likely that he was either referring to the depiction of the falcon on JSP V or the swallow on JSP VI, or to birds that are on portions of the papyri we no longer have. The falcon and swallow as depicted in JSP V and VI are parts of spells designed to help transform the deceased into these birds, which can represent Horus and greatness respectively, since these are the glyphs for these words. See Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1982), 467 (sign G5) and 471 (sign G36).

42. The plough comment is likely describing JSP II. This seems to be a representation of Book of the Dead [BoD] 110. See Michael D. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead Belonging to Tshemmin and Neferirnub: A Translation and Commentary*, Studies in the Book of Abraham vol. 4 (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2010), 56. While the only text here states that they are plowing the entire sky (*sk pt 3w*), the spell is associated with coming to the field of reeds and having all that one would want there. Here others are to do the plowing for you. See BoD 110 and BoD 6.

43. Later in the account, Appleby quotes from the *Times and Seasons* publication.

serpent with his tongue sticking out, but he also provides the explanation that this was a depiction of the serpent beguiling Eve. This accords with Cowdery's writings. The detail of the forked tongue indicates that Appleby, and thus probably Cowdery, were looking at one or more papyri we no longer have because the only legged serpent present on the extant papyri (see JSP V) has no visible tongue.

Charlotte Haven's Letter

This idea of the serpent on the papyri representing the one who beguiled Eve is strengthened by Charlotte Haven's writings. She visited Nauvoo in 1843 and gave detailed accounts of her visit in letters. She writes of Egyptian vignettes, one of which was interpreted as "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."⁴⁴ Again we see the association of the legged snake with the story of the Fall. Additionally, the scene described does not match the one depiction of a legged snake on the papyri fragments we currently have, which forms a strong suggestion that Cowdery, Caswall, and Haven are all describing a scene we no longer have (certainly Caswall and Haven are), an idea that is already indicated by the fact that Haven said the scene was on a roll, not one of the fragments.

Having gone through the pertinent accounts of what Joseph Smith said about the meanings of the noncanonical vignettes on his papyri, we are able to take the next step toward evaluating his views about his antiquities. We can now compare these historical accounts with modern academic ideas about the vignettes.

STEP THREE:

EXAMINING INTERPRETIVE CONGRUENCE AND DISSONANCE

It must be remembered that these accounts, for the most part, are recollections of what a few people thought Joseph Smith said about the vignettes on the papyri. It is difficult to determine how accurately these recollections reflect the Prophet's actual views. Some ideas, such as

44. Charlotte Haven to her mother, February 19, 1843, cited in "A Girl's Letters from Nauvoo," *Overland Monthly* (December 1890): 624. While Haven says this is an interpretation of hieroglyphics, her statement makes it clear she is describing a drawing, or vignette, rather than hieroglyphic text. The distinction between the two was often not made in the nineteenth century, nor is it made by many I talk with today.

Jacob's ladder and a serpent tempting Eve, are in enough sources over a long enough period of time that they at least represent what many thought Joseph Smith believed, and we have no record of his providing a corrective statement. Thus, at least some credence is probably due to those ideas, with less trust being put in other sources that do not have corroborating accounts.⁴⁵ With that tentative conclusion in mind, we can now examine these statements about the vignettes in light of current Egyptology. Doing so is somewhat problematic. As will be noted below, we are not sure that Joseph Smith was trying to tell us what ancient Egyptians would have thought of these drawings, and even if we were, we can only compare them to what Egyptologists say about them, rather than to what actual ancient Egyptians would have said.

This distinction is an important one. Because we have not performed a thorough Egyptological study of the meaning of these vignettes or of what would be a "standard" way of depicting them,⁴⁶ we cannot here perform a detailed examination of the vignettes from an Egyptological point of view. Instead we must be satisfied with a cursory survey, one which will highlight similarities and differences between a superficial academic explanation of the meanings of those drawings and Joseph Smith's purported explanations. A thorough study of each kind of drawing must be done in order for us to truly gain an understanding of the vignettes from an informed scholarly view and to distinguish how these particular vignettes may or may not differ from the norm. Again, given the current state of scholarship, we are very limited in our ability to compare Joseph Smith's interpretations with an Egyptological perspective. Moreover, we do not know that this is the correct comparison to make. Yet it is worth making this comparison, for it is the only one we are able to make.

45. See Kerry Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," in *Approaching Antiquity*, 459–60.

46. Mosher's unpublished dissertation is a very good starting point, but much more must be done in order to really understand the history of presentation and symbolism behind these vignettes. See Malcolm Mosher Jr., "The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead in the Late Period: A Study of Revisions Evident in Evolving Vignettes, and the Possible Chronological or Geographical Implications for Differing Versions of Vignettes" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1990). See also See Malcolm Mosher Jr., "Theban and Memphite Book of the Dead Traditions in the Late Period," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 29 (1992): 143–72.

With that caveat in mind, let us begin. From the present limited Egyptological point of view, the legged snake certainly would not represent the serpent who conversed with Eve in the Fall. We would usually say it was the *sa-ta* snake, a creature often pictured in the Book of the Dead, though its function is not well understood.⁴⁷ Presumably the snake is associated with the earth since its name literally means “son of the earth”⁴⁸ and because the text associated with this section of the Book of the Dead is about going forth from the earth on legs.⁴⁹ The serpent in the story of the Fall is also associated with the earth as part of its curse (Gen. 3:14). However, this is a weak connection given the natural tendency to associate the earth with an animal that lives in holes and slithers on the ground.

If Cowdery’s description of Enoch’s Pillar refers to JSP V, then this description also fails to square with an Egyptological interpretation, for this depiction looks like Ta-Sherit-Min, the ancient owner of the JSP V, standing in front of the hieroglyph for the city of Heliopolis.⁵⁰ Because we have no record of Josephus mentioning a pillar associated with Enoch,⁵¹ we have no way of determining whether the meaning Cowdery attached to this depiction would bear any similarity to Ta-Sherit-Min approaching Heliopolis. It seems unlikely that there would be a strong connection.

If Cowdery’s description of the Godhead is his interpretation of JSP IV, then he is speaking of that which appears to an Egyptologist as a typical representation of figures sitting next to each other. On this

47. See Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 48, 137; Mosher, “Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead,” 289–90; and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 177.

48. See Rainer Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch: (2800–950 v. Chr.): die Sprache der Pharaonen*, Kulturgeschichte der antiken Welt (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1995), 651, 912. Also John A. Wilson, “The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri, Translations and Interpretations: A Summary Report,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 2 (1968): 77; and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 177 n. 138.

49. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 74.

50. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 44; and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 178. See Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 495 (sign O28).

51. It seems likely that Cowdery was confused with a reference Josephus made to Adam’s pillars. See Lincoln H. Blumell, “Palmyra and Jerusalem: Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Texts and the Writings of Falvius Josephus,” in *Approaching Antiquity*, 355, 380.

fragment we see Ta-Sherit-Min facing three seated deities.⁵² In this case, Cowdery's interpretation bears a strong similarity to the Egyptological interpretation in that he identified a set of three deities acting in concert as the unified godhead. A Trinitarian association with Egyptian solar religion is a somewhat commonly held view by Egyptologists.⁵³ Nevertheless, this is not how most Egyptologists would describe this particular vignette.

From an Egyptological point of view the vignette depicted on JSP III, which is presumably the depiction described to Caswall as an emblem of redemption, is part of a judgment and presentation scene associated with Book of the Dead chapter 125.⁵⁴ A few of Caswall's descriptions bear similarities to Egyptological interpretations. One could term the vignette a redemption scene, since it represents the deceased successfully passing judgment and being presented triumphantly into the presence of deity. The figures Caswall described as the four quarters of the earth⁵⁵ did have an ancient association with the cardinal directions, though it was not their primary function.⁵⁶ Egyptologically, the "big dog" that was interpreted as wanting to devour the four quarters of the

52. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 56; Mosher, "Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead," 325; Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 192. See also Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 544, section C.

53. Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 192 n. 204.

54. Both Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, and Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 57, independently agree with this assessment. Presumably, this is the fragment John Gee referenced when he said there was a judgment scene associated with BoD 125 among the JSP. See John Gee, "Facsimile 3 and Book of the Dead 125," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian Hauglid (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005), 102. Gee, "Facsimile 3 and Book of the Dead 125," 95–101, provides an excellent description of what is typical and atypical in judgment scenes.

55. The judgment scene was initially associated with BoD 30B but came to be tied to BoD 125. Besides Gee's analysis of typical judgment scenes, as a point of comparison we will refer to six other judgment scenes, though a much larger study is necessary to determine what is truly standard for Book of the Dead depictions and what is unusual. In P. Ani (EA 10470/3), the four sons are present atop the lotus next to Osiris in a manner similar to JSP III, as also in P. Hunefer (EA 9901/3), and P. Nedjmet, though this is a very abbreviated weighing and judgment scene (EA 10541). However, the four sons are not in P. Anhai (EA 10472/4-5); or P. Kerasher (EA 9995/4); or P. Nebseny (EA 9900/4).

56. John Gee, "Notes on the Sons of Horus" (paper published by Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 33–34. These are the four sons of Horus, presented in the way they are traditionally depicted and labeled



Joseph Smith Papyrus IV. Courtesy Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

earth is a slightly unusual depiction of Ammut,⁵⁷ a creature whose role was indeed to devour.⁵⁸ Its association with Satan is also quite reasonable, since Ammut's role was to devour souls, bringing about a second and final death for them. This certainly mirrors Satan's desire and role from an LDS point of view.

However, there are some elements of the description that do not have any ready parallels with an Egyptological interpretation. While the figure behind Ammut has deteriorated, enough of it remains to make it fairly certain that Thoth is the Egyptian god depicted.⁵⁹ This is confirmed by the text in columns 6–9, where the name of the god is largely illegible, but the epithet, which includes being from Hermopolis (*hmnw*⁶⁰), Thoth's traditional origins, and being the scribe of the Ennead (*sš-m3't psdt*),⁶¹ is clearly about Thoth.⁶² One could make an argument that Thoth's role here, which is to record the results of the judgment that has just taken place, has a kind of parallel with Christ and the "Lamb's Book of Life" (Rev. 13:8; 21:27; D&C 132:19). But a parallel with the role of holding the devourer back from the four quarters of the earth is somewhat weak in this respect, though it does hold some plausibility.

as such in the text above. Columns 3–5 in the facsimile read, *ddmdw in ims[t] hpy dw3-mw.t=fqbh-sn=f*, which are the names of the four sons of Horus.

57. Ammut is present in P. Ani, P. Ankhwahibra (EA 10558/18), P. Kerasher, P. Hunefer, and P. Anhai; but is not in P. Nedjmet.

58. Again, both Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 57, and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, independently agree. See also Gee, "Facsimile 3 and the Book of the Dead 125," 100; Ian Shaw and Paul Nicholson, *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 30, 55; and Leonard Lesko, "Book of Going Forth by Day," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 3 vols., ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:195.

59. Again, both Rhodes *Books of the Dead*, 57, and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, independently agree. Gee, "Facsimile 3 and Book of the Dead 125," 100, outlines how regular it is to have Thoth depicted in this kind of scene. Thoth is present in P. Ani, P. Ankhwahibra, P. Kerasher, P. Hunefer, and P. Anhai; but he is not present in P. Nedjmet unless we take the small baboon as a representation of Thoth as scribe.

60. Column 9.

61. Column 9.

62. See Manfred Lurker, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 121, for a description of Thoth's Hermopolite connection and scribal role. On these roles and his association with the judgment scene, see Denise M. Doxey, "Thoth," in Redford, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 3:398–400.

While there is a Christian notion that recording the names of those to be exalted does prevent Satan from devouring all souls in every quarter of the earth (Rev. 20:8–12), Thoth is not typically thought of as playing that role, though his recording of a successfully passed judgment is indeed what prevents Ammut from devouring the deceased. Thus, there is a plausible parallel, but it is not as strong as those mentioned above.

The parallels are far weaker when it comes to what Caswall relates as Jacob, his wives, and his ladder. There are indeed three figures on the lower-right corner of JSP III. The genders of the figures do not fully match Caswall's description, but their appearance could be taken in the way he describes. In its Egyptological context, the woman furthest on the left is the goddess Ma'at, as is made clear by the role she plays, the text in column 10, and the hieroglyph above her head.⁶³ She is leading the center figure, Nefer-ir-nebu, the woman who is being judged,⁶⁴ and who is presumably the figure identified to Caswall as Jacob. Her depiction could be taken as a male. The papyrus is deteriorated and cut to the right of this figure, making it impossible to specifically identify the third person,⁶⁵ but it is almost certainly another accompanying goddess.⁶⁶ I suppose it is possible that the story of Jacob bringing his family to Bethel, the place where he came into God's presence, so that they could make a covenant with God, is a kind of parallel. It is not a very strong one. At the same time, I do not see any connection between any part of their clothing, or any other elements near them, and Jacob's ladder. While Jacob's ladder is about coming into the presence of God, which is what this scene is about Egyptologically, we would normally not associate the piece of clothing associated with the ladder as being emblematic

63. Again, both Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 57–58, and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, independently agree. Column 10 reads *dd mdw in m3:c.t s3.t r^c*, or “words spoken by Ma'at, daughter of Ra.”

64. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 57–58. The text in column 12 indicates this is who is represented: *nfr-ir-nbw*, or “Nefer-ir-nebu.”

65. In P. Anhai, Anhai is accompanied at the weighing of the heart by Horus, as is Hunefer. Kerasher is accompanied by Ma'at. Ankhwahibra is also accompanied by Ma'at. Nedjmet is accompanied only by her husband, Herihor. Ani appears to be escorted by Isis and Nephthys.

66. Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, suggests another representation of Ma'at while Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 59, suggests it might be Isis. The depiction does not make it possible to identify her, and it is not clear whether or not the text *ii.(t)hr m3:c.t*, or “coming bearing truth” is to be applied to this figure or is describing what Ma'at and Nefer-ir-nebu are doing.

of coming into the presence of deity. That being said, the left-most part of Nefer-ir-nebu's clothing has a ladder-like appearance.

After first having read the historical accounts related above in a cursory manner, I did not have the impression that there were any agreements between them and what my Egyptological training led me to see in these vignettes. Thus, I was surprised to find several Egyptological parallels as I studied more carefully. The parallels were more numerous and stronger than I had supposed they would be. Nevertheless, there is much in these accounts that, at the present time and with our present understanding, seems questionable. This is an important aspect to understand as we move toward creating a model for evaluating Joseph Smith's purported statements about antiquity.

FURTHER INTERPRETIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Before we begin to make such models, there are several more things to consider, for we must be cautious in examining the explanations of these vignettes. For example, the account related by Caswall, as noted above, is a thirdhand account of what Joseph Smith said a vignette represented. Thus we cannot put a great deal of trust in the validity of this account, especially when other parts of his recorded visit seem to be complete fabrication.⁶⁷ Furthermore, we cannot be sure it really was JSP III that was described to him. Still, the description matches this vignette closely enough and has enough parallels with Cowdery's accounts that we must address the probability that it is an accurate account of Joseph Smith's explanation of JSP III. It would be tempting for those with a believing perspective to aver that the elements that have Egyptological parallels were accurately described and those that do not were incorrectly related. I do not believe this is methodologically acceptable. It would be equally tempting for those with a nonbelieving point of view to dismiss the parallels while accepting as authentic the descriptions that have no such validation. This would be equally unacceptable. Thus, we must ask, what are we to do with an account that is ambiguous both in its reliability and its congruency with Egyptological explanations?

Similarly, Charlotte Haven's account relates a teenager's narration of what Lucy Mack Smith said that Joseph Smith said. Haven's writings at

67. Hugh Nibley, "The Greek Psalter Mystery or Mr. Caswall Meets the Press," in *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 304–406.

this point in her life⁶⁸ seem to be at least partially designed to poke fun at Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints. Thus she may be apt to exaggerate somewhat in her letters to her mother. Even if we were to assume that all that Lucy Mack Smith said was recorded fully accurately, which is improbable,⁶⁹ we cannot be sure that Joseph Smith concurred with the explanations conveyed by either Cowdery or Lucy Mack Smith. In fact there are a number of cases in which Mother Smith displays a tendency to somewhat exaggerate when speaking of the antiquities.⁷⁰ Thus Haven's description, while important, must be used with appropriate historian's caution.

At the same time, the various accounts agree on several particulars, such as a legged serpent representing a scene from the Garden of Eden, or scenes where Satan desires to destroy the earth. Moreover, when men like Appleby or Caswall made comments about the vignettes that were published as facsimiles with a printed explanation of them, their comments were congruent with that which Joseph Smith published. Taken together, these agreements suggest a certain amount of validity. How can we reconcile the important historical-critical questions we must ask about hearsay accounts with the evidence for their validity?⁷¹ Again we find ourselves asking how we can properly evaluate the historical validity of these accounts.⁷²

We should not address these questions in isolation. Similar issues help to put them in perspective. The most noticeable are the claimed identity of the mummies and of the handwriting on the papyri. Let us examine the accounts that convey information about these topics.

68. Her letters home become more evenhanded over time, but the account of her visit with Lucy Mack Smith contains an element of mockery.

69. On the overall reliability and some specific possible unreliabilities of Haven's account, see Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," 456–67.

70. On Lucy Mack Smith's possible exaggerations, see Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," 458–59, 463–65.

71. On employing historical method in this way, see Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 120; and Theodor Mommsen, "History and Literature," in *The Varieties of History: Voltaire to the Present*, ed. Fritz Stern (New York: Random House, 1973), 192.

72. On evaluating this, see Gee, "Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence of the Joseph Smith Papyri," 175–217.

INTERPRETIVE CONSIDERATIONS IN LIGHT OF STATEMENTS ABOUT MUMMIES AND AUTOGRAPHS IN THE SOURCES

While we have so far examined accounts that discuss the meanings attached to drawings, others attributed to Joseph Smith further ideas about the papyri. Many felt that he had said things about the identity of the mummies and about the handwriting on the papyri.

Signatures and Authorship

Several accounts of visits with Joseph Smith or his mother speak of whose handwriting was on the papyri. For example, S. M. Bartlett, who visited Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, reported that the Prophet showed him the papyri and said that “‘These ancient records,’ said he [Joseph Smith], ‘throw great light on the subject of Christianity. They have been unrolled and preserved with great labor and care. My time has been hitherto too much taken up to translate the whole of them, but I will show you how I interpret certain parts. There,’ said he, pointing to a particular character, ‘that is the signature of the patriarch Abraham.’”⁷³

We do not know if the papyrus fragment Joseph Smith was pointing to was one that we still have today. As discussed above, all of the extant fragments are from the Greco-Roman period, many centuries after Abraham’s day. It seems unlikely that whatever fragment the Prophet was highlighting was contemporary with Abraham. Thus, it is not probable that he was looking at an actual signature of Abraham, if by “signature” he means the actual handwriting of the patriarch.

The Autograph of Moses

Similarly, many years after Josiah Quincy visited the Prophet, he wrote something of the authors of the papyri, saying that the Prophet had shown him the papyri and told him, “This is the autograph of Moses, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron. Here we have the earliest account of the Creation, from which Moses composed the First Book of Genesis.”⁷⁴

As will be discussed shortly, the report of Moses’s or Aaron’s handwriting being on the papyri is probably inaccurate. Yet we should ask

73. S. M. Bartlett, “A Glance at the Mormons,” *Quincy Whig*, October 17, 1840, quotation marks added.

74. Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1892), 386.

ourselves what to make of it if it were. If we were to assume that Quincy quoted Joseph Smith correctly and assume that by “autograph” Joseph Smith meant the actual handwriting of Moses, then Joseph Smith would be claiming that some portion of the papyri he owned was written on by Moses, who lived about a thousand years earlier than any of the papyri we currently have were created.

However, Quincy’s account is somewhat problematic because he is the only one who recalls writings of Moses and Aaron being on the papyri. Additionally, we have no record of Joseph Smith translating anything from Moses after acquiring the papyri. This suggests either that Quincy did not remember the conversation well or that Joseph Smith never translated the portion about which he was speaking, nor did he speak of it often to others. Moreover, in reporting their experience, Quincy’s traveling companion used wording that is more similar to that in the Book of Abraham, stating that the book was written by the hand of Abraham,⁷⁵ rather than Quincy’s “autograph of Moses” statement, which casts further doubt on the validity of Quincy’s account. It is also important to note that of the sixty-nine times I know of a biblical character being associated with the papyri, this is the only time Moses or Aaron was mentioned. All of this strongly suggests that Quincy misremembered the names of the biblical personalities he had been told were on the papyri. It is far more likely that he was told that the writings of Abraham and Joseph were present.⁷⁶

Still, even if it were only the handwriting of Abraham that was thought to be on the papyri, it is most probable that the ink on the papyrus was not put there by Abraham himself (which is quite a separate issue from whether or not the text was originally authored by Abraham himself). What should be made of this?

Identity of the Mummies

A similar question is connected to the identity of the mummies. A number of accounts speak of who the mummies were. The earliest such mention is made by Oliver Cowdery in 1835, when he averred that they did not know the identity of the mummies, though they were sure none

75. See Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, “1 September 1843–19 May 1845,” May 15, 1844, Adams Family Collection, reel 67, Massachusetts Historical Society; Martin B. Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams, 1807–1886* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 92.

76. Muhlestein, “Joseph Smith’s Biblical Views of Egypt,” 460–65.

of them were Abraham.⁷⁷ In 1838, Joseph Smith also denied knowing the identity of the mummies.⁷⁸ The first time of which I am aware of the mummies being ascribed royalty is when a visitor to Quincy, Illinois, reported that Father and Mother Smith displayed the mummies while Joseph Smith was still in Liberty Jail and that they told this visitor that the mummies were royalty.⁷⁹

An account of a visit with Joseph Smith soon after this also speaks of the mummies being royal. S. M. Bartlett, who at the time of the visit was quite friendly toward the Latter-day Saints, described something of Joseph Smith's ideas about who the mummies were. "The embalmed body that stands near the centre of the case,' said he [Joseph Smith], 'is one of the Pharaohs, who sat upon the throne of Egypt; and the female figure by its side was probably one of the daughters.' 'It may have been the Princess Thermutis,' I replied, 'the same that rescued Moses from the waters of Nile.' 'It is not improbable,' answered the Prophet; 'but time has not yet allowed me fully to examine and decide that point.'"⁸⁰ This secondhand account of what Joseph Smith thought of the mummies' identities indicates that he thought one had been a king of Egypt and assumed, but was not sure, that one of the others was the daughter. He was clear that he did not know their exact identities. It is equally clear that Bartlett felt free to speculate on the identities and that his speculation tended toward the grandiose, since he immediately thought of one of the most famous father-daughter sets of Egyptian royalty. These ideas seem to have taken hold and are conveyed frequently thereafter.

From this point forward, we encounter more and more second- and thirdhand accounts describing the mummies as royalty. Seemingly what began as speculation experienced a steady progression in its circulation and acceptance.⁸¹ Eventually there was something of a widespread

77. Cowdery, "Egyptian Mummies," 233–34.

78. "History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838]," 675, on Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838?p=129>.

79. Henry Asbury, *Reminiscences of Quincy, Illinois, Containing Historical Events, Anecdotes, Matters Concerning Old Settlers and Old Times, Etc.* (Quincy, Ill.: D. Wilcox and Sons, 1882), 153.

80. S. M. Bartlett, "A Glance at the Mormons," *The Sun* (New York City), July 28, 1840, quotation marks added.

81. See Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," 462–63.

belief that the collection of antiquities in Nauvoo included the mummies of Egyptian kings.

There is one account from this time period that reports Mother Smith teaching that one of the mummies was the body of Abraham.⁸² Because in every other account Lucy Mack Smith spoke of the mummies being royalty, and because from the time of their acquisition the Saints had denied that any of the mummies were Abraham, this report seems unlikely to be accurate. This same account also states that a picture of Noah's ark was on the papyri. Again, while this is possible, it is unique among the accounts. On the whole, there are a number of dubious aspects about this report, so we are best served to rely on the consistency of the majority of accounts. Reports of royal mummies were consistent, while this account is fully unique. It is probable that the author of this account remembered things inaccurately. It is also quite possible that Lucy Mack Smith embellished as she showed the antiquities. She had reason to do so, and there are other times when it seems she may have.⁸³

I have already highlighted the improbability that the papyri contained the actual handwriting of Abraham. It is equally unlikely that any of the mummies were the remains of an Egyptian king, especially the king of the Exodus. If Lebolo had discovered a royal mummy and had known it, he almost certainly would have reported it as such and even more certainly would not have shipped it to be sold along with a cache of other mummies and papyri in such a nonchalant manner.

Furthermore, we can identify most of the royal mummies that are possible candidates for the pharaoh of the Exodus, and none of them were owned by Joseph Smith.⁸⁴ If any of his mummies had contained

82. A. W. Harlan, "Mormon Mummies: Remarkable Experiences of Mr. H[arlan] during a visit to Nauvoo, City of the Saints," newspaper clipping dated March 2 (no year and no publisher) found by John W. Welch in the Keokuk History volumes in the Keokuk Public Library, Keokuk, Iowa; digital photograph of clipping in author's possession.

83. See Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," 458, 463.

84. For summaries of the location of royal bodies, see Peter A. Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs, the Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 158, assuming that the Exodus took place sometime between the reigns of Hatshepsut and Merneptah. See also Aidan Dodson and Dyan Hilton, *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 127–83. On

the kind of lavish accoutrements and goods we would expect to accompany royalty, then it certainly would have been mentioned by some eyewitness at some point. While we can never fully rule out the possibility that the mummy of some king of Egypt reached Ohio in 1835, it is so improbable as to be a virtual certainty that none of the Smith mummies were royalty. It may not have seemed so unlikely to the people and culture of Joseph Smith's time and place, but today this seems implausible. While we do not know with certainty that Joseph Smith thought the mummies were royal, the idea became so widespread and was never corrected in any way, it seems quite likely that Joseph Smith at least somewhat accepted this point of view.

**STEP FOUR:
MODELS FOR DEALING WITH
CONGRUENCE AND DISSONANCE**

While we may not be able to sift through each individual account of explanations of the vignettes, identifying mummies, and assigning autographs with enough precision to know what aspects truly came from Joseph Smith or to what particular mummy or papyrus he was referring, the conglomerate mass of evidence suggests that Joseph Smith said many things that find good academic parallels, but also that he believed several things about his Egyptian artifacts that are not fully congruent with modern academic Egyptology. We must then decide how to deal with such information. Here we will explore several options

the dating of the Exodus, see Dan'el Kahn, "A Geo-Political and Historical Perspective of Merneptah's Policy in Canaan," in *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History Proceedings of the Conference held at the University of Haifa, 2–5 May 2010*, ed. Gershon Galil and others (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 255–68; M. G. Hasel, "Israel in the Merneptah Stela," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research (BASOR)* 296 (1994): 45–61; K. A. Kitchen, "The Physical Text of Merneptah's Victory Hymn (The 'Israel Stela')," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities (JSSEA)* 29 (1994): 71–76; James K. Hoffmeier, "What Is the Biblical Date for the Exodus? A Response to Bryant Wood," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS)* 50, no. 2 (2007): 225–47; Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II, King of Egypt* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1982), 70–71; and James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 116–21.

without attempting to explore every possibility.⁸⁵ As scholars continue to find, research, and analyze the evidence that bears on this subject, future studies will undoubtedly illuminate other theories that have not yet been conceived. Here we will cursorily explore what seem to be the most important possible theories.

Model One: No Inspiration

Each of these models purports a different perspective on Joseph Smith's revelations concerning the papyri. For those who approach the subject from a nonbelieving starting point, the answer is simple. Joseph Smith, like so many in his day, was excited about ancient artifacts and was imaginative in his approach to them.⁸⁶ He freely assigned his imaginative ideas to inspiration and touted them as absolutely true, which was then accepted by his followers. Thus, in this paradigm, Joseph Smith received no revelation at all.⁸⁷ This perspective would be equally applied

85. John Gee is working on a more exhaustive analysis of the many theories that might be used to explain Joseph Smith's explanations of the facsimiles. While I have spoken frequently with Gee about his work on these ideas and have made some small contributions to his thinking, and while I have read early drafts of some of his writings on this subject, here I am presenting ideas that I had before reading his work, though I have further refined and developed my thinking since then. There is no doubt that our oral and written conversations with each other have helped refine and improve my ideas, and I am grateful to John Gee for this. It should be kept in mind that I am responsible for the theories presented here, and any failing in either the idea or my ability to present it is not due to Gee or any others who work on this topic.

86. See John Gee's lecture at the 2013 Church History Symposium, found online at *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVAEC1wJFqY>; Kerry Muhlestein, "European Views of Egyptian Magic and Mystery: A Cultural Context for *The Magic Flute*," *BYU Studies* 43, no. 3 (2004): 137–48; Kerry Muhlestein, "Prelude to the Pearl: Sweeping Events Leading to the Discovery of the *Book of Abraham*," in *Prelude to the Restoration: From Apostasy to the Restored Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004), 130–41; and S. J. Wolfe and Robert Singerman, *Mummies in Nineteenth Century America* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2009), 96–133.

87. See, for example, Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 16. See also Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Case against Mormonism*, 2:159, 3:1–52; and Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Institute for Religious Research, 1992), 51, 199–226.

to the canonized interpretations of the Facsimiles and the text contained in the Book of Abraham. However, this approach fails to account for the many textual, geographic, historical, and interpretive accuracies conveyed in the book of Abraham and in Joseph Smith's explanations of its vignettes and those on the other papyrus fragments.⁸⁸ It also fails to deal with the real and valid revelatory epistemological experiences of millions of believers.⁸⁹ Ignoring such experiences as if they did not happen is as methodologically problematic as is ignoring other kinds of evidence. While a failure to deal with all of the evidence represents a real weakness, the strength of this model is that it explains any inaccuracies and offers a more simple explanation of some issues than those offered by scholars of a believing perspective. It is a simple enough hypothesis that I do not believe it needs further explanation here. All other options are more complicated.

Model Two: Complete Inspiration

Many who analyze the topic beginning with a believing point of view may conclude that Joseph Smith was fully inspired and correct in all of his ideas and interpretations about the mummies and papyri. This belief would lead to the conclusion that modern academic practice has failed to come to the point where it can produce this correct understanding through its own methods. This would suggest that we are incorrect in interpreting our evidence about royal mummies (if Smith held that

88. For a few of the many possible examples, see Kerry Muhlestein, "Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: Some Questions and Answers," 90–106; Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee, "An Egyptian Context for the Sacrifice of Abraham," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20, no. 2 (2011): 70–77; Kerry Muhlestein, "Abraham, Isaac, and Osiris-Michael: The Use of Biblical Figures in Egyptian Religion, a Survey," in *Achievements and Problems of Modern Egyptology*, ed. Galina A. Belova and Sergej V. Ivanov (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, 2011), 246–59; John Gee, "An Egyptian View of Abraham," in *Bountiful Harvest: Essays in Honor of S. Kent Brown* (Provo: Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2011), 137–56; John Gee, John A. Tvedtness, and Brian M. Hauglid, eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001).

89. See Steven C. Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision: A Guide to the Historical Accounts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 3–8, 121–24; and Kerry Muhlestein, "Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: A Faithful, Egyptological Point of View," in *No Weapon Shall Prosper*, 235–36.

point of view) and that we have either dated the papyri we now have incorrectly or that Joseph Smith was speaking of papyri we do not currently have and that such papyri were substantially older than those with which it was surrounded when it arrived in the United States.

The former (royal mummies) is possible, though it seems unlikely, at least to this academic author. The latter (older papyri) is also possible and seems somewhat more likely. We do not know if Lebolo was particularly systematic in grouping mummies and papyri together to be sold. There is no evidence that he felt the collections he intended to sell should contain only artifacts from the same time period, nor can we be certain that, even if he felt that way, he was capable of determining what time period various mummies and papyri came from. Furthermore, tombs from the area he was excavating were sometimes reused and thus had artifacts within them stemming from several eras of Egyptian history.⁹⁰ However, given the possibility that many of the fragments we now have may once have been part of the scrolls from which Joseph Smith seems to have translated,⁹¹ it appears more plausible that the papyri were all from the same time period.

When it comes to the text of the Book of Abraham and explanations of the vignettes, there are several other variables that must be taken into account. Regarding the text, one may postulate that it was written (or dictated) by Abraham and was passed down for generations without any changes or redactions, arriving in Kirtland in its pristine, original form. While God is undoubtedly capable of making this happen, it would be a singular occurrence in the history of even sacred texts,⁹² including

90. For example, the Soter family tomb in Thebes was used for many generations. At other times, tombs were reused by those who had no relation or claim to the former inhabitants, hundreds of years later. Nigel Strudwick has been working on this, as reported in "Use and Re-use of Tombs in the Theban Necropolis: Patterns and Explanations," paper presented at the 59th annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, Seattle Washington, April 25, 2008. See also Asunta Redford, "Theban Tomb 188 (the Tomb of Parennefer): A Case Study of Tomb Reuse in the Theban Necropolis" (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2006). As another example, the Tomb of Hawra (TT 37), a 25th dynasty tomb, was reused in the Ptolemaic era, a case that would not be dissimilar from what could be proposed in this paradigm.

91. For more on this, see John Gee, "Formulas and Faith," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 1 (2012): 64–65.

92. For surveys of the transmission process for the Old and New Testaments, see Frank Moore Cross, "The Text behind the Text of the Hebrew Bible,"

modern sacred texts.⁹³ Under this theory of a perfect text, seemingly anachronistic terms such as “land of the Chaldeans” (Abr. 1:1) are historically correct phrases and we need to revise our current academic understanding of their meaning and the history behind them.⁹⁴

While this theory is possible, it seems more likely that Abraham wrote (or dictated) the text of the Book of Abraham, which subsequently went through a transmission and redaction process similar to other ancient texts.⁹⁵ Any anachronisms present in the book of Abraham are similar to those in Genesis and have similar explanations.⁹⁶ Those things that do not currently have a plausible historical explanation will be understood when we are able to obtain and fully analyze all of the pertinent evidence, which may not happen in our time. In light of the fact that many things that once seemed academically unacceptable have since become fully reasonable due to good research,⁹⁷ this theory cannot be discounted.

Regarding the vignettes, we can postulate that Joseph Smith’s explanations illustrate how an ancient Egyptian in Abraham’s day would have interpreted those vignettes. As noted above, it is also possible that they are intended to explain how a Semite from Abraham’s day, such as Abraham himself, would have interpreted them. An alternative to this is the notion that the Prophet was explaining how an Egyptian living in the era when the papyri were created would have interpreted them, or perhaps

in *Approaches to the Bible: The Best of Bible Review*, ed. Harvey Minkoff, 2 vols. (Washington D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1994), 1:148–61; and Darrell Hannah, “New Testament Manuscripts: Uncials, Minuscules, Palimpsests, etc.,” in *Approaches to the Bible*, 1:205–11.

93. For one example of this in modern scripture, see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 1, 1 Nephi 1—2 Nephi 10* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004).

94. See John Gee and Stephen D. Ricks, “Historical Plausibility: The Historicity of the Book of Abraham as a Case Study,” in *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 71–72.

95. On the transmission and redaction process, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 199–285.

96. See K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 333–60. For a different point of view, see Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notely, *Carta’s New Century Handbook and Atlas of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2007), 33.

97. See, for example, Muhlestein and Gee, “Egyptian Context for the Sacrifice of Abraham,” 70–77.

a Jew of that day.⁹⁸ Perhaps it is an explanation that would have come from those in that era who were syncretizing these and other belief systems and thus producing symbolic interpretations that could be taken a number of different ways.⁹⁹ While this is a more nuanced approach that takes into account the complex intercultural relations that were the reality of that era, a reality that has produced a number of textual and pictorial elements that no one currently understands,¹⁰⁰ it is a theory that is impossible to prove or disprove. It can account simultaneously for all of those interpretive elements that have an Egyptological parallel and those that seem improbable given our current academic understanding. However, it does not account for the unlikely assignments of Abrahamic handwriting on the papyri and royal identification of the mummies. This model can allow for the idea that we may misunderstand what Smith meant when he reportedly said that the signature or autograph of Abraham was on the papyrus.

A third alternative regarding Joseph Smith's explanations of the vignettes that fits within this model is that the Prophet was not explaining what any ancient person would derive from the depictions, but rather was expressing the spiritual symbols and lessons and stories we should derive from them in our day. This is somewhat akin to biblical reception theory.¹⁰¹ In this case, regardless of whether an ancient Egyptian or Jew would have perceived Facsimile 1 to be a depiction of Abraham's near sacrifice, Smith provided us with an explanation that

98. Kevin L. Barney, "Facsimiles and Semitic Adaptation of Existing Sources," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, 107–30.

99. See Muhlestein, "Abraham, Isaac, and Osiris-Michael"; Csaba A. Lada, "Encounters with Ancient Egypt: The Hellenistic Greek Experience," in *Ancient Perspectives on Egypt*, ed. Roger Matthews and Cornelia Roemer (London: UCL Press, 2003), 157–70; Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). For more on the idea that Egyptians and those who lived within her boundaries would appropriate, reinterpret, and adapt the ideas of others, see *Evolving Egypt: Innovation, Appropriation, and Reinterpretation in Ancient Egypt*, British Archaeological Reports International Series no. 2397, ed. Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012).

100. John Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7, no. 1 (1995): 75–77; Terence DuQuesne, "The Raw and the Half-Baked: Approaches to Egyptian Religion," *Discussions in Egyptology* 30 (1994): 34.

101. See David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008).

conveys what we should get out of the story. Whether any ancient person would have seen part of Facsimile 2 as representing the conveyance of key words or JSP III as a representation of redemption is irrelevant because the Prophet was instead teaching what we should learn from those vignettes today. This theory can account for at least some of the elements of Joseph Smith's explanations that are in harmony with Egyptological interpretations because some symbols are universal enough, such as fierce-looking creatures wanting to devour things, that it is no surprise that a modern spiritual explanation matches an Egyptian religious one. It can also incorporate those elements of his explanations that do not find any ancient parallels because it does not purport to rely on ancient interpretations. However, when it comes to instances of Joseph Smith saying that hieroglyphs on the vignettes say something which is incongruous with modern Egyptological explanations (see Facsimile 3 and Joseph Smith's explanations of the text above the figures' heads), this theory can only suppose that Joseph Smith was not fully aware he was providing an explanation that was unique to modern times. In other words, Joseph Smith may have thought he was interpreting hieroglyphs when in fact he was providing an inspired, homiletic explanation that was independent of its Egyptian origins. This holds a common element with the next model and will be explored more fully below.

Model Three: Partial Inspiration

Both of the earlier paradigms disallow Joseph Smith the ability to have both inspiration and personal opinions or ideas about any of the ancient artifacts in his possession. The first model suggests that if Joseph Smith is wrong about anything he is wrong about everything, an idea that must be based on the notion that he could not express an incorrect opinion about anything and still be a prophet. In other words, Joseph Smith did not have the right to be wrong. The second model also assumes he never uttered personal opinions on all these matters. This view also presupposes that he did not have the right to be wrong because it assumes that everything spoken about the papyri was inspired of God. There is another approach that someone with a believing perspective might take that does not rest on these presuppositions.

Model Three proposes that God inspired Joseph Smith in matters that concerned important doctrinal concepts but not in all things, not even in all things connected with the ancient artifacts about which he did receive some revelation. Under this paradigm, when Joseph Smith followed through with his ideas to the point of official publication, he

was inspired. This does not mean that each text will not have its own textual history, with the possibility of anachronisms and human error creeping in. Even Book of Mormon writers admitted that their flaws were apparent in the record (see Ether 12:23–25), and Joseph Smith called that book the “most correct,”¹⁰² not the “completely correct” book. An inspired idea does not mean it is free from human frailties. Thus, under this model, ideas Joseph Smith followed through on are likely products of inspiration and should be taken as such.

Those elements in these categories that have not yet found academic corroboration are presumed by those who subscribe to this model to be the fault of either the academy or our understanding of what Joseph Smith really meant or said, and these things will be corrected as we learn more, whether in this life or the next.

However, in this model one does not assume the same to be true for those things the Prophet did not see through to official publication, for in these cases he may have been allowed to exercise his own human musings, however able or flawed they may have been.¹⁰³

To fully understand this paradigm, we must explore two elements: the idea that the Prophet was not infallible, which, in turn, creates the need for a method of discerning his prophetic inspiration from his human opinions.

While Latter-day Saints do not hold a doctrine of infallibility for the leader of their church, it is sometimes hard to know exactly how to sift through this notion in regard to its founding prophet.¹⁰⁴ This concept, then, bears some exploring. I have written elsewhere that I do not think we fully understand or appreciate the scope and richness of the revelatory life of Joseph Smith.¹⁰⁵ My evidence-based belief¹⁰⁶ that his

102. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* (Salt Lake City: Kraut's Pioneer Press, 1982), November 28, 1841.

103. Brian M. Hauglid, “The Book of Abraham and the Egyptian Project: A Knowledge of Hidden Languages,” in *Approaching Antiquity*, 476, has also recently written of Joseph Smith engaging in both sacred and profane (or mundane) activities concurrently.

104. See Robert L. Millett, “What Is Our Doctrine?” *Religious Educator* 4, no. 3 (2003): 15–33.

105. Kerry Muhlestein, “One Continuous Flow: Revelations Surrounding the ‘New Translation,’” in *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context*, ed. Andrew Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2008), 40.

106. By this I mean both intellectual and spiritual evidence.

experience with the divine was more expansive than Latter-day Saints or others often realize or can relate to, because our own experiences are so limited in comparison to what he reports, also suggests that we may not be able to fully evaluate how much the Prophet was or was not inspired in all things. Believers do have some principles that can guide them as they attempt to assess this issue.

Some of these principles are provided by Joseph Smith himself, who once taught that “a Prophet is a Prophet’ only when he is acting as such.”¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere, he spoke of a man who met him and declared “that I was nothing but a man: indicating by this expression that he had supposed that a person to whom the Lord should see fit to reveal his will, must be something more than a man, he seems to have forgotten the saying that fell from the lips of St. James, that Elias was a man of like passions like unto us, yet he had such power with God that He in answer to his prayer, shut the heavens that they gave no rain for the space of three years and six months.”¹⁰⁸

Other LDS prophets and apostles have spoken of this idea. Quoting an old adage, David O. McKay affirmed that “when God makes the prophet He does not unmake the man.”¹⁰⁹ Bruce R. McConkie writes, “The opinions and views, even of a prophet, may contain error, unless those opinions and views were inspired by the Spirit.”¹¹⁰ Gordon B. Hinckley explained about his prophetic predecessors, “We recognize that our forebears were human. They doubtless made mistakes. . . . There was only one perfect man who ever walked the earth. The Lord has used imperfect people in the process of building his perfect society. If some of them occasionally stumbled, or if their characters may have

107. “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1, 21 December 1842–10 March 1843,” 170, on Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-1-21-december-1842-10-march-1843?p=178>).

108. “Journal, 1835–1836,” 20, on Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-1835-1836?p=21>; see also Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” 21.

109. David O. McKay, in *Seventy-eighth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1907, 11; Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” 21.

110. Bruce R. McConkie, “Are the General Authorities Human?” address delivered at the Institute of Religion Forum at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, October 28, 1966, cited in Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” 21. I am grateful to Brent Top, who brought this to my attention.

been slightly flawed in one way or another, the wonder is the greater that they accomplished so much.”¹¹¹ One of those predecessors, Harold B. Lee, taught, “There have been times when even the President of the Church has not been moved upon by the Holy Ghost.”¹¹² J. Reuben Clark, speaking specifically of Joseph Smith, taught that “not always may the words of a prophet be taken as prophecy or revelation, but only when he, too, is speaking as ‘moved upon by the Holy Ghost.’”¹¹³ Even Paul spoke of seeing through a glass darkly, implying an unclear vision (1 Cor. 13:12). He also said that “we know in part, and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor. 13:9).¹¹⁴ Elder D. Todd Christofferson recently said, “It should be remembered that not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine. It is commonly understood in the Church that a statement made by one leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, not meant to be official or binding for the whole Church.”¹¹⁵

With these principles in mind, believers, informed by their own revelation of Joseph Smith’s prophetic ability, can appreciate that amazing outpouring of heavenly inspired revelation that flowed to the Prophet while at the same time acknowledging that he was not inspired in all things at all times. Could it be that what he described as an “overflowing surge”¹¹⁶ of revelation actually made it difficult for him to tell when his own thoughts were caught up and carried along with that surge? The volume of revelation Joseph Smith received about things of the ancient world may have made him more prone to interest in, excitement about,

111. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Continuing Pursuit of Truth,” *Ensign* 16, no. 4 (1986): 5; Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” 22.

112. Clyde J. Williams, ed., *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 542.

113. “When Are the Writings and Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture,” address by J. Reuben Clark Jr. to Seminary and Institute Personnel, given at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, on July 7, 1954, 12. I am grateful to Scott Esplin for pointing me toward this source.

114. I am grateful to John Gee for pointing out this reference in connection with this section of the paper.

115. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign* 42, no. 5 (2012): 88.

116. “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843,” 144, on Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843?p=152>.

and speculation regarding ancient things than were others of his day. We should not be surprised that in a culture so saturated with interest in antiquity that a man who had visited with resurrected ancient beings, had handled a number of ancient objects, and had been blessed to receive inspiration regarding ancient texts would be wont to speculate about all things ancient.

With that understanding, some common assumptions held by believers can be thought through and perhaps dropped. For example, why should we assume that if Joseph Smith was inspired to know that some papyri contained the writings of Abraham and Joseph of Egypt¹¹⁷ that he would also be inspired to know that (at least some of) the papyri themselves were written somewhere between about 300 and 200 BC?¹¹⁸ Why would Joseph need to know that? If Joseph did not receive direct inspiration about the age of the papyri, it is logical that he would assume that the papyri were contemporary with Abraham. Are we safe in assuming that the Lord would reveal to Joseph Smith that the original text of what he was translating came from Abraham, but the handwriting belonged to someone else? If so, should we then presume that the Lord would also then reveal how transmission, transcription, redaction, papyrus production, burial preservation, and other ancient processes associated with the manuscript worked?

Moreover, if Joseph Smith knew he had the writings of Abraham and Joseph, and if he knew or suspected that these writings did not take

117. "History, 1838–1856, volume B-1," 676.

118. On dating the Horos papyri (JSP I, X, XI), see Marc Coenen, "The Dating of the Papyri Joseph Smith I, X, and XI and Min Who Massacres His Enemies," in *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years, Part II. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur*, ed. Willy Clarysse, Antoon Schoors, and Harco Willems (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1998), 1103–15; Robert K. Ritner, "The 'Breathing Permit of Hôr' Thirty-Four Years Later," *Dialogue* 33, no. 4 (2000): 99; Marc Coenen, "Horos, Prophet of Min Who Massacres His Enemies," *Chronique d'Égypte* 74, no. 148 (1999): 257–59; John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000), 25–27; and John Gee, "History of a Theban Priesthood," in «*Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages . . .*» *Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine. Actes du Colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 2 et 3 Décembre 2005*, ed. Alain Delattre and Paul Heilporn, *Papyrologica Bruxellensia* vol. 34 (Bruxelles: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 2008), 67–69. On dating the Tshemmin and Neferirnebu papyri, see Michael D. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 7–11.

up all the papyri, it is logical that he would assume there were writings from other great biblical figures present as well. Correspondingly, such biblical awareness creates the natural assumption that legged snakes were a depiction of the Garden of Eden story, for it was not until after the eating of the fruit that the serpent was told it would go about on its belly. In consequence of these assumptions, Joseph Smith might have spoken ebulliently about them, caught up in the excitement he was already prone to in regards to ancient artifacts and in his own love for biblical writers. Others who were products of that same culture would also presumably be caught up in that same excitement as they heard Joseph Smith speak about it, and thus their own writings reflect something of a combination of both parties' excitement. This would only be further compounded by Joseph Smith's mother. Most mothers perceive their children's qualities and abilities in a way that exceeds the perspectives of less passionate observers. Moreover, Lucy Mack Smith would make a living off of the wonder and curiosities of everything surrounding this Egyptian collection. These two elements must have influenced the presentations she made to her eager listeners. As noted above, she may not have been the most reliable guide as to what was on the papyri.

Under this paradigm, we cannot safely assume that God would reveal to Joseph Smith the identity of the mummies he had come to own. Nor can we assume that God would provide inspired correction to any incorrect ideas and assumptions the Prophet or others may have been making about those. Do we know if it would matter to the Divine Creator that his prophet had some incorrect ideas about Egyptian antiquities? If so, then should we expect that he would also provide inspired correction to any false ideas about physics, geography, or history that the Prophet had developed? Or, should we rather expect that on most matters God allows us to stumble along the path of our natural progression? And if this latter is the case, should we expect that a love of biblical stories and an excitement about antiquities would create speculations and assumptions about the connection between the Prophet's artifacts and the stories about which he had been revealing more? Given that the Lord had previously brought important religious artifacts to the Latter-day Saints, it was natural for them to assume that it was continuing to happen with every aspect of the Egyptian find. From their perspective, why wouldn't the pharaoh of the Exodus find its way to Latter-day Saint hands? And if they made this assumption, and it was mistaken, under this paradigm we do not need to make another mistaken assumption by presuming that God would tell Joseph Smith he had made such a mistake.

My own experience in both ecclesiastical and teaching settings suggests that most Latter-day Saints sometimes find great difficulty in being able to discern true inspiration from their own wants and desires. As we seek answers to prayers and divine guidance, we are usually on guard against confusing the two, attempting to filter out the heavenly inspired ideas from those that are generated by our own mundane thinking. While sometimes inspiration comes clearly and unmistakably, at other times it is less distinguishable. Proponents of Model Three would suggest that it was similar for the Prophet Joseph Smith. Is it possible that after receiving inspiration about the meaning of some Egyptian vignettes, the Prophet started to think about other depictions on the papyri? For example, after learning through inspiration that four figures represented the four cardinal directions on some of the drawings, when Joseph Smith saw similar figures on JSP III, it seems plausible that he assumed it meant the same thing. He might then start to wonder what else that drawing meant and immediately begin to see important principles that could be conveyed by the drawings. In similar circumstances, who wouldn't assume that a creature that looked like it wanted to eat things was not a representation of the great devourer? Given all of this, would Joseph Smith not be apt to see a ladder-shaped portion of the drawing and have his mind immediately turn to Jacob's ladder, especially since he said that at least some of the papyri were concerned with Jacob's grandfather and some with his son?

From a fully believing perspective, it still seems quite plausible that Joseph Smith was inspired about matters and artifacts that his followers needed to understand and that he simultaneously had his own ideas about other ancient artifacts. Conceivably, the difference between the two was not always immediately apparent to him. Perhaps sometimes even Joseph Smith needed to determine what was inspired and what was mundane. Those who adhere to this theory might ask us to allow Joseph Smith space to work out what is inspiration and what is not, arguing that revelation is sometimes a process and that we must allow Joseph Smith to work through that process. If this is the case, what would that process look like?

Exploring this notion naturally raises an important question for those who may espouse it: how would we know when Joseph Smith was operating under inspiration from heaven and when he was excitedly caught up in his own thoughts? Stated otherwise, does a prophet have the right to speculate, and, if so, how do we determine what is speculation and what is not? Here, in an effort to move an important dialogue

forward, I propose one tentative suggestion. Perhaps Joseph Smith himself has given us at least a partial guide as we navigate this question, a guide that serves as the second premise necessary to understand Model Three as it is proposed here.

Joseph Smith once gave official instructions to the Church regarding baptisms for the dead. He explained that he was writing to Church members regarding this issue because “that subject seems to occupy my mind, and press itself upon my feelings the strongest” (D&C 128:1). This principle seems to have guided the Prophet as he tried to determine which of his thoughts and ideas were from God.¹¹⁹ While Joseph Smith spoke and wrote of many topics, not all occupied his mind so persistently or pressed themselves upon his feelings so strongly that he sought to spread them to all the Saints. In other words, the Lord may have let Joseph Smith know which ideas were truly inspired by continually pressing them on his thoughts and feelings until he knew that he had to convey them through writing to the Saints. Ideas that originated with Joseph Smith rather than God would naturally and eventually fall by the wayside as God guided him toward efforts to publish abroad the things of God. Furthermore, even true ideas that were not to be prioritized at this time would similarly drop out of the spotlight. This suggests that an appropriate paradigm for determining whether the Prophet meant for us to take something as inspired and prophetic or not would hinge on whether or not he sought to spread it abroad to the Saints, particularly through writing, revising, and attempting to publish.¹²⁰ If prophetic leaders following him have felt to do the same about his writings or teachings, then we can again assume they were revelations from God, and that now is the time for them to receive prioritized attention, as happened when Doctrine and Covenants 137 was moved into the canon.

This model exacerbates the dilemma briefly posed when exploring Model Two. It seems possible that as Joseph Smith sifted through the thoughts that came to him in regards to the papyri, learning which were really inspiration and pursuing them, he may not have always been fully

119. For others who have written about this idea as a guide for perceiving revelation, see L. Lionel Kendrick, “Personal Revelation,” in *Ensign* 29, no. 9 (1999), 6–13; and also Jay E. Jensen, “Have I Received an Answer from the Spirit?” in *Ensign* 19, no. 4 (1989): 20–25.

120. Something close to this has been suggested by Brian M. Hauglid in “Did Joseph Smith Translate the Kinderhook Plates?” in *No Weapon Shall Prosper*, 100–101.

aware of what was from God and what was not as he passed through each stage of working with the papyri. It may be possible that he knew how to interpret certain drawings but was not aware that he was assuming that interpretation was conveyed in the writing on the drawing. As he received revelation about how to translate the papyri, he may not have always been fully aware of exactly what portion of the papyri he was translating. He even might have received inspiration for textual material he needed to convey that was not on that particular set of papyri, somewhat akin to the process he went through while translating the Bible. As we compare the various accounts of how he translated the Book of Mormon with accounts of how he translated the Bible, and even parchments he saw in vision,¹²¹ it becomes clear that any number of processes may have been combined as he translated the Book of Abraham and interpreted the facsimiles. We cannot assume that the Lord felt it necessary to make sure his prophet knew which characters on the papyri were yielding which meanings, or even if sometimes meanings were coming from characters not present. As mentioned above, Mother Smith certainly felt her son could translate material that was not on the papyri. In the end, Model Three suggests that we must be careful about all assumptions we make regarding the experience Joseph Smith had with the antiquities in his possession.

This paradigm does not speak to whether or not the published interpretations of the facsimiles are supposed to be representations of how ancient Egyptians would have regarded them in various eras, or how ancient Semites from any of those same time periods would have interpreted them, or whether they represent what we should learn from these drawings in our day. In this way, Model Three possesses the same strengths and weaknesses that the various subsets of Model Two does. In a similar manner, it answers such questions as to how Joseph Smith could have produced place names or interpretations of ancient drawings that seem to be either confirmed or made highly plausible by the academic process. It likewise leaves us with some challenging unanswered questions. However, it differs from Model Two in that many potentially troubling questions can be largely dismissed, such as those regarding the identification of handwriting on the papyri, the explanation of drawings not in the Pearl of Great Price, and the identification

121. See the heading for Doctrine and Covenants 7.

of mummies, as well as ideas about the Kinderhook Plates,¹²² the identification of American artifacts as belonging to Lamanites,¹²³ and other matters Joseph Smith did not repeatedly pursue. Under this paradigm, these matters are no longer important. While to the nonbeliever this approach may seem terribly convenient because it explains away so many “problematic” issues, it is at the same time logical and guided by reasonable premises. Moreover, it is not as convenient as it may initially seem because the published translations, explanations, and revelations have always been the major focus of both critics and believers. This paradigm leaves us in the position members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have always held—namely, that confirmation of Joseph Smith’s prophetic calling will be neither proved nor disproved by the mind, but rather through the same kind of inspiration he claimed to receive (see Moro. 10:4).

Those who come from a believing perspective can hold to either Model Two or Three and find them compatible with the assurance they have received through their own revelatory experiences. Those who subscribe to either of these models would likely agree with me as I agree with Wilford Woodruff, who said, “There is not so great a man as Joseph standing in this generation. The gentiles look upon him and he is like a bed of gold concealed from human view. They know not his principle, his spirit, his wisdom, his virtue, his philanthropy, nor his calling. His mind, like Enoch’s, expands as eternity, and only God can comprehend his soul.”¹²⁴

CONCLUSION

None of these proposed models can account for all of the evidence regarding the Joseph Smith collection of antiquities and the recorded statements about them. At present, no theory, whether from a believing or an unbelieving perspective, can do so adequately. It is hoped that as we continue to find more evidence, better analyze the evidence

122. Again, see Hauglid, “Did Joseph Smith Translate the Kinderhook Plates?” 93–103.

123. For example, see Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The Zeph Story,” *BYU Studies* 29, no. 2 (1989): 35–56.

124. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal History of the Church*, April 9, 1837, available online at https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE482906, image 49.

we already have, question our assumptions, and further explore these ideas and theories, we will come closer and closer to a hypothesis that is acceptable to those from many perspectives and that more fully accommodates the evidence. Here some initial ideas have been presented in an attempt to advance the conversation. What is clear is that we need to continue the dialogue, and we need to do so in an appropriate, educated, and open manner, working with all points of view and being transparent about those points of view in an attempt to better understand this interesting issue.

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