

Egyptology and the Book of Abraham

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IN THE ENTRY ON THE FACSIMILES from the Book of Abraham in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we are told that "the Prophet's explanations of each of the facsimiles accord with present understanding of Egyptian religious practice."¹ This is a remarkable statement in view of the fact that non-Mormon Egyptologists who have commented on Joseph Smith's interpretation of the facsimiles uniformly agree that his interpretations are not correct from the perspective of the Egyptologist, who attempts to interpret Egyptian religious literature and iconography as he or she believes the ancient Egyptians would have. For example, in the famous pamphlet compiled by the Reverend Spalding in 1912, James H. Breasted, the first person to hold a chair devoted to Egyptology in America, stated, "Joseph Smith's interpretation of [the facsimiles] . . . very clearly demonstrates that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization."² More recently, Klaus Baer, speaking of Joseph Smith's interpretation of the original of Facsimile 1 and the accompanying text, noted that "the Egyptologist interprets it differently, relying on a considerable body of parallel data, research and knowledge."³

The matter which I propose to examine is whether the "present understanding of Egyptian religious practice" supports Joseph Smith's explanations of the facsimiles found in the Book of Abraham. In addition, I will discuss the contribution which a study of Egyptian history can make to our understanding of the nature of this book of scripture.

1. M. Rhodes, "Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. D. H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992), 1:136-37.

2. F. S. Spalding, *Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator* (Salt Lake City: The Arrow Press, 1912), 26-27.

3. K. Baer, "The Breathing Permit of Hor," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2 (Summer 1968): 133.

Let us begin with Facsimiles 1 and 3 of the Book of Abraham. A correct understanding of the original context and purpose of these scenes has been made possible by the recovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri from the files of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1967.⁴ Within this group of papyri is the original from which Facsimile 1 was derived. A study of the papyri shows that PJS 1 was originally a vignette belonging to an Egyptian funerary text known as the First Book of Breathings, dating to the first century B.C., portions of which are also among the papyri recovered by the LDS church. A comparison of the material found in some of the Kirtland (Ohio) Egyptian papers with PJS 1 and 11 indicates that the scene was damaged when Joseph Smith received it and that the missing portions were restored when Facsimile 1 was created.⁵ It is also very probable that Facsimile 3 served as the concluding vignette of this text. This conclusion is based on the fact that the name of the individual for whom this particular copy of the Book of Breathings was prepared occurs as Horus in both P. JS 1 and Facsimile 3, that Facsimiles 1 and 3 are similar in size,⁶ and that scenes similar to Facsimile 3 also occur in other known copies of the First Book of Breathings.⁷

The First Book of Breathings is an Egyptian funerary text whose earliest attestation is the end of the 30th Egyptian Dynasty (ca. 380-343 B.C.). This text was buried with the deceased and was intended to serve as a sort of "passport and guide" to achieving a blessed state in the hereafter. This involved the continued existence of the deceased in the company of Osiris, king of the Netherworld, and with the sun-god Re in his celestial bark.⁸ As a first step in achieving these goals, the deceased had to undergo the proper rituals of mummification. Papyrus Joseph Smith 1 (Facs. 1 in Abr.) depicts the god Anubis (Fig. 3 in Facs. 1)

4. See the interviews with A. Atiya and H. G. Fischer in "The Facsimile Found: The Recovery of Joseph Smith's Papyrus Manuscripts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2 (Winter 1967): 51-64.

5. Baer, "Breathing Permit," 129-33. See also E. Ashment, "The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham," *Sunstone* 4 (1979), 5-6:33-35. Ashment carried out an extensive study of the original of Facsimile 1 and restored it based on traces found on the papyrus and Egyptian parallels. See his "The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham," 33-38. I believe this restoration to be correct, other than the empty hand of Anubis. Based on parallel scenes, I would add a *nw-jar* in his hand. See, for example, N. de G. Davies, *The Temple of Hibis in el-Khargeh Oasis*, Part III: The Decoration (New York: MMA, 1953), pl.3, reg. 5, no.20.

6. According to Baer ("Breathing Permit," 127), a comparison of P. JS 1 with Facsimile 1 shows that this facsimile was reproduced life-size, indicating that Facsimile 3 probably reproduces accurately the size of the original.

7. Baer, "Breathing Permit," 127. For a parallel to Facsimile 3 found in a Book of Breathings, see P. Tübingen 2016, published in E. Brunner-Traut and H. Brunner, *Die ägyptische Sammlung der Universität Tübingen* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1981), pl. 12-13.

8. J.-C. Goyon, *Rituels funéraires de l'ancienne Égypte* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1972), 197.

officiating in the embalming rites for the deceased individual, Horus (Fig. 2 in Facs. 1), shown lying on the bier. This scene does not portray a sacrifice of any sort. To note just a few instances in which Joseph Smith's interpretations of these figures differ from the way they are to be understood in their original context, consider the fact that Figure 11 (in Facs. 1), which Joseph interprets as "designed to represent the pillars of heaven, as understood by the Egyptians," is actually a palace façade, called a *serekh*, which was a frequent decoration on funerary objects.⁹ The *serekh* originally depicted "the front of a fortified palace . . . with its narrow gateway, floral tracery above the gates, clerestories, and recessed buttresses."¹⁰ Furthermore Joseph interpreted Figure 12 (Facs. 1) as "raukeyang [a transliteration of the Hebrew word for firmament], signifying expanse or firmament over our heads; but in this case, in relation to this subject, the Egyptians meant it to signify Shaumau [another Hebrew word], to be high, or the heavens, answering to the Hebrew word Shaumahyeem [another Hebrew word]." In fact, these strokes represent water in which the crocodile, symbolizing the god Horus (Fig. 9 in Facs. 1), swims.¹¹ Although it appears that the water is supported by the palace façade, this is simply an illusion produced by the perspective adopted in Egyptian art. Actually, everything shown above the façade is to be understood as occurring behind it, i.e., Figure 11 represents the wall surrounding the place in which the activity depicted in the scene occurs.

Baer has described Facsimile 3 (in Abr.) as "a summary, in one illustration, of what the [text] promised: The deceased, after successfully undergoing judgement, is welcomed into the presence of Osiris."¹² Facsimile 3 shows the deceased, Horus (Fig. 5), being introduced before Osiris, the god of the dead (Fig. 1), by the goddess Maat (Fig. 4) and the god Anubis (Fig. 6). Osiris's wife, Isis (Fig. 2), stands behind him. That Figure 6 is to be identified as Anubis I consider a virtual certainty, owing

9. For examples of the *serekh* decoration on funerary objects, see A. J. Spencer, *Death in Ancient Egypt* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 172-73, fig. 69 (Spencer refers to the decoration as "palace-façade panelling"); M. Saleh and H. Sourouzian, *Official Catalogue: The Egyptian Museum Cairo* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987), nos. 268, 178, 179; and S. D'Auria, P. Lacovara, and C. Roehrig, *Mummies & Magic: The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1988), no. 143, pp. 196-97. For discussions of the meaning and origin of the design, see R. H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd, 1992), 148-49. Stephen Quirke notes that this motif "embodies defense," see his *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 146.

10. M. Rice, *Egypt's Making: The Origins of Ancient Egypt, 5000-2000 B.C.* (London: Routledge, 1991), 59.

11. See Baer, "Breathing Permit," 118n35. For Horus in the form of a crocodile in the Osiris-myth, see G. Möller, *Die beiden Totenpapyrus Rhind des Museums zu Edinburgh* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1913), 78-79n42.

12. Baer, "Breathing Permit," 126-27.

to the fact that he is black (which is the customary color of Anubis) and because of the spike found on his head, which is actually the remnant of a dog's ear. In my opinion, none of Joseph Smith's interpretations of the figures in these scenes accord with the way in which the ancient Egyptians probably understood them.

So if this is the way the ancient Egyptians would have interpreted these figures, how can the statement be made that the prophet's explanations of each of the facsimiles accords "with present understanding of Egyptian religious practice"? First, it is important to note that the originals of these facsimiles of the Book of Abraham were created for a specific purpose, to provide for the successful transition of an individual to the afterlife upon his death. Every figure in the facsimiles had as its purpose the accomplishing of that goal. While it is possible that some of these figures might appear in other contexts, and take on other meanings in those contexts, in the context of the funerary papyri their interpretation is related to funerary purposes. The approach taken in attempting to support Joseph's interpretations of these figures is to compare them with figures found in other historical and textual contexts. It is simply not valid, however, to search through 3,000 years of Egyptian religious iconography to find parallels which can be pushed, prodded, squeezed, or linked in an attempt to justify Joseph's interpretations.¹³

For example, there has been an effort made to associate Facsimile 1 with an Egyptian royal festival known as the Sed festival, whose purpose was "the symbolic renewing of the power of the kingship."¹⁴ Nibley has claimed that "in [the Sed-festival] the king is ritually put to death and then restored to life. An important part of the Sed festival was the choosing of a substitute to die for the king, so that he would not have to undergo the painful process to achieve resurrection."¹⁵

There are serious obstacles which render this comparison invalid. First, there is the element of time. The last known depiction of the Sed

13. This is the approach taken in many of the apologetic treatments of the Book of Abraham. See, for example, H. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book Co., 1981), and "The Three Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham" (Provo, UT: FARMS, n.d.), as well as James Harris, "The Book of Abraham Facsimiles," in R. Millet and K. Jackson, eds., *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 2, *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985), 247-86, and *The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham, A Study of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri* (Payson, UT: by the author, 1990), and M. Rhodes, "The Book of Abraham: Divinely Inspired Scripture," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* (henceforth RBBM) 4 (1992): 120-26. Recently, Daniel Peterson has summarized much of the information found in these works in his "Notes from Antiquity," *Ensign* 24 (Jan. 1994): 16-21.

14. J. Gohary, *Akhenaten's Sed-festival at Karnak* (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1992), 1. See also J. G. Griffiths, "Royal Renewal Rites in Ancient Egypt," in his *Atlantis and Egypt* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 173-76.

15. Nibley, "Three Facsimiles," 4.

festival dates to 690-664 B.C.,¹⁶ and there is no evidence that the Sed festival was celebrated during the Greco-Roman period,¹⁷ the time during which P. JS 1 was created. Second, it is important to note the context in which these supposed parallels occur. Scenes of the Sed festival occurring in a private context, i.e., on an object belonging to a non-royal individual, are extremely rare, and I know of none which occur in funerary papyri. Third, the so-called "lion-furniture" scenes from the Sed festival bear no resemblance to the scene in P. JS 1.¹⁸ Finally, it should be noted that, while early generations of Egyptologists thought that the Sed festival involved the ritual murder of the king or his representative, more recent analysis has shown this is not the case.¹⁹ So even if the scene were derived from earlier depictions of the Sed festival, it would still have nothing to do with the sacrifice of anyone.

Nibley has compared Facsimile 3 (in Abr.) with scenes from Eighteenth Dynasty (1550-1295 B.C.) Egyptian tombs depicting the tomb owner in the presence of the King, since Joseph Smith claims that the scene shows Abraham "reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy, in the King's court." Comparison of these two types of scenes runs into many of the same obstacles as the attempt to equate Facsimile 1 with the Sed festival scenes. There is a gap of over 1,000 years between the two types of scenes being compared. Nibley attempts to get around this by stating that this is a "timeless scene recognizable from predynastic monuments on down to the latest times."²⁰ He cites no evidence which sub-

16. E. Hornung and E. Staehlein, *Studien zum Sedfest*, *Aegyptiaca Helvetica* 1 (Basel: Ägyptologisches Seminar der Universität Basel, 1974), 40-41.

17. K. Martin, "Sedfest," in W. Helck and E. Otto, eds., *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, 6 vols. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975-86), 5, 784, and J. Gohary, *Akhenaten's Sed-festival at Karnak*, 8. This lexicon, hereafter referred to as *LÄ*, can be consulted for the Egyptological abbreviations used in this essay.

18. Compare the lion-furniture scenes from the reliefs of Niuserre at Gurob and the reliefs of Osorkon II at Bubastis. For the former, see W. Kaiser, "Die kleine Hebseddarstellung im Sonnenheiligtum des Neuserre," *BÄBA*, Heft 12, Falltafel 4, 2d row, and for the latter see E. Naville, *The Festival Hall of Osorkon II in the Great Temple of Bubastis* (London: EES, 1892), pl. 2, 4-9. Gohary notes that "due to its apparent position near the start of the festival and the choice of furniture used, it seems most likely that [the lion-furniture sequence] is some kind of purification ceremony." See Gohary, *Akhenaten's Sed-festival*, 11 and 19.

19. Note, for example, the following comment of J. G. Griffiths from *The Origins of Osiris and His Cult* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), 209: "But no longer can it be believed that the king took on the guise of Osiris in this festival, nor is the sacrifice of a royal deputy, or indeed of any human being, attested for it." See the entire discussion on pp. 208-11, and the comments in the following: D. Lorton, "Towards a Constitutional Approach to ancient Egyptian Kingship," *JAOS* 99 (1979): 461n3; V. A. Tobin, *Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 97-98; R. Leprohon, review of Tobin, *Theological Principles*, in *JSSA* 17 (1987): 201; and Gohary, *Akhenaten's Sed-festival*, 1-2.

20. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 118.

stantiates this claim. The work²¹ which Nibley relies on in making his comparison does not discuss any examples of such scenes from the period from which the Joseph Smith papyri derive. In fact, the scenes with which Nibley wishes to compare Facsimile 3 are atypical when viewed from the perspective of the history of Egyptian tomb decoration.²² It is also significant that the type of scene with which Nibley wishes to compare Facsimile 3 does not occur in funerary papyri. Comparison of Facsimile 3 to this type of scene is as spurious as that of Facsimile 1 with Sed festival scenes.

In addition to invalidating comparisons made between the facsimiles and other genres of Egyptian texts, attention to the original context of the facsimiles also serves to settle an on-going debate about whether Figure 3 in Facsimile 1 originally held a knife. Before the discovery of the papyri it was argued if this knife was original or if it was added by Joseph Smith.²³ With the discovery of the original of Facsimile 1, it became apparent that Joseph indeed was the source of the "restoration" of the knife, as demonstrated by Ashment.²⁴ There continue to be attempts, however, to argue that a knife was originally present based on accounts from individuals who saw the papyri in Kirtland or Nauvoo.²⁵ The question never asked in arguments for the original presence of a knife is what would the knife have meant in its original, funerary, context. As stated earlier, Facsimile 1 represents the deceased individual, Horus, lying on a bier undergoing the rites of mummification by the god Anubis. While part of the mummification process did involve evisceration, I am aware of no instance in which this procedure is de-

21. A. Radwan, *Die Darstellungen des regierenden Königs und seiner Familienangehörigen in den Privatgräbern der 18. Dynastie*, MÄS 21 (Berlin: Verlag Bruno Hessling, 1969).

22. Vandier has noted that, while the desire to attract the king's attention and praise had always existed among Egyptian officials, "this natural ambition was only exteriorized, one could almost say displayed, during the period of the reign of the Thutmoside and Amenophis kings." He further notes that, from the Ramesside period, "the repertoire of the tombs, with fortunate exceptions, became almost exclusively funerary." See J. Vandier, *Bas reliefs et peintures: scènes de la vie quotidienne*, Manuel d'archéologie Égyptienne, vol. 4 (Paris: Éditions A. et J. Picard et cie, 1964), 536.

23. See S. A. B. Mercer, "Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian," *The Utah Survey* 1 (1913), 1:19.

24. Ashment, "Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham," 36.

25. See J. Gee, review of Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus*, in *RBBM* 4:102-103, where Gee argues that a knife must have been original because if it had been otherwise the witness would have mentioned it. The quote, from Henry Caswall, reads in part: "pointing to the figure of a man lying on a table, he [the Mormon guide] said, 'That is the picture of Abraham on the point of being sacrificed. That man standing by him with a drawn knife is an idolatrous priest of the Egyptians.'" Caswall does not state what he saw or did not see, simply what the "Mormon guide" told him.

picted.²⁶ Given the Egyptians' reticence in depicting things which might be harmful to the deceased in his tomb,²⁷ it is unlikely that an Egyptian would ever wish himself depicted being approached by a god with a knife. Knives are usually found in the hands of demons, protective deities such as Bes and Thoeris (who were the Egyptian god and goddess responsible for protecting women during childbirth), the doorkeepers in the afterworld, and the devourer in the scenes of the judgement of the dead.²⁸ I know of no instance in which Anubis is depicted with a knife.²⁹ The original context of Facsimile 1 would not seem to admit the possibility of a knife in Anubis's hand, and the restoration of a knife does not, in my opinion, represent the original state of the papyrus.

Facsimile 2 is a drawing of an Egyptian funerary amulet known as a hypocephalus, which was placed under the head of the mummy and was intended to protect the head of the deceased, provide him with the sun's life-giving warmth, and to make it possible for him to join the sun god Re in his celestial boat, and thereby insure his continued, pleasant existence in the next life. Hypocephali are attested in Egypt during the Late Period and the Ptolemaic period. The interpretation of Facsimile 2 poses more of a challenge to Egyptologists, and therefore is a more fruitful ground for those seeking to justify Joseph Smith's interpretations of the figures in this facsimile. The challenge arises from the fact that many of the figures in the hypocephalus are not labeled and can only be tentatively identified through citing parallel illustrations and allusions in other texts. In interpreting the figures in the hypocephalus, Egyptologists rely on the fact that "the image of the hypocephalus presents the rising from the Duat, the rebirth of the deceased with the sun, the scenes are rich illustrations of Ch. 162 of the Book of the Dead."³⁰ Concerning Joseph Smith's interpretations of the figures in this facsimile

26. Muhammed has noted that in New Kingdom tombs "the elaborate process of mummification was never represented" (M. A. Muhammed, *The Development of the Funerary Beliefs and Practices Displayed in the Private Tombs of the New Kingdom at Thebes* [Cairo: Antiquities Department of Egypt, 1966], 172), and Sandison has noted that there are no detailed depictions of mummification from ancient Egypt (A. T. Sandison, "Balsamierung," *LÄ* I, col. 611).

27. Consider the practice of the deliberate mutilation of hieroglyphs to prevent them from harming the deceased. Spencer has noted that "the Egyptian belief in the ability of any image or representation to possess magical powers" led to the practice of "mutilating" the hieroglyphs which depicted potentially harmful creatures (scorpions, snakes, birds). At times, even "objects placed in the tomb were . . . deliberately broken in order to 'kill' them before they went to accompany the deceased" (Spencer, *Death in Ancient Egypt*, 156-57).

28. W. Helck, "Messer," *LÄ* 4, col. 113.

29. See Baer, "Breathing Permit," 118n34.

30. E. Varga, "Le fragment d'un hypocephale égyptien," *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-arts* 31 (1968): 12.

ile, it has been stated that "his explanations are, in general, reasonable in light of modern Egyptological knowledge."³¹ A comparison of Smith's interpretations with current Egyptological scholarship shows that this statement is also incorrect.

For example, Figure 5 is identified by Joseph Smith as "Enish-go-on-dosh," which he claims "is said by the Egyptians to be the sun." This figure actually depicts the celestial cow-goddess known as *Ih.t-wrt*, or *Mh.t-wrt* (the great flood), or Hathor. Varga has identified this figure as "the most important in a hypocephalus."³² These goddesses were thought of as the mother of Re, the sun-god, with *Mh.t-wrt* representing the flood from which he arises daily. It is important to note that, while this figure is associated with the sun, i.e., as the mother of the sun-god, it is never equated with the sun. The sun is always a masculine deity in Egyptian religion. Joseph Smith's interpretation might be adjudged close by some, but in my opinion it cannot be judged as "generally correct."

As another example of the attempt to justify Joseph's interpretations of the figures in this facsimile, note Facsimile 2, Figure 4, which has been claimed to be an instance in which the prophet "hits it right on the mark."³³ The explanation given in the Book of Abraham notes that this figure "answers to the Hebrew word Raukeyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament of the heavens, also a numerical figure, in Egyptian signifying one thousand."

Admittedly, certain identification of this figure is not possible with the information currently available to the Egyptologist. Varga originally identified the figure as the god Sokar,³⁴ but later resorted to the more vague description of "the mummy of a falcon with outspread wings."³⁵ The problem is that this figure does not match exactly the iconography of any known falcon god, i.e., mummiform with outspread wings.³⁶ One suggestion is that this figure is to be identified with the falcon who rises from the Duat in Book of the Dead spell 71.³⁷

When attempting to evaluate the correctness of Joseph's explanation of the figure, it should be noted that there is no evidence that the ancient Egyptians ever depicted the sky (firmament of the heavens) as a ship of

31. Rhodes, "Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham," 136.

32. Varga, "Fragment d'un hypocéphale," 11.

33. M. Rhodes, "Divinely Inspired Scripture," 125-26. See also Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 38-39, and Harris, *Facsimiles*, 70n36.

34. E. Varga, "Le travaux préliminaires de la monographie sur les hypocéphales," *Acta Orientalia Hungaricae* 12 (1961): 237.

35. Varga, "Fragment d'un hypocéphale," 10.

36. See H. Altenmüller, "Falke," *LA* 2, 94.

37. See R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, ed. C. Andrews (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1985), 71. The fact that this falcon is depicted in this vignette in the presence of *Mh.t-wrt*, who is also found in the hypocephalus, strengthens this possibility.

any sort.³⁸ In order to get around this, Mormon apologists dissect the wings of the bird in the ship and compare them with depictions of the sky as outspread wings. Rhodes identifies the bird in Figure 4 as Horus-Sokar and claims that "Horus was a personification of the sky."³⁹ It should be pointed out, however, that Joseph's interpretation of the figure apparently applies to the whole figure, not to only a part of it. I can see no justification for removing a part of the figure and then claiming to find interpretations which can be forced to agree with Joseph's explanation.

In order to support Joseph's identification of this figure as the number 1,000, reference is made to a supposed Egyptian "ship of 1000" found in a passage from a sarcophagus dating to the Egyptian 26th Dynasty. There we find the expression *wi3.f n h3 r tpyw.fy*, which Sander-Hansen renders as "seinem Schiffe der 1000 bis zu seinen beiden Köpfen"⁴⁰ (his ship of 1,000 up to its two heads). In Sander-Hansen's discussion of the passage, he notes that he understands this phrase to mean a ship 1,000 cubits in length. This text is a later version of *Book of the Dead* Spell 136a. Recent translators have recognized that *h3* in this phrase does not refer to the number 1,000, but to the word *h3* meaning flowers or buds.⁴¹ T. G. Allen, in his translation of the *Book of the Dead*, renders the phrase as "the bark with blossom(s) at its ends,"⁴² and Faulkner, in his translation, renders it as "the bark . . . which has lotus-flowers on its ends."⁴³ In connection with this spell, Milde notes that "lotus-shaped prows are very common in various vignettes."⁴⁴ In other words, there is no Egyptian

38. E. Hornung, "Himmelsvorstellungen," *LÄ* 2, 1215-17. Nibley claims that the Egyptian word *h3-b3.s*, "a thousand are her souls," which referred to the starry sky, could be written with a boat determinative, and cites *Wb.* 3, 230, noting that this word "is written with the ideogram of a ship." Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 38. This is not true. *Wb.* 3, 230 does not give an example of *h3-b3.s* written with the determinative of a ship, and I can find no examples of such a writing.

39. Rhodes, "Divinely Inspired Scripture," 126.

40. C. E. Sander-Hansen, *Die religiösen Texte auf dem Sarg der Anchnesneferibre* (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1937), 37-38.

41. That some ancient Egyptian scribes understood the text this way is obvious from the fact that one added the determinative of flowers to the word *h3* in one copy of the text. See T. G. Allen, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead Documents in The Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago*, OIP 83 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 221 n.f.

42. T. G. Allen, *The Book of the Dead or Going Forth by Day*, SAOC 37 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1974), 111.

43. R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 124. Note also the translation of E. Hornung (*ein Barke mit Lotos-Bug*) in *Das Totenbuch der Ägypter* (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1979), 263. P. Barguet prefers the translation "*barque recourbée à son extrémité*." See his *Le livre des morts des anciens égyptiens* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967), 178. He calls this translation "*peu sûre*" (n5). For a discussion of this translation, see T. G. Allen, *Book of the Dead Manuscripts*, 221, n.f.

44. H. Milde, *The Vignettes in the Book of the Dead of Neferenpet*, *Egyptologische Uitgaven*, 7 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1991), 112.

"ship of 1000," only a ship with lotus-shaped prows.⁴⁵ And all this is quite beside the point. Joseph in his explanation of the figure in the facsimile said that it was "also a numerical figure, in Egyptian signifying one thousand." It was not. There is no evidence that any ship was ever used as a numerical figure to represent 1,000 or any other number. It should also be noted that of those who wish to equate the figure from the facsimile with the so-called "ship of 1000," none has ever produced an image of this ship and then compared it to the facsimile. It is simply assumed that if a ship of 1,000 can be found in an Egyptian text, it must be the one Joseph Smith was talking about.

Finally, it has been repeatedly claimed that Figure 6 in Facsimile 2, which is a depiction of the four sons of Horus (also found as Figures 5-8 in Facsimile 1) "could indeed 'represent this earth in its four quarters' in the ancient world, as the explanation to the facsimile in the Book of Abraham says."⁴⁶ As far as ancient Egypt was concerned, there is no evidence currently available to support this claim. There is only one context in which the sons of Horus are associated with the cardinal directions, i.e., the "earth in its four quarters." They were sent out, in the form of birds, as heralds of the king's coronation. In this setting, Duamutef (Facs. 1, Fig. 6) went to the East, Qebehsenuf (Facs. 1, Fig. 5) to the West, Amset (Facs. 1, Fig. 8) to the South, and Hapi (Facs. 1, Fig. 7) to the North.⁴⁷ I must emphasize that it is *only* in this context, and in the form of birds, that these gods were associated with the cardinal points. In a funerary context no such relationship is evident. Furthermore, the fact that these gods were *sent* to the four quarters of the earth does not mean that the Egyptians *equated* them with these directions. There is no evidence that they did so.⁴⁸

AUTHORSHIP

One area in which the field of Egyptology aids our understanding of the nature of the Book of Abraham is in its authorship. On one hand, it

45. This passage from the *Book of the Dead* has antecedents in the Egyptian *Coffin Texts*, which are funerary texts which were carved on the sides of wooden coffins from the Middle Kingdom (or First Intermediate Period). See *Coffin Text* spell 1030 (A. De Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, vol. 7, OIP 87 [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961], 259,b), which L. Lesko (*The Ancient Egyptian Book of Two Ways* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972], 13), translates as "two lotuses at its ends." For a differing translation ("*une barque, dont une myriade est à sa tête (avant) et une myriade à sa tête (arrière)*"), see P. Barguet, *Les textes des sarcophages égyptiens du Moyen Empire* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1986), 622 and n5.

46. Peterson, "News from Antiquity," 18. See his references in n6 on p. 21.

47. M. Heerma van Voss, "Horuskinder," *LÄ* 3, 53.

48. In D. Kessler, "Himmelsrichtungen," *LÄ* 2, 1213-15, the gods who were equated with the cardinal directions are discussed. The sons of Horus are conspicuous by their absence.

has been claimed that the Book of Abraham is an actual Abraham holograph. Recently, Paul Hoskisson stated that "the content of the Book of Abraham did not pass through numerous revisions, the hands of countless scribes. . . . It purports to be a rendering of an ancient document originally composed by Abraham himself," and as such he maintains that the Book of Abraham cannot contain anachronisms, i.e., things that could not have occurred during Abraham's lifetime.⁴⁹ Others have argued that while the contents of the text might in some way go back to Abraham, Abraham himself was not the author of the text of the Book of Abraham as it now stands in the Pearl of Great Price.⁵⁰ In view of the fact that the heading of the Book of Abraham in the current edition of the Pearl of Great Price states that the text represents "the writings of Abraham . . . written by his own hand, upon papyrus," I believe it is likely that many members of the church believe that the Book of Abraham is the result of a translation of a direct Abraham holograph.⁵¹

One way to judge whether the Book of Abraham was translated directly from an Abraham holograph is by whether the text of the book contains anachronisms. Of course, the first thing that has to be determined is when Abraham lived. The answer to this is by no means simple, and scholarly estimates for the age of the patriarchs range from 2200 to 1200 B.C.⁵² Many scholars maintain that it is not possible to define a time-period as the most likely setting for the tales of the patriarchs.⁵³ Others would argue that while it is not possible to assign a date to the lifetime of Abraham, it is possible to situate chronologically the so-called "Patriarchal Age." Many scholars would place this sometime during the first half of the second millennium, i.e., 2000-1500 B.C., while others would nar-

49. P. Hoskisson, "Where was Ur of the Chaldees?" in H. D. Peterson and C. D. Tate, Jr., eds. *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, Religious Studies Center Monograph Series, vol. 14, (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 130. See also H. D. Peterson, "The History and Significance of the Book of Abraham," in Millet and Jackson, *Studies in Scripture*, 2:175-76. There is evidence that Joseph Smith believed that he was in possession of an Abraham holograph. Josiah Quincy reported that in 1844 Joseph pointed out to him the "handwriting of Abraham" on the Egyptian papyri (quoted in John A. Larson, "Joseph Smith and Egyptology: An Early Episode in the History of American Speculation about Ancient Egypt, 1835-1844," in D. Silverman, ed., *For His Ka: Essays Offered in Memory of Klaus Baer*, SAOC 55 [Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1994], 172).

50. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 3-7; B. Ostler, "Abraham: An Egyptian Connection," Preliminary Report (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1983).

51. Whether this holograph was ever in Joseph Smith's possession is another matter.

52. According to internal Bible chronology, Abraham departed for Canaan in 2091 B.C. See P. K. McCarter, "The Patriarchal Age," in H. Shanks, ed., *Ancient Israel* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1988), 2. The LDS Bible Dictionary gives 1996 B.C. as the birth of Abraham. See "Chronology," 636, of the Dictionary.

53. C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36 A Commentary*, trans. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 74. McCarter would concur, noting that "it seems impossible to determine the time period in which [Abraham] lived" (McCarter, "Patriarchal Age," 21).

row the time frame within this period.⁵⁴ In our search for anachronisms it would be safe to say that anything occurring after 1500 B.C. is definitely anachronistic to Abraham's lifetime, and since Abraham is portrayed as the first patriarch, anything occurring at the end of this period is probably anachronistic.

What then are the anachronisms which I believe can be identified in the Book of Abraham? First, the association of Facsimile 1 with the Book of Abraham cannot derive from Abraham, since Facsimile 1 dates to approximately 100 B.C.⁵⁵ There are passages in the text of the Book of Abraham which are attributed to Abraham and which refer to Facsimile 1 (Abr. 1:12, 14). The most straightforward reading of these passages indicates that Abraham himself was responsible for the association of Facsimile 1 with his own attempted sacrifice. The book opens with Abraham speaking in the first person (v. 1), and there is no reason to think that the "I" in verse 12, where we read "I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record," refers to anyone except Abraham.⁵⁶ These passages are unquestionably anachronistic to Abraham's day.

Second, there are several proper nouns in the text of the Book of Abraham which also postdate Abraham. I will consider them in the order of their occurrence in the text.

The first such term, Chaldea, occurs in Abraham 1:1, and subsequently verses 8, 13, 20, 23, 29-30, and 2:4. The Chaldeans (Hebrew *kašdîm*) were a people who spoke a West-Semitic language similar to Aramaic and who appeared in the ninth century B.C. in the land south of Babylonia, and appear to have migrated from Syria. Westermann has noted that the city of Ur could be qualified as "of the Chaldees" only from the tenth to the sixth centuries, in any case, not before the first millennium.⁵⁷

The second anachronistic word we encounter in the text is Pharaoh.⁵⁸ In Abraham 1:6 we find "Pharaoh, king of Egypt." In Abraham 1:20 we are told that Pharaoh "signifies king by royal blood." There is one passage in which the term is treated as a name, rather than as a title. In Abraham 1:25 we read "the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham."

The word Pharaoh derives from an Egyptian term for the king's palace, which in Egyptian could be called *pr-c3*, i.e., great house. This term is not attested as a title for the ruler of Egypt until 1504 B.C., during the

54. C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-50*, *Erträge der Forschung* 48 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 73.

55. K. Baer, "Breathing Permit," 111.

56. The same is true of Abr. 1:14, where we read "that you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning."

57. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 66. See also N. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 98.

58. As suggested by E. Ashment, in "Making the Scriptures 'Indeed One in Our Hands,'" in D. Vogel, ed., *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 258n44.

reign of Thutmosis III, but was probably used as such earlier in the Eighteenth Dynasty (which began in 1560 B.C.).⁵⁹ It has been suggested that Pharaoh was simply Joseph's method of translation for a word meaning king, and that the word never actually occurred in the text. I would reiterate that in Abraham 1:25 Pharaoh appears to be used as a proper noun. That Joseph considered Pharaoh to be an individual's name is apparent from his explanation of Facsimile 3, Figure 2, where we read "King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his head."⁶⁰

The next anachronistic word encountered is the name of the place of the attempted sacrifice of Abraham, which is called "Potiphar's hill" (Abr. 1:10, 20). Potiphar is the Hebrew form of the Egyptian name, *P3-di-p3-r*, which means "the one whom Re (the sun god), has given." The name occurs in two forms in the Old Testament, as Potiphar, the name of the Egyptian who bought Joseph (Gen. 37:36), and as Potiphera, the priest of On, who was Joseph's father-in-law (Gen. 41:45). Names of the form *P3-di DN* are common in Egypt, but are first attested during the eleventh century B.C.⁶¹ The only occurrence of the Egyptian equivalent of Potiphar is found on Cairo stele 65444, which dates to the Egyptian 21st dynasty (1069-945 B.C.).⁶²

The final anachronistic name in the Book of Abraham is Egyptus. In Abraham 1:23 we read: "The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden." First, Egyptus is not a Chaldean word, but Greek, and does not mean "forbidden" in any language. The Greek "Egyptus" apparently derives from Egyptian *ḥwt-k3-ptḥ*, "the house of the ka of Ptah," which was the name of a temple of Ptah in Memphis. During the New Kingdom this term came to designate the town of Memphis, the capital of Egypt, in which the temple was located.⁶³ There is some evidence that forms of this name were being used by foreigners to refer to the country of Egypt. It is

59. D. Redford, "Pharaoh," *ABD* 5, 288-89, and J. Osing, "Pharao," *LÄ* 4, col. 1021.

60. Joseph's understanding of Pharaoh seems similar to that of Josephus, who states that "Pharaoh, in the Egyptian tongue, signifies a king, but I suppose they made use of other names from their childhood; but when they were made kings, they changed them into the name which, in their own tongue, denoted their authority" (*Antiquities*, 8, 6, 2, from the Whiston translation, which was available to Joseph Smith [see R. Paul, "Joseph Smith and the Manchester (New York) Library," *Brigham Young University Studies* 22 (1982): 349, and K. Sandberg, "Knowing Brother Joseph Again: The Book of Abraham, and Joseph Smith as a Translator," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22 (Winter 1989): 32]). Joseph Smith's use of Pharaoh in the Book of Abraham seems to me to parallel the use of Nephi as a sort of throne name (Jacob 1:14). Pharaoh appears to have been the name of the first ruler of Egypt (Abr. 1:24), and then the name of subsequent kings (Abr. 1:20).

61. D. B. Redford, "Potiphar," *ABD* 5, 426-7.

62. Redford, in *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 424, and *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, SVT 20 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 228-29, and A. Schulman, "On the Egyptian Name of Joseph: A New Approach," *SAK* 2 (1975): 238, 243.

63. C.-M. Zivie, "Memphis," *LÄ* 4, col. 25.

attested in a Mycenaean Linear B tablet from Knossos, which is usually dated to around 1375 B.C., i.e., 125 years after Abraham, as a man's name, presupposing that it was already a name for Egypt.⁶⁴ Note also that the text (Abr. 1:22-25) implies that Egypt derived its name from an eponymous ancestor, Egyptus.⁶⁵ Given the facts concerning the origin of the word Egyptus, however, this cannot represent historical reality.

From the foregoing discussion it appears that if one accepts a date of sometime in the first half of the second millennium for Abraham, then there are four anachronistic names in the text, Chaldea, Potiphar, Egyptus, and probably Pharaoh. Since these are names, it is not likely that they are translation equivalents of other words in the original text. I believe that there is sufficient evidence of anachronisms in the text of the Book of Abraham to conclude that it cannot be an actual Abraham holograph, i.e., that it was not "written by his [Abraham's] own hand upon papyrus."

HISTORY

One of the primary events of the Book of Abraham is the attempted sacrifice of Abraham. We are told that in the land of the Chaldeans the "god of Pharaoh," which apparently should be taken to mean "the god Pharaoh," was worshipped (Abr. 1:7, 9-10, 13, 17).⁶⁶ There was even a priesthood dedicated to the worship of pharaoh, and this priesthood offered human sacrifices to him. We are told that a "thank-offering" was offered consisting of a child (v. 10), and that three "virgins" were killed on the sacrificial altar because they "would not bow down to worship gods of wood or of stone" (v. 11). Finally, the priest of Pharaoh attempted to sacrifice Abraham, at which point the Lord intervened, rescued Abraham, and destroyed the altar and the priest (vv. 15-20).

From this we can infer several things. Apparently Pharaoh and sev-

64. See M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 136. The date of the Knossos tablets has been debated. The excavator, Evans, assigned these tablets to approximately 1400 B.C. Later, Palmer redated these texts to circa 1150 B.C., a date which was not widely accepted. More recently, Hood has argued that these texts should be dated around 1375 B.C., or perhaps a bit later. See R. F. Willetts, *The Civilization of Ancient Crete*, 2d ed. (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1991), 101, 140. This date of 1375 B.C. seems to be the one generally accepted by scholars (see J. T. Hooker, *Linear B: An Introduction* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1980), 20, par. 28). On the Mycenaean form of this name, see also R. Steiglitz, "The Eteocretan Inscription from Psychro," *Kadmos* 15 (1976): 85, and M. Astour, *Hellenosemitica* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 340.

65. This idea also finds a parallel in Josephus. In *Against Apion*, book 1, sec. 15, we read: "The country also was called from his name Egypt: for Manetho says that Sethosis himself was called Egyptus, as was his brother Armais called Danaus" (Whiston's translation).

66. That "god of Pharaoh" should be taken to mean "the god, Pharaoh" is suggested by the fact that "god of Elkenah" apparently means "the god, Elkenah," since in Abraham 1:7 we find a "priest of Elkenah," and not a "priest of the god of Elkenah," which we would expect if Elkenah were simply a personal name and represented an individual who worshipped a particular god.

eral other Egyptian deities were being worshipped in Chaldea. We are not told specifically that the other gods were Egyptian, but we are told that the worship practices were “after the manner of the Egyptians” (Abr. 1:9, 11), and the images which are said to represent these gods are Egyptian (v. 14). We can therefore plausibly infer that they were Egyptian deities.⁶⁷

67. John Lundquist has attempted to equate the names which Joseph Smith gave to the deities represented in Figures 5-8 of Facsimile 1 with names for Sumerian deities found in a list of names of such gods published by A. Deimel. He suggests that Elkenah corresponds to Sumerian *Il-gi-na* (the raised *d*, for *dingir*, indicating a divinity, has been omitted from this and the following names), Libnah to *La-ban*, Mahmackrah to *Ma-mi-hi-rat*, and Korash to *Kur-ra-su-ur-ur* (“Was Abraham at Ebla?” 232-33).

There are problems with the methodology used to arrive at these equations. First, Deimel’s readings of these names cannot always be trusted. For example, the name which Deimel read as *Ma-mi-hi-rat* is actually to be read *ma-mi-šar-ra-at* (see A. Deimel, *Pantheon Babylonicum* [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1914], #2042, and E. Sollberger, *Ur Excavation Texts 8, Royal Inscriptions*, pt. 2 [London: British Museum, 1965], 19, #86). *Ma-mi-šar-ra-at* is actually not a god’s name, but the name of a canal which connected the Tigris and Euphrates rivers with the sea (see D. O. Edzard, “Mami-šarrat,” in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, ed. D. O. Edzard et al. [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988], 7:329, and Sollberger, 19). The divine element in this name is *Mami*, a Sumerian mother-goddess (see J. J. M. Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon: A Study of the Semitic Deities Attested in Mesopotamia before UR III* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972], 43-44). The name translates as “Mammi is queen.” There is no deity *Ma-mi-hi-rat*. This illustrates one of the problems which can arise when one randomly compares names in a list of deities with those found in the Book of Abraham. When attempting to correlate a particular Near Eastern god with one mentioned in the Book of Abraham, four conditions must be met: (1) the correspondences between the names have to be reasonably explained on phonological grounds (in my opinion, Lundquist’s *Ma-mi-hi-rat* and *Kur-ra-su-ur-ur* fail this test); (2) whether a cult of the god existed must be determined; (3) the date and location of the practice of this cult need to be determined and then compared with the likely dates and locations for Abraham; and (4) occurrences of the name in material available to Joseph Smith must be ruled out as a possible source before the name can be claimed to be derived from the ancient text Joseph was supposedly translating. Until these criteria are met, any equivalences proposed between ancient divine names and those found in the Book of Abraham are simply sloppy guesswork and carry no probative weight.

It should be noted that parallels to the divine names in the Book of Abraham can be found much closer to home. The name *Libnah* occurs several times as a place name in the Old Testament (see F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexikon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980], 526), *Elkanah* is a personal name borne by eight individuals in the Old Testament (see R. Youngblood, “*Elkanah*,” *ABD* II, 475-6), and *Korash* could be a variant of the Hebrew name for Cyrus, *Koresh*, which occurs, among other places, in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1. A skeptical attitude must also be taken to Lundquist’s postulated correlation between the Book of Abraham place-name *Olishem* and the Akkadian place-name *Ulisum* (Lundquist, “*Abraham at Ebla*,” 234-35). *Ulisum* occurs in a text from the reign of the Akkadian king *Naram-Sin* (ca. 2250 B.C.), and apparently refers to a place in northern Syria. According to the Book of Abraham, *Olishem* was located in Chaldea, which is to be located in southern Mesopotamia. For this equation to be valid, one has to accept the considerably weak argument that Chaldea could refer to a place in northern Syria and overlook the fact that *Ulisum* is attested far earlier than the most likely dates for Abraham. This equation cannot bear the weight of proving the antiquity or historicity of the Book of Abraham.

Part of the worship of these gods involved human sacrifice. The religion of that time and place was intolerant, anyone choosing not to engage in these worship practices ran the risk of losing his or her life. These practices seem to have been endorsed or promoted, or at least encouraged, by the Egyptian pharaoh. We are told that at the death of the priest who attempted to sacrifice Abraham there was "great mourning . . . in the court of Pharaoh" (v. 20).

The first thing we have to ask ourselves is to what extent were Egyptian worship practices introduced into Asia. If one accepts that Ur of the Chaldees refers to Tell Muqayyar, in southern Mesopotamia, then from the start the text must be judged historically erroneous, because the Egyptians never had a strong cultural influence on Mesopotamia. There have been attempts to locate Abraham's Ur near Haran.⁶⁸ This area is also outside of Egypt's sphere of influence, even at the height of its empire.⁶⁹ In order to evaluate the verisimilitude of the account found in the Book of Abraham, we have to examine Egypt's religious policy toward its Asiatic Empire, which first came into existence during the New Kingdom.

The results of such a study indicate that Egyptian gods were only rarely worshipped in Syria-Palestine, and then exceptionally.⁷⁰ Rather than introducing Egyptian gods into Asia, the most common occurrence was for Egyptians stationed at posts and garrisons in Palestine to adopt the worship of the local Asiatic gods.⁷¹ Stefan Wimmer has recently written that the Egyptians "never thought about forcing the lo-

68. Cyrus Gordon, among others, has attempted to identify Abraham's Ur with a city Ura in Anatolia (Turkey), rather than with the Mesopotamian Ur. See C. Gordon, "Where is Abraham's Ur?" *BAR* 3 (1977), #2:20-21, 52, and references cited therein, as well as Sarna, *Genesis*, 107n5. Now while the identification of Abraham's Ur as anywhere except Mesopotamia has proven popular with LDS scholars (Lundquist, Hosskisson), scholarly consensus still holds that the Ur of the Chaldees was located in Mesopotamia. See the entry by J.-Cl. Margueron in the *ABD* 6, 766-76, and the refutation of Gordon's argument by H. Saggs in "Ur of the Chaldees: A Problem of Identification," *Iraq* 22 (1960): 1-19. Westermann has written that "it is beyond doubt that . . . Ur of the Chaldees means Ur in Mesopotamia" (*Genesis* 12-36, 67).

69. See N. Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, trans. I. Shaw (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 215, and map on p. 203. The most that can be said is that Egypt did have some contact with the area which included Haran during the New Kingdom. See D. O'Connor, "New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period," in *Ancient Egypt: A Social History*, B. G. Trigger et al. (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 210, fig. 3.5.

70. See R. Stadelman, "Götter, äg. G im Ausland," in *LÄ* 2, cols. 630-32. On the topic of the Egyptian religious policy toward their empire in Syria-Palestine, see E. Bleiberg, "Aspects of the Political, Religious and Economic Basis of Ancient Egyptian Imperialism during the New Kingdom," Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1984, 102-19.

71. S. Wimmer, "Egyptian Temples in Canaan and Sinai," in *Studies in Egyptology Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*, vol. 2, ed. S. Israelit-Groll (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 1080, 1097.

cal population [of Syria-Palestine] to forsake their gods in exchange for Egyptian ones."⁷² Donald Redford states that the Egyptians "forced no one to accept Egyptian ways."⁷³ Concerning the Egyptians' religious tolerance, J. Černý has written:

Egyptians were tolerant to each other within Egypt itself and they were equally tolerant to the gods of a conquered country. . . . towards the native gods they behaved as they so often did in Egypt towards the god or goddess of another town: they simply considered them as different names and forms of their own Egyptian deities. It is clear that in these circumstances no heresy could arise, and with the exception of a short period under and immediately after Ekhнатon, nothing is known of religious persecution of any kind in Egypt.⁷⁴

One could argue that it is the Chaldeans doing the persecuting, not the Egyptians. In response, it could be said that Chaldeans had nothing to gain from forcing Egyptian worship practices on their people, since Egyptians did not expect it. Further, there is no evidence that any Asiatic land ever became so thoroughly Egyptianized that they would have adopted such a zealous attitude toward the Egyptian pharaoh on their own. Again, Redford has noted that "we have no evidence that these 'official' Egyptian cults exerted a serious attraction on the local population [of Canaan]."⁷⁵ Bleiberg maintains that "in Palestine, traces of the state religion of Egypt can be found. These traces, however, are restricted to the Ramesside period [1295-1069 B.C.]. Their influence is superficial."⁷⁶ So it appears that in the area over which they had direct control, and at the height of their imperial power in Syria-Palestine, the Egyptians made no effort to introduce their religion to their subject peoples, and they in turn exhibited little interest in the gods of their conquerors. It is therefore extremely unlikely that any of the areas suggested for the location of Ur would ever have adopted Egyptian religious practices to the extent called for in the

72. Wimmer, "Egyptian Temples," 1097.

73. D. Redford, *Egypt and Canaan in the New Kingdom*, Beer-Sheva, vol. 4, ed. S. Ahituv (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1990), 64. See also Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 214.

74. J. Černý, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1957), reprint of 1952 ed., 41.

75. Redford, *Egypt and Canaan*, 66.

76. Bleiberg, "Aspects," 111. He also notes that "Egyptian religion made very little lasting impression in Palestine" (102). This seems to preclude the fanatical attachment to Egyptian gods depicted in the Book of Abraham.

Book of Abraham.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

In the preceding I have argued that (1) Joseph Smith's interpretations of the facsimiles in the Book of Abraham are not in agreement with the meanings which these figures had in their original, funerary, context; (2) anachronisms in the text of the book make it impossible that it was translated from a text written by Abraham himself; and (3) what we know about the relationship between Egypt and Asia renders the account of the attempted sacrifice of Abraham extremely implausible. If one accepts that Joseph Smith was using the facsimiles in a fashion which was not consonant with their original purpose,⁷⁸ it does not make sense to then insist that "the Prophet's explanations of each of the facsimiles accord with present understanding of Egyptian religious practices." I see no evidence that Joseph Smith had a correct conception of "Egyptian religious practices" or that a knowledge of such was essential to the production of the Book of Abraham.

77. In fact, the religious persecution described in the Book of Abraham is unattested in the ancient world before the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. James Barr has written that "religious martyrdom, as it emerged in the Maccabean period, was something of a new thing in the history of the world. There had always been killings and massacres of people because they were enemies, foreigners, or otherwise disagreeable, but the Maccabean period was perhaps novel in that physical force and continual torture were used precisely in order to enforce conformity to a religious or ideological order. One could escape from this ghastly suffering simply by saying certain simple formulas or undertaking some simple acts. If one did not conform to these demands, the body would be gruesomely tortured and finally destroyed" (J. Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992], 53). The only instances of such persecution in the Hebrew Bible occur in the Book of Daniel, which dates to the second century B.C. (see J.J. Collins, "Daniel, Book of," *ABD* II, 29-30). A Jewish scholar, G. Vermes, has dated the emergence of the tradition of the attempted sacrifice of Abraham to between 150 B.C. and AD 50. See his *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 2d ed., 90.

78. As does Rhodes, in "Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham," 136.