

## Chapter 14: Reducing Dissonance: *The Book of Abraham as a Case Study*

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In the 1830s, William Miller calculated that Jesus Christ’s second coming would occur in 1843. He preached his doctrine and attracted a large following of believers. The rapturous day came and went. After several more “Specific dates for the return of the Lord were set and passed—finally all was staked on 22 October 1844,” but still no Rapture. Not surprisingly, Miller’s followers were disillusioned.<sup>1</sup> Such disillusionment is a manifestation of cognitive dissonance, which occurs when the opposite of a belief follows from the premise upon which it is based.<sup>2</sup> Cognitive dissonance is also often the result of a logical *non sequitur*.

Students of dissonance observe that it “produces discomfort,” with the result that there is pressure for a person to “reduce or eliminate” it. They identify several ways a person may try to reduce dissonance: (1) “change one or more of the beliefs, opinions, or behaviors involved in the dissonance”; (2) “acquire new information or beliefs that will increase the existing consonance and thus cause the total dissonance to be reduced”; or (3) “forget or reduce the importance of those cognitions that are in a dissonant relationship.”<sup>3</sup> In the case of the Millerites, “some returned to their churches, others lost interest in religion, while a few remained faithful to the Adventist or millenarian cause, believing that somehow a chronological error had been made.”<sup>4</sup>

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An exact date for Jesus’ return to earth is not a pillar of the religion founded by Joseph Smith. Instead, perhaps the greatest vulnerability to dissonance in the LDS church lies in the historicity of its founding prophet’s Book of Mormon, “New Translation” of the Bible, Book of Moses, and Book of Abraham—all proclaimed by church authorities to be authentically ancient. The Book of Abraham provides an instructive test case.

A survey of LDS responses to attacks against the historicity of the Book of Abraham reveals two areas of concentration on dissonance reduction. The first concerns the dissonance-producing proposition: Because all extant evidence indicates that a portion of the “Breathing Permit of Hor” (referred to hereafter as Pap JS 11) was the Egyptian original from which at least the first two chapters and eighteen verses of the Book of Abraham were produced,<sup>5</sup> and because a translation of the Breathing Permit does not match that section of the Book of Abraham in any way, then Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham is spurious.

Mormon scholar Hugh W. Nibley summarizes the elements of the dissonant cognition this way: “1) We are asked to see Joseph Smith diligently composing an ‘Alphabet’ and a ‘Grammar’ of the Egyptian language, 2) by employing which he works out the translation of the Book of Abraham from certain Egyptian characters in his possession. 3) The source of those characters, an Egyptian writing called the Book of Breathings, suddenly surfaces in 1967, and it does not contain anything suggesting the Book of Abraham. 4) Therefore the Book of Abraham is a fraud.”<sup>6</sup>

The second area concerns the contents of the Book of Abraham and posits a new proposition to replace the first. This reduces dissonance thus: If what is now known about ancient Near Eastern history generally, and the stories about Abraham specifically, can be made to match the contents of the Book of Abraham, which was produced when relatively little was known about the ancient Near East, then the Book of Abraham can be affirmed to be authentically ancient. Accordingly, Nibley declares: “the story of Abraham told in the Book of Abraham has the support of very ancient tradition,” with the result that we must “take the Book of Abraham seriously, even while it raises many interesting questions.”<sup>7</sup>

In other words, because the evidence about the translation [p.223] process of the Book of Abraham leads to a negative conclusion about Joseph Smith’s ability to translate ancient languages—which consequently produces dissonance—a major strategy of apologists is to shift the focus of the LDS community to the new belief that the Book of Abraham is authentically ancient because several parallels to it have been affirmed from other sources.

Accordingly, two of the four responses to cognitive dissonance which biblical scholar Robert P. Carroll has proposed are relevant to this discussion: “the production of rationalisations which explain (or explain away) the causes of dissonance”; and “the introduction of new cognitions which modify or neutralise the dissonance arousing cognition.”<sup>8</sup> Incidentally, this is how “dissonance gives rise to hermeneutic,”<sup>9</sup> which is an “explanatory scheme” that is “designed to change the original cognitive holdings [i.e., beliefs] or to rationalize dissonant cognitions.”<sup>10</sup>

In order to understand the nature of the relationship between the Breathing Permit of Hor and the text of the Book of Abraham, it is necessary to review how the relevant Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers came into existence.

In July 1835, an enterprising man named Michael Chandler arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, exhibiting four ancient

mummies and “two or more rolls of papyrus covered with hieroglyphic figures and devices.”<sup>11</sup> It did not take Joseph Smith long to begin a “translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics” on the rolls, which he announced “contained the writings of Abraham, [and] the writings of Joseph of Egypt.”<sup>12</sup> His followers purchased the collection. However, Smith’s excitement was soon overshadowed by the crises surrounding the Kirtland Safety Society and his followers’ settlement attempts in Missouri. A number of years passed before efforts concerning the papyri again surfaced in church history—this time in Nauvoo, Illinois.

Those Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers relevant to this essay consist of work sheets associated with early efforts to decipher the papyri. They can be categorized into two groups: those that reflect an attempt to develop an alphabet and grammar of ancient Egyptian, and those that pertain directly to the Book of Abraham.<sup>13</sup>

Because he “seldom used the pen himself,” Smith employed scribes to take dictation.<sup>14</sup> Determining the beginning and ending dates of each scribe’s tenure establishes the correct temporal [p.224] boundaries during which the Egyptian Papers were produced. Four handwriting styles are discernible on the relevant documents: Joseph Smith’s, Oliver Cowdery’s, William W. Phelps’s, and Warren Parrish’s. Smith wrote either prior to or contemporary with Oliver Cowdery. Cowdery’s scribal tenure terminated when he moved to Missouri sometime in 1837.<sup>15</sup> He was excommunicated in April 1838.<sup>16</sup>

Though he was in Kirtland during the time that Chandler displayed his mummies and papyri, William W. Phelps was a resident of Missouri, where he served as “a printer unto the church” (LDS D&C 57:11; RLDS D&C 57:5a). On 16 May Phelps and his oldest son had arrived in Kirtland for a temporary stay, when they lived in Joseph Smith’s house.<sup>17</sup> They left Kirtland and returned to Missouri on 9 April 1836.<sup>18</sup> Because of problems that would develop between Phelps and the church in the next few years, it could only be during this eleven-month period that he served as one of the prophet’s scribes.

Warren Parrish was employed by Smith on 29 October 1835.<sup>19</sup> During a portion of his tenure, Parrish was ill and consequently unable to record for Smith—this was from at least 22 December 1835 to 8 February 1836.<sup>20</sup> He surely was no longer a scribe by July 1837, when he was accused of having embezzled \$25,000 from the Kirtland Safety Society,<sup>21</sup> and by that December he would be out of the church.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, what Oliver Cowdery recorded had to have been before September 1837; what William W. Phelps recorded had to have been before 9 April 1836; and what Warren Parrish recorded had to have been between 29 October and 22 December 1835 and between 8 February 1836 and ca. July 1837. Anything that Phelps and Parrish wrote together had to have been done between 29 October 1835 and 9 April 1836. And as will be pointed out, Cowdery had stopped writing for Smith by the time that Parrish began.

There are several indications that the “Alphabet and Grammar” (hereafter A-G) documents were produced prior to the Book of Abraham manuscripts. In the first place, there is a chronological development from the former to the latter. The first three A-G documents analyze, among other things, the Egyptian symbols of Papyrus JS 1—the original of the Book of Abraham’s Facsimile 1—and conclude with the first two hieratic symbols that are the [p.225] beginning of the Breathing Permit (Pap JS 11)—exactly the point at which the second manuscript of the Book of Abraham begins. (Other manuscripts of the Book of Abraham—1a and 1b—will be discussed later.) The three earliest A-G documents were written by (1) Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, (2) Oliver Cowdery, and (3) William W. Phelps. The book form of the “Alphabet and Grammar,” which goes into more detail but does not decipher as many signs, is based on these three documents.<sup>23</sup> Finally, it appears that the major effort on the A-G documents had been completed before Warren Parrish became a scribe, because his handwriting appears only at the end of each, identifying the last sign dealt with, identified as Kolob.

As mentioned, the last two signs of Joseph Smith’s A-G document (as well as Cowdery’s and Phelps’s) are the same as the first two signs of Book of Abraham Manuscript 2. The first of these was deciphered as “The land of the Chaldeans.” The second seems to have been connected with Abraham’s name, interpreted in the Smith-Cowdery A-G to mean: “In the first degree Ah-broam—signifies The father of the faithful, the first right, the elder. Second degree—Same sound—A follower of righteousness—Third degree—Same sound—One who possesses great knowledge—Fourth degree—same sound—A follower of righteousness, a possessor of greater knowledge. Fifth degree—Ah-bra-oam. The father of many nations, a prince of peace, one who keeps the commandments of God, a patriarch, a rightful heir, a high priest.”

The relationship between these decipherments and the contents of Abraham 1:1-2 is obvious. It is significant in this regard that it was felt that one and the same sign—and even parts of signs—could be used on several different levels in order to produce expanded meanings, with the result that entire verses could be produced from a single sign. Thus, contrary to Nibley’s assertions that the A-G documents “were not used in any translation,”<sup>24</sup> they indeed were and indicate the “modus operandi”<sup>25</sup> for Smith’s “translation” of at least the first two chapters and eighteen verses of the Book of Abraham.

Book of Abraham Manuscripts 1a and 1b appear to have been recorded by Phelps and Parrish simultaneously at the dictation of Smith. For, in addition to various individual misspellings and other errors, both contain corrections where Smith apparently changed the wording of his translation as he dictated it. Moreover, [p.226] the punctuation in both is sparse, resulting in numerous run-on sentences (also a feature in the dictated original manuscript of the Book of Mormon); and the existing punctuation is not consistent between Phelps’s and Parrish’s manuscripts, indicating that each was trying as best he could to punctuate as he wrote. This evidence contradicts Nibley’s affirmation that Manuscripts 1a and 1b represent “the finished or nearly-finished text of the Book of Abraham . . . not deriving that text from, of all things, eighteen hieratic marginal symbols.”<sup>26</sup> In this respect, it seems that Nibley has not taken into account the appearance of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, which in the same way resembles a “finished or nearly-finished text.”

Further evidence indicates that the “eighteen hieratic marginal symbols” (there are twenty-seven in Manuscript 2) were indeed felt to be closely connected with the text of the Book of Abraham. That each of the various hieratic signs

from Papyrus JS 11 was written before its corresponding English text in at least Manuscripts 1a and 2 is demonstrated by the fact that in several cases all the English text which was juxtaposed to a set of hieratic signs invades the space allotted for the text accompanying the next set of signs.<sup>27</sup> In Manuscript 1b, Parrish actually drew a horizontal line in several places to divide the English text that accompanied one set of signs from that which accompanied the next.<sup>28</sup> Throughout the remainder of Manuscript 1b and all through Manuscript 2, Parrish used paragraphs to separate the English text that accompanied one set of signs from the text that accompanied the next.<sup>29</sup>

Yet another indication that the hieratic signs were contemporary with the English text is that Phelps's crabbed penmanship is apparent in the hieratic characters in the manuscript that he penned (1a), while the neat work of Parrish is matched in the hieratic characters in the one that he penned (1b). When the handwriting changed from Phelps's to Parrish's in Manuscript 2, the linking of the hieratic characters also changed from Phelps's dark tint to Parrish's lighter tint.

This evidence not only contradicts Nibley's assertions that "the English of the Book of Abraham was here copied down before the Egyptian signs were added,"<sup>30</sup> and that the hieratic characters "were copied out ... by a single scribe in a bold and rather skillful hand,"<sup>31</sup> but demonstrates that in these manuscripts the "eighteen [p.227] hieratic marginal symbols" from Papyrus JS 11 are directly connected with the English text of the Book of Abraham.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, the status of Cowdery, Phelps, and Parrish, between 1835 and 1836 is important since Nibley has claimed that they "were impatient of Joseph Smith's scholarly limitations and were at the same time invited by him to surpass them" and that they "turned against Joseph Smith at the very time that they were working on the Egyptian Papers."<sup>33</sup>

However, on 14 February 1835, Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, helped choose the twelve apostles; on 14 September, he was appointed to act as recorder for the church; on 13 January 1836 he was made a member of the presidency of the High Council at Kirtland; and on 3 April 1836 he and Joseph Smith witnessed, in vision, Jesus Christ on a breastwork of gold (LDS D&C 110). In that Oliver Cowdery had not worked on any of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers after Warren Parrish had begun—that is, after 29 October 1835—it is not true that he "turned against Joseph Smith at the very time that they were working on the Egyptian Papers."

On 16 May 1835 William W. Phelps arrived in Kirtland and lived at Smith's house. He was involved in founding the School of the Prophets on 2 November 1835. He took a prominent seat during the dedicatory services, with the other church authorities, and actively participated in these exercises. He received the ordinance of the washing of feet on 29 March 1836 in the Kirtland temple.<sup>34</sup> In a letter addressed to Phelps's wife Sally, Smith described him as a man "whose Merits and experiance and acquirements, but few can compete with in this generation and few I fear will ever appretiate the worth of such men; men upon who god in his wisdom hath bestowed gifts, that duly qualify them to lead men in the way of life and salvation."<sup>35</sup> Phelps, therefore, appears to have been in good standing during all this time, not lashing out against Smith sometime around November 1835—"the very time that [he was] working on the Egyptian Papers."

Joseph Smith recorded that he spent 30 December 1835 with Warren Parrish studying Hebrew. Parrish had been ill and was now "recovering his health, which gives much satisfaction, for I delight in his company." On 14 November 1835, Smith gave this revelation about Parrish: "Behold, it shall come to pass in his day, that he shall [p.228] see great things show forth themselves unto my people; he shall see much of my ancient records, and shall know of hidden things, and shall be endowed with a knowledge of hidden languages; and if he desire and shall seek it at my hands, he shall be privileged with writing much of my word, as a scribe unto me for the benefit of my people; therefore this shall be his calling until I shall order it otherwise in my wisdom, and it shall be said of him in time to come, Behold Warren, the Lord's scribe for the Lord's Seer, whom He hath appointed in Israel."<sup>36</sup> Thus, it is safe to assume that the documents scribed by Parrish were dictated by Smith and that Parrish was in the best standing with Smith during this period.

Consequently, there is no basis for Nibley's attempt to reduce dissonance by asserting that "The brethren at Kirtland were invited to try their skill at translation; in 1835 the Prophet's associates, miffed by his superior knowledge and determined to show him up, made determined efforts to match up the finished text of the Book of Abraham with characters from the J. S. Papyrus No. XI; but they never got beyond the second line of characters—if they were really trying to translate, they soon demonstrated that it simply didn't work. When at that very time they turned savagely against Joseph Smith and told every scandalous thing they could invent about him, none of them ever made mention of his involvement in any of these frustrated exercises."<sup>37</sup>

Instead, the evidence indicates: (1) that Cowdery, Phelps, and Parrish served faithfully as Joseph Smith's scribes—not his rivals—each man being in good standing with Smith during the time that these documents were produced; (2) that the A-G documents represent initial efforts at deciphering, among other things, the hieroglyphics from Papyrus JS 1 (the original from which Facsimile 1 was taken), ending with the first two signs of the Breathing Permit of Hor (Papyrus JS 11); and (3) that the Book of Abraham Manuscripts are the written results of Smith's dictating his interpretation of hieratic characters from the Breathing Permit and imaginatively reconstructed signs, with each scribe first drawing the designated characters prior to recording accompanying interpretations.<sup>38</sup>

The "Egyptian original" of the Book of Abraham is not "lost"—in spite of Nibley's dissonance-reducing assertions to the contrary, which he bases on Cowdery's passing description (incorrectly attributed to Joseph Smith<sup>39</sup>) of the entire collection of papyri [p.229] (i.e., the "record of Abraham and Joseph," the son of Jacob).<sup>40</sup> Cowdery summarized the appearance of this collection as "beautifully written on papyrus with black, and a small part, red ink or paint, in perfect preservation."<sup>41</sup>

But only one papyrus was beautifully written. The handwriting on the other was crabbed and contained no rubrics. In 1841 William I. Appleby observed that "there is a perceptible difference between the writings [of Abraham and Joseph]. Joseph appears to have been the best scribe"<sup>42</sup> (i.e., the writing on the papyrus attributed to Abraham was of inferior quality). Thus, despite Nibley, the evidence indicates that the Book of Abraham was developed from

“that badly written, poorly preserved little text, entirely devoid of rubrics, which is today identified as the [Breathing Permit of Hor].”<sup>43</sup>

After attempting to explain away the dissonance between the evidence and the Book of Abraham, Nibley tries to shift the focus by declaring that “it is the Book of Abraham that is on trial, not Joseph Smith” and that Smith’s “reputation must rest on the bona fides of the book, not the other way around.”<sup>44</sup> And he issues the challenge: “Is [the Book of Abraham] an authentic autobiography of Abraham the Patriarch, or is it not?”<sup>45</sup>

Efforts to establish the historical authenticity of the Book of Abraham face major obstacles. For instance, even Nibley acknowledges that one means used to establish the authenticity of a document is to compare it “with documents known to be authentic coming from that same time and place, and to weigh the points of conflict or agreement among them.”<sup>46</sup> Assuming Abraham’s historicity, there is no agreement about when he would have lived.<sup>47</sup> Nibley uses this advantageously, because he wants as much latitude as possible, and accordingly postulates that Abraham could have lived anytime during a comfortable span of two thousand years.<sup>48</sup> Because there can be no way of discerning which documents come “from that same time”—sometime within Nibley’s two thousand years—it is impossible to make any valid comparisons with the contents of the Book of Abraham.

These obstacles are ignored by Nibley, however, who is determined to “make up for the absence of reliable dates to give us texts contemporary with Abraham” by accepting as valid any old documents “actually bearing the name of Abraham.”<sup>49</sup> Thus by “the [p.230] study of parallels”<sup>50</sup> he can refer to documents which are temporally and/or culturally disparate in the extreme.<sup>51</sup> Here is an illustration of this commonly used “parallelomania”<sup>52</sup> methodology in Nibley’s writings.

To show how “typically Egyptian” the first several verses of the Book of Abraham are, Nibley juxtaposes them against several quotations which range from the Egyptian Old Kingdom (2575 B.C.) through the Christian Period, including quotations from Plutarch and Plato. In this manner, he asserts that the Book of Abraham and Egyptian inscriptions “confirm and support each other.”<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, this methodology does violence to the historical integrity of the documents used in the manner described.

As with the writings of noted nineteenth-century British anthropologist James Frazer, there is a “complete absence of historical consciousness”<sup>54</sup> in the “parallel school” of Book of Abraham apologetics. For it is an anathema to it to rely on a method that “insists that the essential requirement for interpretation of a text is to read it in context: not merely in literary context, but in the wider, deeper social and cultural context in which both author and audience lived, and in which the language they employed took on the connotations to which the interpreter must seek to be sensitive.”<sup>55</sup>

Nibley has dismissed such scholarly methodology as “pointless preoccupation with method and intrigue to avoid head-on confrontation with the text.” His apparent antipathy against scholarship is further demonstrated by his claim that “to this day no Egyptologist can do more than pretend to understand the Book of Breathing or the facsimiles to the Book of Abraham. Though by departmental courtesy we credit them with knowledge they do not possess, it is safe to say that they are still without a foothold in reality.”<sup>56</sup>

Nothing could be further from the truth; it is just that scholarly methodology does not yield the results that dissonance-reducing apologists want—results that can only be obtained when proper historical methodology is ignored. For Nibley, the only “really effective means of testing any method [is] by the results that it produces”<sup>57</sup>—a Machiavellian approach to be sure.

By analogy, because the movies *The Sword in the Stone* and *Camelot* contain the name of King Arthur, the “parallelomania” approach would accept them as valid evidence in establishing the [p.231] historicity of the book *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*. Such comparisons would of course convince everyone except the medievalists, who are bound to “have a preoccupation with method.”

In conclusion, there is no factual basis to the rationalizations which have been devised to explain away the dissonance caused to the Book of Abraham by the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers and by the Joseph Smith Papyri. Moreover, the attempt to demonstrate the historicity of the Book of Abraham by means of searching far and wide for parallels is suspect because of its complete disregard for the cultural, temporal, and spatial matrices of the material it uses.

It is therefore suggested that such means of dealing with the dissonance concerning the Book of Abraham be abandoned. An observation by biblical scholar Jacob Neusner is appropriate here: “an old Christian text, one from the first century for example, is deemed a worthy subject of scholarship [by historians of religion]. But a fresh Christian expression (I think in this connection of the Book of Mormon) is available principally for ridicule, but never for study. Religious experience in the third century is fascinating. Religious experience in the twentieth century [or the nineteenth] is frightening or absurd.”<sup>58</sup>

Mormon apologists have thoroughly accepted the flawed hypothesis of which Neusner speaks. Evidence of this is their attempt to make the Book of Abraham “a worthy subject of scholarship” and to keep it from being an object of ridicule by unnecessarily archaizing it. It seems more appropriate—as well as more accurate—to regard it as “a fresh Christian expression” also. Let the LDS community begin to study, ponder, and learn from the Book of Abraham for what it is—not for what some within that community want it to be.

1. Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 194.
2. See Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 2, 13-15.
3. Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 26.

4. Handy, 194f.
5. That is how Professor Klaus Baer titles Pap JS 11, 10, and his article in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3 (Autumn 1968): 109ff.
6. Hugh W. Nibley, *Judging and Prejudging [sic] the Book of Abraham*, n.d., photocopy, 1.
7. Hugh W. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1981), 47.
8. Robert C. Carroll, "Prophecy and Dissonance: A Theoretical Approach to the Prophetic Tradition," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92 (1980): 109.
9. Carroll, 110; see also pp. 124ff.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al. *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, 1932-51), 2:235; hereafter HC.
12. *Ibid.*, 236.
13. The Nauvoo Book of Abraham manuscript appears to be part of a printer's manuscript and does not reflect any developmental effort. Therefore its significance in relation to this essay is marginal.
14. Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *Brigham Young University Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 440. Jessee kindly spent many long hours with me evaluating the handwriting of the various documents.
15. HC 2:513. G. W. Robinson was voted as general church recorder on 17 September 1837 in place of Oliver Cowdery, "who had removed to Missouri."
16. Jessee, 442.
17. W. D. Bowen, "The Versatile W. W. Phelps," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958, 62.
18. *Ibid.*, 76.
19. Jessee, 446.
20. HC 2:344; 393.
21. Compare Marvin S. Hill et al., "The Kirtland Economy Revisited," *Brigham Young University Studies*, 17 (Summer 1977): 449.
22. Jessee, 448.
23. That the book was written after the other A-G mss. can be demonstrated by comparing where corrections have been made in each of the documents. For example, Joseph Smith's original (i.e., in his own handwriting) has "Ah broam - abraham Ki Ahbrah[?]am," which he crossed out. Cowdery replaced it with "Ki-Ah-bram, Ki-ah-bra-oam - Zub-zool-oan." Cowdery's copy was corrected thus: "KiAh-broan, KiAh-bra-oam. Zub-zool-oan." Phelps corrected his in this way: "KiAhbroamKiah brah-oam Zub zool oan," where the morpheme "ki" was jammed into the available space. On page 3 of the book, however, Phelps had written "Kiah broam = Kiah brahoam = Zub zool oan," revealing no observable corrections, indicating that it was written after the other three.
24. H. W. Nibley, "The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers," *Brigham Young University Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 380.
25. Nibley, "Judging," 3.
26. *Ibid.*
27. See pages 2 and 4 of Ms. 1a. Curiously, on page 4, Phelps rewrote the text that accompanied his last sign, with the left edge of the paper serving this time as his margin. He then began new text half-way through the last line, again indented, but providing no set of signs. See also page 23 of Ms. 2.
28. See pages 1 and 2 of Ms. 1b.
29. See especially page 7, top.
30. Nibley, "Egyptian Papers," 380.
31. Nibley, Message, 3.
32. For a more detailed analysis, see my forthcoming study on the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers.
33. Nibley, "Egyptian Papers," 396, 397.
34. Bowen, 76.
35. Photograph in the *Improvement Era* 45 (Aug 1942): 529.
36. HC 2:311f.; emphasis added.
37. Nibley, Message, 2; cf. "Judging," 5.
38. In an earlier article I suggested the possibility that Joseph Smith had received the text of the Book of Abraham by revelation—prior to his attempt at deciphering Pap JS 11 or independently of his efforts with the papyri ("The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham: A Reappraisal," *Sunstone* 4 [Dec 1979]: 44; cf. similar statements by Nibley in "Judging," 6; Message, 50ff.; and Abraham, 2). The evidence does not support such a possibility.
39. *Ibid.* Because the statement was included in HC 2:348, Nibley must have assumed that it was written by the prophet, instead of being an adaptation of Cowdery's published letter to a Mr. "Wm. Frye." See note 41 below.
40. Nibley, Message 2f.
41. Oliver Cowdery, in *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (Dec. 1835): 234.
42. William I. Appleby, *Biography and Journal*, LDS archives.
43. Nibley, Message, 3. Curiously, even though he admits (Message, 3) that Pap JS 1 (the original of Facs. 1) was directly connected to Pap JS 11 (the Breathing Permit of Hor), Nibley contradicts himself when he uses the same type of evidence to arrive at opposite conclusions by maintaining that only the latter was damaged "before the document was mounted" (Message, 2). For Pap JS 1, he claims that "no clear instances of [restorations] have been demonstrated on Facsimile 1"—that Pap JS 1 was intact when the prophet mounted it ("As Things Stand at the Moment," *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 [Autumn 1968]: 95). As support for this claim, he asserts that "the mere presence of those ugly patches [of glue], where the mounting was otherwise so very neatly done, casts serious doubt on [the] theory that the surviving parts of the Facsimile No. 1 papyrus are all that the Mormons ever saw of it" ("As Things Stand," 82). "Filaments of fiber or the imprint of such" (Message, 2) do not appear on the glue on the backing sheet of Pap JS 1, indicating that those parts which are missing today were missing when it was mounted. For Pap JS 11, Nibley correctly notes that the clean glue on its backing paper indicates that "these parts of the text were missing at the time of mounting" (Message, 2). He recently indirectly re-affirmed his belief that Pap JS 1 was intact in his statement: "Egyptologists have often complained that the Mormons have deliberately redrawn [the facsimiles]—an accusation that the discovery of some of the originals disproved" (Abraham, 44).

Because the original of Facs. 1 is the only one of which the original was found, Nibley can only be referring to it. For a discussion of how much of Pap JS I was extant when the prophet first saw it, see Ashment, "Facsimiles," 34ff.

44. Nibley, Message, 3.
45. Nibley, Abraham, 1.
46. Ibid., 8.
47. See Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, no. 133 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 89f.; John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 7-12.
48. Nibley, Abraham, 8, 53. He uses Van Seters inconsistently. On the one hand he declares that "estimates [as to when Abraham lived] now run all the way from the sixth century B.C. of Van Seters to 2500 B.C." (p. 8) and that Van Seters dates "the Patriarch squarely in the middle of the first millennium B.C." (53; cf. 54). But Van Seters is of the opinion that Abraham is a mythical character, the stories about whom were composed originally between 600 and 400 BCE (Van Seters, 310), which, ironically, Nibley later acknowledges (55).
49. Nibley, Abraham, 8.
50. Ibid., 50.
51. See Nibley, Message and Abraham, passim.
52. For a good discussion of "Parallelomania," see Samuel Sandmel in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 1-13.
53. Nibley, Abraham, 78ff.
54. Howard C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 22.
55. Ibid., 3.
56. Nibley, Abraham, 51, 52.
57. Nibley, Message, 53.
58. Jacob Neusner, "Religious Studies: The Next Vocation," *The Council on the Study of Religion Bulletin* 8 (Dec. 1977): 117.