

Investigating the Kirtland Egyptian Papers—by Brian Hauglid

FAIR Conference 2006

[Editor's note: This transcript was prepared from a recording of Hauglid's oral presentation, and has been lightly edited for clarity. Links to on-line resources were later added for the convenience of the reader—some of these links were not available when the address was given, and many contain dynamic content that may change as new information becomes available. Their inclusion does not represent an endorsement of everything—or anything—in the link by Hauglid, but are to serve as an aide to the reader who wishes further information or more up-to-date material.]

I have to admit I was a little—I had a disturbing event yesterday. I met our cameraman—I don't know if you met Will Schryver yet and he kept telling me, he thought he had seen me somewhere and finally right around lunch time he came up and he said, "I finally figured out where I've seen you."

I said, "Where?"

He said, "You look like [Mark Hofmann](#)."

I would rather be Dan Peterson with the Krispy Kremes than Mark Hofmann!

You know I have to tell you one more little thing here. You know I have been kind of messing around little bit on the FAIR boards, and we keep getting this elephant in the room thing—some of you know it what I am talking about. You know, the Book of Abraham controversy. "The elephant in the room" is, "It's so obvious; why doesn't everybody just see that and leave the church?"

Bias and Belief

It reminded me of this cartoon thing that I saw one time. It was a two fleas on a Cocker Spaniel, looking up into the stars, and one flea says to the other, "Do you really believe in a dog?" [Laughter] It's just that obvious, isn't it? Things are just that obvious.

Well it's a pleasure to be with you today. I think this is my first FAIR conference, I believe, and I've watched your work, I've been an admirer from afar and so I am kind of glad that I finally broke the ice and got to know you a little bit more, and I am with you now. I hope that I can become among you as we move along here.

For many years I've had a really deep interest in the Book of Abraham. I've researched it, I've written about it, as you know. And the main thing that I guess I want to start out with: I am totally biased that the Book of Abraham is the word of God, totally biased. I believe with all my heart that this is the word of God.

Now, if that offends anybody, good—because that's the way it is. Because that it's the Holy Spirit that's totally that is true.

So everything that I tell you today—whether it's all those evidence and all those technical stuff—really doesn't convince me one way or the other because if it's what the critics say I still believe the Book of Abraham is true. That's not ever going to change, because I have that witness. And I think I have some people on here that feel that too—I know I do—that it doesn't matter what they say, we still know what's true all the way.

Now if keeping my solemn covenant—and I say solemn covenant—to sustain and defend the kingdom of God upon this earth makes me an "apologist," so be it. Then you can call me an apologist all day long because I am going to keep that covenant.

The Kirtland Egyptian Papers (KEP)

Well the KEP, [Kirtland Egyptian Papers](#). It's not uncommon for academics—in my field anyway—to run up against questions and problems that have tough solutions to them or even no solutions. You run into conundrums and paradoxes all the time and with the KEP they are around every turn—every turn there is a question looming there, a question mark for this, a question mark for that, and you are just about pulling your hair out trying to figure things out.

And so, for the past couple of years I have devoted my life to try to figure out the Kirtland Egyptian Papers and I am happy to tell you that I've got it all figured out now. Okay? Somebody will give you the word today.

What did I have to do to learn about the KEP? Well I did have to kind of figure out that since I am a Islamist and I can't be an expert in this, I decided that I would draw on some other people like Royal Skousen Kent Jackson. People have done some textual study and I've actually learnt some things along the way. So I've gotten out of my Islamic barrier there and I have learned new things, isn't that amazing that we can do that? We don't have to be I mean Kevin Barney sitting right here. He is a lawyer plus he is a great scholar, okay. And I think those two are mutually exclusive sometimes, but I am just kidding Kevin. All right.

So I spend a lot of time trying to figure out what I need to know in order to evaluate these documents and so I am not going to be able to give you all of the answers. I am not going to be able to talk about all of the Abraham and Egyptian manuscripts but I am going to give it a try at least to give you some things to think about here.

Now you know that they are called Kirkland Egyptian Papers, and as I have worked with some of the church historians as I've had an opportunity to look at the originals they just have a very basic identification system (we have them catalogued) so they made me memorize these numbers here: they said, "Well you go by is those numbers there, okay? Manuscript 1294 Folders one through five," and I said, "Okay." "And now the Egyptian stuff Manuscript 1295, Folders one through nine." "Okay."

And it's really interesting because they keep them in a box, the top flips up, and then there are all these folders in there and they are marked just like what it says here—you just open it up and there are all your folders and they try to keep it between these nice plastic sheets, of course, that stop any deterioration, I suppose.

I suppose they will do some conservation in the future to seal them in Mylar, like they did with the papyri, which is all nicely taken care about this time.

So what I would like to do is to help all of us look at these papers a little bit differently. First of all, they are not really Kirtland Egyptian Papers because not all of them are from Kirtland. And so, I am going to refer to them as either Abraham Manuscripts or Egyptian Manuscripts. Now the Abraham Manuscripts are the ones that have the Book of Abraham text on them. The Egyptian Manuscripts are different. They have the alphabet and they have the counting, and they have the grammar.

But I want to give you a little background of these manuscripts first before we talk about them, because I would assume that not everybody here knows all these manuscripts and so let me see if I can show this—I know it's a big chart here.

There is something like this on the [FAIR Wiki](#), or something like this, this is just for the Abraham Manuscripts and I'll show you the Egyptian one in a minute.

Abraham Manuscript #1

Going across it's dated sometime in 1835, it has five leaves: that means there is writing on both sides. And so there are ten pages to it, and the first part of it on page one and that would be Abraham one through three—it's in the hand of W. W. Phelps. And then the next part in all the way to the end of the manuscript is in the hand of Warren Parrish and Warren's a very nice writer. Easy, pretty easy to read. So that's manuscript number one.

Now this one here was discovered by Wilford Wood, who lived around the turn of the century. I think he died in 1950-something or 1960-something. He was a furrier. He made fur coats and (I think it was in 1916) he kind of had a spiritual calling to spend his life trying to find everything that he could, all the artifacts that he could: papers, documents, things that belonged to Joseph Smith. He tried to collect as much of these materials as he could. And in 1936–37 especially he was in touch with the man named Charles Bidaman.

Now Charles Bidaman is the son of Lewis Bidaman, who was the second husband of Emma Smith, and that's where that manuscript comes from. Wilford Wood bought it from him for \$100 and a fur coat for Charles' wife. That's how we got the manuscript and that was in 1937. Then Brother Wood was very concerned that manuscript papers be given to the Church, so he donated it to the Church and it's been with the Church Historical Department ever since.

Abraham Manuscript #2

Now, manuscript number two. That's another 1835 document I think. It is two leaves—that means it's two sheets of paper written on both sides. It's in the hand of Frederick G. Williams.

Now, Dean Jesse, had originally assigned W. W. Phelps to that but we've figured out in recent months that it's in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams. There is just pretty much no question about it, and that covers the Book of Abraham chapter one starting at verse four and then goes to Abraham 2:6.

Abraham Manuscript #3

Manuscript number three is dated sometime after October 29th, and it has three leaves. Again three pages or three sheets on each side in the handwriting of Warren Parrish and that goes from Abraham 1:4 to 2:6.

Abraham Manuscript #4

Then I had to kind of split up manuscript four okay because it's all in the same folder but they are three things. So the first one here is 13 leaves, it's written only on one side in the handwriting of Willard Richards, probably in 1841, and that's [Abraham 1:1](#) to [2:18](#).

And then 4a are two separate sheets, pages 7 and 8—they are in the handwriting of Willard Richards and contains Abraham [3:18–26](#).

And, finally, 4b is after 1841, and again it's only one page, written by Willard Richards and it's the [Facsimile one](#) interpretation, but that's on the reverse of page two of this one. Is it getting complicated yet? You know, these actually are quite complicated!

Abraham Manuscript #5

Then manuscript number five is three leaves okay and that's [Facsimile two](#) explanation.

There is a man name Stephen Emmel, a Coptic papyrologist from Harvard, I believe, who looked at these materials, their relationship to each other, and said, "The Mormons don't realize how complex these documents are."

So these are all very complicated things, but I am a simple guy so I tried to simplify as best as I can for myself, anyway.

Now two of the manuscripts, manuscript two and manuscript three, have the strange phrase at the very top of the manuscript, "sign of the fifth degree of the first" is crossed out, second is put up there and it says "part." And then the next one says the same thing and it's crossed out the same way and they are identical that way.

Now that has caused no small stir among both apologists and critics, as both try to figure out what in the world that is about.

And so of course I'll tell you exactly what it's about in just a few minutes, right? Not.

Egyptian Manuscripts

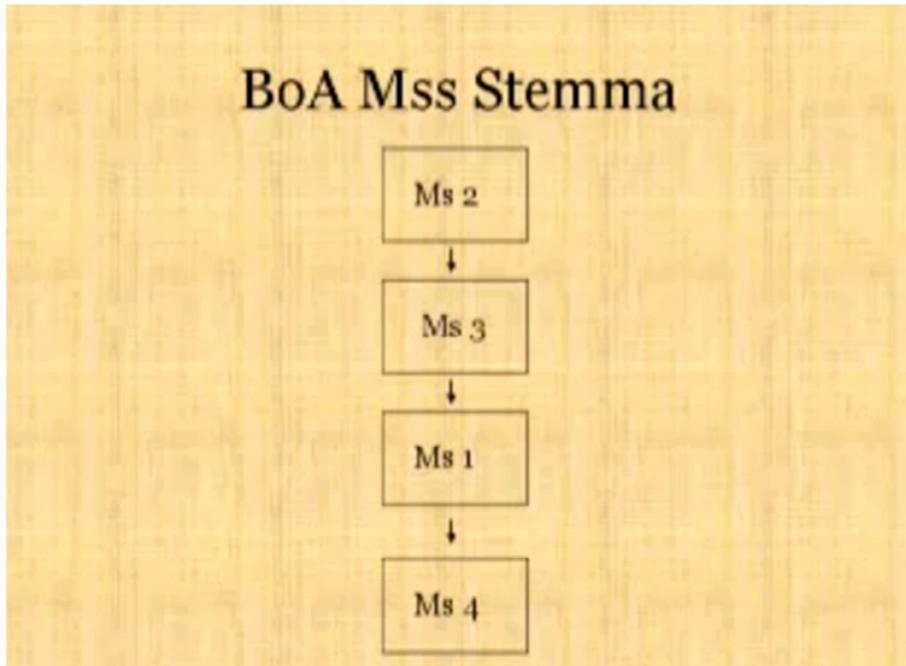
Now here's the Egyptian ones. We talk about getting more complicated here. And this stuff is not easy to figure out: first of all you have nine folders or manuscripts here and we've got some dates that we have tentatively figured out and the handwriting and these are the names over here: "grammar and alphabet" and "Egyptian counting."

MS #	Date	Size	Handwriting	Notes
Egypt Ms 1	Aft. Jan. 1836	1 volume	Phelps & Parrish	"Grammar and alphabet (sic)"
Egypt Ms 2	1836?	2 leaves/pgs	Phelps	"Egyptian counting"
Egypt Ms 3	Oct. 1835?	4 leaves/pgs	Phelps	"Egyptian alphabet"
Egypt Ms 4	Oct. 1835?	4 leaves/pgs	Joseph Smith	"Egyptian alphabet"
Egypt Ms 5	Oct. 1835?	5 leaves/pgs	Oliver Cowdery	"Egyptian alphabet"
Egypt Ms 6	Nov. 1836?	: vol/notebook	JS & OC	"Valuable discovery"
Egypt Ms 7	1837?	: vol/notebook	Oliver Cowdery	F.G.W & William
Egypt Ms 8	Nov. 1835?	1 leaf/pg	?	Col 182 Bk of Tchemmin
Egypt Ms 9	Nov. 1835?	1 leaf/pg	?	Col : Bk of Tchemmin

Three "Egyptian alphabet" manuscripts—one in the handwriting of Joseph Smith. There's also one notebook that says "valuable discovery" on it, with Joseph Smith's signature and a couple columns of the Book of Tchemmin, which Michael Rhodes identified.

Now that's a lot of stuff. This is a lot of material here. It's not going to be easy to figure out what all this is about. But I am going to give you some things to think about here as we go along. Let me give you what I call the Book of Abraham stemma—now what this means is the kind of the genealogical relationship between these manuscripts.

BoA Mss Stemma



Manuscript two would be the earliest. Then manuscript three could have been copied from manuscript two, but it's later. Manuscript one is definitely copied from manuscript three and manuscript four is probably copied from manuscript one. That's what that means it's just kind of a stemma here to help us understand what the relationship is between these particular manuscripts.

The critics and their approaches

Now interestingly, manuscripts one through three have hieratic characters lined up on the left hand margin with English text on the right. And these characters are taken from the Joseph Smith papyri number 11. If you don't know what that is, it's the papyri that supposedly comes right after Facsimile number one in the papyri collection.

So manuscripts two and three obviously connect to some of this Egyptian material okay but manuscript one doesn't have the "sign of the fifth degree" and all that on there but it still has those characters on there and so the critics have concluded (with the sound of a slamming iron door by the way) that these characters represent the translation process of the Book of Abraham. That's kind of the long and the short of it.

Of course the characters themselves come from the Hor "Book of Breathings" as I said, and they immediately follow Facsimile number one, and so the way the critics think about the matter is they look at [Abraham 1:12](#) and it reads "I will refer you to the representation [meaning Facsimile Number one] at the commencement of this record." And they say, "Well that means that the Book of Abraham ought to come right after Facsimile number one." I am just summarizing the critics' point here.

And we know that the Book of Abraham does not come from the Hor Book of Breathings. In fact, it is not even close. How do we know that? Because it's been translated a number of times. The most recent is

by [Mike Rhodes](#). He [translated](#) all that material and you cannot find any Book of Abraham material in there.¹

Now here's just a thought—and I appreciate Kevin Barney on this one on his [adaptation thesis](#) that J Red, [a Jewish redactor](#) may have put that particular statement in to help the reader refer back to a picture. Or it could have been Joseph Smith himself putting in that particular explanation. We don't know for sure. It almost doesn't sound like Abraham, but such things are called glosses or explanations. I've found those in the Book of Moses, even—there are glosses in which things are being explained [by the translator or a redactor]. It's still part of the scriptures, but it's a kind of explanation to help us move through the text.

And so the critics really do have some good questions about this, if they would be a little bit more open, but what I think really it's going to take to at least start to answer these questions is to really carefully analyze these manuscripts, manuscript by manuscript, page by page, line by line, and even word by word in some instances. And when we investigate these manuscripts that closely we may come to some conclusions that the critics come to, and we may (and likely will) come to other conclusions that they do not.

The only one I know so far that has studied the manuscripts as much as or maybe more than me is [Brent Metcalfe](#). He is the only one that I know of, and why is that? Because nobody else has the pictures.

Some others of the critics do, of course, but they don't know how to interpret them. I have to talk to Brent and actually we have come to the same conclusions on some things, we've already determined that. And, yeah, we depart radically on some other things. So just understand that when I say that he is one that I know has studied the manuscripts quite carefully.

So now on the FAIR Wiki—which I was very impressed to learn about—there is a discussion of the [critics' approach](#) to the Book of Abraham and the Egyptian Manuscripts. So, let's just review that really quickly here because this is going to help us figure out where we are going.

Translation documents for the Book of Abraham?

The critics argue that the Book of Abraham Manuscripts represent the translation working papers for the Book of Abraham. So those characters over on the left side are being translated on the right side with the text. That's what the critics say is going on.

And then they go to this one—the Egyptian Manuscripts—demonstrate that Joseph did not understand Egyptian. [They insist that] number three of the Book of Abraham Manuscripts demonstrates that the Sensen papyrus (the Papyrus the Book of Hor) was believed to be the source for the Book of Abraham. The Sensen Papyrus—since it's in fact not the Book of Abraham, but an Egyptian Book of Breathings, whatever else the Book of Abraham may be, it is not an accurate translation of an ancient Egyptian text. [This is the basis of the critics' case.]

¹ Michael D. Rhodes, [The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary](#) (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Provo, Utah, 2002).

So this last one now is the final damning piece of incontrovertible evidence, and it has to be founded on those first three assumptions, of course—and if you accept number four, then that is supposed to lead us to the inescapable conclusion that this whole Book of Abraham thing is a gigantic fiasco for Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints. [It is supposed to] bring into question the very veracity and legitimacy of the church and shakes it to its very foundation, right? And so we all leave the church, go home and watch TV and something like that, but it's over. Not so easily though, no.

No, if it was that easy we wouldn't be easy. It be a nice package if everything on there were true, but the one part that's on there that *is* absolute true is number four (the Sensen Papyru is not the text of the Book of Abraham). We all accept that.

Challenging the critics' assumptions

What I want to work on today is [assumption] number one. I can't prove whether Joseph Smith knew Egyptian or not. I can do some dabbling there. I can't prove what the early brethren believed about the translation process because there is not really anything written about it that much.

But I can work on number one—if those *are* translation working papers then the manuscripts are going to give us clues that they are translation working papers.

So let me give the bottom line here before we even start. The portion of the Book of Abraham represented in these manuscripts was translated as early as July of 1835. We know that because there is a reference to it that there was a translation actually going on in July of 1835 and if you know anything about Joseph Smith's translation abilities with the [Book of Mormon](#) or the JST you know he can do a lot in a little time with his translations. Okay, so keep that in mind.

Secondly, manuscripts one, two and three do not show the marks of a dictated text. Now why is that important? Because if they were dictated then that would say again that they are part of the translation process—you would conclude that Joseph Smith is right there dictating these documents, and then you'd have to explain those hieratic characters on the margin.

Well, now, when you define an hieratic character over here with 100 English words, it doesn't make any sense. Can you get a hundred words out of one little character? Of course not. And so, [if these are translation documents,] it makes Joseph and the brethren look like idiots. It's okay to say that, because we know that's not what those hieratic characters mean.

And so what we have to determine is whether or not the manuscripts were dictated: was Joseph right there getting the inspiration or telling them what to do with those characters there? If so, the manuscripts will, I think, tell us that's the case.

Now the third thing we need to keep in mind here. Joseph Smith in my view was a seer and a scholar. He was a seer and a scholar. And I believe that Joseph Smith worked with his scribes to bring about the revelatory Book of Abraham that we have, the divine Book of Abraham. But I also believe that they—including Joseph Smith and his scribes or whoever else—made serious intellectual attempts to understand things, to learn things, languages and such, and I think we need to keep those [ideas or

roles] separate: Joseph the seer and Joseph the scholar. He is both, [but they are a separate roles], I think.

And we can't pigeonhole Joseph into just saying that he is a seer, therefore this stuff doesn't make sense. If he is a scholar, oh now we've got him working, trying to figure things out just like the rest of us. "Oh, he wasn't given everything," we might say. "Okay. That's fair, that's all right."

Myths and realities of the manuscripts

So let me give you a few what I think anyway are myths and realities here about the Abraham manuscripts and also about the photos. I want to talk about the photos too. When I talk about the photos I should let you know that Steven Christiansen is the man who was killed, by Mark Hofmann, not by me. I am not Mark Hofmann, or any incarnation of him, but Steve worked with the church to produce some high resolution photographs. And after Christiansen was murdered Mr. Metcalfe was able to get negatives from, you'll have to help me out here, but I think it was from Steve Christiansen.

And so he got the negatives and he's had those negatives for quite a few years and he's done lots of studies on those and shared them with some folks and on the internet as well. And so these are photos I will be talking about.

Myth #1: High resolution photos provide an accurate portrayal of the manuscripts So let's start with myth number one. Not everybody believes these myths so I am just saying a kind of myth because I have seen this as I monitored the discussion boards and as I have heard from different people these kinds of things here. So myth number one is the high resolution photos provide an accurate portrayal of the Book of Abraham manuscripts—that's a myth to me. And we'll talk about that. Now I don't know how well you can see this. This is a photo of the Book of Abraham manuscript one, page one. And this is the one that comes from the Christiansen collection. And so this is something like what Mr. Metcalfe would have.

You know here's another one that I procured more recently. This is a digital image of the same page. Now you see a difference there. There are differences that you can't really see it on this too well but there is a lot more red at least—this color correction is actually beautiful. I've seen the originals enough to know that this one here looks a lot more like the original than this one over here [the Metcalfe version]. Now let me just run you through a couple more here.

Here is Book of Abraham manuscript two page three okay and this is one of the ones I have to pull my hair out on a little bit, with the Christiansen photos, and here is the new one—a lot nicer. A nice digitized image there. Another one: this is the Book of Abraham manuscripts three page five. By the way this one here is used quite a bit on the web, there may be some be recognize that. And here is the newer one here. Again you can't see quite as clearly on this [older] one compared to this [newly digitized] one?

This is manuscript number four, page two—this is a Willard Richards one and here is the new [digitized image] right here. So you can see that there is some differences between the digitized images and the

earlier photos that were done over two decades ago. And it's been more helpful for me even with these nice digitized images to go up to the church and look at the originals, because with your eyes you have more of the 3D viewpoint of things and it's a lot better even that way. And so I just want you to know that there is progress being made on trying to make these kinds of things more accessible to scholars, to understand these manuscripts better.

Myth #2a: Ink analysis can give us complete and accurate information Now myth number two—this one here I've seen a lot on the discussion board (and by the way this is not Mr. Metcalfe). Mr. Metcalfe agrees that this is an absolute myth: that ink analysis on photos can give complete and accurate information. Okay well that can't be true. Why? Because how can you do ink analysis on a photo? It's kind of hard to do that, isn't it? And I haven't tried it, and I don't want to, because if you go to the originals and use a binocular microscope or if you need to some day do a chemical analysis it would have to be on the originals, wouldn't it? In order to see the right ink and to see things magnified or whatever you'd use the proper tools.

So the reality is you have to use the originals on this [type of analysis] with the microscope or chemical analysis and that's just the way it is folks. You cannot come to a real, solid conclusion about ink with photos, you just can't, it doesn't work. All right.

Now here's the most over-used one I've seen on the web.

Myth #2b: There are two kinds of ink on manuscript three This the one I have seen on the web. Book of Abraham manuscript three, page five, and here is the new digitized image there. Well it does look the same, doesn't it? It does look the same and I bet you're waiting for me to say it's different but it's not. I did look at this under magnification and made sure that these two inks with the same thing. Now let me just throw out something to you here that [John Gee](#) wants me to tell you, and he wants you to spread it around, all right, and that is that he was arguing for a two ink analysis, two ink theory, that many of you know about.

And the two ink theory says that the characters were in a different ink than the text therefore the characters put on the paper after the text was already there, that was the way kind of John was thinking about that. And when he was thinking through that he did not have access to the originals. He did not have access to the newly digitized images he only had what basically everybody else has. And so he just made judgment call there.

Well John and I have been working together on some of this and he is totally convinced now that the two ink theory on manuscript three is dead. There are no two inks, aren't you sad?

You shouldn't be sad, because this particular manuscript here is used as an example to shoot down the two ink theory when in reality there is other three manuscripts still, two others with hieratic characters on them that are not analyzed on the web with these critiques here.

And when we get to manuscript two, you'll see that the two ink theory is not dead all the way yet. If somebody will try to kill it, I am sure, but here is Book of Abraham manuscript two so you see the characters over here you'll notice there is no margin line on this one and there is lots of space between the text and the characters there. And we have to figure out why that is. There are several conclusions one could come to about that—and here is the newly digitized image.

Now I have done enough looking at this under a microscope to determine with absolute certainty that these characters here are in a different ink than the text. I know that. I can magnify things from 6 times to 50 times and look at the fibers even and I can see that there are different inks there and you can see a correction rate here with the same ink as this over here. And I'll show you some more of that. And so yeah the two ink theory is dead with manuscript three, but manuscript two is yet to be dead. I guess the critics will have a go, which I am sure they'll do somehow. So let's go on myth number [four].

Myth #3: Manuscript one contains Phelps' transcription of Joseph Smith's dictation Book of Abraham manuscript number one, page one, and I want to focus just on the Phelps section—that's that top section there. And many of the critics argue that this is dictated text: that is, Joseph Smith is standing there dedicating this to W. W. Phelps. [This is important to the critics,] of course, because they're "translation papers"—remember they don't want us to lose that thought.

And here's the text straight here, and you can see there are some characters over here and some numbers here that will talk about in just a minute. It's in a darker ink than the Parrish writing. The reality here is that this is not dictated text—I am going to show you why. Here are some reasons"

#1) First of all, with these number characters here okay we got number one that goes with this one and this one and we have number two that goes with this one so and by the way you can find these in the grammar book of the Egyptian manuscripts here. Some of this kind of material looks just a bit too deliberate for me for dictated text. Okay to put numbers on there, Joseph Smith would have to be saying, "Okay, now put number one...." He is dictating number one, and then you write there so can I put number two and then dictate it—doesn't make sense to me. And so it appears very deliberate, but if that were the only evidence I had, I probably wouldn't told you this one.

#2) How about punctuation? This one here Will Schryver actually got the message board going on this one a little bit. You can see a lot of semicolons in here and colons and commas. And generally speaking with dictated text you almost have zero punctuation. You go to the Book of Mormon manuscripts or the JST manuscripts—there's very little punctuation on those dictated manuscripts.

Well so what do you? You look at Phelps' contemporary letters to his wife Sally and lo and behold, the punctuation that he uses here is very similar to the punctuation that he is using in these letters, which were composed right along that same time period. He punctuates it more. And so to me that tells us that this particular part, anyway, is not dictated—it's too clean there.

#3) There is a phenomenon called *dittography* where a scribe will be copying something from another manuscript and accidentally write a word twice. You see it all the time in scribal errors.

And so you can see "be" over here and he's got little equal sign and then he writes beginning again, the whole thing. Okay. We're supposed to just write beginning there not beginning and so his eye is moving back and forth between two manuscripts there. And so let's see.

#4) Now this I know this is a big word it's called *homeoteleuton*. I'll tell you what that is. So you walk up to the room here and I think I am swearing at you or something—I am not!

You can read there "a high priest holding the right belonging to the fathers" and that's where we are ending right here from the beginning of time. So that's Abraham one, two, and three. But notice what's missing here. Well we have the error right here this is what we have now. "It was conferred upon me from the fathers it came down from the fathers." Now you notice you got *fathers* here and *fathers* there. This was a very common type of mistake made by scribes from Old Testament, New Testament times, all the way up to the 19th century scribes. Even today, when you see two words like this, you see fathers all over the place it's so easy to take this "fathers," this "fathers" and just omit what's in between. It's simple to do that and you see it all the time; it's a common scribal error.

And that is just to say that Phelps' eye was looking at "fathers" and just missed it up to the next "fathers." Phelps also has seven omissions in the Phelps section here which are puzzling.

When you think about dictation, to me you need to realize that when Joseph Smith did dictation, he did go back with his scribes and fixed things, of course he did, but this is a lot of stuff that that's different from our manuscripts. So I don't know what Phelps was copying from, how accurate the manuscript was or how hurried he was or whatever it was, but he is missing a lot of things in this particular passage or this part here.

So my conclusions: the reality, for me anyway, is that he is copying from an earlier manuscript. Perhaps it's an unrevised one that the prophet is letting him copy from, I don't know. Or he is just in a rush, but the point in my view is that this could not have been dictated.

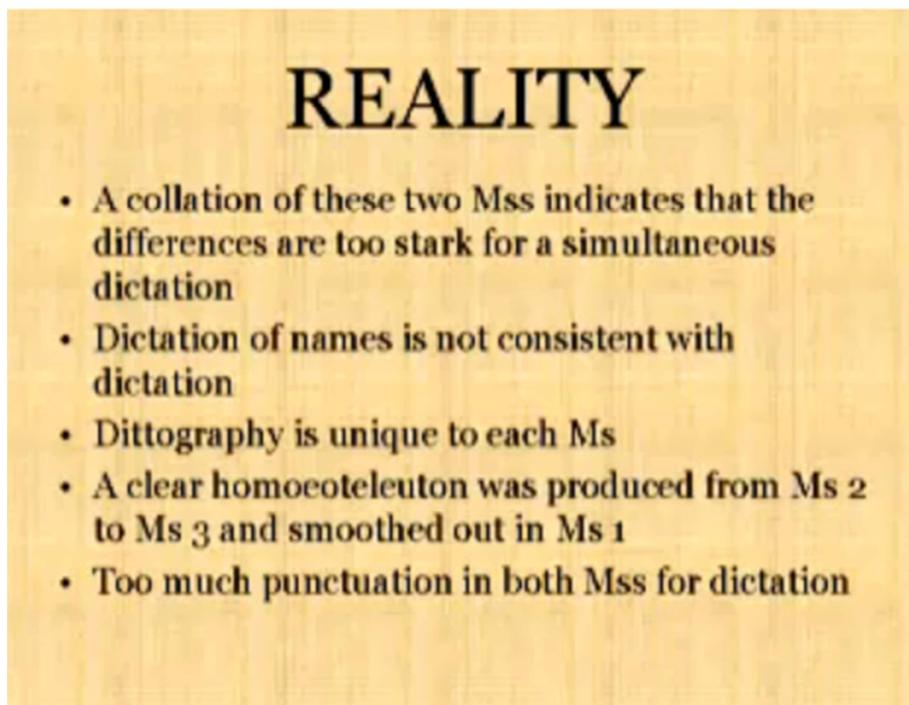
So what am I doing, I am separating the *manuscript* from the *translation* here. I am separating it from the translation saying it's not a working translation paper, that's what I am saying.

Myth #4: Manuscripts two and three were simultaneously dictated So, now myth number [five]: manuscripts two and three were simultaneously dictated. Now, Mr. Metcalfe already knows that he and I part ways on this one, majorly—we do not agree on this one. And I get to hear his evidence, but here we go

What is normally used on this particular point—for the critics anyway, and I am not lumping Brent [Metcalfe] into that, by the way, yet. But we've got this strange sense here at the beginning and because it's so exact on both manuscripts. It looks like Joseph Smith just dictated that to them and then told them to correct that and they both made the exact same corrections on it because this correction up here is in the handwriting of Williams just like it's supposed to be and this correction here is in the handwriting of Parrish just like it's supposed to be. You can even just tell by the s here—it's very easy.

But number one, why would Joseph Smith dictate such a strange sentence that's not even in our scriptures? It doesn't make any sense. That part doesn't, to me anyway.

What we have in our scriptures is what we have in our scriptures. I just don't see where he is coming from on this. So the reality for me is that if you put the two manuscripts together (manuscript two and manuscript three) those are the two earliest ones, you are going to notice some big differences there and I would want to have these explained to me. If I were going to be swayed over to the dictation side [of the debate.]



Problem #1: Unusual names will not be the same with dictation And so, first of all the copying of names that should not be as consistent with dictation. Dittography is in these manuscripts again. You got another *homeoteleuton* in there, you've got way too much punctuation again, probably, for dictation purposes. They didn't waste time on punctuation when things were dictated, they just wrote down what Joseph Smith told them to write down and then they went back later and punctuated things—that was the practice with the Book of Mormon and JST, and so why would we see it any differently here?

If you put these two manuscripts together again you get exact cross outs (the individual letters separated by hyphens are cross outs here; I couldn't figure out how to do them on PowerPoint, so those are cross outs).

Collation of BoA Mss 1,2,3

I sought for t-h-e ^mine appointment w-h- e-r-e u-n-t-o unto the priesthood	I sought for t-h-e ^mine appointment w-h- e-r-e u-n-t-o unto the priesthood	This sentence is not attested in MS #1
MS #2 Abr. 1:4	MS #3	

Problem #2: Errors characteristic of copying, not dictation And this is an addition here, and so again that is exact between the two. If you want to go along with the dictation simultaneous dictation theory but notice some of the differences here. You've got "their dumb idols" from Williams (#2, left side), while Parrish (#3, right side) has "these dumb idols."

Collation of BoA Mss 2&3

BoA Ms #2	BoA Ms #3	NOTES
their dumb idols	these dumb idols	Abr. 1:7
Elk=keenah	Elkkener	
+that is	-that is lying before you	Abr. 1:12
Elk'Keen	Elkkener	Abr. 1:13
is called by the Chaldeans Rah-lee-nos	Is -was called by the - Egyptians Chaldeans, Rahleenos	Abr. 1:14

William's here is Elk-Keenah, Parrish has Elkkener. Williams adds "that is," Parrish removes "that is lying before you." Now for a dictation you'd think Joseph Smith would keep them straight on that.

Again on the names here you have "is called by the Chaldeans, Rahleenos" and here Parrish has "~~was~~ called by the ~~Egyptians~~ Chaldeans." Now Williams didn't *hear* "Egyptians" but Parrish did. Do you see where I'm going with this? The ears aren't the same. Okay I am growing old, and I know I have selective hearing, but this isn't in that category here. Williams hears unrightly, and Parrish does not.

And so to me it's strange. This would have to be explained to me—why are there these big differences between these manuscripts? And then the dittography here again this is a perfect dittography for copying from another manuscript. You can't see it very well from where you are sitting, I know, because this isn't great but "the gods of the land" is right up here and here I try to get it out there a little bit, but it was really tough to do it and then you'll notice that this underlined portion here is "gods of the land" and it crosses it out.

So again his eye is overlooking [text in copying] this parent manuscript, he sees "gods of the land," he writes it down, he puts his eyes back there again, sees "gods of the land" again, writes it down. It's a common thing that occurs and he crosses it out when he sees that he has done it twice. That's a common scribal error.

Here's another one with manuscript three "and my". This is at the bottom of the page and the next page starts with "any my" again. So, he crosses this one out because he goes back and realizes that he had put it twice. Another *homeoteleuton*. Now this one here I will grant could have been added later by Joseph Smith but it also could be an easy *homeoteleuton* because when you reading "the god of," "the god of," "the god of," "the god of," it's easy to miss one of the "god of," okay?

And when you're copying things over but it is weird that they both would miss it. It is weird with that, but if this manuscript is copied from this one that means he is just perpetuating his mistake. Does that make sense?

So we're just talking about scribal errors here.

Problem #3: Over-punctuation for a dictated text Now let's go to the dictation question for just a minute here, with [Robert J. Matthews](#) on OT1. Now OT1 is the Old Testament manuscript for the JST. He says there is little punctuation. Old Testament two which is the revised one has practically no punctuation. And then New Testament one manuscript, likewise has very little punctuation. New Testament Two has some punctuation added much later—the ink is much darker.

And so what you are seeing there is that Matthews thinks that there was a lot more punctuation after the dictation and somebody went back and put it in, in a different ink. And then of course [Royal Skousen](#), in his book on the [original manuscripts](#), says it without any punctuation at all. Okay. So punctuations is an important issue with this question about whether these are working translation papers or not. And so here is manuscript three and you have look at all the punctuation. This is a lot more than you would see in a dictated text.

I would have to have that explained to me why is there so much punctuation going on there. Same thing with manuscript two. You get some that look like it had already been punctuated, but notice how dark these punctuation marks are—that means that somebody went back later and punctuated this. If there is going to be any argument for a dictated text, it would have to be based on manuscript two, because manuscript three fails the test and manuscript one fails the test completely. Number two is the only one you could possibly argue for it.

But notice here the ink is very dark and it matches the characters. Now what that tells me —and again I had to look at this under a microscope to figure this out— is that somebody went back and put these marks in here and at the same time put in some characters because the inks match; it's a later ink. Okay. And that's why to me the two ink theory is not totally dead yet.

Myth #5: Hugh Nibley was always wrong, or always right. And myth number [six]. Did Nibley ever make any errors? Of course not. Or was he completely wrong? Of course not. By the way, Nibley gets hammered a lot on the discussion boards— it's just sad to see that because he did so much good work and just to throw it out completely (and by the way John Gee has totally been discredited, by the same reasoning, because of his little mistake which he admits to now on the two ink thing and <00:07:03> manuscript number three—he has, in the critics' telling, been totally discredited because of that one mistake. He doesn't know what he is doing anymore because he made a mistake? So we can't make any mistakes as apologists, is that it? What a cry and shame to be looked at that way, Of course we are going to make mistakes.

We are not perfect apologists, we are just trying to do the best that we can with the material that we have, and so Nibley was no different. He made mistakes as well. He wasn't perfect and he wasn't an idiot either. I think he was very good. In fact, he believed also that these were all copies that we don't have the original dictated manuscripts of the Book of Abraham, period—that's what he said. We don't have them and I am inclined to agree with him about that.

He believed that manuscript one was the parent copy to manuscript two and three, which we know now is not right, but that's not a huge error. We know that because Warren Parrish copied manuscript one from manuscript three. What we find with these manuscripts is that the earlier manuscripts generally will have a lot more problems to it. These will be more problematic, to try to figure out. There is a lot more variance in there, and lot more mistakes and these kinds of things, and then the next manuscript will be a little bit more fleshed out, a little bit smoother. The next manuscript will be a little bit smoother until finally you get to the manuscript four which is a lot smoother and looks pretty much like the *Times and Seasons* [published version of the Book of Abraham text]. It's very smoothed out.

And manuscript two, being the earliest, has the hardest readings in it, with the most variance in it, and so by the time you get to manuscript one it is working out a lot of things like you get this "regulus" in these two manuscripts that gets taken out—"regulus" whatever that is. And you get out "that is lying before you" out of these manuscripts.

Collation of BoA Mss 1,2,3

BoA Ms #2	BoA Ms #3	BoA Ms #1
I sought for -the + mine appoint . . . (Abr. 1:4)	I sought for -the + mine appoint . . .	I sought for mine appoint . .
(Abr. 1:6)		-and the god of Koash
(Abr. 1:11)		(2&3) -regulus
(Abr. 1:12)		(3) -that is lying before you
(Abr. 1:17)		(2&3) -their hearts are turned

By the way, John Gee is going to have something kind of new out on this called the Egyptianisms in the Book of Abraham manuscripts where he has found, and this is one of them here "their hearts are turned"—he's found that the part that's crossed out, "the hearts are turned" is the passive Egyptian of the Ptolemaic time period. And he feels that that's pretty good evidence that Joseph Smith knew what he is talking about. He was seeing something Egyptian going on, and that still needs to be kind of explained I guess.

External evidence for the Book of Abraham manuscripts

Myth #6: The external evidence for the claim that the Book of Abraham manuscripts are copies is not very strong. Well we know that the scribes' external evidence certainly describes the historical atmosphere in the early nineteenth-century Church.

We know that W. W. Phelps was called as a scribe in July 1835. We know Frederick G. Williams was acting as scribe as early as October 3rd, and we know that Warren Parrish is called as scribe on October 29th. So we know that the manuscripts that we have don't predate these dates. They are later than that, anyway, and maybe much later—we don't know for sure.

We also want to taking this consideration some historical matters here: what's going on between 1835 and 1842? Tons of things are going on in the Church. How busy is Joseph Smith? It's amazing he has time to breathe. Literally there is so much happening with him. Joseph Smith during this time period gives more rein to the leaders of the Church, gives them more independence to do things. There is an increase in secular learning, learning languages, history, ancient things—the members are very interested in that kind of thing during this time period.

I don't want to read all of this, but look at some of the things going on in those 7 years: with the preparation and acceptance of the doctrine covenants 1835 edition, I need to give you a little clue here on the how far along the translation was by August 17th, 1835. You know the term "Shinehah" it's in [Abraham 3:13](#)—remember that it got some saviors with "Olea." Well that word gets adopted into the heading of an March 1833 revelations in the 1835 D&C in August.

And how was it adopted into the Doctrine and Covenants? Well it's put in there as a code name. Remember the code names that were used by the prophet? Some of you are too young maybe. Our scriptures used to have those in there; they don't any more. But Shinehah was in the 1835 edition of the [Doctrine and Covenants](#). It was accepted in August 17th, 1835 which seems to suggest that the translation was at least up to Abraham 3:13 by August of 1835—does that make sense to you? I mean if he is pulling out that word.

There is also more going on with the [Kirtland Safety Society](#), the bank closes, there is <00:02:45>, the Far West problems, the extermination order, the Liberty Jail experiences and all that, building Nauvoo, all of this, there is so much going on. So it's no wonder really why between 1835 and 1842 Joseph Smith was not able to publish the Book of Abraham at that time.

Well I like this one. Joseph loosens the reins, he really does. He goes to Michigan and lets the brethren go ahead and hold a major conference for the Church. He lets the Missouri and Kirtland leaders just go ahead and run things, for years really. [Richard Bushman's](#) book *Rough Stone Rolling* makes it pretty clear that Joseph had allowed a lot of autonomy to these leaders and [D&C 134](#) was credited to W. W. Phelps. Some think it's Oliver Cowdery, but should also be W. W. Phelps as well.

And so there is a lot going on—the reins are loosened, and what I am trying to do is help you see that it's not out of the realm of reason to expect that these brethren may have been doing some things on their own. From Bushman's book:

Joseph and the Early Brethren

“Joseph was not always in charge of the councils he attended. The group itself chose the moderator, shifting the responsibility from one to another of the more experienced men like Sidney Rigdon or Oliver Cowdery, but sometimes turning to new converts like William E. McLellin. . . . Joseph could absent himself from these meetings without crippling business. He left Kirtland for months at a time, and the councils carried on in his absence. The men in Missouri managed their affairs without him for years” (Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 252.).

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And so he is not tightly reined there to the brethren. There is also that interest in secular learning I mentioned and as you know Oliver Cowdery goes to New York I believe, it is, and a rabbi Joshua Seixas is found, and he comes back and he begins the school in January of 1836 for the brethren to learn Hebrew.

And Joseph was interested in that, and so were some of the early brethren—they were in an AP class. I don't have any problem with that but they had to learn from the teacher and Joseph says on Wednesday the 17th February 1836:

² Richard L. Bushman with Jed Woodruff, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 252.

Interest in Secular Learning Rises

- Late 1835: Hebrew school established
- "Wednesday the 17th [February 1836] attend[ed] the school and read and translated with my class as usual, and my soul delights in reading the word of the Lord in the original, and I am determined to persue the study of languages untill I shall become master of them" (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. by Dean Jessee, 161).

*"attend[ed] the school and read and translated with my class as usual, and my soul delights in the reading and reading of the word of the Lord in the original, and I am determined to pursue the study of languages untill I shall become master of them."*³

And I was talking to Alexander Baugh who is on the Joseph Smith Papers Project and he shared this with me. He has a letter from Joshua Seixas to Joseph Smith. And it reads,

Joshua Sexias to Joseph Smith

"Mr. Joseph Smith Jun has attended a full course of Hebrew under my tuition; & *has been indefatigable* in acquiring the principles of the Sacred language of the Old Testament Scriptures in the original tongue. *He has so far accomplished a knowledge of it*, that he is able to translate to my entire satisfaction; & *by prosecuting the study he will be able to become a proficient in Hebrew*. I take this opportunity of thanking him for his industry, & his marked kindness towards me" (emphasis mine).

Kirtland Ohio March 30th 1836

[Signed]

J. Sexias

³ Dean C. Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 161.

"Mr. Joseph Smith Jun has attended a full course of Hebrew under my tuition and has been indefatigable in acquiring the principals of the sacred language of the Old Testament Scriptures in the original tongue. He has so far accomplished a knowledge of that he is able to translate to my entire satisfaction and by prosecuting the study he will be able to become a proficient in Hebrew. I take this opportunity of thanking him for his industry and his marked kindness toward me."

And this was in Kirtland in March of 1836 and that tells me two things:

Number one: Joseph Smith is not bad at Hebrew. Number two, he had to work at it. Why didn't the Lord just give it to him, you know, with all his revelations? Because Joseph is a seer and he is a scholar. He has to work through the books just like you and me. And I think this to me this is just another indication that he is trying to do the best that he can to become the scholar that he wants to be.

I have a couple quotes here, let's see here we go. The Lord and Joseph Smith were open to allowing some of the early brethren to participate in the bringing forth of scripture. As early as 1829, Oliver Cowdery was given the opportunity to translate the Book of Mormon and failed (see D&C [8-9](#)).

On November 14th, 1835 Warren Parrish was told he "shall see much of my ancient records and shall know of the hidden things and shall be endowed with a knowledge of hidden languages and if he desires and shall seek it out my hand he shall be privileged with writing much of my word as a scribe un to me for the benefit of my people."⁴ W. W. Phelps was promised in a blessing, "behold he shall have understanding in all sciences, even languages and with his brother Oliver shall write and arrange many good books for the good of the church with the young may grow up in wisdom."⁵

Now I don't know about you, but it appears to me that it was put into the minds of these early brethren that they could learn some things on their own. Even the Lord in March of 1833 encouraged Joseph Smith and the early brethren to study and learn and become acquainted with all good books and with languages, tongues and people as a revelation March 1833 [[D&C 90:10](#)].

Now that would put a thought in my mind to see what I could do to learn some languages.

And so I am just trying to help build an idea of what the climate was at this time when these papers come out. Okay. It's not unreasonable to suggest that these papers were study papers, not translation papers but study papers. And as I read these papers more and as I go over and over them it just becomes clear to me that that's exactly what we're talking about here.

Well this investigation has led me to believe that the Book of Abraham manuscripts and the translation process are two very different things. As far as the translation process goes, we really know little about

⁴ Joseph Smith blessing to Warren Parrish, given 14 November 1835; see *History of the Church* 2:311.

⁵ Blessing given by Joseph Smith on 22 September 1835, recorded 3 October 1835 on page 14 of Church record; presumed to be from the W.W. Phelps diary, 30-34.

how it worked. How much do we know about the Book of Mormon [translation process](#), really, when you get right down to it? What is Joseph Smith experiencing? Or the [JST](#) experience?

From Joseph Smith's previous experience with the Book of Mormon and JST, it is not likely that he used his intellect alone as suggested by these Book of Abraham manuscripts. Now that's an important point. Just because there are a lot of characters over there, and you've got the English on the text on the right side, does not mean that that's the translation process that he used. And it's not borne out in the Book of Abraham or Book of Mormon anyway, or in the JST manuscripts, that he would put characters on one side and text on the other side. We don't have any evidence of him using that process for anything else that he was translating, and if something comes out I sure like to see it.

This would put Joseph Smith more in the realm of an [academic] translator as we would now define it if these are translation papers trying to match the characters [to English equivalents] but when we are referring to Joseph as a translator and a seer it is an entirely different thing. This is the area of revelation about which we know very little.

Conclusion

I do not believe that the Book of Abraham manuscripts represent a goofing around approach. Warren Parrish, Frederick G Williams and W. W. Phelps knew no more about how Joseph Smith received the Book of Abraham than all of do concerning the Book of Mormon when it comes to the divine revelation part.

I think they may have made a serious attempt to try and understand how or if Joseph Smith's translation matched the hieratic characters. As Nibley first suggested, they may perhaps also have attempted to use Joseph Smith's translation to learn the Egyptian language. They may also have used the characters simply as paragraph markers, because if you go to manuscripts then you have one for each paragraph, just about. Maybe they are illustrations, maybe they are markers for the paper, I don't know—but I do know it's not translation going on there.

What is clear is that the translation process of the Book of Abraham is not represented in these manuscripts. These are two very separate events. The revelatory process is as enigmatic here as Joseph's other revelation experiences with the Book of Mormon, JST and D&C—however these manuscripts do represent a desire that fits the climate of 1835–1836 to study and learn languages. Thus this demonstrates that Joseph Smith was both a seer and a scholar and that the early brethren were interested in learning languages as well.

Now despite all the evidence that I suggested to you, I believe that the Book of Abraham carries within itself the divine stamp of its own authenticity. I believe that with all my heart that we don't need this. We don't need to have this as some sort of supporting evidence. Just as the Savior told his critics that they would not "be persuaded though one rose from the dead" ([Luke 16:31](#)), so the Lord in Joseph's time warns, "Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all things which I have committed unto you" ([D&C 5:7](#)). Isn't that the truth? It's exactly the way it is.

So I testify that the Book of Abraham is the word of God. I don't need this evidence to prove that, but if that's not how it works it's because the Holy Spirit of God has witnessed to me the truthfulness of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith and all he brought forth by the gift and power of God. This I know, and testify, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.