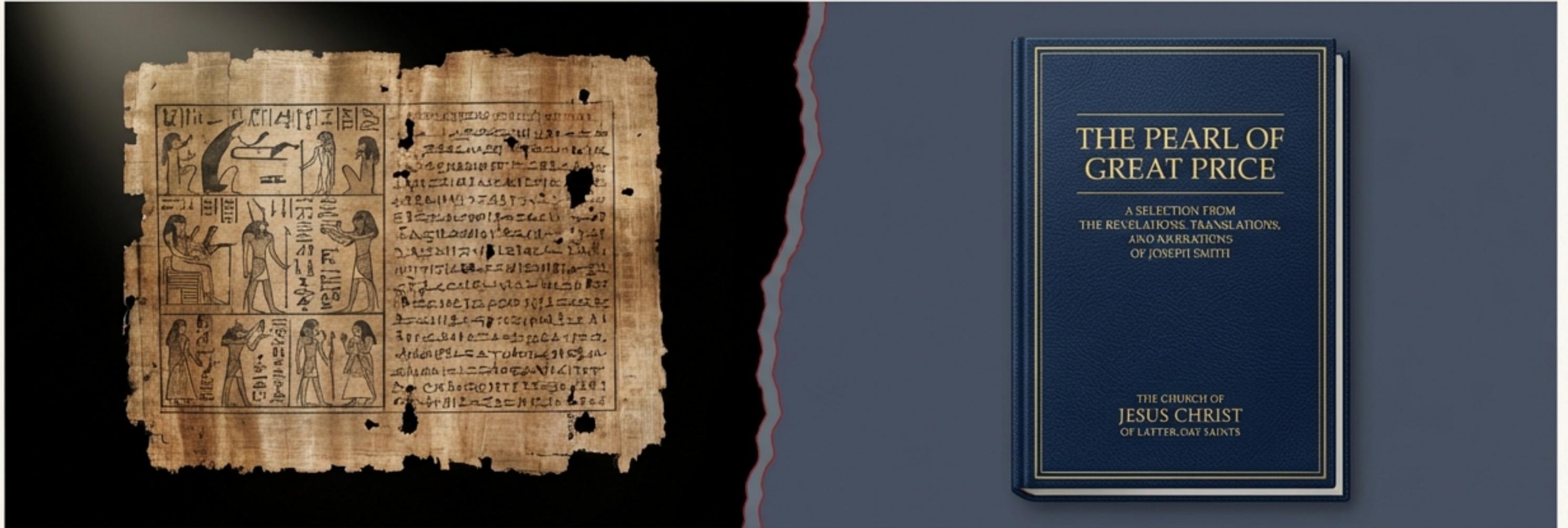


## Investigative Case File

# The Case of the Book of Abraham: An Evidence-Based Investigation

Joseph Smith claimed to translate ancient papyri. When those papyri were rediscovered, egyptologists confirmed they did not match his translation. This is the central problem apologetics must solve.



## Core Facts Established

In 1835, Joseph Smith acquired Egyptian papyri and produced the Book of Abraham, claiming it was a translation "written by his own hand [Abraham's] upon papyrus."

In the 1960s, a portion of these papyri, long thought lost, was rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Egyptologists—and the LDS Church's own essay—confirm the surviving papyri are common Egyptian funerary texts, dated 1,000+ years after Abraham, and do not mention him at all.

# The Apologist's Stance: A Conclusion in Search of Evidence

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The primary modern defenders of the Book of Abraham are BYU-employed egyptologists, most notably Dr. Kerry Muhlstein and Dr. John Gee. Their academic credentials are often used to reassure church members.



“So I start out with an assumption that the Book of Abraham and the Book of Mormon and anything else that we get from the restored gospel is true. Therefore **any evidence** I find I will try and fit into that paradigm ... To me it's a given that it's true.”

**Dr. Kerry Muhlstein**, 2020 FairMormon Conference

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**Analysis:** This statement confirms the apologetic project is not a neutral, scholarly inquiry. It is an exercise in fitting evidence to a pre-determined, unchallengeable conclusion. This is the opposite of the scientific or academic method.

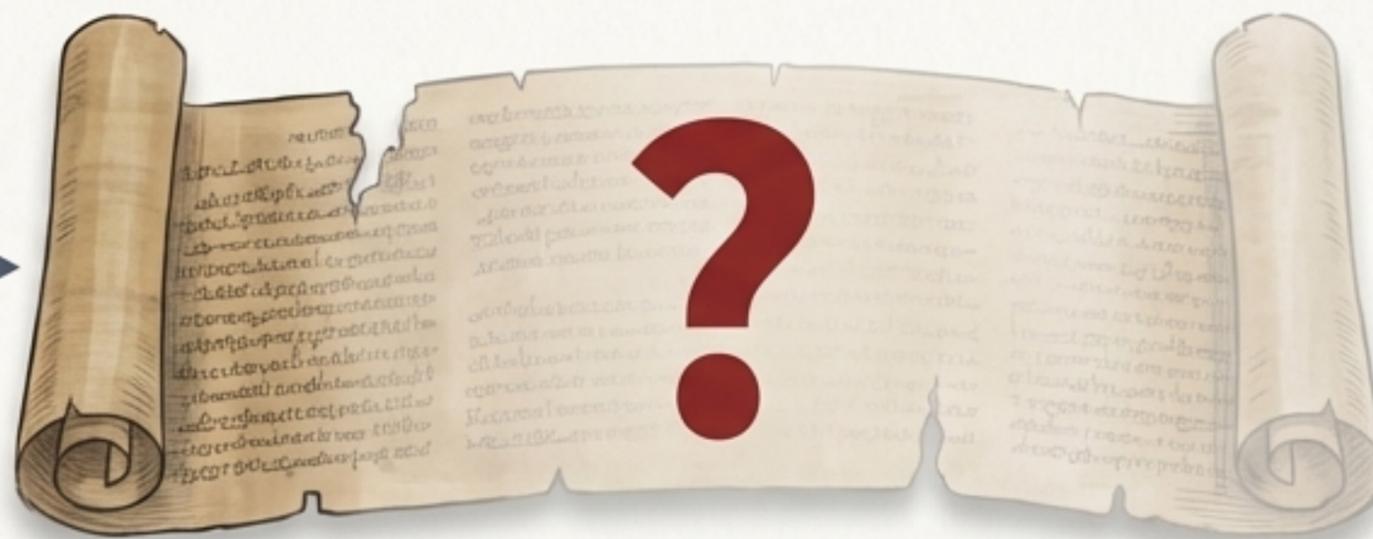
# Defense Argument #1: The “Lost Scroll” Theory

## The Claim

Apologists argue that the *real* source for the Book of Abraham was on a different, longer portion of the papyri that was subsequently lost, perhaps in the Great Chicago Fire. The fragments we have today, they claim, are irrelevant.



Surviving Fragments



Theoretical “Lost” Portion

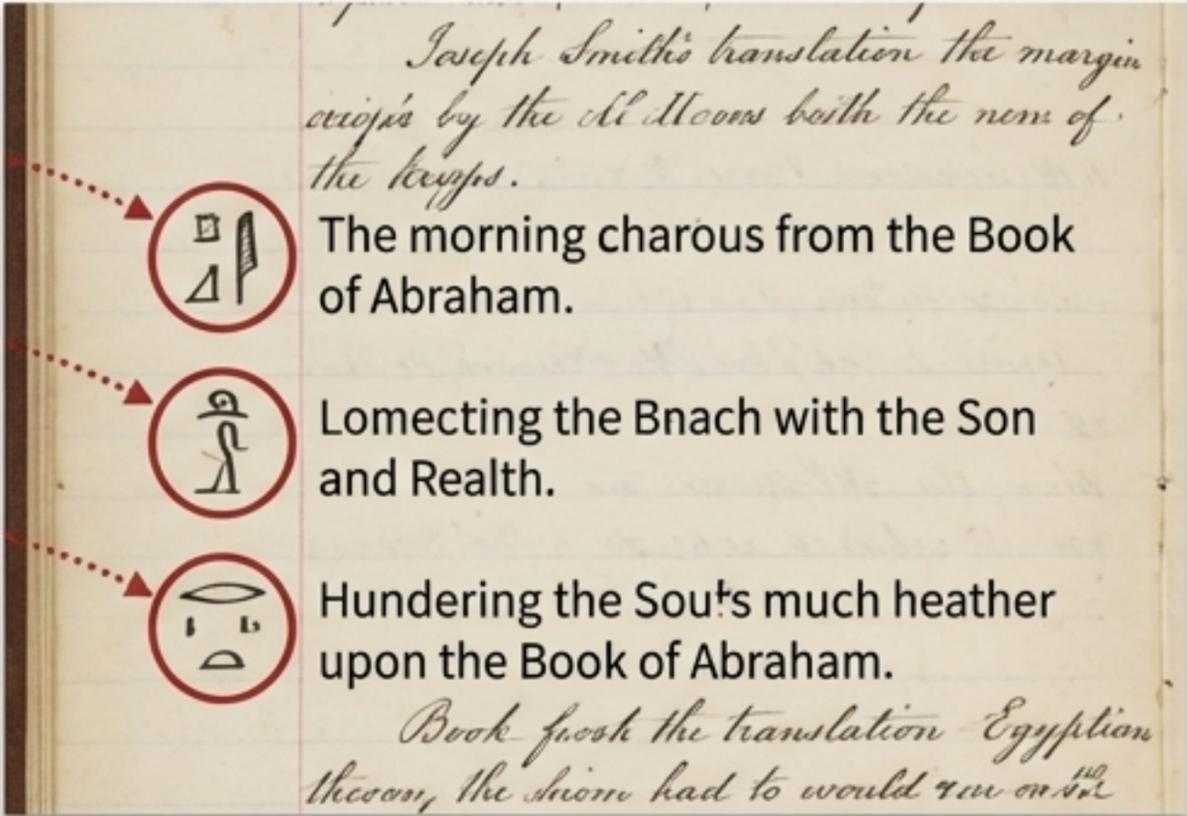
## The Official Position (from the LDS Gospel Topics Essay)

“It is likely futile to assess Joseph’s ability to translate papyri when we now have only a fraction of the papyri he had in his possession... The loss of a significant portion of the papyri means the relationship of the papyri to the published text **cannot be settled conclusively** by reference to the papyri.”

In short: The smoking gun is missing, so you can’t prove a crime.

# Rebuttal: The Manuscripts Show a Direct Link to the Surviving Papyri

**The Evidence:** Joseph Smith's own translation documents, known as the "Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar," survive. They show a clear, sequential process.

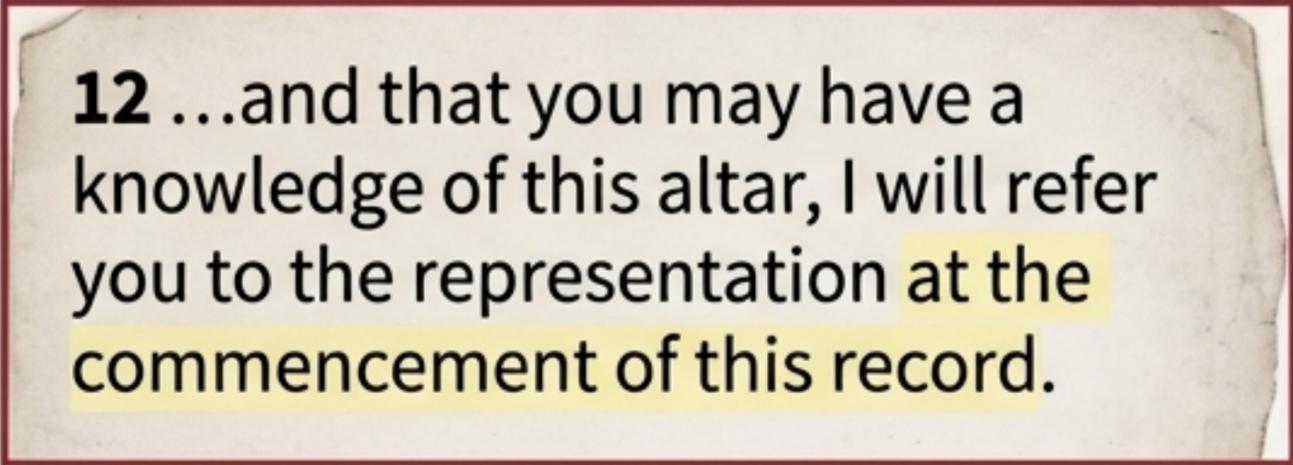
SURVIVING PAPYRUS	JOSEPH SMITH'S MANUSCRIPT
 <p>The surviving papyrus fragment shows a drawing of a man on the left and columns of hieroglyphs on the right. Three hieroglyphs are circled in red and connected by dotted lines to the corresponding entries in the manuscript on the right.</p>	 <p>Joseph Smith's translation the margin origin by the Al Moons both the name of the scrolls.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The morning charous from the Book of Abraham.</li><li>Lomecting the Bnach with the Son and Realth.</li><li>Hundering the Sou'ts much heather upon the Book of Abraham.</li></ul> <p>Book frook the translation Egyptian throun, the shom had to would run on the</p>

**The scribes were copying characters directly from the papyrus we have and aligning them with the translation. This is not a random assortment; it is a sequential translation effort from the extant document. This evidence alone fatally undermines the Lost Scroll theory.**

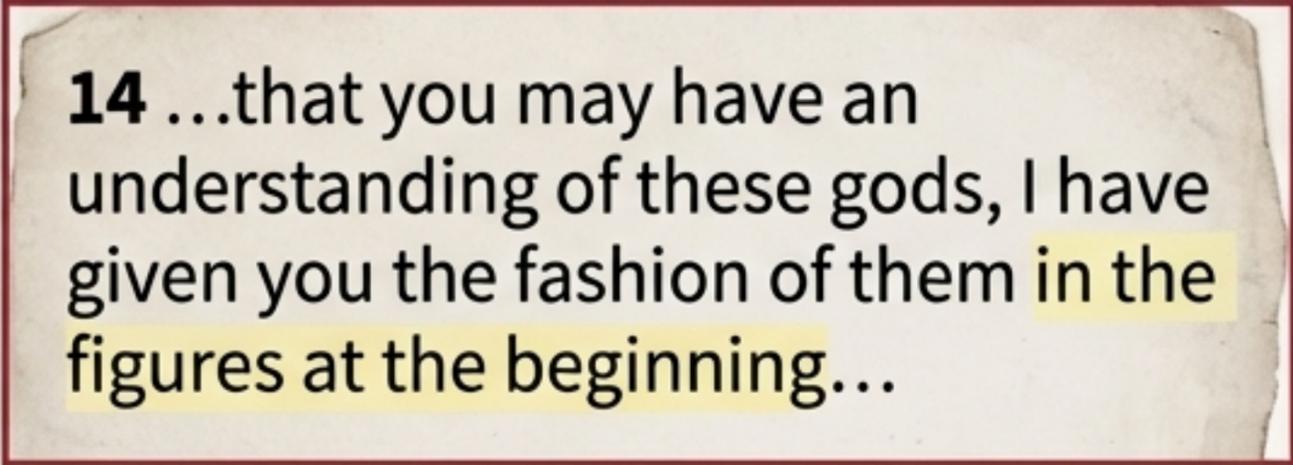
# Rebuttal: The Book of Abraham Itself Testifies Against a Lost Scroll

## The Scripture's Testimony:

The canonical text of the Book of Abraham directly connects the narrative to the illustrations (**facsimiles**) found on the surviving papyri.



**12** ...and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record.



**14** ...that you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning...

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## Analyst's Note:

The scripture states that the illustrations (Facsimile 1) are part of the *same record* as the text. Since we have the papyrus with Facsimile 1, the text is telling us that its source is the document we possess, not one that is lost.

# Rebuttal: The Math Proves There Was No Room for the Text

Forensic Analysis: Experts have calculated the length of the missing portions of the scroll based on the physics of how papyrus rolls and the content of similar known funerary texts.

Space Required for Book of Abraham text.



**511 cm**

Maximum Possible Space Available on Scroll.



**56 cm**

There was not enough physical space in the missing sections of the papyrus scroll to contain even one-tenth of the Book of Abraham text.

The “Lost Scroll” is a **mathematical impossibility.**

# Rebuttal: The Defense's Own Expert Witness Reverses His Testimony



**The Witness:** Dr. Brian Hauglid  
Former BYU Professor  
Editor, *The Joseph Smith Papers* Project

> “For the record, I no longer hold the views that have been quoted from my 2010 book... **I now reject a missing Abraham manuscript.** I agree that the Egyptian papers were used to produce the Book of Abraham... I no longer agree with Gee or Muhlstein. I find their apologetic scholarship on the Book of Abraham **abhorrent.**”

The leading academic defender of the Lost Scroll theory abandoned it, calling the work of his peers “abhorrent,” after studying the primary source documents published by the Church itself.



# Rebuttal: Joseph Smith's Own Words Contradict the Catalyst Theory

## Section 1: What did 'Translate' mean to Joseph Smith?

> "I wish to mention here that the title page of the Book of Mormon is a **literal translation**, taken from the very last leaf... and that said title page is **not by any means a modern composition** either **of mine or of any other man...**"

## Section 2: His Consistent Testimony

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| ✓ <b>July 1835</b>    | ...commenced the <b>translation</b> of some of the characters or hieroglyphics... |
| ✓ <b>October 1835</b> | ... <b>translating</b> the Egyptian records.                                      |
| ✓ <b>March 1842</b>   | ...continued the <b>translation</b> of the book of Abraham.                       |

**Joseph Smith understood and presented his work as a "literal translation," not an inspired work of fiction or a vague revelation. The Catalyst Theory requires us to believe Joseph Smith did not understand his own prophetic process.**

# Rebuttal: The Apologetic Defense Is in Disarray

## Internal Contradiction

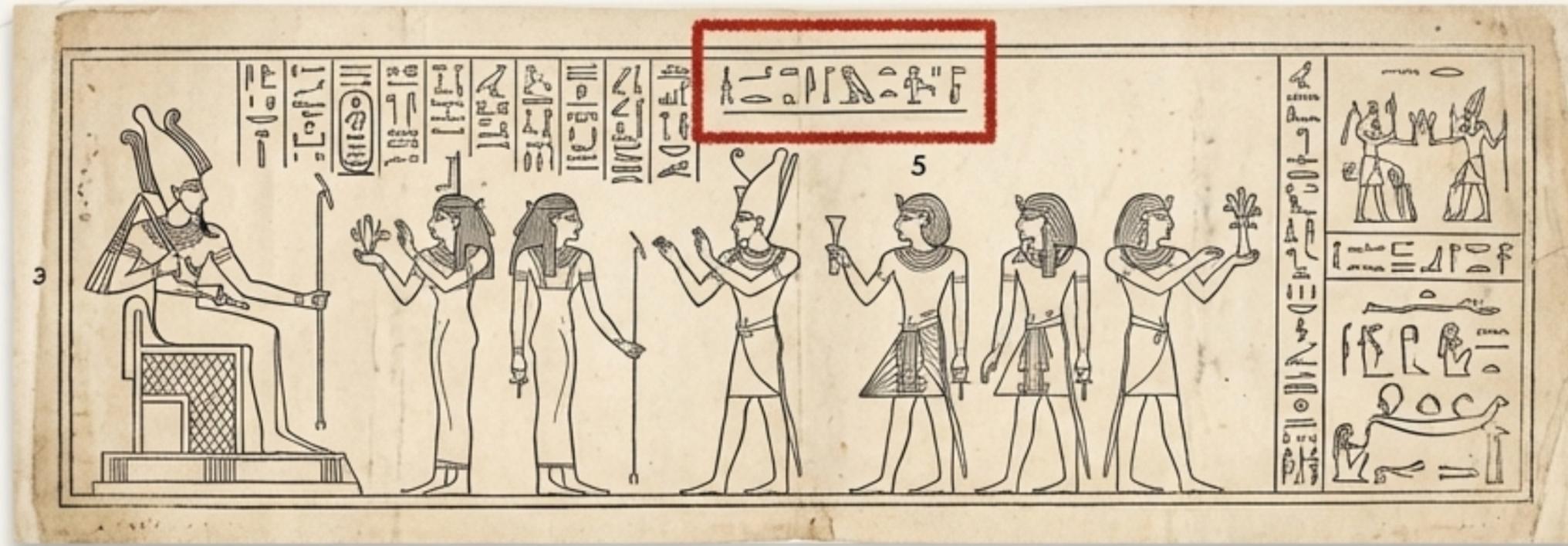
The two main apologists for the Book of Abraham hold mutually exclusive theories. Even more damning, John Gee (proponent of the Lost Scroll) has publicly argued against the Catalyst theory.

> “I’m open to the the Catalyst Theory. I considered it seriously for years. **I haven’t considered it seriously in years because it does—there’s not enough evidence for it** . . . Joseph Smith said that he got that—it says it’s Abraham’s reasoning and says that he learned it from just translating a papyrus that’s in his house.” John Gees Pro.

## Analysis

The Church’s top apologists cannot agree on a coherent explanation. One expert’s “evidence” is dismissed as baseless by the other, showing the desperation to find any explanation, even one that contradicts his colleague.

# The Irrefutable Evidence: Facsimile 3



## Joseph Smith's Claim

For characters above one figure (labeled #5), he wrote: "King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his head."

## Egyptological Translation

Egyptologists read these same characters as, "the Osiris Hor, justified forever."

**This is not a matter of interpretation. Joseph Smith provided a specific, literal translation for characters visible in the published scripture. That translation is demonstrably incorrect. This single piece of evidence invalidates both the 'Lost Scroll' theory and the 'Catalyst' theory.**

# The Macro Picture: A Pattern of Problematic “Translations”

The Book of Abraham is not an anomaly. It fits a pattern found across Joseph Smith’s major scriptural productions.

## Book of Mormon

**Source Language:** Reformed Egyptian

**Expert Analysis:** A language unknown to linguistics. Confirmed non-existent by egyptologist Dr. Robert Ritner.

**Verdict:** Unfalsifiable. The source language was invented and cannot be checked.

## Book of Abraham

**Source Language:** Egyptian

**Expert Analysis:** A known ancient language, deciphered via the Rosetta Stone.

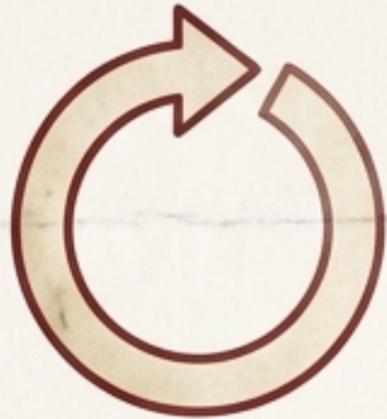
**Verdict:** Falsifiable. The translation claims were tested and proven false.

## Shared DNA

Both introductions use remarkably similar framing and language, claiming to be ancient records written by an ancient prophet’s hand, now translated by Joseph Smith. This suggests a common 19th-century authorial voice.

# The Apologetic Playbook: A Method of Faith-Preservation, Not Truth-Seeking

## Tactic 1: Assume the Conclusion



### Tactic 1: Assume the Conclusion

Start with “the Church is true” and force all evidence to fit that conclusion, as stated by Kerry Muhlstein.

## Tactic 2: Create Unfalsifiable Claims



### Tactic 2: Create Unfalsifiable Claims

Argue for a “Lost Scroll” that can never be examined or a “Catalyst” revelation that is, as Gerardo Samano noted, indistinguishable from fraud.

## Tactic 3: Misrepresent the Evidence



### Tactic 3: Misrepresent the Evidence

Selectively show images, misquote sources, or redefine clear words like “translation” to support a preferred narrative.

## Tactic 4: Poison the Well



### Tactic 4: Poison the Well

When evidence is presented, attack the arguer’s motives. Label experts like Dr. Ritner as “critics” or “anti-Mormon” to dismiss findings without engaging their substance.

# The Verdict: The Apologetic Defenses Are Not Supported by the Evidence

To accept the apologetic arguments for the Book of Abraham, one must willfully dismiss a staggering amount of direct, verifiable evidence.

## One must reject:

- ✘ **The Physical Manuscripts:** Which link the translation directly to the surviving papyri.
- ✘ **The Scripture Itself:** Which states the facsimiles are on the same record.
- ✘ **Joseph Smith's Own Words:** His repeated claims of a 'literal translation.'
- ✘ **Forensic & Mathematical Analysis:** Which prove a long scroll was impossible.
- ✘ **The Unanimous Consensus of Egyptology:** The expert field that can actually read the language.
- ✘ **The Testimony of Former Apologists:** Like Brian Hauglid, who abandoned the theories after seeing the evidence.

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**The Book of Abraham controversy is not a case of ambiguous evidence requiring faith. It is a case of overwhelming evidence pointing to a 19th-century origin, countered by apologetic theories that crumble under direct scrutiny.**

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