

## The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus . . . Twenty Years Later

by Michael D. Rhodes

Twenty years ago I published a translation and commentary of Facsimile 2 of the Book of Abraham.<sup>1</sup> In the intervening years there have been numerous advances in our understanding of this interesting document, and I felt that the study needed revision in the light of those advances.<sup>2</sup>

This will certainly not be the last word on Facsimile 2. In Egyptian studies, as indeed in all human endeavors, our knowledge is always tentative and in need of constant revision as we learn more. It should come as no surprise to members of the Church that as we gain more understanding of Egyptian matters, we find an increasing number of Joseph Smith's explanations of Facsimile 2 are in accord with that increased understanding. Nevertheless, my purpose is not to “prove” Joseph Smith was a prophet. That knowledge can and should come only from God, not from intellectual reasoning, and each individual must find it for himself or herself. President David O. McKay said that Brigham Young University “was established for the sole purpose of associating with facts of science, art, literature, and philosophy the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup> In this spirit, I have attempted to relate the current Egyptological understanding of Facsimile 2 with the revealed truths of the restored gospel.

Facsimile 2 belongs to a class of Egyptian religious documents called hypocephali (Greek ὑποκέφαλος, “under the head,” a translation of the Egyptian *hr tp* with the same meaning). A hypocephalus is a small disk-shaped object made of papyrus, stuccoed linen, bronze, gold, wood, or clay, which the Egyptians placed under the head of their dead. They believed it would magically cause the head and body to be enveloped in flames or radiance, thus making the deceased divine.<sup>4</sup> The hypocephalus itself symbolized the eye of Re or Horus,<sup>5</sup> i.e., the sun, and the scenes portrayed on it relate to the Egyptian concept of the resurrection and life after death. To the Egyptians the daily rising and setting of the sun was a vivid symbol of the resurrection. The hypocephalus itself represented all that the sun encircles, i.e. the whole world. The upper portion represented the world of men and the day sky, and the lower portion (the part with the cow) the nether world and the night sky.

Hypocephali first appeared during the Egyptian Saite Dynasty (663-525 B.C.) and their use continued down to at least the Christian era.<sup>6</sup> It is in the Saite version of the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael D. Rhodes, “A Translation and Commentary of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 (Spring 1977): 259-74.

<sup>2</sup> I owe special thanks to John Gee who read this paper several times, made helpful suggestions, and provided additional references that made the paper better than it would otherwise have been.

<sup>3</sup> *Messenger*, Provo; BYU, (October 1937)

<sup>4</sup> See Richard Lepsius, *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter* (Leipzig: C. Wigrand, 1842), chapter 162, line 10. Also see translation of chapter 162 of the Book of the Dead in the appendix.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Birch, “Hypocephalus in the Possession of Sir Henry B. Meux, Bar.,” *Proceedings for the Society of Biblical Archeology* (November 1883): 3 (hereafter cited as *PSBA*). See also Hans Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1952), 314, 630.

<sup>6</sup> See Samuel Birch, “Hypocephalus in the Collection of Walter Myers, Esq. F. S. A.,” *PSBA* (2 June 1885): 214, where Birch discusses a hypocephalus which dates to about the Christian era.

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Book of the Dead, chapter 162, that directions for the construction and use of the hypocephalus are given.<sup>7</sup> The section to which this chapter belongs (chapters 162-65) contains many strange words and concepts, which some egyptologists believe contain foreign influences, possibly Semitic or Nubian.<sup>8</sup>

Hypocephali are found in several museums in Europe and the Middle East,<sup>9</sup> but except for the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus, and there are even a few in America—three in the University of Pennsylvania Museum and one in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Three hypocephali found in the British Museum are quite similar to the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus<sup>10</sup> both in layout and text. By comparing these with Facsimile 2, I was able to reconstruct the original text of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus with only a few uncertain readings.

From the accounts we have about the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus and the other associated Egyptian papyri, it seems they were found in Egypt in the Gurneh area of Thebes around the year 1818.<sup>11</sup> Similar hypocephali such as British Museum 8445c, which are clearly related to the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus, have all been found in Thebes.<sup>12</sup> BM 8445c is especially interesting in another aspect as well, since the owner's name was *Hr* (Horus), the same as the owner of the Book of Breathings papyrus in the Church collection. Could it be the same person?

A careful examination of Facsimile 2 shows that there is a difference between most of the hieroglyphic signs and the signs on the right third of the figure on the outer edge as well as the outer portions of the sections numbered 12-15. These signs are hieratic, not hieroglyphic, and are inverted, or upside down, to the rest of the text. In fact, they are a fairly accurate copy of lines 2, 3, and 4 of the Joseph Smith Papyrus XI, which contains a portion of the Book of Breathings. Especially clear is the word *snsn*, in section 14, and part of the name of the mother of the owner of the papyrus, (*tꜣy-)**hby.t*, repeated twice on the outer edge. An ink drawing of the hypocephalus in the Church Historian's office shows these same areas as being blank. It is likely that these portions were destroyed on the original hypocephalus and someone (the engraver, one of Joseph Smith's associates, or Joseph himself) copied the lines from the Book of Breathings papyrus for aesthetic purposes.

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<sup>7</sup> See translation of chapter 162 in the appendix.

<sup>8</sup> Eduard Naville, "Einleitung," *Das Ägyptische Todtenbuch der XVIII. bis XX. Dynastie*, 3 vols. (Berlin: A. Asher, 1886), 184; Thomas George Allen, *The Book of the Dead or Going Forth by Day*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization No. 37 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 157; Jean Yoyotte, "Contribution à L'Histoire du Chapitre 162 du Livre des Morts," *Revue d'Égyptologie* 29 (1977): 194-202.

<sup>9</sup> British Museum in London, the Louvre in Paris, Berlin Museum, Magyor Nemzeti Museum in Budapest, and Cairo Museum in Egypt.

<sup>10</sup> The three are 37909, 8445c, and 8445f. Berlin No. 7792, although badly damaged, also shows similarities.

<sup>11</sup> See Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 2:348-50; also James R. Clark, *Story of the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955).

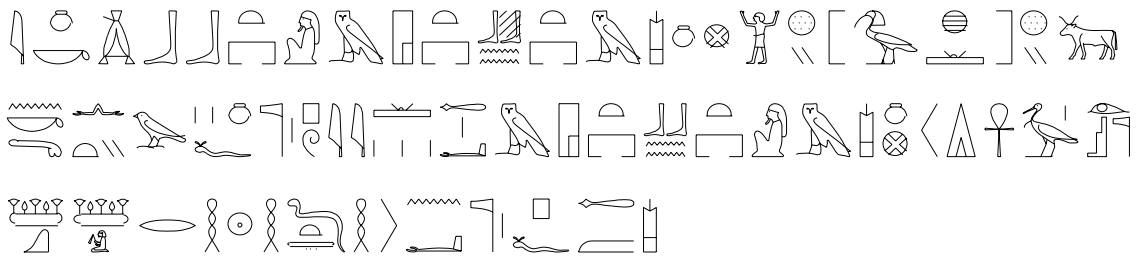
<sup>12</sup> Edith Varga, *Acta Orientalia Hungariensis* 12 (1961) 256.



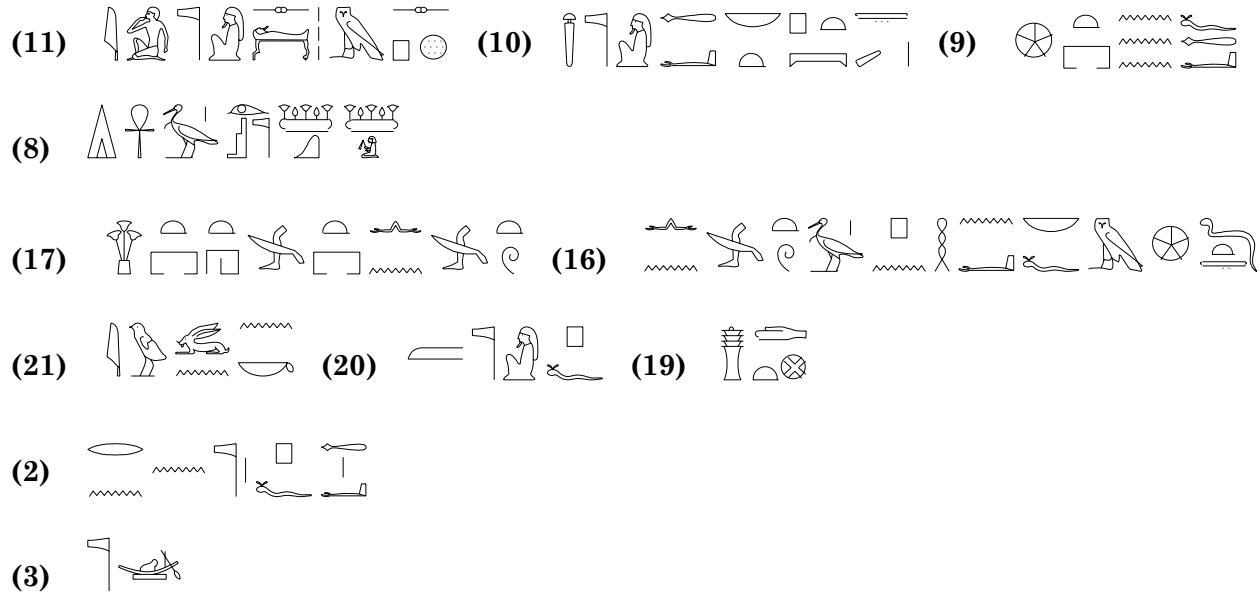
Facsimile 2

Facsimile 2 - Hieroglyphic Transcription

Edge:



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### Facsimile 2 - Transliteration of Hieroglyphic Text

**Edge:**  $\dot{\text{i}}$ nk  $\underline{\text{d}}$ bsty m  $\dot{\text{h}}$ w.t bnb $\dot{\text{n}}$ .t m  $\dot{\text{I}}$ wnw, q $\text{3}$  sp-2,  $\text{3h}$  sp-2. k $\text{3}$  nk  $\dot{\text{i}}$ wty snw=f. n $\dot{\text{r}}$  pwy  $\text{3}$  m  $\dot{\text{h}}$ w.t bnb $\dot{\text{n}}$ .t m  $\dot{\text{I}}$ wnw <di  $\text{c}$ n $\dot{\text{h}}$  b $\text{3}$  Wsir Ššq r n $\dot{\text{h}}$   $\underline{\text{d}}$ .t  $\dot{\text{h}}$ >n $\text{c}$  n $\dot{\text{r}}$  pf m  $\dot{\text{I}}$ wnw.

11-18:  $\dot{\text{i}}$  n $\dot{\text{r}}$  s $\underline{\text{d}}$ r.w m sp tpy, n $\dot{\text{r}}$   $\text{3}$  nb p.t, t $\text{3}$ , dw $\text{3}$ .t, mw=f  $\text{3}$ , di  $\text{c}$ n $\dot{\text{h}}$  b $\text{3}$  Wsir Ššq.

17-16:  $\dot{\text{h}}$ 3.t th.t, nn th.tw, nn th.tw b $\text{3}$  pn  $\dot{\text{h}}$ n $\text{c}$  nb=f m dw $\text{3}$ .t  $\underline{\text{d}}$ .t.

21-19: iw wnn=k m n $\dot{\text{r}}$  pf  $\underline{\text{d}}$ d.wy.

2: rn n n $\dot{\text{r}}$  pf  $\text{3}$ .

3. dp.t n $\dot{\text{r}}$

### Translation of The Text

**Edge:** I am the Provider<sup>13</sup> in the Sun Temple<sup>14</sup> in Heliopolis. [I am] most exalted and very glorious. [I am] a virile bull without equal. [I am] that Mighty God<sup>15</sup> in the Sun

<sup>13</sup> Egyptian *dbsty*, an epithet of the god Osiris. (Cf. Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache*, 5 Vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), 4:562, entry 7 (hereafter cited as *Wb*.) It can also mean a box like the Hebrew תִּבְיָה “ark” of the covenant, which is thought to be an Egyptian borrowing. Cf. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1061.

<sup>14</sup> Egyptian *hw.t bbn*, literally “house of the benben.” Cf. *Wb* 1:459,10. Also see Ricardo Caminos, “The Chronicle of Prince Osorkon,” *Analecta Orientalia* 37 (Rome: Pontificia Institutum Biblicum, 1958) 127. Reference to the House of the Benben is also found in two late demotic magical papyri, which also contain the name of Abraham, Francis Ll. Griffith and Herbert Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* (London: H. Grevel, 1904), column IX, line 14; and Janet H. Johnson, “The Demotic Magical Spells of Leiden I 384,” *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het*

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Temple in Heliopolis. <May the Osiris Shishaq live forever><sup>16</sup> with that Mighty God in Heliopolis.<sup>17</sup>

**Left Middle:** O God of the Sleeping Ones<sup>18</sup> from the time of the creation.<sup>19</sup> O Mighty God, Lord of heaven and earth, of the hereafter, and of his great waters,<sup>20</sup> may the soul of the Osiris<sup>21</sup> Shishaq<sup>22</sup> be granted life.

**Bottom:** May this tomb never be desecrated,<sup>23</sup> and may this soul and its lord never be desecrated in the hereafter.

**Upper Left:** You shall ever be as that God, the Busirian.<sup>24</sup>

**To the Left of the Standing Two-headed God:** The name<sup>25</sup> of this Mighty God.

**To the Left of the Falcon-Headed God on the Ship:** Divine ship.

### Commentary

Heliopolis, the biblical On, is one of the most ancient cities in Egypt. Its Egyptian name *ḥw.t-kꜣ-Ptḥ* (“house of soul of Ptah”) gave us the name of Egypt (through Greek Αἴγυπτος). The connections between Heliopolis and Israel are many and ancient. Jewish tradition maintains that Abraham taught the priests of Heliopolis astronomy and other

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*Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 56 (1975): 29-64, column IX, line 14. Cf. also *wbn.n=k m ḥw.t bnbm m Ḥwnw*. “You have shown forth as the phoenix in the temple of the Benben in Heliopolis.” (*Pyramid Texts* 603 §1652).

<sup>15</sup> Mighty God is a name given to both Osiris and to the dead person thought of as Osiris. Cf. *Wb* 2:361,2 & 7.

<sup>16</sup> < *diꜥnh bꜣ Wsir Ṣšq r nhḥ d.t* > Proposed reading of the missing portion of the outer edge.

<sup>17</sup> This same phrase is found in a demotic Sensen papyrus referring to Osiris, “*Wsir nꜥr ꜣ m Ḥwnw*,” Guiseppe Botti, “Il Libro del Respirare e un Suo Nuovo Esempio nel Papiro Demotico N. 766 del Museo Egizio Di Torino,” *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 54 (1968): 226.

<sup>18</sup> I.e. the dead. Cf. *Wb* 4:392,9.

<sup>19</sup> Literally “the first time.” Cf. *Wb* 3:438,1.

<sup>20</sup> The primeval ocean from which the sun rose on the day of creation and which surrounds the earth. Cf. Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 114. A similar phrase is found in one of the demotic magical papyri, *r-wn n=y pꜣ tꜣ r-wn n=y tꜣ twꜣ.t r-wn n=y pꜣ nwn*, “Open the earth for me, open the netherworld for me, open the primeval waters for me.” Griffith and Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden*, London, line I 5.

<sup>21</sup> On the identification of the dead with Osiris, see Frankfort, *Religion*, 103ff.

<sup>22</sup> Shishaq or Sheshonq was the name of several Egyptian pharaohs of Dynasty XXI, the Libyan dynasty.

<sup>23</sup> Emending to *nn th.tw ḥꜣ.t tn*. Similar passages, but even more garbled, are found in the British Museum Hypocephali 8445c, 3445f, and 37909.

<sup>24</sup> A nisbe adjective formation of *Dd.w*, Busiris, a cult center of Osiris in the Delta, and thus used as an epithet of Osiris. Cf. *Wb* 5:630,7.

<sup>25</sup> The Egyptians believed that every god and goddess had a secret name. If anyone could find out this name, he would have power over the god or goddess. Cf. Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 501-4.

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sciences.<sup>26</sup> Our ancestor Joseph married Asenath (Hebrew אֲסֵנַת, Egyptian *Is.t-N.t* “Isis-Neith” or *ns-N.t > ss-N.t* “She who belongs to Neith”), daughter of Potipherah (Hebrew פּוֹטִיפָרֶע, Egyptian *p3-di-p3-Rc* “He whom Re gave”), priest of On.<sup>27</sup> It was the pharaoh Sheshonq III, who sacked the temple of Jerusalem at the time of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, and carried off all its holy implements to use in the Temple of On.<sup>28</sup> It may be more than coincidence that the name of the owner of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus is Sheshonq (Shishaq). Even more interesting, in 150 B.C. refugees from Jerusalem under the leadership of the priest Onias got permission from the Pharaoh Ptolemy Philometor to build a temple similar to the temple of Jerusalem at Leontopolis in the nome (administrative district) of Heliopolis.<sup>29</sup> Thus the association of Abraham and his descendants with Heliopolis is an ancient and venerable one.

Two demotic papyri discovered in Thebes in the early 1800s are of special interest.<sup>30</sup> They are dated to around the third century A.D., and are thus near the same age as the Egyptian documents Joseph Smith acquired from Michael Chandler, and come from the same part of Egypt. One of the papyri shows the drawing of a mummy lying on a lion couch with a figure of the god Anubis standing over it, quite similar to the scene depicted in Facsimile 1 of the Book of Abraham. Beneath this drawing are the words in Greek: Ἀβραὰμ ὁ ἐπὶ . . .,” Abraham who upon . . .” (the remainder of the sentence is damaged but could be something like “the couch.”<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of the same papyrus we find the name Abraham (Ἀβραὰμ) again.<sup>32</sup> On another of these papyri is the phrase in demotic, *brhm p3 df n t3 ir.t n t3 wd3.t*, “Abraham, the pupil of the eye of the Wedjat.”<sup>33</sup> Thus we find two ancient Egyptian papyri that Joseph Smith could not possibly have known about that associate Abraham not only with a lion couch scene but also with the Wedjat eye of Horus, which the hypocephalus was supposed to represent.<sup>34</sup>

Two pseudepigraphic texts dealing with Abraham that were discovered after Joseph Smith's time also shed interesting light on the relationship between Abraham and the Egyptians. In the *Testament of Abraham*, Abraham is shown a vision of the Last Judgment that is unquestionably related to the judgment scene pictured in the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, thus clearly associating Abraham with the Egyptian Book of the Dead.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, I, 8, 2; Eupolemus as quoted by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, IX, 18, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Genesis 41:45.

<sup>28</sup> I Kings 14:25-26.

<sup>29</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XIII.3.2-4.

<sup>30</sup> Hans D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), lviii.

<sup>31</sup> Janet H. Johnson, “The Demotic Magical Spells of Leiden I 384,” *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden to Leiden* 56 (1975): column XIII line 6 (hereafter cited as *Demotic Spells*).

<sup>32</sup> Johnson, *Demotic Spells*, column VIII line 16.

<sup>33</sup> Griffith and Thompson, *Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden*, col. VIII line 8.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Birch, “Hypocephalus in the Possession of Sir Henry B. Meux, Bart.” *PSBA* (November 1883): 3. See also Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 314, 630.

<sup>35</sup> *Testament of Abraham*, recension A, 12-13. For an English translation see James H. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1983), 1:889-90.

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One of the Joseph Smith papyri is in fact a drawing of this judgment scene from the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead.

*The Apocalypse of Abraham* describes a vision Abraham saw while making a sacrifice to God. In this vision he is shown the plan of the universe, “what is in the heavens, on the earth, in the sea, and in the abyss”<sup>36</sup> (almost the exact words used in the left middle portion of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus). He is shown “the fullness of the whole world and its circle,” in a picture with two sides.<sup>37</sup> The similarity with the hypocephalus is striking. There is even a description of what are clearly the four canopic figures labeled number 6 in the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus.<sup>38</sup> The significance of these documents is that they date from the beginning of the Christian era -- they are roughly contemporary with the hypocephalus and the other Egyptian documents purchased by Joseph Smith -- and they relate the same things about Abraham that Joseph Smith said are found in the hypocephalus and the other Egyptian papyri.

### Facsimile 2 By The Numbers

I now turn to the illustrations on the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus and compare Joseph Smith's explanations of them with an interpretation based on modern Egyptology. First of all, let me say that the interpretation of illustrations is one of the most difficult parts of understanding Egyptian texts. Egyptians did not include illustrations merely for decoration; they were always used to supplement and clarify the text. However, determining their correct meaning can, for us, be a formidable undertaking. A given symbol can have many different meanings, and trying to decide which one the author of the text was trying to convey is at times nearly impossible. For example, the wedjat-eye found above and to the left of the seated hawk figure in section 3 can represent healing, light, totality, protection, glory, and even riches!<sup>39</sup> Moreover, in many instances, we simply do not yet know what some symbols mean. With this understanding of the difficulty of what we are about to attempt, let us look at each of the figures.

1. A seated deity with two (or in most hypocephali, four)<sup>40</sup>ram's heads. He is holding in his hand the symbols of life (*ꜥnh*), dominion (*wꜣs*) and stability (*ḏd*). On either side of the god are two apes (numbers 22 and 23) with horned moon-disks on their heads, in an attitude of adoration.<sup>41</sup> There are also two serpents, one on either side of the seated

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<sup>36</sup> *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12. For an English translation, see Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 1:694-95.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 18.

<sup>39</sup> Gertrud and Traudl Kerszt-Kratschmann, *Das Grosse Ägyptische Totenbuch*, Schriften des Österreichischen Kulturinstituts Kairo, Archäologisch-Historische Abteilung, Band I, (Kairo: Österreichisches Kulturinstitut Kairo, 1969), 73.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. British Museum hypocephali 37909, 8445f, 8445c, etc. For another hypocephalus with only two heads represented see *PSBA*, 1897, plate II. Also in another hypocephalus, the god is wearing one or more Atef-crowns.

<sup>41</sup> The number of apes varies from two to as many as eight on other hypocephali.

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deity.<sup>42</sup> The god is sitting at the center of the hypocephalus, which, as was mentioned above, represents the world.

This seated figure represents god as the creator, either Amon-Re or Khnum.<sup>43</sup> When thus depicted with four heads, this god united within himself the attributes of the gods Re (the sun), Shu (light), Geb (the earth), and Osiris (god of the next world and the resurrection), and represented the primeval creative force.<sup>44</sup>

Joseph Smith says that this is “Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God.”<sup>45</sup> This agrees well with the Egyptian symbolism of god endowed with the primeval creative force seated at the center of the universe. The name Kolob is right at home in this context. The word most likely derives from the common Semitic root *QLB*, which has the basic meaning of “heart, center, middle” (Arabic قلب - *qalb* “heart, center”; Hebrew קֶרֶב “middle, midst”, קָרַב “to draw near”; Egyptian *m-qꜣb* “in the midst of”). In fact, *qalb* forms part of the Arabic names of several of the brightest stars in the sky, including Antares, Regulus, and Canopus.

The apes can represent Thoth, the god of writing and wisdom, as well as the moon,<sup>46</sup> but due to their curious habit of holding up their hands to receive the first warming rays of the sun after the cold desert night as if worshipping the sun at its rising,<sup>47</sup> they are often found in connection with the sun. Besides these solar and lunar associations, apes are also found associated with stars and constellations.<sup>48</sup> Joseph Smith says they are stars receiving light from Kolob, which is in harmony with our understanding of their symbolism in Egyptian.

In his explanation of figure 1, Joseph Smith says that the earth is called Jah-oh-eh by the Egyptians. In the *Times and Seasons* he defined Jah-oh-eh as “O the Earth.”<sup>49</sup> This would be reasonable rendering of the Egyptian *i ꜣh.t*, “O Earth” (assuming that Joseph used the biblical convention of rendering a Semitic Yod with an english *J*).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> These snakes often have circles drawn around them. For example, see British Museum Hypocephalus 8445f.

<sup>43</sup> Those who think it is Amon-Re: Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 389, and *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, 7 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1973-89), 1:239 (hereafter cited as *LdÄ*). Those who think it is Khnum: William Flinders Petrie, *Abydos I*, Twenty-Second Memoir of the Egyptian Exploration Fund (London: Egyptian Exploration Fund, 1902); P. J. Horrack, “Les hypocéphales,” in *Étude Archéologique, Linguistique et Historiques dédiées à Mr. le Dr. C. Leemans*, ed. W. Pleyte (Leiden, 1985). P. J. de Horrack, “Hypocephalus in the Musée du Louvre,” *PSBA* (4 March 1884): 128.

<sup>44</sup> This primal creative force was called *šf.t ꜥꜣ.t* by the Egyptians. Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 137-38; *Wb* 4:456, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Explanation to facsimile 2 in *Pearl of Great Price*.

<sup>46</sup> Frankfort, *Religion*, illustration 3; de Horrack, “Les Hypocéphales,” 60; *LdÄ* 4:917-18; Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 7; *LdÄ* 4:917.

<sup>48</sup> Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 7; *LdÄ* 4:917.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons* 4 (13 November 1843): 373.

<sup>50</sup> The Coptic form of *ꜣh.t*, ⲉⲓⲱⲗⲉ was vocalized “yo-he” see János Cerný, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 50; Walter E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 89.



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2. A two-headed deity wearing the double-plumed crown of Amon, with ram's horns mounted on it. On his shoulders are jackal heads, and he is holding the jackal standard of the god Wepwawet. To his right is an altar with offerings on and around it. In most hypocephali, he is holding the *ankh*, or symbol of life, in his right hand. Also to his right is a line of hieroglyphs reading: "The name of this Mighty God."

This is Amon-Re, the chief god of the Egyptian pantheon;<sup>51</sup> the two heads illustrate the hidden and mysterious power of Amon (his name in Egyptian means "the Hidden One") combined with the visible and luminous power of Re.<sup>52</sup> This is clearly the god mentioned in chapter 162 of the Book of the Dead (the chapter describing the construction and use of the hypocephalus), who wears the double plumed crown. The jackals on his shoulders as well as the jackal standard he holds are symbols of the god Wepwawet, the Opener of the Way, i.e. of the year, of the king in his conquests, of the dead through the dangers of hereafter to the throne of Osiris where they would be judged, or any other way that needs opening.

Joseph Smith says, "Stands next to Kolob, called by the Egyptians Oliblish, which is the next grand governing creation near to the celestial or the place where God resides: holding the key of power." The symbol of life held by this god was considered as a symbol of a god's power. A good example is the god Aton, who is represented by a sun disk with numerous rays emanating from it that all end in a hand holding the symbol of life. I can find no obvious word in Egyptian that matches with Oliblish, but this puts it in the same category as many of the strange names found in the 162nd chapter of the Book of the Dead, which seem not to be Egyptian but some foreign language.

Joseph also says this figure pertains to the plan of God's creations as revealed to Abraham as he was making a sacrifice. This agrees exactly with the *Apocalypse of Abraham* account as described above,<sup>53</sup> as well as with the Egyptian concept of the hypocephalus representing all that the sun encircles.

3. A hawk-headed god Re with the sun disk on his head, seated on the solar bark. On either side of him is a Wedjat-eye. In his hand he holds the *wꜣs*-scepter, symbol of dominion,<sup>54</sup> and in front of him is an altar with a lotus blossom on it.

Re seated in his bark represents the sun in its daily journey across the sky and symbolizes resurrection and rebirth, since the sun was thought to die and be reborn each day. The lotus on the altar in front of him is also symbolic of rebirth and the rising sun.<sup>55</sup> The Wedjat-eye was symbolic of light and protection (among other things)<sup>56</sup> and is thus not out of place in this context.

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<sup>51</sup> *LdÄ* 1:237-246; Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 34.

<sup>52</sup> de Horrack, "Louvre Hypocephalus," 128. Petrie, *Abydos I*, 50.

<sup>53</sup> *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12.

<sup>54</sup> *wꜣs* "dominion." Cf. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd. ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957), 559; Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962), 54.

<sup>55</sup> *LdÄ* 3:1092-94.

<sup>56</sup> Thausing and Kerszt-Kratschmann, *Grosse Totenbuch*, 73.

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Joseph Smith said this represented God, sitting upon his throne clothed with power and authority; with a crown of eternal light on his head. The was-scepter, as I mentioned above, represents power and authority, and the sun certainly qualifies as a crown of eternal light. He also said that it represented the grand key words of the priesthood. The Greek writer Plutarch explained that the Wedjat-eye of Osiris represented πρόνοια “divine providence” (literally “foreknowledge”),<sup>57</sup> the divine wisdom by which God oversees and cares for all of his creations. It is not unreasonable to see in this “the grand key words of the priesthood” (“The glory of God is intelligence,” D&C 93:36).

4. A hawk in mummy wrappings with outspread wings, seated upon a boat. This can represent either Horus-Soped or Sokar, both hawk gods, which are symbolized by a mummiform hawk.<sup>58</sup> One outstanding feature of this figure is its outspread wings, which are not normally found in representations of these two gods. The wings show a clear connection with Horus, the personification of the sky,<sup>59</sup> as well as emphasizing the emerging of the hawk from his mummy bindings in the resurrection. The association with Sokar, the ancient god of Memphis, is even more interesting. In the festival of Sokar, which was celebrated in many parts of Egypt, a procession was held in which the high priest would place the Sokar-boat on a sledge and pull it around the sanctuary. This procession symbolized the revolution of the sun and other celestial bodies.<sup>60</sup>

Joseph Smith sees here symbolism for the expanse or firmament of the heavens, which concept, as stated above, the Egyptians often represent by the hawk-god Horus. Joseph's explanation that this figure represents the revolutions of Kolob and Obilish agrees favorably with what we know of the use of the Sokar-boat in the festival of Sokar to represent the revolutions of the sun and other celestial bodies. Joseph also says that it is a numerical figure in Egyptian signifying one thousand. While this is not the standard hieroglyph for one thousand, there is a clear connection between the number one thousand and the ship of the dead. For example, in the Coffin Texts we read, “He takes the ship of 1000 cubits from end to end and sails it to the stairway of fire.”<sup>61</sup> On the sarcophagus of the princess Anchenneferibre is found a description of the “Khabas in Heliopolis” and “Osiris in his ship of a thousand.”<sup>62</sup> The term *Khabas* (Egyptian *ḫꜥ-bꜥ=s*) means “A Thousand is her souls” and refers to the starry hosts of the sky,<sup>63</sup> confirming again Joseph Smith's explanation that it represents the expanse of the heavens.

5. A cow wearing a sun disk and double plumes with a *menit*-necklace (symbol of Hathor, Ihet, etc.).<sup>64</sup> This is the cow Ihet mentioned in chapter 162 of the Book of the Dead, which should be drawn on a piece of new papyrus to make a hypocephalus.<sup>65</sup> Hence this picture of a cow is common to almost all hypocephali. *Ihet* is a form of *Hathor*, a

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<sup>57</sup> Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 51.

<sup>58</sup> Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 723, 741-42; *LdÄ* 5:1108, 5:1056.

<sup>59</sup> *LdÄ* 5:1056.

<sup>60</sup> *LdÄ* 5:1056, 1061; Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 725-26.

<sup>61</sup> Coffin Texts 162, II, 403-4.

<sup>62</sup> C. E. Sander-Hansen, *Die Religiösen Text auf dem Sarg der Anchneneferibre* (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1937).

<sup>63</sup> *Wb* 3:230, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 459; *LdÄ* 2:1025, 1041, 3:124-25.

<sup>65</sup> Lepsius, *Todtenbuch*, chapter 162, lines 8-9.

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personification of the original waters from which the whole of creation arose and the one who gave birth to the sun.<sup>66</sup> She is also connected with Mehweret (Greek Μεθϋρ), another cow goddess who symbolized the sky and is the celestial mother by whom the sun is reborn each day.<sup>67</sup> The name Mehweret (*Mh-wr.t*) means, “Great fullness,” i.e., the primeval waters from which Re, the Sun, first arose.<sup>68</sup> Standing behind the cow is the goddess Wedjat who is holding a lotus blossom, the symbol of rebirth,<sup>69</sup> here indicating the daily and annual renewal of the sun.

Joseph Smith's explanation that this is the sun is in agreement with the Egyptian symbolism. Of various names used here by Joseph, I can find an equivalent only for Hah-ko-kau-beam, which is recognizable as the Hebrew הַכּוֹכָבִים “the stars.” But again as stated above, strange, incomprehensible names are typical of this class of Egyptian religious documents.

6. These four standing, mummy-like figures are the four Sons of Horus.<sup>70</sup> They were the gods of the four quarters of the earth and later came to be regarded as presiding over the four cardinal points.<sup>71</sup> They also were guardians of the viscera of the dead, and their images were carved on the four canopic jars into which the internal organs of the dead were placed.<sup>72</sup>

Joseph Smith is right again describing these figures as representing “this earth in its four quarters.”

To the right of these four figures is the name of a god written with a lotus blossom, a lion, and a ram (Egyptian *srpt-mꜣt-sr*). These three signs are thought to symbolize the gods of the rising, midday, and setting sun, i.e. Re, Khepri, and Atum.<sup>73</sup> This same god is found in several different passages of the late Egyptian demotic papyrus, which refers to Abraham.<sup>74</sup> Joseph Smith gives no explanation of this hieroglyphic name, but it is clearly associated with Abraham in this ancient document.

7. A seated ithyphallic god with a hawk's tail, holding aloft a flail. This is a form of Min, the god of the regenerative, procreative forces of nature, perhaps combined with Horus, as the hawk's tail would seem to indicate.<sup>75</sup> Before the god is what appears to be a bird presenting him with a Wedjat-eye, the symbol of all good gifts.<sup>76</sup> In other hypocephali

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<sup>66</sup> *LdÄ* 3:124.

<sup>67</sup> *LdÄ* 4:3-4.

<sup>68</sup> Naville, *Ägyptische Todtenbuch*, chapter 17, lines 34-36; *LdÄ* 4:3.

<sup>69</sup> de Horrack, “Louvre Hypocephalus,” 127; Johanna Dittmar, *Blumensträuße als Opfergabe in alten Ägypten*, Heft 43 of *Münchener Ägyptologische Studien* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1986).

<sup>70</sup> For an exhaustive study of the Four Sons of Horus see John Gee, “Notes on the Sons of Horus,” (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991).

<sup>71</sup> Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 315-16; *LdÄ* 5:53

<sup>72</sup> Gee, “Notes on the Sons of Horus”.

<sup>73</sup> Marie-Louise Ryhiner, “À Propos de Trigrammes Panthéistes,” *Revue d'Égyptologie* 29 (1977): 134-36.

<sup>74</sup> Griffith and Thompson, *Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden*, col. VIII line 8.

<sup>75</sup> Petrie, *Abydos I*, 50; Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 465.

<sup>76</sup> Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 511.

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it can also be an ape, a snake, or a hawk-headed snake that is presenting the eye. This figure represents Nehebka, a snake god and one of the judges of the dead in the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead.<sup>77</sup> Nehebka was considered to be a provider of life and nourishment<sup>78</sup> and as such was often shown presenting a pair of jars or a Wedjat-eye. As for the bird found in Facsimile 2, this could symbolize the *Ba* or soul (which the Egyptians often represented as a bird) presenting the Wedjat-eye to the seated god.

Joseph Smith said this figure represented God sitting upon his throne revealing the grand key-words of the priesthood. The connection of the Wedjat-eye with “the grand key-words of the priesthood” was discussed above. Joseph also explained there was a representation of the sign of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove. The Egyptians commonly portrayed the soul or spirit as a bird, so a bird is an appropriate symbol for the Holy Ghost.

Joseph Smith explained that the remaining figures contained writings that cannot be revealed to the world. Stressing the secrecy of these things is entirely in harmony with Egyptian religious documents such as the hypocephalus and the 162nd chapter of the Book of the Dead. For example, we read in the 162nd chapter of the Book of the Dead, “This is a great and secret book. Do not allow anyone's eyes to see it!” Joseph also says line 8 “is to be had in the Holy Temple of God.” Line 8 reads, “Grant that the soul of the Osiris, Shishaq, may live (eternally).” Since the designated purpose of the hypocephalus was to make the deceased divine, it is not unreasonable to see here a reference to the sacred ordinances performed in our Latter-day temples.

## CONCLUSION

The text as well as the figures and illustrations of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus all point toward the Egyptians' hope in a resurrection and life after death as a divine being. Although to our modern way of thinking, this message is conveyed by a strange assortment of gods, animals, and other bizarre figures, it is important to remember, that to the Egyptians, who always tried to express abstract ideas with concrete representations, these were all aspects of the One God who manifested himself in many forms.<sup>79</sup>

It is especially significant to recognize that knowledge of these things was unavailable even to the best scholars of Joseph Smith's day. The pseudepigraphic works attributed to Abraham I cited above, for example, first came to light near the turn of this century. The demotic papyri referring to Abraham were not published until 1839 and a translation of them not until 1904.<sup>80</sup> Although Champollion had deciphered Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1822, it required many years of painstaking work before Egyptologists were able to publish grammars and dictionaries of the Egyptian language. Joseph Smith simply

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<sup>77</sup> Petrie, *Abydos I*, 50; Samuel Birch, “Henry B. Meux Hypocephalus,” 38; Birch, “Hypocephalus in the British Museum No. 8445a,” *PSBA* (5 February 1884): 389; Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 389; *LdÄ* 4:388.

<sup>78</sup> *LdÄ* 4:388.

<sup>79</sup>Thausing and Kerszt-Kratschmann, *Grosse Totenbuch*, 16, 72; Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 223-25, 247; *LdÄ* 1:245.

<sup>80</sup> Conrad Leemans, *Monument égyptien du Musée d'Antiquités des Pays-Bas à Leide: Papyrus égyptien démotique à transcriptions grecques I* (Leiden, 1839), number 383. The first translation in Griffith and Thompson, *Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden*.

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*could not* have acquired the understanding he had of these things from the world. Nevertheless, as this study has shown, many of the prophet's explanations of the hypocephalus illustrated in Facsimile 2 are supported by our present understanding of ancient Egyptian religion, and are in fact especially typical of Late Egyptian religious writings. One or two could conceivably be dismissed as mere chance or lucky guessing, but the many correct interpretations taken together are impossible to ignore. It is clear that Joseph Smith knew what he was talking about. This only reaffirms what every honest person can learn in earnest prayer, that Joseph Smith received these things from God, even as he claimed.

### Appendix

#### Translation of Chapter 162 of the Book of the Dead (from Lepsius' *Todtenbuch*<sup>81</sup>)

**Title:** A spell for causing flame to be under the head of a glorified being.

To be recited: Greetings to you, mighty Par,<sup>82</sup> who wears the lofty double plumes and the White Crown [of Upper Egypt], who holds the flail [of royal authority]. You are Lord of the regenerative powers.<sup>83</sup> You consistently rise and shine forth. You never cease to rise. You are a master of forms, who has numerous appearances. You hide yourself from your children<sup>84</sup> in the Wedjat-eye.<sup>85</sup> You are the strong roarer in the midst of the Assembly<sup>86</sup> of the gods. You are a powerful runner, swift of stride. You are a strong god who comes to the one that summons him, [and who comes] to the one that laments [his] misery caused by need (or pestilence). Come then to my call, [for] I am Ihet.<sup>87</sup> Your name<sup>88</sup> is in my mouth, and I will say it: he of Haghghar<sup>89</sup> is your name, Iriyakrasingarabat<sup>90</sup> is your name, Sarpatmaisar<sup>91</sup> is your name, Harsat<sup>92</sup> is your name. I have praised your

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<sup>81</sup> Lepsius, *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter nach dem hieroglyphischen Papyrus in Turin* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1842), pl. LXXVII.

<sup>82</sup> Egyptian *p3-r(c)*, i.e. Re the sun god Re. Cf. *Wb* 2:401, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Literally “Lord of the phallus” or “possessor of the phallus.”

<sup>84</sup> “The one who hides himself from his children” is an epithet of Amon-Re at Khasut in the Delta. This might be a reference to Re withdrawing himself from mankind as detailed in the Book of the Cow.

<sup>85</sup> *wḏ.t*, the uninjured eye of Horus (from *wḏ* “to be hale, well”). Also of Re and generally of any god or goddess. Also an amulet in the form of an eye. Cf. *Wb* 1:401, 12.

<sup>86</sup> *psj.t*, literally, “the nine,” but perhaps better understood as a plural of a plural, i.e. all gods. The number of gods in the *psd.t* can range from seven to fifteen to “all the gods”; see Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. John Baines (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 222-23.

<sup>87</sup> *Ih.t*, the heavenly cow, *Mh-wr.t* a form of Hathor. Cf. *Wb* 1:120, 6.

<sup>88</sup> Every god and goddess possessed a hidden or secret name. If anyone could find out this name, he would have the power of the god or goddess. Cf. Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 501-4.

<sup>89</sup> *hghghr*, meaningless in Egyptian.

<sup>90</sup> Also meaningless in Egyptian.

<sup>91</sup> This name is found behind the four Sons of Horus on the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus and seems to refer to the three aspects of the sun: rising sun, midday sun, and setting sun, i.e. Re, Khepri, and Atum. Cf. Marie-Louise Ryhiner, “À Propos de Trigrammes Panthéistes,” *Revue d'Égyptologie* 29 (1977): 134-36.

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name. I am Ihet. Hear my voice this day. You place a flame under Re's head, and behold he is in the divine afterlife in Heliopolis.<sup>93</sup> You cause him to become like those upon the earth.<sup>94</sup> He is your soul. Do not forget him. Come to the Osiris, Efonakh, who is justified, and cause a flame to be under his head. Truly he is the soul of the Great Body<sup>95</sup> which rests in Heliopolis. Akhukhaparsar<sup>96</sup> is his name, Barkatatju<sup>97</sup> is his name. Come indeed and cause him to become like one of your followers, for this one, he belongs to you.

To be recited over a figure of Ihet which is made of fine gold and placed around the neck of the glorified being and also put in writing upon new papyrus and placed under his head. [If this is done] there will be a multitude of flames all around him as it is with those upon the earth (i.e. the living). The eye of Ihet (i.e. the hypocephalus) is a very great protection for her son, Re, when he sets. His throne shall be encircled by a zealous (?)<sup>98</sup> army. He shall be made divine in the necropolis and he shall not be turned back from any door of the hereafter successfully.

Then you shall say after you have placed this goddess around the neck of the glorified being, "O most hidden one who is in heaven, watch over the body of your son, and preserve him in the necropolis."

This is a great and secret book. Do not allow anyone's eyes to see it, for that would be an abomination. He who knows it (i.e. the book) and keeps it secret, he will continue to exist.

The name of this book is: Mistress of the Secret Temple. The End.

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<sup>92</sup> Also meaningless. All of these names may be just gibberish, or some other language--perhaps Semitic or Nubian. Cf. Naville, "Einleitung," 184; Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 157; Jean Yoyotte, "Contribution à l'Histoire du Chapitre 162 du Livre des Morts," *Révue d'Égyptologie* 29 (1977): 194-202.

<sup>93</sup> Not the earthly Heliopolis, but rather the heavenly Heliopolis in the same sense as the heavenly Jerusalem.

<sup>94</sup> I.e. made alive again.

<sup>95</sup> I.e. Osiris.

<sup>96</sup> Perhaps another designation for the sun in its three aspects of rising, midday, and setting (Re, Khepri, and Atum). Cf. Marie-Louis Ryhiner, "À Propos de Trigrammes Panthéistes," *Révue d'Égyptologie* 29 (1977), 123ff.

<sup>97</sup> Perhaps another foreign name.

<sup>98</sup> Egyptian *mhd.ty*. Not found in the *Wb*. In late Egyptian *mhd* means a quarrel. Cf. Leonard H. Lesko, *A Dictionary of Late Egyptian*, 5 vols. (Berkeley: B. C. Scribe Publications, 1982-1990), 1:231.