

# The Solomon Spalding Theory

Chapter 9 from *Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon*  
by Jerald and Sandra Tanner

The authorship of the Book of Mormon has been hotly debated since it was first published. The title page of the 1830 edition reads: "By Joseph Smith, Junior, Author and Proprietor." This was changed in 1837 to: "Translated by Joseph Smith, Jun." Mormons have defended Smith's use of the statement "author and proprietor," saying that in order to get a copyright it had to be worded that way. However, he could have obtained a copyright by merely stating that he was the "Proprietor." Smith evidently misunderstood the wording of the copyright law which mentions "authors and proprietors" and assumed he had to use both words.

Most critical scholars view Joseph Smith as the author, after liberally plagiarizing other works such as the Bible. Fawn Brodie saw the Book of Mormon as the product of Smith's mind:

Far from being the fruit of an obsession, the Book of Mormon is a useful key to Joseph's complex and frequently baffling character. . . . Any theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon that spotlights the prophet and blacks out the stage on which he performed is certain to be a distortion. For the book can best be explained, not by Joseph's ignorance nor by his delusions, but by his responsiveness to the provincial opinions of his time.<sup>1</sup>

Dan Vogel, in his book *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, discusses Smith's ability to write the Book of Mormon:

Emma [Smith] overstated the case for Joseph's illiteracy, claiming that he "could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well worded letter, let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon." Certainly, Smith had less schooling than his wife, but he managed to write reasonably well. After examining several letters from the early period of Smith's life (1831-1832), historian Dale Morgan concluded that they exhibit

"a flair for words, a measure of eloquence, and a sufficient degree of schooling." . . . Smith's talent lay not in correct orthography but, while telling a story, in his sense of narrative and ability to create memorable images.

The book Joseph dictated abounds with examples of his poor grammar and Yankee dialect as well as his penchant for digression, redundancy, and wordiness. Rarely are his characters' inner moral conflicts reflected. Most often we encounter flat, uncomplicated, two-dimensional heroes and villains. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Dictating to scribes mostly impromptu and without the aid of notes, the narrator was not entirely unprepared. God's dealings with Native Americans was, after all, a topic that had preoccupied him [Joseph Smith] for more than five years. He had been rehearsing the stories since at least 1823 when he held his family spellbound with his accounts of the area's original inhabitants.<sup>3</sup>

However, another theory is that the Book of Mormon was taken from an unpublished 1812 novel written by a retired minister, Solomon Spalding (or Spaulding), who died in 1816 in Ohio. This theory was presented in the 1834 book, *Mormonism Unveiled*, by E. D. Howe.<sup>4</sup> The Spalding connection has lately been defended in the book, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* by Wayne L. Cowdery, Howard A. Davis and Arthur Vanick.<sup>5</sup> Their theory is that after Spalding's death his manuscript fell into the hands of Sidney Rigdon, a Campbellite minister, who then revised the story, adding religious material, with the intent of publishing it himself. They propose that Rigdon later collaborated with Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith to produce the Book of Mormon.

2 Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), p. 119.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

4 E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: 1834), pp. 278-290.

5 Wayne L. Cowdery, Howard A. Davis and Arthur Vanick, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005).

1 Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p. 69.

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While their research provides a great deal of background information on Sidney Rigdon, any connection between him, Cowdery and Smith prior to 1830 is still a matter of speculation. They also provide extensive information on Oliver Cowdery and his family. But again, they are unable to provide a definite connection between Cowdery and Smith prior to 1829, when Cowdery became Smith's scribe.

It should be noted that Solomon Spalding lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and then Conneaut, Ohio, and never published his novel. Sidney Rigdon was also in Pittsburgh and Ohio at different times. Joseph Smith, born in Vermont in 1805, grew up in Palmyra, New York, far from Spalding's home.

So the questions are: What evidence is there that Spalding's manuscript was the basis for the Book of Mormon and how would it have ended up in Smith's possession? Even if Smith could possibly have seen or heard of Spalding's writings, is there any evidence that he colluded with Rigdon and Cowdery to write the Book of Mormon? Whose writing style best fits the Book of Mormon? Who wrote the replacement material for the 116 pages that were lost? We believe that Joseph Smith still appears to be the author of the Book of Mormon.

### Family Statements

Long after Spalding's death, and after the 1830 publication of the Book of Mormon, his family and friends gave statements that they believed the Book of Mormon was produced by plagiarizing Spalding's novel. Even though they stated that Spalding wrote in the old scriptural style, they claimed that it did not contain the religious parts as found in the Book of Mormon. They may have truly believed this to be the origin for the Book of Mormon but the evidence is circumstantial at best. Spalding's brother, John, saw the manuscript in 1813 but did not comment on it until twenty years later:

He [Solomon Spalding] then told me he had been writing a book, which he intended to have printed . . . The book was entitled the "Manuscript Found," of which he read to me many passages.—It was an historical romance of the first settlers of America, endeavoring to show that the American Indians are the descendants of the Jews, or the lost tribes. It gave a detailed account of their journey from Jerusalem, by land and sea, till they arrived in America, under the command of NEPHI and LEHI.<sup>6</sup>

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6 Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 279.

John's wife, Martha, stated:

I was personally acquainted with Solomon Spalding, about twenty years ago. I was at his house a short time before he left Conneaut; he was then writing a historical novel founded upon the first settlers of America. . . . The lapse of time which has intervened, prevents my recollecting but few of the leading incidents of his writings; but the names of Nephi and Lehi are yet fresh in my memory, . . . I have no manner of doubt that the historical part of it, is the same that I read and heard read, more than 20 years ago.<sup>7</sup>

John Miller, a boarder at the Spalding home in 1811, stated:

I was soon introduced to the manuscript of Spalding, . . . From this he would frequently read some humorous passages to the company present. It purported to be the history of the first settlement of America . . . I have recently examined the Book of Mormon, and find in it the writings of Solomon Spalding, from beginning to end, but mixed up with scripture and other religious matter, . . . The names of Nephi, Lehi, Moroni, and in fact all the principal names, are bro't fresh to my recollection, by the Gold Bible.<sup>8</sup>

Aaron Wright, another acquaintance of Spalding, wrote:

I first became acquainted with Solomon Spalding in 1808 or 9, when he commenced building a forge on Conneaut creek. When at his house, one day, he showed and read to me a history he was writing, of the lost tribes of Israel, purporting that they were the first settlers of America, and that the Indians were their descendants. Upon this subject we had frequent conversations. He traced their journey from Jerusalem to America, as it is given in the Book of Mormon, excepting the religious matter. . . . the names more especially are the same without any alteration. He told me his object was to account for all the fortifications, &c. to be found in this country, . . .<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, these early statements do not connect Rigdon with the manuscript. *Mormonism Unveiled* makes that connection (p. 289), but not Spalding's friends and family. According to the authors of *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon*, James G. Bennett in 1831 "publicly connected Rigdon with the shady origins of The Book of Mormon."<sup>10</sup> However, this connection

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7 *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 283.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 284.

10 Cowdery, et al., *Who Really Wrote*, p. 175.

could have been made simply because people thought Joseph Smith too uneducated to write the book, thus focusing on the well-known preacher who joined Mormonism in late 1830.

Stories of ancient migrations from Israel, two civilizations at war, long lost records of American Indians, stone boxes, metal plates, mammoths, etc. were common in the New England area during the early 1800's. The presence of such ideas in the Book of Mormon and Spalding's novel may have led the Spalding family to assume a greater connection than the evidence will support.

### Who Could Have Given It to Smith?

One of the problems with the Spalding theory is determining how the manuscript would have fallen into Smith's hands. It has been theorized that several years after Spalding's death, Sidney Rigdon stole the Spalding manuscript from a print shop in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Howe proposed that this happened during 1823-24.<sup>11</sup> However, the authors of *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon* propose an earlier date prior to 1822.<sup>12</sup> Rigdon then moved to Ohio in the Spring of 1826.<sup>13</sup>

The authors of *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon* theorize that Sidney Rigdon could have met Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith as early as May of 1822, in Ohio.<sup>14</sup> Even if Cowdery and Smith had made such a trip to Ohio, why would they have formed a relationship with Rigdon? Cowdery would have been only fifteen and Smith sixteen at the time.

The authors also propose that Oliver Cowdery, a distant cousin of Smith's, may have attended a revival meeting conducted by Rigdon in the fall of 1826 in Greensburg, Ohio and then met with Rigdon.<sup>15</sup> But the possibility of Cowdery meeting Rigdon at a meeting is hardly sufficient to make the leap to conspiring together to produce a book. Presumably Cowdery would have been the one to suggest using Joseph Smith as their front man to fake the discovery of the hidden record and arrange for its publication. If Rigdon had just met Cowdery, why would he embark on such a risky venture, trusting his pet project to a nineteen-year-old stranger who would, in turn, pass it on to another young stranger, Joseph Smith?

The whole theory rests on too many assumptions. One must first theorize that Cowdery had met Smith prior to 1826. Even though Cowdery and Smith were distant cousins there is no evidence that they knew each other at that time. Then it must be assumed that Cowdery met Rigdon at the revival meeting in the fall of 1826. Again, no direct evidence exists. Even if Cowdery had met Smith and Rigdon, why would he and Rigdon think this young money-digger was a good candidate for publishing the book? Smith certainly didn't have the resources to ensure its publication and there was no way to be sure he could convince anyone else to back such a venture.

Smith's only notoriety was his arrest in March of 1826 in southeastern New York on charges relating to his magic seer stone and money-digging.<sup>16</sup> Since his arrest evidently didn't make the newspapers it doesn't seem likely that Rigdon or Cowdery would have been aware of it. Cowdery may have heard through the family about the Smiths and their money-digging, but it still leaves the question, why would he think Smith would be able to complete the scheme?

Rigdon would not have known Cowdery or Smith at the time he allegedly stole the manuscript. Therefore, he could not have had them in mind as collaborators. After Rigdon supposedly spent several years rewriting the manuscript, why would he entrust it to an unknown person? Even if Rigdon knew Smith, one wonders why he would want to turn over the role of prophet to someone else since those who knew Rigdon never thought of him as a humble man. How could Rigdon have been sure young Smith could fool his family and friends, keep the plot secret, and get Martin Harris to finance the printing of the book? Without hard evidence, the theory of them conspiring together remains just that, a theory.

Another incongruity not properly accounted for is that both Rigdon and Spalding had much smoother writing styles than what appears in the 1830 Book of Mormon. Why is the book riddled with bad grammar? The Spalding theorists suggest that Smith "surreptitiously" read the reworked Spalding manuscript and then by "carefully paraphrasing," he was able to "integrate Sidney's notes, comments, and numerous biblical interpolations into a single coherent entity."<sup>17</sup> But why wouldn't Smith simply dictate from the manuscript? The Book of Mormon reads much more

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11 Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 289.

12 Cowdery, et al., *Who Really Wrote*, pp. 152, 197.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 336.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 385.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 230, 337.

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16 For more on Joseph Smith's magic seer stone and money-digging, see our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* chapter 4.

17 Cowdery, et al., *Who Really Wrote*, p. 232.

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like a storyteller giving an oral account. The rambling nature of the book suggests it was being composed on the spot, not something that was written previously. For example, Alma 40:19 reads:

Now, whether the souls and the bodies of those of whom has been spoken shall all be reunited at once, the wicked as well as the righteous, I do not say; let it suffice, that I say that they all come forth; or in other words, their resurrection cometh to pass before the resurrection of those who die after the resurrection of Christ.

If this was originally written by Rigdon it would have been much simpler for Smith to simply read the text.

The Book of Mormon does reflect many of the same ideas as preached by Sidney Rigdon prior to his joining Mormonism, but that does not necessarily mean that Rigdon must be the author. Rigdon had been a part of the Restoration Movement in the early 1800's, whose most famous preacher was Alexander Campbell. Many in the movement came from traditional churches, such as the Presbyterians, but had moved closer to the Baptist position. As the movement developed the Restorationists separated from the Baptists and grew into the disciples of Christ, Church of Christ and Christian churches. Those of the Restoration Movement argued for a restoration of New Testament Christianity, celebration of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, adult baptism by immersion and rejection of creeds. They also argued for the use of "Christian" instead of the various denominational names. These ideas were already being preached in the New England area years before Joseph Smith wrote his Book of Mormon. Thus Smith could have easily included such theological points in his book without Rigdon. In fact, Joseph Smith's father had been influenced by the religious discussions of the day and refused to join any church as he was waiting for some sort of restoration of the primitive gospel.<sup>18</sup> Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy wrote:

About this time [1811] my husband's mind became much excited upon the subject of religion; yet he would not subscribe to any particular system of faith, but contended for the ancient order, as

18 For more information see the following: Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994); Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988); and Clyde D. Ford, "Lehi on the Great Issues: Book of Mormon Theology in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 38, no. 4 (Winter 2005).

established by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and his Apostles.<sup>19</sup>

### Record Hid in an Underground Box

One similarity between Spalding and Smith's stories is the finding of a buried record hid in a stone enclosure in a hill. Both stories purport to be an account of former inhabitants of America. In Spalding's novel we read:

Near the west Bank of the Coneaught River there are the remains of an ancient fort. As I was walking . . . I hapned **to tread on a flat Stone**. This was at a small distance from the fort: & it lay on the top of a small mound of Earth exactly horizontal . . . **With the assistance of a leaver I raised the Stone**—But you may easily conjecture my astonishment when I discovered that its ends and sides rested on Stones & that it was designed as a cover to an artificial cave.—I found on examining . . . that it is was about eight feet deep . . . Here I noticed a big flat Stone fixed in the form of a doar, . . . Within this cavity I found an earthan Box with a cover which shut it perfectly tite—The Box was two feet in length . . . When I had removed the cover I found that it contained twenty eight sheets of parchment. & that when \* \* \* appeared to be manuscripts written in an elegant hand with Roman Letters & in the Latin Language. . . . The Roll which principally attracted my attention contained a history of the authors life & that part of America which extends along the great Lakes & the waters of the Mississippi.<sup>20</sup>

Joseph Smith recounted that an angel appeared to him in 1823 and announced "there was a book deposited [in the hill], written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang."<sup>21</sup>

Further on in his story Smith tells about the place they were buried:

Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario county, New York, stands a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, **deposited in a stone box**. . . . Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up. I looked in,

19 Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), p. 294.

20 Rev. Solomon Spaulding, *The "Manuscript Found."* *Manuscript Story* (Liverpool: Millennial Star Office, 1910), pp. 1-2.

21 *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith-History, v. 34.

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and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate, as stated by the messenger. The box in which they lay was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were laid two stones crossways of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them.<sup>22</sup>

While there are similarities regarding a hidden record in a stone enclosure, it was a common idea of the day that the Indians at one time had some sort of record of their people but it had been lost. There were also accounts of stone boxes. Researcher Dan Vogel explains:

Joseph Smith was certainly not the first to claim the discovery of **a stone box, metal plates, or an Indian book**. It was known that the Indians sometimes buried their dead in stone boxes similar to the one described by Joseph Smith. In 1820, for example, the *Archaeologia Americana* reported that human bones had been discovered in some mounds “enclosed in rude stone coffins.” A similar stone box, described by John Haywood of Tennessee, was made by placing “four stones standing upright, and so placed in relation to each other, as to form a square or box, which enclosed a skeleton.” Stone boxes of various sizes and shapes had reportedly been found in Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, New York, and other places.

According to various accounts, some of the North American mounds also contained metal plates. Plates constructed by the Indians were usually made of hammered copper or silver and were sometimes etched. Plates made of other metals were most likely of European manufacture. In 1775 Indian trader James Adair described two brass plates and five copper plates found with the Tuccabatches Indians of North America. According to Adair, an Indian informant said “he was told by his forefathers that those plates were given to them by the man we call God; that there had been many more of other shapes, . . . some had writing upon them which were buried with particular men.” . . .

Perhaps such discoveries of metal plates encouraged the persistent legend of a lost Indian book. The legend, as related by Congregational minister Ethan Smith [in his 1825 book, *View of the Hebrews*] of Poultney, Vermont, held that the Indians once had “a book which they had for a long time preserved. But having lost the knowledge of reading it, they concluded it would be of no further use to them; and they buried it with an Indian chief.”<sup>23</sup>

In discussing the similarities between Spalding's story of a record hid in a cave covered by a stone and Smith's account of finding the plates in a stone enclosure, Richard Van Wagoner explains that both could have drawn from the Masonic “Legend of Enoch”:

In this saga, Enoch, the seventh patriarch, the son of Jared, and the great-grandfather of Noah, according to Masonic tradition, became disgusted with wickedness surrounding him. Fleeing to the “solitude and secrecy of Mount Moriah” . . . the Shekinah (sacred presence) appeared to him with instructions to preserve the wisdom of the antediluvians to their posterity. He then made a **gold plate and engraved in characters** the true, ineffable name of Deity. **The plate was then placed in a specially prepared subterranean vault**, along with other treasure, and covered with a **stone door**. Enoch was then only allowed to visit the site once a year.<sup>24</sup>

Thus we see that Joseph Smith did not need Spalding's manuscript to come up with the idea of a hidden record.

### Two Manuscripts?

Spalding's manuscript had supposedly been stored by his widow, but after Howe's book was published, the manuscript seems to have been lost. Evidently the early proponents of the Spalding theory got the manuscript from Spalding's widow sometime in 1833 or 1834, but since it was not as close to the Book of Mormon as they had hoped, it was quietly stored away. It was later found in a trunk in Hawaii. In 1910 the LDS printing office in England printed Spalding's work. In the preface to the printing of *Manuscript Found*, we read:

The history of the discovery of the Manuscript can be told in a few words. D. P. Hurlbut, an apostate, the originator of the fabrication that the Book of Mormon originated in Mr. Spaulding's tale, wrote a bitter assault on the Latter-day Saints in 1836 [1834], entitled “Mormonism Unveiled,” which was published in the name of, and by E. D. Howe, of Painesville, Ohio. During the time Hurlbut was gathering material for this work, he obtained from the family of the then deceased clergyman the original of the “Manuscript Story,” but discovering that it would, if published, prove fatal to his assumptions, he suppressed it; and from that time it was entirely lost sight of until about two years ago [1884], when a Mr. L. L. Rice, residing at Honolulu, Sandwich Islands

<sup>22</sup> *PGP*, Joseph Smith-History vs. 51-52.

<sup>23</sup> Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon*, p. 140.

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[Hawaii], found it among a numerous collection of miscellaneous papers which he had received from Mr. Howe, the publisher of Hurlbut's "Mormonism Unveiled," when in 1839-40, he, with his partner, purchased from that gentleman the business, etc., of the *Painesville Telegraph*.

In 1884 President James H. Fairchild, of Oberlin College, Ohio, was paying a visit to Mr. Rice, . . . and discovered a packet marked in pencil on the outside, "Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek," which, to their surprise, on perusal, proved to be the veritable, long-lost romance of Dr. Spaulding . . .<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the reason for its suppression, Spalding's manuscript is an important document because it allows researchers to study his linguistic style and compare it with the Book of Mormon. The manuscript is now owned by Oberlin College in Ohio.

Those promoting the Spalding theory maintain that he wrote two manuscripts and that the one that was eventually printed is not the one used by Rigdon and Smith for the Book of Mormon. They point out that witnesses who had seen Spalding's work referred to it as "Manuscript Found," and the one that is published is referred to as "Manuscript Story."

In response to the claim that Spalding prepared two manuscripts, Fawn Brodie wrote:

it should be noted that if, as seems most likely, there was only one Spaulding manuscript, there were certain similarities between it and the Book of Mormon which, though not sufficient to justify the thesis of common authorship, might have given rise to the conviction of Spaulding's neighbors that one was a plagiarism of the other. . . . it should be remembered, as President Fairchild pointed out in his analysis of the problem, that "the Book of Mormon was fresh in their minds, and their recollections of the 'Manuscript Found' were very remote and dim. That under the pressure and suggestion of Hurlbut and Howe, they should put the ideas at hand in place of those remote and forgotten, and imagine that they remembered what they had recently read, would be only an ordinary example of the frailty of memory."<sup>26</sup>

### Same Names?

The various statements of Spalding's family and friends maintained that the Book of Mormon contained the same names used by Spalding: *Nephi*, *Lehi*,

*Lamanites*, *Zarahemla*, *Moroni*, *Mormon*, etc. In fact, Aaron Wright stated: "the names more especially are the same without any alteration."<sup>27</sup> Artemus Cunningham wrote that "I well remember the name of Nephi, which appeared to be the principal hero of the story."<sup>28</sup>

John Miller stated:

The names of Nephi, Lehi, Moroni, and in fact all the principal names, are brought fresh to my recollection by the Golden Bible. When Spalding divested his story of its fabulous names by a verbal explanation, he landed his people near the Straits of Darien, which I am very confident he called Zarahemla . . .<sup>29</sup>

However, these names do not appear in the Spalding manuscript that has been preserved, thus the need for a second manuscript. However, there is no evidence, other than the late memory of relatives, that there were two manuscripts.

Spalding's available manuscript does have unusual names, such as: *Elseon*, *Fabius*, *Habelon*, *Hamuel*, *Hamelick*, *Hamboon*, *Lamesa*, *Labanco*, *Rambock*, *Sambal*, *Taboon*, the *Sciotans*, etc. However, they are not the same as the Book of Mormon. Reading the Book of Mormon after not seeing Spalding's work for twenty years, the family could easily think that they read the same names in both.

The name *Moroni* would seem to be a more likely name to have occurred to Joseph Smith than to Solomon Spalding, given Smith's interest in treasure digging and stories of Captain Kidd, who spent time in the Comoros Islands, the capital of which is Moroni.<sup>30</sup>

### Writing Styles

The Spalding theory would demand that the second missing manuscript was written in a totally different style from the first. But why would Spalding rewrite his novel in the King James style but not include religious material? Or move the story back centuries, changing it from a story of Romans who accidentally land in America to ancient Israelites who make the voyage? Or change the names of the people? Or switch to using bad grammar?

27 Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 284.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 286.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 283.

30 Ronald V. Huggins, "From Captain Kidd's Treasure Ghost to the Angel Moroni," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 36, no. 4 (Winter 2003): p. 18.

25 Spaulding, "Manuscript Found," preface.

26 Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, p. 449.

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When a person reads the current Book of Mormon he will not see all of the original bad grammar, since much of it has been corrected over the years.<sup>31</sup> On page 475 of the first edition (1830) the following appears:

because they testified **particular** concerning us, **which is** the remnant of their seed. . . . And **those** things which **testifies** of us, are they not written . . .

In the 1981 edition (3 Nephi 11:16, 17) this has been changed to read:

because they testified **particularly** concerning us, **who are** the remnant of their seed. . . . And **these** things which **testify** of us, are they not written . . .

On page 406 of the first edition this statement appears:

they were drowned **up** in the depths of the sea.

In the 1981 edition (Alma 63:8) this has been changed to read:

they were drowned in the depths of the sea.

The 1830 edition often misused “were” when it should have been “was”:

which there **were** so much wickedness  
(1830, p. 463, 3 Nephi 5:6)

At other times the author misused “was” when it should have been “were”:

both Alma and Helam **was** buried in the water  
(1830, p. 192, Mosiah 18:14)

Another common mistake was the use of “wrote” instead of “written”:

And thus ended the record of Alma, which was **wrote** upon the plates of Nephi.  
(1830, p. 347, Alma 44:24)

The word “for” was often added in sentences and has now been deleted:

they did prepare **for** to meet him  
(1830, p. 225, Alma 2:12)

we depend upon them **for** to teach us the word  
(1830, p. 45, Helaman 16:21)

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<sup>31</sup> For other examples of the grammatical errors and corrections made in the Book of Mormon, see the Introduction to *3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon* by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

The author also had a habit of adding “a” in a sentence where it didn’t belong. In the following examples the word “a” has been deleted in later editions:

As I was **a** journeying to see a very near kindred  
(1830, p. 249, Alma 10:7)

And as I was **a** going thither  
(1830, p. 249, Alma 10:8)

as Ammon and Lamoni was **a** journeying thither  
(1830, p. 280, Alma 20:8)

Spalding wrote in the typical novel/story-telling form of his day, not the flat narrative of the Book of Mormon. Here is an example of Spalding’s prose:

Droll Tom was rewarded for his benevolent proposal with one of the most sprightly rosy dames in the company.—Three other of the most cheerful resolute mariners were chosen by the other three buxhum Lasses—<sup>32</sup>

The Book of Mormon’s treatment of women is far less interesting:

it came to pass that the Lord spake unto him again, saying that it was not meet for him, Lehi, that he should take his family into the wilderness alone; but that his sons should take daughters to wife, that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise. (1 Nephi 7:1)

At times Spalding used the ancient forms of “thy” and “thou.” However, this was not the general tone. Here is one example:

Hold out the hand of kindness and friendship to **thy** neighbour—consider him when reduced to indigence & distress—he is as dear to the great and good being as what **thou** art [*& now **thou** hast an opportunity to manifest the disposition of **thy** heart*] To afford him relief will be pleasing to **thy** maker & an expression of **thy** gratitude Envious & malicious souls are almost incurably contaminated with that hellish poison which first disordered the soul of man—partake not of their guilt by joining them in the malignant work of slander & detraction.<sup>33</sup>

A more typical example of his writings follows:

The family name I sustain is Fabius, being descended from the illustrious General of that name—I was born at Rome and received my [tuition] education

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<sup>32</sup> Spaulding, “*Manuscript Found*,” p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

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under the tuition of a very learned Master—At the time that Constantine arrived at that city & had overcome his enemies & was firmly seated on the throne of the Roman empire I was introduced to him as a young Gentleman [*litera*] genius & learning and as being worthy of the favourable notice of his imperial majesty—He gave me the appointment of one of his Secretaries, and such were the gracious intimations which he frequently gave me of his high approbation of my conduct that I was happy in my stations.<sup>34</sup>

Fawn Brodie commented that even if

there were actually two Spaulding manuscripts, one might reasonably expect stylistic similarities between the Book of Mormon and the extant manuscript ["Manuscript Found"], since the latter was full of unmistakable literary mannerisms of the kind that are more easily acquired than shed. Spaulding was heir to all the florid sentiment and grandiose rhetoric of the English Gothic romance. He used all the stereotyped patterns—villainy versus innocent maidenhood, thwarted love, and heroic valor—thickly encrusted with the tradition of the noble savage. The Book of Mormon had but one scant reference to a love affair, and its rhythmical, monotonous style bore no resemblance to the cheap clichés and purple metaphors abounding in the Spaulding story.<sup>35</sup>

### “And It Came to Pass”

One of the features that the Spaulding family claimed was used in abundance in his writings was the phrase, “and it came to pass.” John Spaulding stated:

I well remember that he wrote in the old style, and commenced about every other sentence with “and it came to pass” or “now it came to pass,” the same as in the Book of Mormon, and according to the best of my recollection and belief, it is the same as my brother Solomon wrote . . .<sup>36</sup>

However, this phrase does not appear a single time in his manuscript. Yet it is found repeatedly in Joseph Smith's works. Even though there are still countless examples of the phrase in current editions of the Book of Mormon, many have been deleted since the 1830 edition. For instance, on page 262 of the first edition we read as follows:

**And it came to pass** that he began to cry unto the people, saying: Behold, I am guilty, and these men are spotless before God. **And it came to pass** that he began to plead for them, from that time forth; . . .

In the 1981 edition (Alma 14:7, second half of the verse) the second instance of “and it came to pass” has been deleted:

And it came to pass that he began to cry unto the people, saying: Behold, I am guilty, and these men are spotless before God. And he began to plead for them from that time forth; . . .

Besides the monotonous use of the phrase “and it came to pass” in the Book of Mormon, it appears in the Book of Moses, Book of Abraham, *Doctrine and Covenants* and in Joseph Smith's 1832 diary.<sup>37</sup>

Another common phrase in Smith's writings is “or in other words,” but it is missing in Spaulding's book. Below are four examples from the Book of Mormon:

Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, **or, in other words**, a Savior of the world. (1 Nephi 10:4)

And this was their faith, that by so doing God would prosper them in the land, **or in other words**, if they were faithful in keeping the commandments of God that he would prosper them in the land; . . . (Alma 48:15)

And there began to be men inspired from heaven and sent forth, standing among the people in all the land, preaching and testifying boldly of the sins and iniquities of the people, and testifying unto them concerning the redemption which the Lord would make for his people, **or in other words**, the resurrection of Christ; . . . (3 Nephi 6:20)

And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; **or in other words**, he said that man was created after the image of God. . . . (Mosiah 7:27)

The same pattern is present in the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

And if God giveth him power again, or if he translates again, **or, in other words**, if he bringeth

34 Spaulding, “*Manuscript Found*,” p. 4.

35 Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 449-450.

36 Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 278.

37 “And it came to pass” also found in *Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 7:3, 5, 7; Abraham 4:8; *Doctrine and Covenants* 74:3-4; *An American Prophet's Record*, pp. 6, 7, 8.



forth the same words, behold, we have the same with us, and we have altered them; (*D&C* 10:17)

Lift up your hearts and rejoice, for unto you the kingdom, **or in other words**, the keys of the church have been given. (*D&C* 42:69)

And let the higher part of the inner court be dedicated unto me for the school of mine apostles, saith Son Ahman; **or, in other words**, Alphas; **or, in other words**, Omegas; even Jesus Christ your Lord. Amen. (*D&C* 95:17)

Other common Book of Mormon words and phrases, such as “exceedingly,” “constrained,” and “more particularly,” are also absent from Spalding’s work but present in Smith’s writings. These phrases also appear to be absent from Rigdon’s sermons.

Here is an excerpt from Sidney Rigdon’s July 4, 1838, sermon which clearly shows that Rigdon’s style was very different from Smith’s:

It is now three score and two years, since the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, caused the proclamation to go forth among the people of the continents, that the people of this nation should be free, and that over them, “kings should not rule, and princes decree authority;” and all this, preparatory to the great work which he had designed to accomplish in the last days, in the face of all people, in order, that the Son of God, the Savior of the world, should come down from heaven, and reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously; according to the testimony of all the holy prophets, since the world began. And it is eight years, two months, and twenty eight days, since this church of the last days was organized, by the revelations of that same Jesus, who is coming to reign before his ancients gloriously: then consisting of six members only.<sup>38</sup>

After examining Spalding claims, Fawn Brodie observed that

the theory is based first of all on the untenable assumption that Joseph Smith had neither the wit nor the learning to write the Book of Mormon, and it disregards the fact that the style of the Book of Mormon is identical with that of the Mormon prophet’s later writings, such as the *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*, but is completely alien to the turgid rhetoric of Rigdon’s sermons.<sup>39</sup>

38 Sidney Rigdon, Oration delivered on the 4th of July, 1838, Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri, p. 6.

39 Brodie, Appendix B, p. 442.

## The Use of “Therefore” and “Wherefore”

Both the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s revelations printed in the *Doctrine and Covenants* demonstrate Smith’s tendency to use the words *therefore* and *wherefore*. There are 1,078 instances where either *therefore* or *wherefore* are found in the Book of Mormon—an average of over two times per page. The writings of Solomon Spalding, on the other hand, do not exhibit this habit. In fact, in an examination of Spalding’s work, we found only twelve places where the word *therefore* was used and the word *wherefore* did not appear at all. Because the Book of Mormon is about six times as large as Spalding’s story, we could divide the 663 instances of *therefore* in the Book of Mormon by six. This would give us a ratio of 110 instances in the Book of Mormon versus 12 times in Spalding.

Also, Spalding seems to use the word in a different manner than it is found in the Book of Mormon. In the Book of Mormon *therefore* usually appears at the beginning of sentences or at the start of new thoughts. For example, in Ether 9:1 we find: “And now I, Moroni, proceed with my record. *Therefore*, behold, it came to pass . . .” Solomon Spalding, on the other hand, seems to have always used the word in the middle of statements: “We are *therefore* bound to maintain the rights . . . We must *therefore* contemplate his attributes . . .”<sup>40</sup>

Neither the way Spalding used the word *therefore* nor the number of times it is found in his manuscript conforms to the pattern we find in the Book of Mormon. The most serious problem, however, is the word *wherefore*. We have already indicated that we could not find it in his manuscript. This would be very hard to explain if he were really the author of the Book of Mormon because it appears 415 times in that book. In 2 Nephi, chapter 2, the author used it twenty-two times. In just one verse of that chapter *wherefore* appears three times:

**Wherefore**, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; **wherefore**, there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. **Wherefore**, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God . . . (2 Nephi 2:12)

Even if it could be demonstrated that Spalding or some other author was prone to use the words *therefore* and *wherefore*, it would be necessary to show that that person also made a change from *therefore* to *wherefore* while working on the manuscript. In the case of Joseph

40 Spalding, “*Manuscript Found*,” p. 31.

Smith, we can clearly show that he did make such a change in his revelations and that it occurred at the very time he was dictating the Book of Mormon. Since the change can be clearly demonstrated in both the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the Book of Mormon, it provides important evidence that Joseph Smith himself was the author of both books.

### Spalding and the Missing 116 Pages

Wesley P. Walters, a noted authority on Mormon history, has written some compelling reasons for rejecting the Spalding theory. One thing he noticed was that if Smith was copying from a text written by Spalding he should not have had a problem replacing the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon that Martin Harris lost. Pastor Walters observed:

There is one final consideration that is really fatal to the identification of [Spalding as the author]. When Joseph was producing the Book of Mormon he met with a very disastrous event. Mrs. Harris . . . managed to get hold of 116 pages of the opening portion of the Book of Mormon manuscript . . . Had Joseph been dictating from a manuscript provided for him by Rigdon, it should have been easy for him simply to have read off the same portion again. Likewise, even if he had read his translation from the words God had caused to appear on his Seer Stone (as the early Book of Mormon witnesses described his translating process), it should also have been no problem for God to restore the lost pages in identical words. However, it seems more likely that Joseph had simply dictated his material as it came to his mind. This meant that he could not reproduce word-for-word what he had already dictated on those 116 missing pages. The way out of this embarrassing predicament was given in a “revelation” in which he was informed that there was a second set of plates . . . References to that second set of plates appear, therefore, in the part of the Book of Mormon which replaced the purloined manuscript, explaining that it was for “a wise purpose” that this second set was being made. One of the passages mentioning this second set of plates that rescues Smith from his problem occurs right in the middle of [1 Nephi 9] . . . This makes sense if Smith dictated it, but there is no explanation why Spalding should introduce a second set of plates into his story where it serves no purpose. . . . How can the preoccupation with religious topics in these . . . pages be explained when Spalding’s novel was said by the earliest witnesses to have had little religious content? . . . Why should Spalding introduce, with no apparent need for it in the

plot, a second set of plates, just where Joseph would need so badly a second set of plates to avoid being discredited by his inability to reproduce the identical words of the missing 116 pages?<sup>41</sup>

The small plates of Nephi present a problem for the Spalding theory. The reader will remember that the Mormon critic M. T. Lamb wanted to know if it was possible to believe that the

old prophet Mormon, fifteen hundred years ago, should happen to discover these other plates of Nephi, and thus change the entire first part of his book, at the **precise spot** in king Benjamin’s history where Martin Harris stole the 116 pages of manuscript?

Those promoting the Spalding theory believe Rigdon is the main author of the replacement material for the 116 lost pages. However, this would require repeated secret contact between Smith, Cowdery and Rigdon, who was in another state, and some method of conveying the new pages to Smith in New York.

The inclusion of Joseph Smith’s father’s dream in this portion clearly points to Joseph Smith as the author.<sup>42</sup> The story of Nephi seems to be modeled after Smith’s own family experience: Nephi and Joseph are both younger brothers, favored by their father and chosen by God. Clearly Nephi is Joseph’s alter-ego. 2 Nephi, chapter 3, tells of a future seer who will be a descendent of Joseph in Genesis and this seer will also be named Joseph, as well as his father:

And thus prophesied **Joseph**, saying: Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; . . . **And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father.** And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation. (2 Nephi 3:14-15)

Later Joseph Smith would incorporate this teaching in his own revision of the Bible by expanding chapter 50 of Genesis to include a prophecy about himself.<sup>43</sup>

If the 116 pages are actually Rigdon’s work, it is hard to imagine him writing such praise-worthy material about Joseph Smith.

A similar question of authorship arises when we read the eighth chapter of Mosiah. It seems unlikely that

41 *Contemporary Christianity*, (Winter 1977-1978).

42 See chapter 1, pages 15-17 of this book for more information on Joseph Smith’s father’s dream.

43 “Joseph Smith Translation,” LDS Bible, Appendix, p. 799.

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Rigdon would compose these verses that would point to Smith as the greatest seer and prophet:

Now Ammon said unto him: I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; **for he has wherewith that he can look**, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is **a gift from God**. And the **things** are called **interpreters**, and no man can **look in them** except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish. And **whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer**. (Mosiah 8:13)

And the king said that **a seer is greater than a prophet**.

And Ammon said that **a seer is a revelator and a prophet** also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God.

But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known. (Mosiah 8:15-17)

The fact that the Book of Mormon discusses the role of “seer” as the greatest gift points to Joseph Smith as the author of that section, not Rigdon. After all, Smith was the one with a “seer stone.”

### Books About the American Indians Before 1830

While it is often assumed that very little was known about the Native Americans and ancient ruins during the early 1800's, there actually was considerable interest in Indian culture and artifacts resulting in several books and newspaper articles. A number of books were printed before the Book of Mormon proposing that the American Indians were descended from Israel—the very idea put forward in the Book of Mormon.

In 1652 Menasseh Ben Israel's *Hope of Israel* was published in England. This Jewish rabbi was a firm believer that remnants of the ten tribes of Israel had been discovered in the Americas.<sup>44</sup>

In 1775 James Adair published *The History of the American Indians*. He theorized that there were twenty-three parallels between Indian and Jewish customs. For example, he claimed the Indians spoke a corrupt form

of Hebrew, honored the Jewish Sabbath, performed circumcision, and offered animal sacrifice. He discussed various theories explaining Indian origins, problems of transoceanic crossing, and the theory that the mound builders were a white group more advanced than the Indians.<sup>45</sup>

In reading *The History of the American Indians* we found that Adair described the Indian forts, mounds and ditches:

We frequently met with **great mounds of earth, either of a circular, or oblong form, having a strong breast-work** at a distance around them, made of the clay which had been dug up in **forming the ditch** on the inner side of the inclosed ground, and these were their **forts of security against an enemy** . . . About 12 miles from the upper northern parts of the Choktah country, there stand . . . two oblong mounds of earth . . . in an equal direction with each other . . . A broad **deep ditch inclosed** those two **fortresses**, and there they raised an **high breast-work**, to secure their houses from the invading **enemy**.<sup>46</sup>

Similar descriptions are found in the book of Alma:

Yea, he had been strengthening the armies of the Nephites, and erecting **small forts**, or places of resort; throwing up **banks of earth round about to enclose** his armies, and also building walls of stone to encircle them about, round about their cities and the borders of their lands; yea, all round about the land. (Alma 48:8)

And he also placed armies on the south, in the borders of their possessions, and caused them to **erect fortifications** that they might **secure** their armies and their people from the **hands of their enemies**. (Alma 50:10)

And he caused that they should build a **breastwork** of timbers upon **the inner bank of the ditch**; and they cast up dirt out of the **ditch** against the **breastwork** of timbers; and thus they did cause the Lamanites to labor until they had encircled the city of Bountiful round about with a strong wall of timbers and earth, to an exceeding height. (Alma 53:4)

Joseph Smith may not have read the book but it does show that the ideas were already circulating in New York before the Book of Mormon was published.

Elias Boudinot wrote *A Star in the West; or a Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel* in 1816. He relied heavily on evidences compiled by James

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 105.

<sup>46</sup> James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (London: Edward & Charles Dilly, 1775), pp. 377-78.

<<http://www.archive.org/stream/historyofamerica00adairich#page/378/mode/2up>>

<sup>44</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*, p. 117.

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Adair. He also mentions the Indians' lost book of God.<sup>47</sup>

In 1823 Ethan Smith published *View of the Hebrews*. This book was so popular that Mr. Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) brought out an enlarged edition in 1825. Dan Vogel observes:

[Ethan] Smith's is by far the most important and interesting work dealing with the origin of the American Indians and the mound builders. Smith quotes from many other writers, both American and European, to support his thesis that the first settlers of the New World were the lost ten tribes of Israel. . . . Several times he repeats the notion that the mound builders were destroyed by the Indians . . . His ten tribe theory forces him to develop the hypothesis that the Indians had degenerated from a civilized condition to their wild and savage state. He also mentions the Indian legend of the lost book of God which would one day be returned.<sup>48</sup>

Researcher George D. Smith observed:

In 1823, seven years before the Book of Mormon was published, Ethan Smith, had written *View of the Hebrews*, a compilation of popular opinions about the origins of the American Indians, who supposedly descended from the Hebrew tribes. . . . Ethan Smith was a Congregational minister living in Poultney, Vermont, Oliver Cowdery's home until 1825 when he moved west and met Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith's own birthplace, Sharon, Vermont, was only 40 miles from Poultney. But *View of the Hebrews*, which was expanded in the 1825 edition, was also read widely in New York . . .

Ethan Smith had collected reports about the Hebrew origin of the Indians from missionaries and traders who had lived among them.<sup>49</sup>

The popularity of *View of the Hebrews* was discussed by Robert Hullinger:

*View of the Hebrews* circulated widely in New York. It was also condensed in Josiah Priest's *The Wonders of Nature and Providence*, one of the more widely circulated books of the Manchester rental library in 1827.<sup>50</sup>

LDS General Authority B. H. Roberts wrote extensively about the parallels between *View of the*

*Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon.<sup>51</sup> Rev. Robert Hullinger gave the following summary of B. H. Roberts's parallels:

According to Roberts's later studies, some features of *View of the Hebrews* are paralleled in the Book of Mormon. (1) Indians buried a book they could no longer read. (2) A Mr. Merrick found some dark yellow parchment leaves in "Indian Hill." (3) Native Americans had inspired prophets and charismatic gifts, as well as (4) their own kind of Urim and Thummim and breastplate. (5) Ethan Smith produced evidence to show that ancient Mexican Indians were no strangers to Egyptian hieroglyphics. (6) An overthrown civilization in America is to be seen from its ruined monuments and forts and mounds. The barbarous tribes—barbarous because they had lost the civilized arts—greeting the Europeans were descendants of the lost civilization. (7) Chapter one of *View of the Hebrews* is a thirty-two page account of the historical destruction of Jerusalem. (8) There are many references to Israel's scattering and being "gathered" in the last days. (9) Isaiah is quoted for twenty chapters to demonstrate the restoration of Israel. In Isaiah 18 a request is made to save Israel in America. (10) The United States is asked to evangelize the native Americans. (11) Ethan Smith cited Humboldt's New Spain to show the characteristics of Central American civilization; the same are in the Book of Mormon. (12) The legends of Quetzacoatl, the Mexican messiah, are paralleled in the Book of Mormon by Christ's appearing in the western hemisphere. . . . Roberts came to recognize that, at least in the case of Ethan Smith's book, such works were widely available.<sup>52</sup>

Not only were there numerous books speculating on the history of the American Indian, it was a common topic in the New York newspapers. The following was published in the *Wayne Sentinel* in Palmyra, New York, on October 11, 1825:

Those who are most conversant with the public and private economy of the Indians, are strongly of opinion that they are the **lineal descendants of the Israelites**, and my own researches go far to confirm me in the same belief.

We find this statement in the *Palmyra Herald* for October 30, 1822:

In the year 1810, I opened, . . . one of the flat mounds, . . . in Ohio, . . . we found the skeletons of a

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47 Vogel, *Indian Origins*, p. 42.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

49 George D. Smith, Jr., "Book of Mormon Difficulties," *Sunstone*, vol. 6, no. 3 (May 1981), pp. 45-46.

50 Robert N. Hullinger, *Joseph Smith's Response to Skepticism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), p. 186.

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51 B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham D. Madsen (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

52 Hullinger, *Response to Skepticism*, pp. 183-184.

number of bodies, . . . all deposited directly due east and west, the heads to the west; precisely as is the practice in **Christian** burials.

The *Palmyra Register* for May 26, 1819, reported that one writer “believes (and we think with good reason) that this country was once inhabited by a race of people, at least, partially civilized, & that this race has been exterminated by the forefathers of the present and late tribes of Indians in this country.”

The *Wayne Sentinel* published these statements on July 24, 1829:

The Aborigines . . . are fast dwindling away, and will soon be buried in the depths of that oblivion which conceals the history and fate of a people who (judging from the traces discovered of the progress which they had made in civilization, and the arts and sciences, as developed by the western antiquities) must have been but a little behind the present generation in many respects. When we look at the straggling Indians who . . . reveal the ravages of intemperance and almost every other loathsome vice, we can hardly persuade ourselves that **they are remnants of the powerful race of people who, as it were but yesterday, stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific** . . . we may picture them in our minds as a flourishing and mighty nation . . . powerful in wealth and natural resources; combining moral and political excellence . . . and we may suppose that some dreadful plague, some national calamity swept them from the face of the earth; or perhaps that like Sodom and Gomorrah of old, their national sins became so heinous, that the Almighty in his wrath utterly annihilated them . . .

### “The Language of the Egyptians”

The Book of Mormon claims to have been written in “the language of the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 1:3). This is rather strange since the Nephites were supposed to be Israelites. This unusual idea, however, may have been suggested by an article which appeared in the *Wayne Sentinel* in 1827:

Decyphering of Hieroglyphics.—Professor Seyffarth of Leipsig, who has been employed in decyphering the Egyptian Antiquities at Rome, states, . . . that he has found . . . a Mexican manuscript in hieroglyphics, from which he infers, that the Mexicans and the Egyptians had intercourse with each other from the remotest antiquity, and that they had the same system of mythology.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Wayne Sentinel*, June 1, 1827.

### Ancient Records

A possible source for the idea of metal plates could have come from reading the popular Jewish historian, Josephus. In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, he mentioned “engraven” “public records” of “brass.”<sup>54</sup> Also, the Apocrypha (published in many King James Bibles of Smith’s day) mentioned metal records: “So then they wrote it in tables of brass.”<sup>55</sup>

A book that might have suggested to Smith the idea of metal records joined by rings was *Jahn’s Biblical Archaeology*, published five years before Smith began dictating the Book of Mormon.<sup>56</sup> Jahn described ancient tablets that were joined “by rings at the back, through which a rod was passed to carry them by.”<sup>57</sup> While Smith probably would not have read the book, it demonstrates that the concept was discussed in his day.

Both Spalding and Smith wrote about finding a record hidden in the ground written by ancient inhabitants of America, a group sailing from the Old World to the New World with great wars between two different civilizations. Since these ideas were common in books and newspapers of the day, Smith did not need Spalding’s novel to write the Book of Mormon.

### Slipping Treasures

There are elements of treasure hunting and Masonry in the Book of Mormon that resemble Joseph Smith’s environment more than that of Solomon Spalding. In December of 1825 the *Wayne Sentinel*, printed in Palmyra, New York, ran a story about local money diggers and slipping treasures:

WONDERFUL DISCOVERY—A few days since was discovered in this town [Albion], by help of a **mineral stone**, which becomes transparent when **placed in a hat** and the light excluded by the face of him who looks into it, provided he is fortune’s favorite, a monstrous POTASH KETTLE in the bowels of Mother Earth, filled with the purest bullion. Some attempts have been made to dig it up, but without success. His Satanic Majesty, or some other unseen agent, appears to keep it under marching orders, for **no sooner is it dug onto in one place, than it moves off like “false**

<sup>54</sup> *Josephus: Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1966), ch. 10, p. 299.

<sup>55</sup> KJV Apocrypha, I Maccabees 14:18, 27, 48.

<sup>56</sup> Johann Jahn, *Jahn’s Biblical Archaeology*, trans. Thomas C. Upham (Andover, MA: Flagg and Gould, 1823).

<sup>57</sup> Brent Lee Metcalfe, “Apologetic and Critical Assumptions About Book of Mormon Historicity,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 26, no. 3 (Fall 1993): p. 157.

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**delusive hope” only to re-appear in some remote place.** But its pursuers are now sanguine of success. They have entrenched the kettle all around, and driven a steel ramrod into the ground immediately over it, to break the enchantment. Nothing now remains but to raise its ponderous weight and establish a mint that it may be coined into federal money. Good news indeed for these hard times....<sup>58</sup>

This is very reminiscent of the slipping treasures of the Book of Mormon. Helaman 13:18 states “whoso shall hide up treasures in the earth shall find them again no more, because of the great curse of the land, save he be a righteous man and shall hide it up unto the Lord.” Further on in the same chapter we read: “Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land” (Helaman 13:35). This sounds very much like the problems encountered by Joseph Smith and friends as they looked for treasures. Martin Harris gave the following account of the Smiths and the money diggers:

Mr. Stowell was at this time at old Mr. Smith's, digging for money. It was reported by these money-diggers, that they had found boxes, but before they could secure them, **they would sink into the earth.** A candid old Presbyterian told me, that on the Susquehannah flats he dug down to an iron chest, that he scraped the dirt off with his shovel, but had nothing with him to open the chest; then he went away to get help, and when they came to it, it **moved away** two or three rods into the earth, and they could not get it.<sup>59</sup>

The inclusion of slipping treasures in the Book of Mormon points to Smith, not Rigdon or Spalding, as the author. Joseph Smith had been involved in using a magic stone in his hat to find buried treasures since at least 1822.

### Masonic Influences

Another curious item in the Book of Mormon is the introduction of wicked secret societies (see Helaman 6:18-26). One wonders why Spalding or Rigdon would introduce the Gadianton robbers to the book. The introduction of the band, with their “secret signs, and their secret words...that they might distinguish a brother who had entered into the covenant,” and should “not suffer for their murders” would seem more likely to have

<sup>58</sup> *Wayne Sentinel*, Dec. 27, 1825, as quoted in *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry*, by LaMar Petersen, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Freethinker Press, 2000), p. 28.

<sup>59</sup> *Tiffany's Monthly*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Aug. 1859): p. 165.

been added by Smith after the 1826-1827 outcry against the Freemasons<sup>60</sup> due to the death of William Morgan. Richard Van Wagoner commented:

Joseph Smith's anti-Masonic stance at the time the Book of Mormon was dictated can be explained by the fact that his father, a member of Ontario Masonic Lodge No. 23 (Canandaigua, NY) since 1817, left the craft in the aftermath of the notorious 1826 abduction of anti-Masonic crusader William Morgan and was considered a seceder Mason.<sup>61</sup>

Helaman 7:4 speaks of the “judgment-seats” that had been taken over by those of the Gadiantons. This is reminiscent of the high percentage of early American leaders who were members of the Masonic Lodge. The newspapers in New York were full of stories against the Freemasons. The 1827 *Wayne Sentinel* ran the following article:

The excitement respecting Morgan, instead of decreasing, spreads its influence and acquires new vigour daily. Scarcely a paper do we open without having our eye greeted by accounts of meetings, together with preambles and resolutions, some of them of a cast still more decided and proscriptive than any we have yet published. . . .

The Freemason, too—not only those who took off Morgan, but every one who bears the masonic name—are proscribed, as unworthy of “any office in town, county, state, or United States!” and the institution of masonry, . . . is held up as dangerous and detrimental to the interests of the country!<sup>62</sup>

Researcher David John Buerger mentions other newspapers that reported on the anti-masonic nature of the Book of Mormon:

A few references from contemporary newspapers confirm an early anti-Masonic perception of the Book of Mormon. On 15 March 1831, the *Geauga Gazette* of Painesville, Ohio, stated that “the Mormon Bible is Anti-masonick” and that “every one of its followers . . . are anti-masons.” This newspaper quoted Martin Harris as saying that the Book of Mormon was an “Anti-masonick Bible.” A similar story appeared in *The Ohio Star* in Ravenna, Ohio, on 24 March 1831. Another Painesville paper, *The Telegraph*, ran an article on 22 March 1831 challenging the 15 March

<sup>60</sup> Freemasonry is a fraternal organization that originated in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century in England. George Washington and many of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence were Freemasons.

<sup>61</sup> Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon*, p. 141.

<sup>62</sup> *Wayne Sentinel*, March 23, 1827.

## Joseph Smith's Plagiarism — Chapter 9: The Solomon Spalding Theory

story and claiming that the Book of Mormon was printed by a “Masonic press” in Palmyra, New York. It further asserted that there was “a very striking resemblance between masonry and mormonism. Both systems pretend to have a very ancient origin, and to possess some wonderful secrets which the world cannot have without submitting to the prescribed ceremonies” (see also 24 Mar. 1831). Interestingly, Mormon converts in northeastern Ohio were identified by the press as being as fanatical as the region’s anti-Masons. Notably the first anti-Mormon book, *Mormonism Unveiled*, referred to ancient Book of Mormon Nephites as “Anti-masons.”<sup>63</sup>

Historian Dan Vogel comments:

The Book of Mormon image of prophets being martyred at the hands of “secret combinations” could be loosely inspired by Morgan’s death (Al. 37:30; 3 Ne. 6:19-30). Regardless, the principle upon which anti-Masons believed Morgan’s murder had been carried out is expressed: “And whosoever of those who belonged to their band should reveal unto the world of their wickedness and their abominations, should be tried, not according to the laws of their country, but according to the laws of their wickedness, which had been given by Gadianton and Kishkumen” (Hel. 6:24). Later, as he worked on his Inspired Revision of the Bible in October 1830, Joseph Smith would make an

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63 David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), pp. 47-48.

addition to Genesis with a more direct comparison to the Morgan affair. His revision disclosed that Lamech murdered Irad, the son of Enoch, “for the oath’s sake,” because Irad began to reveal secret oaths to the sons of Adam (Moses 5:47-50). This undoubtedly reminded many in western New York of Morgan’s violent murder.<sup>64</sup>

Interestingly the Book of Mormon sections referenced above by Dan Vogel occur in the latter part of the book, which was most likely composed in the late 1820’s after Morgan’s death and when anti-Masonic sentiment prevailed. It seems more likely that Joseph Smith would write these passages than Spalding, whose manuscript was written in 1812 when Masonry was not an issue. Also, Smith’s father and brother were members of the Masonic lodge. Thus it is more reasonable to see those themes appearing in the Book of Mormon by way of Smith, just as with the themes of slipping treasures and divination, activities for which there is evidence of Joseph’s participation but not for Spalding or Rigdon.

Regardless of who authored the Book of Mormon, those outside of Mormonism agree the book is the product of the early 1800’s.

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64 Dan Vogel, “Echoes of Anti-Masonry: A Rejoinder to Critics of the Anti-Masonic Thesis,” *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), pp. 280-81.

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### Additional information on Solomon Spalding from Part 1 of *Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon*, pages 37-38.

In 2008 another computer study was done by Matt Jockers, Craig Criddle and Daniela Witten, comparing various authors’ word prints, including Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon, with that of the Book of Mormon.<sup>67</sup>

Solomon Spalding was included in this study because of his unpublished 1812 novel of a group of Romans who sailed to the New World. Some people have theorized that Sidney Rigdon, a Campbellite minister, and Joseph reworked Spalding’s manuscript to compose the Book of Mormon.

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67 Matt Jockers, Craig Criddle and Daniela Witten, “Reassessing authorship of the Book of Mormon using delta and nearest shrunken centroid classification,” *Oxford Journal of Literary and Linguistic Computing* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

However, the study does not prove that any of these men wrote a given section of the Book of Mormon. It only demonstrates which of the small pool of authors studied would be the closest match to the Book of Mormon. It should also be noted that Joseph Smith was not used in the study. One blogger posted these observations:

I want to be tactful here, for I appreciate the efforts put forth to understand the Book of Mormon in this study. But if I understand what has been done, this study does not determine the probability that any of the potential candidates had anything to do with the Book of Mormon. It determines the probability that one candidate is closer to some metrics of Book of Mormon style than another candidate from an

## Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible — Solomon Spalding

extremely limited pool that excludes the most likely modern candidate, Joseph Smith (though adding him might not have made any difference). But saying that Sidney Rigdon is closer to the style of, say, 2 Nephi 10, than Orson Pratt or Henry Longfellow tells us nothing about who wrote 2 Nephi 10. Unwittingly, the nature of this study may make it, in retrospect, inherently rigged for Rigdon/Spalding/Cowdery. Maybe Rigdon + Spalding would have been the best fit even if hundreds of other possibilities had been tested, but that remains to be seen (actually, the wordprint work of Hilton et al. has already raised serious and highly credible questions challenging Spalding as a potential author of the Book of Mormon).

One positive aspect of this study: the results are consistent with the concept of multiple authorship. Some chapters are assigned to Spalding, some to Rigdon, and some to Cowdery, though it's possible that none of these authors have styles close enough to the Book of Mormon to be a genuine candidate for authorship with more confidence than the hypothesis of multiple ancient authors with different styles translated by a single modern author in a way that allowed some subtle non-contextual stylistic differences to persist.<sup>68</sup>

That the Book of Mormon appears to have different styles would be consistent with the theory that Smith plagiarized a number of sources. The reliability of such studies to determine authorship remains to be established.

In regards to the Spalding theory, it would necessitate three manuscripts: the original Spalding novel, his revision in the old style, and Sidney Rigdon's revision adding the religious portions. To complicate matters even further, it is proposed that when Joseph Smith was dictating to his scribes he was actually paraphrasing

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68 "That New Book of Mormon Wordprint Study: The Criddle Riddle—or Rigged for Rigdon?" posted by Mormanity (12/23/2008 07:40 a.m.) at <http://www.nothingwaving.org/post/7510/2008-12-23/that-new-book-of-mormon-wordprint-study-the-criddle-riddle-or-rigged-for-rigdon.html>

Rigdon's manuscript. Researchers Cowdery, Davis and Vanick theorize:

As soon as Sidney had started back to Ohio to await developments, Oliver and Joseph began the process of translating the plates—which meant surreptitiously reading the already reworked pages and carefully paraphrasing them so as to integrate Sidney's notes, comments, and numerous biblical interpolations into a single coherent entity.<sup>69</sup>

With all of the rewriting that was supposedly done on the manuscript, one wonders how well one could deconstruct the Book of Mormon to determine the author for any given portion? There is no second Spalding manuscript or Rigdon manuscript with which to make comparisons. It is all speculation. We do have the original Spalding manuscript and the Book of Mormon, which do not appear to have enough in common to insist that the latter came from the former. For more on the Spalding/Rigdon theory, see chapter 9 in *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* in the second part of this book.

Computer studies certainly have their place, but it is still unclear how well they can determine authorship when there has been a deliberate attempt to mimic another person's style or to disguise the author's style. In a paper presented at the Twenty-First Conference on Innovative Applications of Artificial Intelligence, July of 2009, it was pointed out that when such efforts are made to deceive, computer analysis was no more effective in identifying the correct author than "randomly guessing the correct author of a document."<sup>70</sup>

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69 Wayne L. Cowdery, Howard A. Davis, Arthur Vanick, *Who Really Wrote The Book of Mormon?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), p. 232.

70 Michael Brennan and Rachel Greenstadt, "Practical Attacks Against Authorship Recognition Techniques," paper presented at Proceedings of the Twenty-First Conference on Innovative Applications of Artificial Intelligence (IAAI), Pasadena, California, July 2009. <[http://www.cs.drexel.edu/~greenie/brennan\\_paper.pdf](http://www.cs.drexel.edu/~greenie/brennan_paper.pdf)> (March 31, 2010)

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Excerpts from *Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible*  
*in the Book of Mormon*  
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