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The Dead Spaulding Story Buried Out of Sight

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Abstract: James H. Fairchild of the Oberlin College library recovered the Manuscript Found written by Solomon Spaulding. Fairchild claims that after comparing the Book of Mormon and Spaulding's manuscript the theory that the two are related "will probably have to be relinquished."

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

MONDAY, APRIL 20, 1885.

THE DEAD SPAULDING STORY BURIED OUT OF SIGHT.

THE April number of Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Sunday Magazine* contains a *fac simile* of the religious department page of the *New York Observer* of February 5, 1885, on which appears this interesting statement:

SOLOMON SPAULDING AND THE BOOK OF MORMON.

The theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon in the traditional manuscript of Solomon Spaulding will probably have to be relinquished. That manuscript is doubtless now in the possession of Mr. L. L. Rice, of Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands, formerly an anti-slavery editor in Ohio, and for many years State printer of Columbus. During a recent visit to Honolulu, I suggested to Mr. Rice that he might have valuable anti-slavery documents in his possession which he would be willing to contribute to the rich collection already in the Oberlin College library. In pursuance of this suggestion, Mr. Rice began looking over his old pamphlets and papers, and at length came upon an old, worn and faded manuscript of about 175 pages, small quarto, purporting to be a history of the migration and conflicts of the ancient Indian tribes which occupied the territory now belonging to the States of New York, Ohio and Kentucky. On the last page of this manuscript is a certificate and signature giving the names of several persons known to the signer, who have assured him that to their personal knowledge the manuscript was the writing of Solomon Spaulding. Mr. Rice has no recollection how or when this manuscript came into his possession. It was enveloped in a coarse piece of wrapping paper, and endorsed in Mr. Rice's handwriting, "A manuscript story."

There seems no reason to doubt that this is the long lost story. Mr. Rice, myself and others compared it with the Book of Mormon, and could detect no resemblance between the two, in general or detail. There seems to be no name nor incident common to the two. The solemn style of the Book of Mormon, in imitation of the English Scriptures, does not appear in the manuscript. The only resemblance is in the fact that both profess to set forth the history of the lost tribes. Some other explanation of the origin of the Book of Mormon must be found, if any explanation is required.

—From *Bibliotheca Sacra*.

JAMES H. FAIRCHILD.

The foregoing is worthy of general attention. If genuine, and there appears no good reason to dispute it, the fiction, so widely believed, that the Book of Mormon was founded upon a romance written by one Solomon Spaulding, is consigned to the limbo of exploded popular delusions. There never was any real plausibility in the Spaulding story as an account of the origin of the Book of Mormon. Any one who has read that record of the ancient inhabitants of America, and compared it with the story told concerning Solomon Spaulding's "Manuscript Found," could not fail to perceive

the essential difference between them in every particular. This has been pointed out so clearly and so many times, that no excuse was left to those who have persisted in circulating the foolish story because it was their only refuge as assailants of the Book of Mormon. Yet it has been repeated from the pulpit as well as the press, and so-called ministers of the Gospel have lent themselves to the deception which has been practised upon the public, and has prevented many thousands from investigating the message of truth contained in the sacred record, brought forth from the dust as a witness for God and His Christ in this age of spiritual darkness and unbelief.

The manufacturers of the Spaulding story managed to gain possession of the manuscript which they claimed was used as the basis upon which the structure of the Book of Mormon was built. They found that it would not bear out their hypothesis in any particular. They therefore kept it out of sight, so that it could not be compared with the record which they alleged was elaborated from its text. The account of the manner in which the manuscript was obtained from the widow of Mr. Spaulding, the promise of its publication as a refutation of the Book of Mormon, the failure to publish it or either return it to the owner or remunerate her for its retention, have been given to the public both by "Mormon" and anti-"Mormon" writers.

It is evident, and beyond question, that Messrs. Hurlburt, Howe and Co., who obtained the manuscript from Mrs. Davison, Spaulding's widow, for the purpose of opposing the Book of Mormon, suppressed the manuscript when they found it did not answer their purpose. And it is equally clear that if Spaulding's manuscript had contained anything to justify the claim that the Book of Mormon was fabricated therefrom, it would have been published so that the two works might be compared. And this of itself ought to be sufficient, with candid minds, to prove beyond doubt that the "Manuscript Found" had no connection with the Book of Mormon. But it has been repeatedly shown that none of the circumstances or dates in which the Spaulding manuscript was alleged to have been brought forth, corresponded in any degree with the production of the Book of Mormon. In fact the Spaulding story as an account of the origin of the Book of Mormon could not stand the test of examination when first started, and every attempt to support it has only resulted in proving its falsity. Some of the strongest proofs of its fallacy are contained in the very affidavits used to bolster it up. A full and complete refutation of the story is given in a little work by Elder George Reynolds, entitled "Myth of the Manuscript Found."

There has been but one thing lacking to demonstrate beyond all question, from anybody, the utter groundlessness of the story which is still told by the enemies of the Book of Mormon, and that was the production of the manuscript said to have been copied and manipulated in the construction of the Book of Mormon. That one lack seems now to have been supplied. The manuscript so long suppressed is now itself a "manuscript found." It was to Ohio that Hurlburt and Co. took the manuscript after they had by false representations and promises of money obtained it from Spaulding's widow, intending to publish it in opposition to the Book of Mormon; it was in Ohio that it came into the possession of Mr. Rice, who has had it for many years with other papers. The parties who now bring it to light have no connection with

the "Mormon" Church, and have no interest, personal or otherwise, in misrepresenting the facts. Mr. Fairchild's statement, if accepted, destroys for ever the stronghold of the foes of the Book of Mormon, and leaves them the alternative of accepting it as a divine revelation and translation, or fabricating some other theory to account for its origin that will better bear the test of scrutiny than the thrice dead and effectually sepulchred Spaulding story.

There is one error in the statement of Mr. Fairchild which we desire to point out. It is common to nearly all writers and preachers on the subject of the Book of Mormon except those who believe in the book. He states that the Spaulding manuscript and the Book of Mormon "both profess to set forth the history of the lost tribes." Now, while the Spaulding manuscript, according to all accounts that have been given of it, purports to be a history of the lost ten tribes of Israel, the Book of Mormon makes no reference to those tribes whatever, except in a solitary passage, and that shows that the ten tribes were in another place altogether from the people whose history, religion and destiny the Book of Mormon relates. That book does not profess to "set forth the history of the lost tribes," and does not attempt to do so. And this was one of the proofs that it could not be identified with the Spaulding manuscript even before the production of that paper. Another proof of the essential difference between the two was the impossibility of showing where the portions of the Book of Mormon containing the supposed text of the manuscript are connected with the added or original matter, so as to produce from a couple of hundred or less pages of manuscript, more than six hundred pages of printed matter, and this, too, on subjects altogether different from the subject treated of in the manuscript of which it was alleged to have been an elaborated imitation.

And now that the story with which "Christian" ministers and editors have been "refuting" the Book of Mormon for many years is effectually disposed of for argumentative purposes, will they cease to relate it? will they acknowledge their mistake? will they be as diligent in correcting their error as they were in promulgating it? We fear not. The dead and buried Spaulding story will be lugged out of its grave, no doubt, and held up against the Book of Mormon as of old, and the believers in that Divine Record—the Stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim, which, with the Stick of Judah—the Bible, is now joined in one as a witness for the Father and the Son to all nations, will still have to bring forward the complete proofs which have been so abundantly produced, that the Spaulding story is a myth without foundation and without coherence. And they will be able to put an effectual quietus upon it in all candid minds by the testimony of Mr. Fairchild in *Bibliotheca Sacra*.
C. W. P.

THE GATHERING.

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."—Rev. xviii, 4.
THIS prophetic vision of the Apostle John is having a literal fulfillment in our day, while the world look on and see it not, or if they notice it at all, it is with ridicule and contempt. In obedience to the voice from heaven, the