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## The Originator of the "Spaulding Story"

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**Abstract:** This article gives a history of the Spaulding manuscript that deals with the major characters of the story—Solomon Spaulding, P. Hurlburt, Mrs. Davidson, and E. D. Howe.

paradise. The time then arrived, in the mind of Brahma, for man to be placed upon the earth, to have dominion over it. He drew from the great soul a germ of life, which he diffused into the two persons whom he had created, male and female, for the propagation of their race. He endowed them with speech and conscience, thus placing them pre-eminently at the head of all created things.

The man he named Adima, which,

in the Sanscrit, means the first man. The woman was called Hiva, which, in the Sanscrit language, means what completes life.

He placed them on the Island of Ceylon, where everything was well adapted for their convenience, comfort and pleasure. They were commanded to multiply, and instruct their children to be mindful in calling upon Brahma, who would not forsake them while they continued to serve him.—*Juvenile Instructor*.

### THE ORIGINATOR OF THE "SPAULDING STORY."

BY G. R.

Doctor Philastus Hurlburt was the originator or inventor of the "Spaulding Story."

He was not a doctor by profession, but his mother gave him that name because he was the seventh son, a very common custom in some parts at the time he was born.

Those who adopt his fabrication with regard to the authority of the Book of Mormon would have people believe that he really was a doctor. It gives an air of respectability to their tale, and tends to make the public think that he must have been a man of good education, though he really was not.

We will now give some statements with regard to his life, and the causes that led to the invention of the desperate lie, regarding the Book of Mormon, which has tended to deceive so many people. These statements are, for the most part, abridged from the writings of one who was intimately acquainted with him.

Hurlburt embraced the gospel in 1832. Previous to this he had been a local preacher in the Methodist church, but had been expelled therefrom for unchaste conduct. Soon after his baptism he went to Kirtland, where he was ordained an Elder. In the spring of 1833, he labored and preached in Pennsylvania. Here his self-importance, pride and other undesirable traits of conduct soon shook the confidence of the members of the Church in him as a man of God;

and before long his unvirtuous habits were so plainly manifested that he was cast off from the church, and his license taken from him by the conference.

Some may here ask, "How is it that men who leave the Church of Christ and come out in opposition to its truths are so often proven to have previously been men of immoral lives?" The answer is plain and simple: pure, honest, virtuous men do not apostatize and turn against the principles of the gospel. They remain faithful. But men who have been wicked, and who do not sincerely repent when they enter the Church, though they may profess to do so, are very apt to turn aside and fight against God's cause. It is for this reason that so many men of Hurlburt's stamp have unfortunately for them been proven to have led very wicked lives before their baptism. Had their repentance been sincere, their after lives would have been different.

Hurlburt went to Kirtland, the seat of the government of the Church, and appealed to the general conference. His case was there re-heard, and because of his confession and apparent repentance, his license was restored to him.

On his way back to Pennsylvania he stopped in Ohio. There he attempted to seduce a young lady, but his design was frustrated. For this crime he was expelled from the Church. Finding he would be tolerated by the



Saints no longer, he determined to be revenged by injuring them all in his power. He went to Springfield, Pennsylvania, and commenced to preach against "Mormonism." Here he was received with open arms by those who had been vainly endeavoring to stay the progress of God's work in that region, and churches, chapels and meeting-houses were crowded to hear him.

He was now dubbed the Rev. Mr. Hurlburt, and was petted and patronized by priest and people; but for all that he did very little in staying the progress of the truth. As an anti-Mormon lecturer he was a failure.

During his stay in Pennsylvania Hurlburt formed many acquaintances, and mingled with all sorts of people. While in a small settlement called Jackson, he became familiar with a family of the same name, (possibly the persons who had given the name to the settlement). Some of this family had been acquainted with the now widely-known Mr. Solomon Spaulding, and from them Hurlburt learned that that gentleman had once written a romance called "The Manuscript Found," which professed to recount the history of the ancient inhabitants of this continent.

Hurlburt had now given himself up to the work of opposing "Mormonism." He quickly perceived that this romance could be used as a weapon to carry on the warfare. If he could obtain possession of it and find any points in common between it and the Book of Mormon, he could exaggerate those seeming resemblances and falsify other statements. If he found no agreement between the two he could contrive to have "The Manuscript Found" accidentally (?) destroyed and then claim that its contents were almost identical with the record of Mormon. He found it necessary to pursue the latter course.

In carrying out his design he repaired to Kirtland, and there made an appointment to deliver a lecture, calling upon all who were opposed to "Mormonism" to attend. They did so in force. At this lecture Hurlburt told his audience that in his travels in the State of Pennsylvania, lecturing against "Mormonism," he had learned

that one Mr. Spaulding had written a romance, and the probability was that it had by some means fallen into the hands of Sidney Rigdon, and that he had transformed it into the Book of Mormon. Hurlburt further stated that he intended to write a book, and call it "Mormonism Unveiled," in which he would reveal the whole secret.

His anti-Mormon hearers were delighted. One mobocrat, a Campbellite, advanced the sum of \$300.00 towards the prosecution of the work. Others contributed for the same purpose, and Hurlburt, being thus provided with the funds, at once proceeded to hunt up the manuscript.

With this view he proceeded to New Salem or Conneaut, Ohio, the place where Mr. Spaulding formerly resided. There he called a meeting and made known his intentions. His harangues created quite a stir. He told the same story about the manuscript and Sidney Rigdon, that he had told in Kirtland. The idea was new to his hearers, but as it was something which was to destroy "Mormonism," they did not object to it, and some helped him with more money. He was here advised to visit Mrs. Davidson, formerly the wife of Mr. Spaulding, who now resided at Monson, Massachusetts. This he determined to do.

It should here be mentioned that the gospel had already been preached with considerable success in the neighborhood of New Salem (Conneaut), and though it was the place where "The Manuscript Found" was written, the Spaulding story was never dreamed of there until Hurlburt mentioned it. But it was too good a thing for those who had rejected the truth to let pass. It afforded them some slight excuse for not receiving the doctrines of "Mormonism." Such persons clutched at it eagerly, as drowning men are said to grasp at straws. Nevertheless the work of the Lord did not stand still in those parts. Numbers were afterwards baptized in that very section, so little effect had Hurlburt's fabrication upon the minds of the people.

Hurlburt at once carried out the advice given to him by his New Salem acquaintances. He proceeded to Mon-



son, called on Mrs. Davidson, and by representing his wishes in his own unscrupulous and not over-truthful manner, obtained from her the writings of her former husband. Further she told him that there was a trunk somewhere in the State of New York, that also contained papers which he might have, if they were found to suit his purpose.

Mrs. Davidson positively asserts that she gave Hurlburt the original of "The Manuscript Found," and that he promised to publish it, which however he never did. He claimed that *it did not read as he expected*, or he found nothing that *would suit his purpose*. In this he for once undoubtedly told the truth. Quite lately, however, he has made the following affidavit.

GIBSONBURG, OHIO.

January 10, 1881.

*"To all whom it may Concern :*

In the year eighteen hundred and thirty-four (1834) I went from Geauga County, Ohio, to Munson, Hampden County, Mass., where I found Mrs. Davidson, late widow of the Rev. Solomon Spaulding, late of Conneaut, Ashtabula County, Ohio. Of her I obtained a manuscript, supposing it to be the manuscript of the romance written by the said Solomon Spaulding, called the 'Manuscript Found,' which was reported to be the foundation of the 'Book of Mormon.' I did not examine the manuscript till I got home, when upon examination I found it to contain nothing of the kind, but being a manuscript upon an entirely different subject. This manuscript I left with E. D. Howe, of Painsville, Geauga County, Ohio, now Lake County, Ohio, with the understanding that when he had examined it he should return it to the widow. Said Howe says the manuscript was destroyed by fire, and further the deponent saith not.

(Signed) D. P. HURLBURT.

Mrs. Davidson says she gave Hurlburt "The Manuscript Found." He, in the above, says it was nothing of the kind, but *was a manuscript upon an entirely different subject*. What was that subject? Hurlburt in his original statement says: "It is a romance, purporting to have been

translated from the Latin, found on twenty-four rolls of parchment, in a cave, but written in modern style—giving a fabulous account of a ship being driven upon the American coast, while proceeding from Rome to Britain, a short time previous to the Christian era, this country then being inhabited by the Indians."

Such is his description of the manuscript he received. No wonder it did not suit his purpose. No work treating on the ancient inhabitants of America could be more unlike the Book of Mormon than this. But Mrs. Davidson says this was the original of "The Manuscript Found," and we believe her. We regard it altogether more probable that this was the plot of Mr. Spaulding's romance than the ten tribe version, which we consider to be a later invention, manufactured by some ignorant "Anti-Mormon," who really imagines that the Book of Mormon carried that idea. We have nothing more than unauthenticated gossip for the assertion that Mr. S. ever believed that the American Indians were of Israelitish descent. In fact, it is stated that during the later years of that gentleman's life he was strongly inclined to infidelity.

If the papers given to Hurlburt contained "The Manuscript Found," as stated by Mrs. Davidson, we know what became of it. It was burned, if we can believe D. P. Hurlburt. It was destroyed so that it might never be brought up to confront those who claim that in it is to be found the origin of the Book of Mormon. If Hurlburt did not receive it, Mrs. Davidson must have retained it. Then what became of it? Solomon Spaulding's family could have no possible motive for not publishing it. To them it would have been a mine of wealth; at least they thought so, as evidenced by the agreement between Mrs. D. and Hurlburt, that she was to have half the profits accruing from its publication.

There is another fact that strongly bears out Mrs. Davidson's statement. It is this, that it is highly improbable that Mr. Spaulding would write two entirely distinct and varying romances on the ancient inhabitants of America. We never hear of him writing



more than one on this subject. If, then, the Roman story was not the "Manuscript Found," what was it? It certainly in many particulars agrees with the statements of those who profess to know something about Mr. Spaulding's writings. Both (if there were two) are said to have been written in the Latin language; both were found in a cave near Conneaut, Ohio. This is altogether unlikely. The evidence we believe to be overwhelming that Hurlburt did receive "The Manuscript Found," and not finding it what he wanted, he destroyed it, or had it destroyed.

We have previously referred to the Jacksons of Jackson settlement, Pennsylvania, from whom Hurlburt first heard of Mr. Spaulding's writings. In justice to Mr. Jackson it must be stated, that on one occasion Hurlburt called on him and asked him to sign a document which testified to the probability of Mr. Spaulding's manuscript having been converted into the Book of Mormon. This he indignantly refused to do. He had read both books, and knew there was no likeness between them. He then and there stated that there was no agreement between the two; adding that Mr. Spaulding's manuscript was a very small work in the form of a novel, which said not one word about the children of Israel, but professed to give an account of a race of people who originated from the Romans, which Mr. Spaulding said he had translated from a Latin parchment that he had found. The Book of

Mormon, Mr. Jackson continued, purports to be written by a branch of the House of Israel; is written in a different style, and altogether different. For this reason he refused to lend his name to the lie, and expressed his indignation and contempt at Hurlburt's base and wicked project to deceive the public.

Mr. Jackson's recollection of the plot of the "Manuscript Found" tallies exactly with Hurlburt's description of the contents of the manuscript he received from Mrs. Davidson, and is confirmatory evidence of the truth of her statement, that she gave that work to Hurlburt. It is also the strongest kind of testimony in favor of the theory that Spaulding's romance had nothing Israelitish in its narrative, but was Roman from beginning to end, in detail, incident, language, writing, parchment and all.

To return to Hurlburt's work: those who were anxious that it should be published, discovered that it would be better that it should not appear in his name, his reputation having grown too bad. The manuscript was therefore sold to Mr. Howe of Painesville, Ohio, for \$500, and was published by him. It did not prove a financial success, its circulation was but small. Mr. Howe eventually offered the copies at half price, but they would not sell even at that reduction. Hurlburt rapidly spent his ill-gotten gains in drink, and for many years bore a most undesirable reputation. He is now an old man, residing at Gibsonburg, Ohio.—*Juvenile Instructor*.

Avoid the scolding tone. A tired mother may find it hard to do this; but it is she who will get most good by observing the rule. The tone of scolding tells upon the throat, just where a woman who is not over-strong is apt to feel the ache of extreme fatigue. The children too, who are great imitators, will be sure to catch the scolding tone, and will talk to their dolls, to one another, and by-and-by to their own children, very much as their mothers are now talking to them.

SAVING.—The way to keep money is to earn it fairly and honestly. Money so obtained is pretty certain to abide with its possessor. But money that is inherited, or that in any way comes in without a just and fair equivalent, is almost certain to go as it came. The young man who begins by saving a few shillings a month and thriftily increases his store—every coin being a representative of solid work honestly done—stands a better chance to spend the rest of his life in affluence than he who, in his haste to become rich, obtains money by dashing speculations or the devious means which abound in the foggy regions which lie between fair-dealing and fraud.