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## "The Manuscript Found," II

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**Abstract:** This three-part essay describes in detail the experience of the author in obtaining Solomon Spaulding's manuscript, purported to be similar to the Book of Mormon, while in Honolulu. The second part refutes the idea that the Book of Mormon is based on or similar to the Spaulding Manuscript and contains a number of interviews with the involved parties.

## “THE MANUSCRIPT FOUND.”

BY PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

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### II.

When I obtained Mr. Rice's verbatim copy of the "Manuscript Found," I had only little faith that he would receive the consent of either Mr. Fairchild or of his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. Whitney, to allow me to publish it. Mr. Whitney was a son of one of the early Calvinist missionaries who, in an early day, was sent by the American Missionary Board to the Sandwich Islands to convert the heathens. He was deeply imbued with strong prejudices against the Latter-day Saints, such as his pious missionary father possessed. His wife entertained similar bias, and I had reason to believe that they would do all in their power to prevent me from obtaining possession of the manuscript for publication, as I desired. Mr. Rice himself was also very determined in his spirit of opposition to The Church, when I first met him, but this feeling gradually softened, and was greatly modified by my repeated interviews with him, and by means of a correspondence which sprang up between us by letter, and continued, at short intervals, up to the time of his last sickness. I was so strongly impressed with this idea as expressed above, or that they would not consent for me to publish it, that I determined to make a copy of the manuscript while it was in my hands. On reaching Laie, I laid the matter before my fellow-missionaries and associates who unanimously concurred with me. We therefore set to work, and in a few days completed an exact copy.

Contrary, however, to my expectations, when I returned the original manuscript to Mr. Rice, I found his feelings considerably changed. He had received word from Mr. Fairchild, giving his

consent to my proposition of publishing the work, which had also caused the reconciliation of his son-in-law and daughter to the idea of letting me publish it. We, therefore, concluded our arrangements, and each signed the agreement, in accordance with the terms first mentioned by him; and so, the manuscript was committed into my hands. I immediately forwarded the same to the *Deseret News* in Salt Lake City, together with the terms of the agreement, to have the same published and issued in book form. After considerable delay on the part of the *News* in completing the work, the manuscript was published, and ready for distribution to the world. In strict accord with the agreement between myself and Mr. Rice, his manuscript, together with twenty-five copies of the printed pamphlet, were sent to me. Meanwhile, Mr. Rice had passed suddenly to the great beyond, and I surrendered the manuscript, with the printed copies accompanying it, to his son-in-law, Mr. Whitney, thereby fulfilling to the letter the agreement which I had entered into with Mr. Rice.

Thus the Spaulding Story, variously called "The Manuscript Found," "Manuscript Story," etc., was at length brought to light from its long hiding place and made public! What a disappointment the discovery and publication of this long lost manuscript must have been, and is, to all those who have predicated the authorship of the Book of Mormon upon it! It is now made to appear, in a way that can never be denied, that all such claims, statements and representations of authorship are false. They are brought to nought, and it is definitely, openly and irrevocably determined that such claims of authorship are without even the shadow of a foundation.

It will now be interesting to review, as briefly as possible, some of the desperate efforts which have been made by anti-"Mormons" to connect the origin of the Book of Mormon with this now found, printed and exposed, Solomon Spaulding's manuscript.

In a book entitled, "Who Wrote the Book of Mormon?" by Robert Patterson, of Pittsburg, which is perhaps the strongest effort ever put forth with such end in view, we find the following statement:

In this discussion there are manifestly but two points to be considered. The first is to establish the fact that the historical portions of the Book of Mormon are certainly derived from Spaulding's Manuscript Found; and the second, to show, if practicable, in what way and by whom the plagiarism was probably effected. Of these, the first is the only vitally important one. If the identity can be determined, imposture will be proved, even though it may not be possible to demonstrate absolutely how the fraud was perpetrated.

I have conclusively proved—the printed book itself is the proof,—that the first and only point is *not* established or sustained, and that the historical portions of the Book of Mormon, are *not* derived from Spaulding's "Manuscript Found." Hence, there should be nothing further required in this discussion. But the author proceeds to quote the statements of various witnesses, to some of whom I desire to refer, because, notwithstanding the truth is told irrevocably exposing them as falsehoods, they are constantly being used and quoted against the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The testimonies are taken from his book:

John Spaulding, a brother of Solomon, visited the latter at Conneaut just before his removal, and states as follows:

"He then told me he had been writing a book, which he intended to have printed, the avails of which he thought would enable him to pay all his debts. 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. They afterwards had quarrels and contentions, and separated into two distinct nations, one of which he denominated Nephites and the other Lamanites. Cruel and bloody wars ensued, in which great multitudes were slain. They buried their dead in large heaps, which caused the mounds so common in this country. \* \* \* I have recently read the Book of Mormon, and, to my great surprise, I find nearly the same historical matter, names, etc., as they were in my brother's writings. I well remember that he wrote in the old style, and commenced about every 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, with the the exception of the religious matter."



Mrs. Martha Spaulding, wife of John Spaulding, states in regard to Solomon Spaulding and his writings as follows:

"I was personally acquainted with Solomon Spaulding about twenty years ago. The lapse of time which has intervened prevents my recollecting but few of the incidents of his writings, but the names of Lehi and Nephi are yet fresh in my memory as being the principal heroes of his tale. They were officers of the company which first came off from Jerusalem. He gave a particular account of their journey by land and sea till they arrived in America, after which disputes arose between the chiefs, which caused them to separate into different bands, one of which was called Lamanites and the other Nephites. Between these were recounted tremendous battles, which frequently covered the ground with the slain; and these being buried in large heaps was the cause of the numerous mounds in the country. \* \* \* I have read the Book of Mormon, which has brought fresh to my recollection the writings of Solomon Spaulding; and I have no manner of doubt that the historical part of it is the same that I read and heard read more than twenty years ago. The old, obsolete style, and the phrases of 'And it came to pass,' are the same."

Henry Lake, the partner of Spaulding in building the forge, writes from Conneaut, in September, 1833, as follows:

"He [Spaulding] very frequently read to me from a manuscript which he was writing, which he entitled the 'Manuscript Found,' and which he represented as being found in this town. I spent many hours in hearing him read said writings, and became well acquainted with their contents. He wished me to assist him in getting his production printed, alleging that a book of that kind would meet with rapid sale. I designed doing so, but the forge not meeting our anticipations, we failed in business, when I declined having anything to do with the publication of the book. This book represented the American Indians as the descendants of the lost tribes, gave an account of their leaving Jerusalem, their contentions and wars, which were many and great. One time when he was reading to me the tragic account of Laban I pointed out to him what I considered an inconsistency, which he promised to correct; but by referring to the Book of Mormon I find, to my surprise, that it stands there just as he read it to me then. Some months ago I borrowed the Golden Bible, put it into my pocket, carried it home, and thought no more of it. About a week after, my wife found the book in my coat pocket as it hung up, and commenced reading it aloud as I lay upon the bed. She had not read twenty minutes till I was astonished to find the same passages in it that Spaulding had read to me more than

twenty years before from his 'Manuscript Found.' Since that I have more fully examined the said Golden Bible, and have no hesitation in saying that the historical part of it is principally if not wholly taken from the 'Manuscript Found.' I well recollect telling Mr. Spaulding that the so frequent use of the words 'And it came to pass,' 'Now it came to pass,' rendered it ridiculous."

The author of the book in question comments on the above testimony as follows:

It should be stated in explanation of the above that the Book of Mormon, at the time of its publication, was frequently spoken of as the "Golden Bible." Also that an incongruity occurs in the story of Laban, in the First Book of Nephi, where Nephi says they "did speak many hard words unto us, their younger brothers, and they did smite us even with a rod." Whereupon an angel appears and says, "Why do you smite your younger brother with a rod?" Consistency would require that the number, whether singular or plural should be the same in both sentences. The oversight is in itself a trifle, but its occurrence in both the Spaulding Manuscript and the Book of Mormon is an unanswerable proof of identity.

John N. Miller testifies as follows:

"In the year 1811, I was in the employ of Henry Lake and Solomon Spaulding, at Conneaut, engaged in rebuilding a forge. While there I boarded and lodged in the family of said Spaulding for several months. I was soon introduced to the Manuscript of Spaulding, and perused it as often as I had leisure. He had written two or three books or pamphlets on different subjects, but that which more particularly drew my attention was one which he called the 'Manuscript Found.' \* \* \* It purported to be the history of the first settlement of America before discovered by Columbus. He brought them off from Jerusalem under their leaders, detailing their travels by land and water, their manners, customs, laws, wars, etc. He said that he designed it as an historical novel, and that in after years it would be believed by many people as much as the history of England. \* \* \* I have recently examined the Book of Mormon and find in it the writings of Solomon Spaulding from beginning to end, but mixed up with Scripture and other religious matter which I did not meet with in the 'Manuscript Found.' Many of the passages of the Mormon book are verbatim from Spaulding, and others in part. The names of Nephi, Lehi, Moroni, and in fact all the principal names are brought fresh to my recollection by the Golden Bible. When Spaulding divested his history 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. They were marched about that country for a length of time, in which wars and great bloodshed ensued. He brought them across North America in a north-east direction."

Aaron Wright, a former neighbor of Spaulding, writes at Conneaut, Aug., 1833, as follows:

"I first became acquainted with Solomon Spaulding in 1808 or 1809 when he commenced building a forge on Conneaut Creek. When at his house one day he showed and read 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, as it is given in the Book of Mormon, excepting the religious matter. The historical part of the Book of Mormon I knew to be the same as I read and heard read from the writings of Spaulding more than twenty years ago: the names more especially are the same without any alteration. He told me his object was to account for all the fortifications, etc., to be found in this country, and said that in time it would be fully believed by all except learned men and historians. I once anticipated reading his writings in print, but little expected to see them in a new Bible. \* \* \* In conclusion, I will observe that the names and most of the historical part of the Book of Mormon were as familiar to me before I read it as most modern history.

Oliver Smith, another old neighbor of Spaulding wrote at Conneaut, Aug., 1833:

"When Solomon Spaulding first came to this place, he purchased a tract of land, surveyed it out, and commenced selling it. While engaged in this business he boarded at my house, in all nearly six months. All his leisure hours were occupied in writing an historical novel founded upon the first settlers of this country. He said he intended to trace their journey from Jerusalem, by land and sea, till their arrival in America; give an account of their arts, sciences, civilization, wars and contentions. In this way he would give a satisfactory account of all the old mounds so common to this country. During the time he was at my house I read and heard read one hundred pages or more. Nephi and Lehi were by him represented as leading characters when they first started for America. \* \* \* (Mr. Smith narrates his last interview with Spaulding, when the latter was about starting for Pittsburg and solicited Smith's leniency, as one of his creditors, not to prevent his going. Mr. Smith then closes as follows:) This was the



last I heard of Spaulding or his book until the Book of Mormon came into the neighborhood. When I heard the historical part of it related, I at once said it was the writing of old Solomon Spaulding. Soon after I obtained the book, and on reading it found much of it the same as Spaulding had written more than twenty years before.”

In another paper, I will present a few comments on these cunningly devised, and seemingly explicit statements, and briefly review some of the unscrupulous falsehoods in the testimony of these and other witnesses who conspired to deceive the world, and to destroy the Book of Mormon.

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MAKE GOOD USE OF GOD'S GIFTS TO YOU.

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Laura Bridgman, the famous deaf and blind woman, while a student at the Perkins Institute for the Blind, in Boston, became very helpful to the little blind girls who were being educated there. Although apparently so helpless herself that it would seem as if she was the one in need of help rather than the one to give it, nevertheless with her quick, active fingers she would assist many of them to acquire a knowledge of the intricacies of the sewing machine; and many a little blind girl there had to thank Laura for teaching her to thread a needle with the tongue.

The latter accomplishment was acquired by Laura before self-threading needles, adapted to the needs of the blind, came into general use by them.

Any one who is in possession of all his senses might take a lesson from the deeds of the patient, helpful Laura; be contented with his lot and never cease to thank God for the gifts which he has bestowed; and determine to make at least as good use of those, which he has in common with the deaf and blind girl, as she did of hers.—*Sarah Whalen.*