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"The Manuscript Found," III

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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 third part disproves the testimonies of the witnesses included in part II.

“THE MANUSCRIPT FOUND.”

BY PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

III.

Note how carefully the foregoing statements are drawn; see how minute and explicit they are in every particular to prove that the Book of Mormon is identical with the “Manuscript Found.” It will readily be seen how forceful and weighty such statements must of necessity be, coming as they do (supposedly) from so-called credible witnesses, and especially from the brother of Solomon Spaulding the author of the very innocent, but much magnified “Manuscript Found.” How difficult it would be to disprove such positive and detailed statements, coming from such apparently authentic sources! Had the “Manuscript Found” remained *unfound*, had it been destroyed, so that the truth or falsity of these statements never could have been proven by comparison with the Book of Mormon itself, one could scarcely blame the unthinking, uninspired world of mankind for their unbelief in, and rejection of, that sacred book.

But, in the merciful providence of God, it was not ordained that the world should be left in such ignorance; and now that the long-lost “Manuscript Story” has come to light, there is no longer the least shadow of excuse for such unbelief, on the grounds so strongly set forth by the relentless opponents of the Book of Mormon.

The long concealment of this silly “Manuscript Story” seems to have been designed by Providence for the express purpose of emphasizing this point; and for the further purpose of permitting the more perfect development of the deep-laid schemes of wicked

men, inspired by the great enemy of all truth, in their vain attempts to overthrow the work of God and if possible to destroy it; and at last, to reveal to the world the true character of those who have engaged in the despicable undertaking of deceiving mankind, together with their slanderous and villainous methods of compassing their pernicious ends.

There are other statements of other persons, but all are of the same purport and almost the same language. If one of these statements could be proven true, then all would be so proven. On the contrary, if one were shown to be false, then all must fall, for they all testify, almost word for word, to the same alleged facts.

Nothing further should be necessary to prove the falsity of the affidavits than to refer the reader to the published "Manuscript Found," but as many may not have access to the "Story," it will be in order to point out a few inaccuracies, misstatements, errors and downright falsehoods contained in the foregoing affidavits. This will be done by the statement of facts, and by quoting witnesses that cannot be impeached.

No sooner did Mr. Fairchild publish his letter, announcing the discovery of the "Spaulding Manuscript," and make the startling declaration that "some other explanation of the origin of the Book of Mormon must be found, if any explanation is required," than the friends of the "Spaulding Story," and the determined enemies of the Book of Mormon, cried out: "Oh, he is mistaken—it is not 'The Manuscript Found.'" In this way they sought to bolster up their pet theories and deep-laid schemes to deceive the world. But their craft was doomed.

Mr. Fairchild himself was thoroughly convinced that it was the veritable Spaulding romance which had been made to do such duty in the herculean effort to destroy the Book of Mormon, and "Mormonism." He says: "There seems no reason to doubt that this is the long-lost story. Mr. Rice and 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 foregoing shows that Mr. James H. Fairchild, president of

the Oberlin College, had originally been convinced that the "Manuscript Story" was indeed the origin of the Book of Mormon, and while, perhaps, as eager as anybody to demonstrate that fact, was greatly surprised, as was also Mr. L. L. Rice (and the others referred to as having compared it with the Book of Mormon,) to find that there was "no resemblance between the two in general or detail."

It also shows how little foundation there is, or ever has been, for the presumption or claim that it was the foundation or source of the Book of Mormon. Mr. L. L. Rice, himself an old editor, literary man and well-read in the history of the Latter-day Saints, and possessor of the "Manuscript Story," as he repeatedly told me, firmly believed it to be the only writings of Solomon Spaulding, and the veritable "Manuscript Found" from which it had been (and surprising to say, still is,) claimed the Book of Mormon was derived. The manner in which this "Manuscript" came into Mr. Rice's hands has been related in the fore-part of this sketch. D. P. Hurlburt obtained the "Manuscript" in 1834, from Mr. Jerome Clark, then residing at Hardwicks, New York, in whose care the "Manuscript" had been left by Mrs. Davison, the widow of Solomon Spaulding, upon an order given by her to Hurlburt for that purpose. At this time, there was no other manuscript writings of Solomon Spaulding in existence.

When D. P. Hurlburt obtained the "Manuscript," he very naturally proceeded to have it identified by living witnesses, and in his handwriting the following inscription is found thereon:

"The writings of Solomon Spaulding, proved by Aaron Wright, Oliver Smith, John Miller and others. The testimonies of the above gentlemen are now in my possession. D. P. Hurlburt."

Hurlburt delivered the "Manuscript" to E. D. Howe & Co., printers, in Painesville, Ohio.

Mr. L. L. Rice made the following statement to me in the presence of Elder Enoch Farr, in Honolulu, in 1885:

"This manuscript came into my possession when Mr. Winchester and I bought out the printing establishment of Mr. E. D. Howe, in Painesville, Ohio, in connection with a large amount of old papers found in the place and turned over to us with it. I have had it ever since in my possession."

It is curious to note that the names of Aaron Wright, Oliver

Smith and John N. Miller, who, with others, identified the "Manuscript Story" delivered to D. P. Hurlburt, as the veritable "writings of Solomon Spaulding," are attached to some of the foregoing statements, taken from the work entitled, "Who Wrote the Book of Mormon?" and said to be copied from "Mormonism Unveiled," which purports to have been written by E. D. Howe, but is really the production of that corrupt apostate D. P. Hurlburt.

In the light of facts developed by the discovery of the "Spaulding Story," it would be charitable to believe those statements had been forged, and their names attached to them after they were dead, by some unscrupulous fanatic whose conscienceless soul would shrink from no crime in order to accomplish his purpose.

Those men, "and others," as stated by Hurlburt, without doubt knew, in 1834, when they gave their testimony respecting the writings of Solomon Spaulding, what they were doing—simply this, and nothing more:—That the "Manuscript Story," delivered to D. P. Hurlburt by Jerome Clark, on the order of Mrs Davison, Spaulding's widow, was nothing more or less than the "writings of Solomon Spaulding." This is sufficient to identify the same for all time. The history of the "Manuscript" and the endorsements upon it, with the opinions of such men as Mr. L. L. Rice, President James H. Fairchild and others attest that fact.

Mr. R. Patterson, author of "Who Wrote the Book of Mormon," sets forth that Messrs. Wright, Smith and Miller made the statements over their names, in 1833. If this were true, then those men could never have heard Spaulding read his "Manuscript Story," which they certify to as being his writings, for there is not one word in the "Manuscript," bearing any similarity or likeness to the Book of Mormon; nor could they have read the "Manuscript Story" themselves and then have made such statements, without knowing they were deliberately lying. The affidavits themselves, as proven by the now open contents of the "Manuscript Story," are deliberate, unqualified falsehoods, without a scintilla of truth in them. It is scarcely possible to think that a number of otherwise reputable men would combine to put forth such base statements. It is more probable that some fanatical opponent of The Church, an enemy to the truth, without conscience or scruple, concocted those state-

ments, after those men were dead, and put the falsehoods into their speechless mouths.

Mr. Robert Patterson, author of "Who Wrote the Book of Mormon," in the outset of his attempt to prove it to have been a plagiarism from "Spaulding's Story," says:

In our enquiries upon the first point, a merited tribute should be paid to the value of Mr. E. D. Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," issued by its author at Painesville, Ohio, in 1835, only five years after the publication at Palmyra, New York, of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith. Mr. Howe's was the pioneer upon this subject, and, though long out of print, the few copies extant are *still the storehouse from which successive investigators derive their most important facts*. It contains the statement of eight witnesses whose testimonials were obtained in 1833, twenty-one years after Mr. Spaulding left Connecticut, seventeen years after his death, and three years after the appearance of the Book of Mormon. Their authenticity has never been impeached.

It will readily be seen what credence may be placed in these "eight testimonials" when the fact is known that D. P. Hurlburt, a corrupt and malignant apostate, cut off from The Church for immoral conduct, is the real author of E. D. Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," and that while he was concocting the "testimonials" and by and with the aid of Mr. E. D. Howe, was preparing his infamous book, "Mormonism Unveiled" for publication, the "Manuscript Found," the "Manuscript Story," "the writings of Solomon Spaulding," were all in their hands in Mr. E. D. Howe's printing establishment at Painesville; and were brought there about one year before this book was published, by D. P. Hurlburt, for the express purpose of being used, if possible, to prove the plagiarism which Mr. Patterson in his work was so anxious to prove. But it was found that the only way the "Spaulding Story" could be made available was to suppress it, to treat it as lost, as "sold to the Mormons and destroyed by them," as the story runs; then draw upon the cunning resources of the author or authors of "Mormonism Unveiled," and conjure up the "testimonials" of "old neighbors of Spaulding" to prove that Solomon Spaulding wrote the Book of Mormon, intending to destroy the "writings of Solomon Spaulding" which were in their hands, thereby obliterating all possible evidence which

those writing might contain, of their deep-laid schemes to deceive the world and escape exposure.

But Cowper is right. "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform," and so "Spaulding's writings" escaped the destruction intended for them by Hurlburt, Howe & Co., and by all other schemers, in this cunningly-devised plot to defeat the divine purpose, and in due time they were again brought forth to show how crafty, how vile, how unscrupulous, desperate and damnable are the ways of those who oppose the truth.

Let us review the statement of one of these pretended witnesses. We will take the testimony of John Spaulding, brother of Solomon. He says:

It was a 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.

The fact is, there is not one word in the "Manuscript Story" about the Indians having descended from the Jews. Indeed, after having read it, and copied a large part of it with my own hand, I cannot recall a single reference to the Jews in the whole story. Again:

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.

This is made out of whole cloth. "Spaulding's Story" begins at Rome, not at Jerusalem. The words Nephi, Lehi, Nephites and Lamanites do not occur at all in "Spaulding's Story," nor are there any names remotely resembling them, as the "Manuscript" itself attests. Then Mr. John Spaulding is made to say:

I have recently read the Book of Mormon, and to my surprise, I find nearly the same historical matter, names, etc., as they were in my brother's writings.

How very differently Messrs. Fairchild and Rice viewed this same matter when they compared his "brother's writings" with the Book of Mormon! They saw "no resemblance between the two, in general or detail." Again, Mr. J. Spaulding is made to say:

I well remember that he (Solomon) 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, etc."

How very unfortunate it is for the author of the foregoing, whether he was John Spaulding or Robert Patterson, or some other person who may have put such cunning words into his mouth, that the phrases, "And it came to pass," or, "Now it came to pass" do not occur anywhere in the "Manuscript Found," much less "commencing about every sentence."

And thus every testimony of these alleged credible witnesses might be controverted, but this one is enough to show the falsity of all, owing to their similarity. The example suffices to disprove the great point which Mr. Patterson desired to establish; namely, that the historical portions of the Book of Mormon were certainly derived from the Spaulding manuscript. The foregoing clearly and forever proves that his point is not sustained, and that the historical portions of the Book of Mormon are not derived from Spaulding's writings.

I have proved that the story in possession of Mr. Rice was the self-same document that Mr. Spaulding wrote; that this story is now in print and may be read by all; that it contains neither names nor subject matter that resemble anything within the pages of the Book of Mormon; that the testimonies given in the book of Mr. Patterson are self-evidently false and contradictory, being based not upon what the witnesses themselves knew, but rather upon the cunningly devised conspiracy and lies of men who combined to destroy the value of the Book of Mormon, but who were thwarted in their designs by the mysterious providences of God.

There remains nothing further to do than to add my testimony, which I do, that the Book of Mormon is of divine origin; that it was revealed to Joseph the Prophet by an angel of God; and translated from the plates by the power of God, and is given to the world for the benefit and salvation of mankind.