The Mythical "Manuscript Found"

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In 1834, relying on testimony gathered by one Doctor Philastus Hurlbut (a former Mormon who had been excommunicated from the church for immoral behavior), E. D. Howe suggested that the Book of Mormon was based on an unpublished novel called "Manuscript Found," written by a former minister named Solomon Spalding.[1] In statements collected by Hurlbut, eight former neighbors of Spalding said they remembered elements of his story that resembled the historical portions of the Book of Mormon. Some said they recalled names shared by Spalding's earlier tale and the Book of Mormon. Others claimed that the historical narrative of both stories was the same with the exception of the religious material in the Book of Mormon. Howe suggested that, by some means, Sidney Rigdon, a former Campbellite preacher in Ohio and Pennsylvania who had joined the church in November 1830, had obtained a copy of "Manuscript Found" years before and had used it as the basis for the Book of Mormon, to which he also added religious material. Rigdon, Howe argued, must have conspired with Joseph Smith to pass the Book of Mormon off as a

1. Solomon Spalding's name is sometimes spelled Spaulding.

Review of Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis, and Arthur Vanick. *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Spalding Enigma.* St. Louis: Concordia, 2005. 558 pp., with appendixes. $16.99.

divinely revealed book of ancient American scripture as part of a moneymaking scheme.[2] Subsequent variants of this hypothesis have been published from time to time.[3]

Once the standard critic's explanation of the Book of Mormon, the Spalding (or Spalding-Rigdon) theory has fallen on hard times. The first significant blow to this explanation came with the rediscovery in 1884 of an original Spalding manuscript known today as "Manuscript Story."[4] In 1833, Hurlbut borrowed the manuscript from Spalding's widow and entrusted it to Howe. In his book, Howe briefly described the document but, finding it did not support his theory, argued that the Book of Mormon was based upon a now lost second manuscript on ancient America. After 1834, "Manuscript Story" was either lost, misplaced, or knowingly suppressed. The recovery of this Spalding manuscript in 1884 and its subsequent publication did much to undermine confidence in the Spalding theory, even among critics, since the manuscript did not seem consistent with the statements published by Howe. Another blow to the theory came in 1945 when Fawn Brodie published her popular biography of Joseph Smith,[5] in which she rejected the Spalding theory and crafted an alternative theory similar to that

2. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed: or, a faithful account of that singular imposition and delusion, from its rise to the present time. With sketches of the characters of its propagators, and a full detail of the manner in which the famous Golden Bible was brought before the world. To which are added, inquiries into the probability that the historical part of the said Bible was written by one Solomon Spalding, more than twenty years ago, and by him intended to have been published as a romance* (Painesville, OH: By the Author, 1834), 278–90.

3. For a brief overview, see Lester E. Bush Jr., "The Spalding Theory Then and Now," *Dialogue* 10/4 (1977): 40–69.

4. *The "Manuscript Found" or "Manuscript Story," of the Late Rev. Solomon Spaulding* . . . (Lamoni, IA: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1885). The first Latter-day Saint edition was published as *The "Manuscript Found": Manuscript Story* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1886). The most recent publication of this manuscript is Solomon Spaulding, *Manuscript Found: The Complete Original "Spaulding Manuscript,"* ed. Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1996). When quoting from *Manuscript Story,* I will reference this more recent edition.

5. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith,* 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (New York: Knopf, 1993). Brodie's book was originally published in 1945. See Louis Midgley, "F. M. Brodie—'The Fasting Hermit and Very Saint of Ignorance': A Biographer and Her Legend," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 147–230.

advanced by Alexander Campbell in 1831. In Campbell's view, Joseph Smith stood alone as the author of a fictional Book of Mormon. Like Campbell, Brodie argued that the Book of Mormon was a product of Joseph Smith's imagination and creative ability and that common and popular ideas and sources would have supplied all that was necessary for him to create such a book. Subsequently, most critics of the Book of Mormon have followed some variant of Brodie's thesis. But in more recent years, as the Internet has opened up an additional venue for the dissemination of "information," the Spalding theory has made a modest comeback. Spalding advocates such as Dale Broadhurst have taken advantage of the Internet to provide a forum for similarly disposed critics of the Book of Mormon.[6]

Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Spalding Enigma (hereafter referred to as *The Spalding Enigma*) is the latest attempt to breathe new life into the Spalding theory. Its authors, Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis, and Arthur Vanick, have produced previous works on the subject,[7] always contending, as they do in the present work, that other critics such as Brodie have wrongly dismissed the Spalding theory as a viable naturalistic explanation. Oddly, though, they seem to place the blame for neglect of the Spalding theory on Latter-day Saints. "Few are aware," they lament, "of a fascinating body of evidence that has continued to accumulate over the years and, despite efforts by pro-Mormon scholars to deny or dismiss it, has grown to such proportion that it now poses a significant challenge to history itself" (p. 17). According to the authors, these obstructionists include "Brodie and other pro-Mormon writers" (p. 49). This is an odd statement. Though nominally a Latter-day Saint at the time she wrote her book, Fawn Brodie had become an atheist several years before, it appeared. She was excommunicated shortly after the publication of her book, and it can by no means be described as "pro-Mormon." Such

6. There is, however, little in the way of quality control on "publications" on the Internet.

7. See Howard A. Davis, Donald R. Scales, and Wayne L. Cowdrey, with Gretchen Passantino, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House, 1977); and Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis, Hugh L. O'Neal, and Arthur Vanick, *The Spaulding Enigma: Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* (2000), CD-ROM.

statements raise the question of how well Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick know the playing field. While faithful Latter-day Saints have always defended the Book of Mormon and been critical of all naturalistic theories, it has been critics of Mormonism who have been primarily responsible for the acceptance (and then rejection) of the Spalding theory. The reason is that Latter-day Saints already have an explanation for the Book of Mormon, and so the quest for a plausible naturalistic alternative is an unbeliever's affair. Why, one must ask, have most recent critics of the Book of Mormon rejected the Spalding theory? In my view, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick have not dealt effectively with the most important objections to it.

I will first provide some historical background for the publication of E. D. Howe's *Mormonism Unvailed,* the book that made the Spalding theory famous. I will then examine evidence for and against the claim that "Manuscript Story" (the document once in Howe's possession) and "Manuscript Found" (the document described by Spalding's neighbors as being the source for the Book of Mormon) are, as Spalding proponents have often maintained, separate and distinct works. The facts, in my opinion, do not support Spalding advocates on this crucial point. I will also review other major difficulties in accepting the Spalding theory, including, among other concerns, the character of Philastus Hurlbut, who is at the very center of the case for it. I will cite, where appropriate, relevant criticisms of the theory from both Latter-day Saints and non–Latter-day Saints. Finally, I will examine what is offered as evidence that Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery were part of a conspiracy in which Rigdon obtained and possibly altered a copy of Spalding's unpublished "Manuscript Found."

Mormonism Unvailed

Latter-day Saints began to gather in Kirtland, Ohio, during the first part of 1831. However, some residents of the nearby town of Painesville were not pleased by what they saw of the new religious movement. Notable among these was Eber D. Howe, editor of the local newspaper and, eventually, at least the nominal author of the very first

anti-Mormon book. On 28 November 1834, the *Painesville Telegraph* announced the publication of *Mormonism Unvailed*.[8] Although E. D. Howe took credit for the authorship of the book, it was known at the time that much of the material had been gathered by Philastus Hurlbut, who, following his expulsion from the Church of Jesus Christ, was employed by anti-Mormons in Ohio to gather negative information on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. Hurlbut's backers hoped that the publication of such information would "prove the '*Book of Mormon*' to be a work of *fiction* and *imagination*" and also "completely divest Joseph Smith of all claims to the character of an honest man, and place him at an immeasurable distance from the high station which he pretends to occupy."[9] In early 1834, Hurlbut turned his materials over to Howe, who then published them in *Mormonism Unvailed*. Since Howe listed himself as the author and made no mention of Hurlbut's name, Latter-day Saints jokingly referred to Hurlbut as the "legitimate" and Howe as the "illegitimate" author of the book.[10] Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick argue that this might have been incorrect, and on this point, they may be right. At least it appears to have been an overstatement. It is true that Hurlbut gathered the statements from the neighbors of the Spaldings in Ohio and Pennsylvania and also accumulated negative affidavits against Joseph Smith and his family from Palmyra and Manchester residents in New York. Another set of statements from Isaac Hale and other former Smith neighbors in northeastern Pennsylvania had previously been published in May 1834, and these were also included in the book.[11] However, the question of the extent of Howe's authorship may be irrelevant since it is the testimony gathered by Hurlbut and not Howe's negative and often contradictory treatment of the Book of Mormon that is chiefly remembered.

8. "Mormonism Unvailed," *Painesville Telegraph,* 28 November 1834.

9. "To the Public," *Painesville Telegraph,* 31 January 1834; for an interesting biographical sketch of one of Hurlbut's financial backers, see Dale W Adams, "Grandison Newell's Obsession," *Journal of Mormon History* 30/1 (2004): 159–88.

10. Joseph Smith, "To the Elders of the Church of the Latter Day Saints," *Messenger and Advocate* 2/3 (December 1835): 228.

11. "Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register,* 1 May 1834; Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 262–69.

Leaders of the church at that time reacted to *Mormonism Unvailed* in several ways. First, they published in the *Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* a series of letters on the history of Joseph Smith and his early prophetic experiences. These materials were intended as a rebuttal to the negative testimony published by Howe.

Second, they pointed out that Hurlbut, who had a clear animus against Joseph Smith, had been employed by enemies of the church to solicit and collect this "testimony." One should not expect, they argued, that his efforts would yield a fair or accurate picture of Joseph Smith, his family, or the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. In an editorial, Oliver Cowdery warned readers that Hurlbut had been exploiting his given name "Doctor" in an effort to give his actions an air of authority: "We have not, till now, thought this man worthy a notice in our paper, neither would he at this time [have] been noticed by us were it not to undeceive those at a distance who are unacquainted with him and may be deceived in consequence of the above title, of Doctor."[12] Cowdery did not think that Hurlbut's investigations would do much damage to the church, but he hoped that those who sought to investigate the truth "will be as forward to expose *his* character, and hold *him* up to the view of the community, in the true light which his crimes merit, as they were first to employ him, and employ a *more respectable* agent, if they are calculating on success when they engage with the religion and characters of their neighbors."[13]

By some means, Howe had obtained Hurlbut's list of subscriptions for the book, which Howe immediately filled. When Hurlbut received his own allotted copies, he found that few wanted an additional copy. This forced him to sell his copies at a much reduced price.[14] Orson Hyde noted with some amusement that investigators were still will-

12. "Considerable Excitement," *Evening and Morning Star* 2/19 (April 1834): 149. Even in recent years, questionable "doctorates" have been surprisingly common among critics of Mormonism (e.g., Dee Jay Nelson, Walter Martin, John Ankerberg, and John Weldon). In this, as in other respects, Hurlbut and Howe seem to have established a pattern.

13. "Considerable Excitement," 150, emphasis added.

14. "He traveled and sold them, hardly paying his expenses and sold the balance at auction in Buffalo in the spring of 1835." Maria S. Hurlbut statement, 15 April 1885, Arthur B. Deming File, Mormon Collection, Chicago Historical Society.

ing to pay more than full price for the Book of Mormon and playfully suggested, "Tell every body to buy and read 'Mormonism Unveiled' if they wish, for we are convinced of Paul's statement, where he says, 'Ye can do nothing against the truth but for the truth.'"[15]

A third way in which Latter-day Saints responded to *Mormonism Unvailed* was by drawing attention to how the Spalding theory contradicted earlier explanations of the Book of Mormon, such as Alexander Campbell's.[16] Church leaders focused on the discrepancy between Campbell's explanation that Joseph Smith alone was the author and the notion that Spalding, a long-dead clergyman, was the principal writer of the book. When local newspapers reprinted an article published in the Illinois *Pioneer* that spoke of the Spalding theory, Oliver Cowdery observed:

> The Pioneer's "friend of truth" has certainly got ahead of Mr. [Alexander] Campbell: He says that the "true origin" of the writing composing the book of Mormon, is from the pen of an eccentric *Spaulding,* who carried the same to Pittsburgh, but died soon, and that since they have been altered a little, and now appear as the book of Mormon. Mr. Campbell says, that "[Joseph] Smith is its real author, and as ignorant and impudent a knave as ever wrote a book." Will these two gentlemen settle this dispute; for it truly looks pitiful to see this wide disagreement, since they both express so much anxiety.[17]

Latter-day Saint writers also pointed out that not all the statements in *Mormonism Unvailed* were consistent with the Spalding theory. "Which, then, of these accounts, I would ask, is true?" asked John Taylor in 1840 when he reviewed two recent pamphlets published against the Book of Mormon.

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15. Orson Hyde and William E. McLellin to Oliver Cowdery, 12 May 1835, in *Messenger and Advocate* 1/8 (May 1835): 116.

16. Alexander Campbell, "Delusions," *Millennial Harbinger* 2/2 (7 February 1831): 85–96.

17. "Trouble in the West," *Messenger and Advocate* 1/7 (April 1835): 105. In this and all other quotations, original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation have been retained.

> One says that Joseph Smith junr. is the author and publisher of the Book of Mormon. the other says that Solomon Spaulding is the author of it! One says that it was written by Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdry, from the mouth of Joseph Smith, junr., as he looked at a stone, with his face in a hat; the other, that it was written, and altered by Sidney Rigdon, from the "Manuscript Found"!! One makes it out that it was written in Harmony township, Susquehanah county, by Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery; the other, that it was written in Conneaut, Ohio, first by Solomon Spaulding, and afterwards altered by Sidney Rigdon, in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania!!! So much, then, for the agreement of the testimony which is brought forth as FACTS concerning the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and yet these gentlemen are both of them good men; both of them accredited ministers of the Methodist connexion; and both of them have got what they call FACTS, diametrically opposed to each other as light is from darkness. But Mr. Heys has got good testimony to his account, so has Mr. Livesey; and I suppose that because both of the testimonies are good, they must both of them be true—although the one contradicts the other—especially as they were supported and held forth by such pious, holy men.
>
> I shall leave Messrs. Heys and Livesey, then, to settle this difficulty between themselves.[18]

18. John Taylor, *An Answer to Some False Statements and Misrepresentations Made by the Rev Robert Heys, Wesleyan Minister, in an Address . . . on the Subject of Mormonism* (Manchester: Thomas, 1840), 7–8. Taylor notes that Heys (or Hays), "having no better weapon, commenced propagating falsehood by publishing a statement purporting to be made by a Mr. Hale, Joseph Smith's father-in-law, professing to give an account of the character of Joseph Smith, and of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon: but as he was not acquainted with a document containing some other lies published by Mr. Livesey, a Rev. brother of his, which also gave an account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; it so happened that they did not agree in their statement in regard to its author, origin, or coming forth; so for the benefit of the public I published the counter statement of his Rev. brother, whose testimonies did no more agree than the testimony of the false witnesses that appeared against our Savour." "Communication," *Millennial Star* 1/11 (March 1841): 277–78. "One man testifies that Mr. Joseph Smith repeated the contents of the Book of Mormon by looking at a white stone, and a scribe wrote them down, and this

The same lack of agreement among those who reject Joseph Smith's explanation of the Book of Mormon vexes critics today.[19] Although most critics today attribute its origins to Joseph Smith, *The Spalding Enigma* demonstrates that not all critics are convinced by that view. In fact, disagreements among critics over naturalistic explanations of the Book of Mormon are sometimes heated. An earlier version of this book, for example, received harsh criticism from both Latter-day Saints and anti-Mormons Jerald and Sandra Tanner.[20] In response to one of these rebuttals, Cowdrey, Davis, and Scales sent a cartoon of a jackass as an indication of their affection for the Tanners.[21] More recently, Dale Broadhurst, another Spalding researcher reviewing this same critique, insisted that "it appears all too likely that there is a certain segment of that church's 'middle management' which looks upon the couple with friendly eyes. The Tanners," he complained, "really do very little to rock the boat of Mormonism."[22] In a rebuttal to another publication, Broadhurst commented: "I am more convinced than ever that the Tanners effectively function as a mouthpiece for certain high-level parties within the LDS Church."[23] More recently, he

in Harmony, Susquehannah Co., Pa. Another testifies that Mr Rigdon formed it out of Mr Spaulding's romance, in Pittsburgh or in Ohio, some two or three hundred miles from where Mr. Smith is said to have done it. 'So their witnesses agree not together.' 'Confusion among the Babel repairers.'" Orson Hyde to George J. Adams, 7 June 1841, in John E. Page, *The Spaulding Story, Concerning the Origin of the Book of Mormon* (Pittsburgh: n.p., 1843), 10–11.

19. See, for example, Daniel C. Peterson's editor's introduction, "'In the Hope That Something Will Stick': Changing Explanations for the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review* 16/2 (2004): xi–xxxv.

20. Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner, *Did Spalding Write the Book of Mormon?* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1977). In addition to their own observations and criticisms, the Tanners cite criticisms from the late Wesley P. Walters.

21. Reproduced in Tanner and Tanner, *Did Spalding Write the Book of Mormon?* 19.

22. Dale R. Broadhurst, "Tannerism—Reality or Illusion?" was once available at Solomonspalding.com/tanrpg/TanrRev1.htm (last revised on 10 November 1999); it is now available in a rewritten form at the same site but is titled "Tannerism—Reality or Shadow?" (accessed 9 January 2006).

23. Dale R. Broadhurst, "The Changing World of Tannerism," at SidneyRigdon.com/wht/WhitRev1.htm. The statement is taken from a version of the article under the same name published in 2000. A hard copy of that earlier version, though now excised, is in my possession.

has lamented the influence of Fawn Brodie, the Tanners, and others in discouraging investigation of the Spalding theory.[24] Such sentiments reflect an emotional investment in the Spalding theory by certain critics of the Book of Mormon. At the present time, however, Spalding proponents clearly remain in the minority. Whether this state of affairs will change remains to be seen; the challenge of changing it can be illustrated by the introduction of a recent, rather well-received, five-volume collection of documents relating to early Mormon history by secular anti-Mormon critic Dan Vogel. He excludes documents supporting the Spalding theory, noting that "These documents shed no light on Mormon origins."[25] Since they are essential to the theory itself, though, I will examine them rather carefully.

The Two Spalding Manuscripts Theory

In 1834 E. D. Howe published statements gathered by Philastus Hurlbut from former neighbors of the deceased Solomon Spalding, a former Congregationalist minister who lived between 1809 and 1813 in Conneaut, Ohio, near the border of northeastern Ohio and northwestern Pennsylvania. These former neighbors included John and Martha Spalding, of Crawford County, Pennsylvania (John was one of Solomon Spalding's brothers); Henry Lake, Aaron Wright, Oliver Smith, and Nahum Howard of Conneaut, Ohio; John N. Miller, from nearby Springfield, Pennsylvania; and Artemus Cunningham of Perry, Geauga County, Ohio. At the time they knew him, Spalding had fallen into debt and hoped to be able to pay it off through the publication of a manuscript on which he was then working. In their statements, each of the former neighbors described what they remembered of the manuscript they had encountered more than twenty years earlier.

In their 1833 statements, two witnesses said that Spalding had frequently read to them from his manuscript. John Spalding said that his brother had read to him "many passages."[26] Henry Lake reported

24. Broadhurst, "Changing World of Tannerism."

25. Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 1:xiv.

26. John Spalding statement, [August 1833], in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279.

that Spalding "very frequently" read to him. In fact, Lake spent "many hours in *hearing him read* said writings" and in that way, he asserted, "became well acquainted with its contents."[27] Neither of the two indicated that they had read the manuscript themselves. Six others stated that they had either read the manuscript themselves or both read it and heard it read. All six of these said they had read from the manuscript at least once, but the statements are unclear as to whether they had read the *entire* manuscript or only parts of it. One witness, Oliver Smith, indicated that he had "read or heard read one hundred pages or more" at least once.[28] All eight indicated that Spalding's manuscript had been brought to their recollection recently by their encounter with the Book of Mormon. Six of the witnesses said that they had "read" the Book of Mormon; however, the statements are unclear as to whether this meant that they had read the entire Book of Mormon or only parts of it. In addition to those who claimed to have read the Book of Mormon, John Miller affirmed that he had "examined" the Book of Mormon,[29] while another said he had only "partially examined" it.[30] Again, the nature and quality of the examination is unspecified.

Spalding's former neighbors described some of the general features of his unpublished narrative as they said they remembered them. John Spalding said that his brother endeavored in his manuscript "to show that the American Indians are the descendants of the Jews, or the lost tribes."[31] According to Martha Spalding, "He had for many years contended that the aborigines of America were descendants of some of the lost tribes of Israel, and this idea he carried out in the book in question."[32] Henry Lake claimed that "this book represented the American Indians as the descendants of the lost tribes."[33] Aaron Wright spoke of "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

27. Henry Lake statement, September 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 281.
28. Oliver Smith statement, August 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 285.
29. John N. Miller statement, September 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283.
30. Artemus Cunningham statement, undated, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 287.
31. John Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279.
32. Martha Spalding statement, [August 1833], in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280.
33. Lake, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282.

descendants."[34] They also remembered that the people in Spalding's tale had traveled from the Old World to America. "It gave," remembered John Spalding, "a detailed account of their journey from Jerusalem, by land and sea, till they arrived in America."[35] According to Martha Spalding, "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."[36] Henry Lake said that the story "gave an account of their leaving Jerusalem."[37] "He brought them off from Jerusalem," said John Miller, "under their leaders; detailing their travels by land and water."[38] Aaron Wright recalled that Spalding "traced their journey from Jerusalem to America."[39] Oliver Smith remembered that Spalding "said he intended to trace their journey from Jerusalem, by land and sea, till their arrival in America."[40]

The neighbors recalled that Spalding's novel purported to describe how its leading characters came to be established in the Americas after their journey. According to John Spalding, "It was an historical romance of the first settlers of America."[41] Martha Spalding remembered the manuscript as "a historical novel founded upon the first settlers of America."[42] John Miller said that "it purported to be the history of the first settlement of America."[43] Aaron Wright claimed that the characters in Spalding's novel "were the first settlers of America."[44] It was "a historical novel, founded upon the first settlers of this country," said Oliver Smith.[45] Artemus Cunningham remembered Spalding's tale as a "romantic history of the first settlement of this country."[46] Various customs and elements of their culture were also detailed and

34. Aaron Wright statement, August 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284.
35. John Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279.
36. Martha Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280.
37. Lake, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282.
38. Miller, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283.
39. Wright, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284.
40. Smith, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 285.
41. John Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279.
42. Martha Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280.
43. Miller, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283.
44. Wright, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284.
45. Smith, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284–85.
46. Cunningham, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 286.

described. One neighbor recalled that there were "humorous passages" in "Manuscript Found."[47]

In Spalding's tale the migrants divided into two groups. John Spalding said that, having arrived in the New World, "they afterwards had quarrels and contentions, and separated into two distinct nations, one of which he denominated Nephites and the other Lamanites."[48] Martha Spalding explained that "disputes arose between the chiefs, which caused them to separate into different lands, one of which was called Lamanites and the other Nephites."[49] John and Martha Spalding remembered that wars and contentions were also a significant part of the story. "Cruel and bloody wars ensued, in which great multitudes were slain."[50] The New World people in Spalding's tale were "enlightened and warlike."[51] According to Henry Lake, "their contentions and wars . . . were many and great."[52] Others reported that Spalding had told them that he intended, through his story, to provide an explanation for many of the ruins and mounds common to the region.[53]

In addition to the general features of the Spalding narrative mentioned above, witnesses also said they remembered specific names and phrases from Spalding's story, which they claimed, were identical to those found in the Book of Mormon. Of the eight former neighbors providing statements, five (John and Martha Spalding, John Miller, Oliver Smith, Artemus Cunningham) mention the name *Nephi,* and four (John and Martha Spalding, John Miller, Oliver Smith) the name *Lehi.*[54] Two of them (John and Martha Spalding) remembered that the terms *Nephites* and *Lamanites* had been used to designate the opposing groups.[55] One neighbor (Henry Lake) said he remembered the name *Laban,* and another (John Miller) said he remembered the

47. Miller, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283.
48. John Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279.
49. Martha Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280.
50. John Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279.
51. Martha Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280.
52. Lake, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282.
53. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279–80, 284–87.
54. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279–80, 283, 285–86.
55. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279–80.

names *Moroni* and *Zarahemla*.[56] Three of the witnesses said they remembered the phrase *And it came to pass* or *now it came to pass*.[57] One said that he remembered the phrase *I Nephi*.[58] Some also recalled that the tale was written in an "old" or "old obsolete style" and that the narrative of the story was the same as that found in the Book of Mormon except for the religious elements.[59]

After these eight statements were collected, an attempt was made to locate the "Manuscript Found." According to Howe, "a messenger" (Hurlbut) was sent to Massachusetts, where Spalding's widow then lived. Although she reportedly had "no distinct knowledge" of the contents of "Manuscript Found," she gave permission for this messenger to retrieve the manuscript from a trunk at her former place of residence in New York.[60]

> The trunk referred to by the widow, was subsequently examined, and found to contain only a single M.S. book, in Spalding's hand-writing, containing about one quire of paper. This is a romance, purporting to have been translated from the Latin, found on 24 rolls of parchment in a cave, on the banks of Conneaut Creek, but written in a modern style, and giving a fabulous account of a ship's 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. This old M.S. has been shown to several of the foregoing witnesses, who recognise it as Spalding's, he having told them that he had altered his first plan of writing, by going farther back with dates, and writing in the old scripture style, in order that it might appear more ancient. They say that it bears no resemblance to the "*Manuscript Found*."[61]

56. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282–83.
57. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280–82.
58. Cunningham, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 286.
59. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280–81, 286.
60. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 287.
61. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 287–88.

It is now generally acknowledged that, in the passage above, E. D. Howe described the document recovered by Lewis L. Rice in Hawaii in 1884 and now known as "Manuscript Story."[62] Faced with the facts summarized above, Howe was forced to insist that the Book of Mormon's historical narrative was derived from a supposed second Spalding manuscript on ancient America known as "Manuscript Found." It was this second document, he claimed, rather than the one retrieved by Hurlbut, that his witnesses had described in their statements. However, critics of the Spalding theory, both Latter-day Saints and non–Latter-day Saints, have been understandably suspicious of this claim, suspecting that either Howe, Hurlbut, or former Spalding neighbors simply invented the theory of a second manuscript after finding that the actual Spalding manuscript did not match the neighbors' descriptions. The first three chapters of *The Spalding Enigma* attempt to counter this suspicion (pp. 29–98).

"A considerable body of evidence exists," according to *The Spalding Enigma,* "indicating that Solomon Spalding wrote a second novel entitled *A Manuscript Found,* which disappeared prior to 1833" (p. 32). Unfortunately for their position, much of that evidence comes from very late testimony solicited long after the fact, in which "witnesses" recalled, with ever-increasing detail, what Spalding had reportedly done or said through the years. Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick insist that early evidence for that claim can be found in the statements collected by Hurlbut in 1833. Out of eight statements about Spalding collected by Hurlbut between August and September 1833, however, six (John Spalding, Martha Spalding, Henry Lake, Oliver Smith, Nahum Howard, and

62. This discovered manuscript bears the title "Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek," which title was written in an unknown hand at an unknown time. The manuscript, however, appears to be in Spalding's hand. Howe had sold the *Painesville Telegraph* with type, press, old books, manuscripts, and papers to Mr. L. L. Rice, who carried much of this material with him, unexamined, in an old trunk for many years. In 1884, President James H. Fairchild of Oberlin University visited Rice in Honolulu and discovered the long-lost Spalding romance (which is now housed at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio). See James H. Fairchild, "Manuscript of Solomon Spaulding and the Book of Mormon," paper read before the Northern Ohio and Western Reserve Historical Society, 23 March 1886, Tract No. 77, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, 193–94.

Artemus Cunningham) *mention only one work.*[63] Two former neighbors (John Miller and Aaron Wright) indicate that Spalding had several other papers or writings *in addition to his story on ancient America.*[64] Since these statements were solicited and obtained by Hurlbut before he retrieved "Manuscript Story" from the trunk of Spalding's widow, they prove, says *The Spalding Enigma,* that Spalding wrote a second story that was a revision of his earlier tale "Manuscript Story." This supposed second version, which was called "Manuscript Found" (p. 79), was allegedly closer to the Book of Mormon. In a statement made in September 1833, John Miller said that Spalding "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 [being] discovered by Columbus."[65] Did any of these other books or pamphlets bear any relation to the Book of Mormon? Miller's statement gives no indication that they did. In fact, while Miller mentions several "books or pamphlets on different subjects," he seems to draw a distinction in his statement between "Manuscript Found" and Spalding's other writings.[66] Howe claimed that Mrs. Spalding told Hurlbut that her husband "had a great variety of manuscripts"[67] but said nothing about their content. In a statement made in 1880, Spalding's daughter Matilda Spalding McKinstry also referred to "little stories" her father would read to her as a child, one of which she says was called "'The Frogs of Wyndham,'" in addition to "sermons and other papers."[68] These might have been what Miller meant by "books or pamphlets on different subjects." In contrast to these other papers, however, the manuscript that Miller described and that interested him was the one that dealt with an ancient settlement of America long before its discovery by Columbus.

63. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279–81, 285–86.
64. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283–84.
65. Miller, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283, emphasis added.
66. Miller, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283.
67. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 287.
68. Matilda Spalding (Spaulding) McKinstry statement, 3 April 1880, in Ellen E. Dickinson, "The Book of Mormon," *Scribner's Monthly* 20 (August 1880): 615.

In his August 1833 statement, Aaron Wright claimed that Spalding "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."[69] Wright claimed that this manuscript was the source for the historical narrative of the Book of Mormon. He asserted that "Spalding had many other manuscripts, which I expect to see when Smith translates his other plate." But Wright gave no hint as to their content and nature, nor did he give any indication that any of those other manuscripts was a revision or a history or had anything to do with an early settlement of America before Columbus, or that any of them was in any way comparable to the content of the Book of Mormon.

In 1834, Howe said that, after the Spalding manuscript was retrieved from New York, it was shown to some of Spalding's former Conneaut associates. "This old M.S.," wrote Howe, in a passage worth quoting again, "has been shown to several of the foregoing witnesses, who recognise it as Spalding's, he having told them that he had altered his first plan of writing, by going farther back with dates, and writing in the old scripture style, in order that it might appear more ancient. They say that it bears no resemblance to the '*Manuscript Found*.'"[70] However, Howe did not name which neighbors made this claim, nor did he cite any additional firsthand testimony in support of this claim, leading some subsequent writers to suggest that he was dissembling.

In this connection, the authors describe a hitherto unpublished, unsigned statement (apparently gifted to the New York Library in 1914 but only recently discovered in the 1980s) attributed to Aaron Wright, who had submitted one of the original eight statements published in *Mormonism Unvailed*. In this second statement—dated 31 December 1833 and purportedly written in Conneaut—Wright, using language reminiscent of Howe—allegedly claims:

> I have examined the writings which he [Hurlbut] has obtained from SD Spaldings widowe I recognize them to be the ~~writings~~

69. Wright, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284, emphasis added.
70. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 288.

> handwriting of SD Spalding but not the Manuscript I had refferance to in my statement before alluded to as he informed me he wrote in the first place ~~he wrote~~ for his own amusement and then altered his plan and commenced writing a history of the first Settlement of America the particulars you will find in my testimony dated ~~Sept 18~~ August 1833. (pp. 61–62)

Even assuming that this document is genuine, its usefulness as evidence for a second Spalding manuscript is nonetheless problematic on several counts. First, while the letter suggests that Howe did not invent the claim that, when confronted with the known Spalding manuscript, former neighbors said that "Manuscript Found" was a second one, it seems strange that Howe would not have published firsthand testimony if he had had a copy of such a letter.

Second, even though it was drafted eleven months before the publication of *Mormonism Unvailed,* the statement was still written only *after* Hurlbut's disappointing failure to recover what he and others had hoped would prove to be the source of the Book of Mormon. This leaves open the suspicion that the statement was made after the fact in order to explain away the discrepancy between "Manuscript Story" and the earlier testimony. Even though it was made long before the discovery in the 1980s of Wright's second statement, B. H. Roberts's observation still applies: "Let it constantly be borne in mind that the existence of a second Spaulding manuscript, on the subject of ancient America and its inhabitants, and entirely different from the one at Oberlin, is not heard of until after the unearthing of the manuscript, (now at Oberlin) by Hurlburt,[71] and the consequent disappointment of the conspirators on finding it so utterly lacking in the features necessary to make it appear probable that it was the basis of the Book of Mormon."[72]

71. Hurlbut's name is spelled various ways (e.g., Hurlburt, Hurlbert, Hulbert); I have retained the original spellings in quotations.

72. Brigham H. Roberts, "The Origin of the Book of Mormon (A Reply to Mr. Theodore Schroeder). II. The 'Second' Spaulding Manuscript," *American Historical Magazine* 3/6 (1908): 551. For the exchange between Roberts and Schroeder in the early 1900s concerning the Spalding theory, see Theodore Schroeder, "The Origin of the Book of Mormon," *American Historical Magazine* 1/5 (1906): 380–96; 1/6 (1906): 518–33; 2/1

Third, while the statement denies that "Manuscript Story" was "Manuscript Found," Wright provides no additional details about the content of "Manuscript Found" that were not already given in his earlier statement. This is odd since Wright had insisted that the details of "Manuscript Found" were still clear to him even after "more than twenty years ago." Not only the history, but "the names more especially are the same without any alteration," and "the names of, and most of the historical part of the Book of Mormon were as familiar to me before I read it, as most modern history." Yet in neither this nor his earlier testimony does he produce so much as one Book of Mormon name from his remarkable memory. Instead, a significant portion of the statement simply repeats Wright's earlier words verbatim. Instead of lending support to the accuracy of his recollections, the lack of detail raises questions about the reliability of his memory or about his probity. After being confronted with the genuine work of Spalding, so obviously inconsistent with his earlier description, was he trying to save face?

Finally, there is the fact, noted by the authors, that the statement is in the hand of *Hurlbut,* rather than that of Wright (pp. 60, 444 n. 11). Wright apparently did not draft his own statement. This supports the conclusion of many historians that, in collecting testimony, Hurlbut drafted many of the statements published by Howe and simply had people sign them.[73] This new evidence, if it is authentic, would appear to support that conclusion. It seems likely that the second Aaron Wright statement represents a sloppy and perhaps aborted effort by Hurlbut and Wright to salvage the earlier statements after the disappointing failure to obtain what they wrongly assumed was the source of the Book of Mormon.

(1907): 57–76; 2/3 (1907): 213–30. The response by B. H. Roberts was published in "The Origin of the Book of Mormon," *American Historical Magazine* 3/5 (1908): 441–68; 3/6 (1908): 551–80; 4/1 (1909): 22–44; 4/2 (1909): 168–96.

73. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Joseph Smith's New York Reputation Reappraised," *BYU Studies* 10/3 (1970): 286–90; Richard Lloyd Anderson, review of *Joseph Smith's New York Reputation Reexamined,* by Rodger I. Anderson, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 59–62.

An Unfinished Tale

In further support of their claim that "Manuscript Story" and "Manuscript Found" were two different manuscripts, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick argue that "Manuscript Story" was in no shape to submit to a publisher. Spalding's widow and daughter had both indicated that Spalding had submitted the manuscript to a printer in Pittsburgh named Patterson. In the document recovered by Hurlbut from the widow's trunk, however, words and names are frequently misspelled or spelled inconsistently. Lines, sentences, and sometimes full paragraphs are crossed out. The story itself goes from the first person to the third person without explanation and then goes on for more than forty pages describing a final war between the two rival factions in the tale, the Sciotons and the Kentucks. But it breaks off before the final battle, leaving the tale incomplete. In light of these and other elements, the authors argue that "it seems unlikely that Spalding actually submitted such a work" as this for publication (p. 90). "While *Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek* had been written mostly for personal enjoyment, *A Manuscript Found* had to be a more polished and professional effort" (p. 81). In fact it was a "masterpiece" and "a work both worthy of publication and capable of generating sufficient income to bail him out of financial difficulty" (p. 81). In contrast, "Manuscript Story" "is clearly unfinished and certainly in no condition to be presented to a publisher" (p. 90).

This argument advanced by Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick seems, however, to contradict the report of Spalding's widow and daughter. In her 1839 statement, Spalding's widow related that, in an attempt to get his manuscript published, Spalding submitted it to Patterson for evaluation. Patterson "informed Mr. S. that if he would make out a title page and preface, he would publish it and it might be a source of profit. This Mr. S refused to do for reasons which I cannot now state."[74] According to Spalding's daughter, "when he [Patterson] returned it to my father, he said: '*Polish it up, finish it,* and you will make money

74. Matilda Spalding Davison, "Origin of the 'Book of Mormon,' or 'Golden Bible,'" *Boston Recorder,* 19 April 1839.

out of it."[75] Contrary to the claims of *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* this statement indicates that the manuscript in question was incomplete, not ready for publication, and in need of "polish," a description consistent with the state of the document recovered in 1884 known as "Manuscript Story."

The authors' argument is also undermined by the statement of Redick McKee, one of Spalding's neighbors in Amity, Pennsylvania, his last place of residence before his death. In 1882 McKee visited with Spalding's daughter, Matilda Spalding McKinstry. McKee, who appears to have gotten the information from McKinstry, indicated that, when Patterson examined the manuscript, he suggested that Spalding "should write a brief preface, and perhaps *a chapter or two* in concluding the romance, giving a little more elaborate description of the Indian mounds in Ohio."[76] This statement suggests that even at the time of his death in Amity, Spalding's tale was still unfinished. Although it was supposedly "Manuscript Found" that was taken to the printer, McKee's reference to a manuscript *still needing a chapter or two* fits "Manuscript Story," which breaks off in the middle of the final war between the rival factions, supporting the conclusion that two such manuscripts never existed. There is still no firm evidence that a second Spalding manuscript resembling the Book of Mormon ever existed.

Paper Dreams

In what the authors call their "strongest piece of evidence" that "Manuscript Story" and "Manuscript Found" were separate works, they cite testimony from two of Spalding's neighbors in Amity, Pennsylvania, who knew Spalding before his death and who claim to have seen Spalding's manuscript, which they described as having been written on foolscap paper (pp. 90–91). In 1999, Roland Baumann, an archivist for Oberlin College's Mudd Library, was asked at the behest of the authors to examine the Oberlin Spalding manuscript in order to

75. McKinstry statement, 3 April 1880, in Dickinson, "The Book of Mormon," 615, emphasis added.

76. Redick McKee statement, in Pittsburgh *Presbyterian Banner,* 15 November 1882.

determine if the document had any watermarks indicative of foolscap. An examination of the manuscript revealed none. From this, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick conclude, based on the testimony of Miller and McKee, that "Manuscript Found" and "Manuscript Story" cannot have been identical but must have been different documents since one (the supposed "Manuscript Found") was written on foolscap and the other (the extant "Manuscript Story") was not (p. 92). They note that the paper for "Manuscript Story" measures approximately 7¾ x 6 inches for the first twelve pages and 8 x 6⅜ inches for the remaining leaves (p. 455 n. 38). "This suggests Spalding's pages were created by cutting a full-sized sheet both vertically and horizontally into four sections, one sheet of 16 x 12¾ making four sheets of 8 x 6⅜" (p. 456 n. 38). Unfortunately for this theory, though, the term *foolscap* in the nineteenth century had a much broader meaning than it did originally. "Foolscap paper originally referred to a watermark showing a fool's cap, *but by the 1700s this term was universally used to refer to a paper size*. Published accounts (given in the Oxford English Dictionary under *fool's-cap*) indicate that foolscap paper varied from 12 to 13.5 inches in width and from 15 to 17 inches in length (that is, from 30 to 34 cm in width and 38 to 43 cm in length)."[77] This would be consistent with the above description of the pages for "Manuscript Story," indicating that Miller and McKee were merely describing the known Spalding manuscript and not a hypothetical second document.

Malleable Memory

I believe that the 1833 testimony about Spalding's manuscript is best explained as a compound of several factors. These include genuine but vague memories of "Manuscript Story," recalled after twenty

77. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 38, emphasis added. In a late statement Benjamin Winchester states that the manuscript in Hurlbut's possession was written on "foolscap," although he does not say if he saw the manuscript himself or heard this from Hurlbut (Testimony of Benjamin Winchester, 27 November 1900, Council Bluffs, Iowa, typescript in Library-Archives, Community of Christ). Rather than indicating a water mark, this probably reflects a broader usage of the term than the authors have considered.

years. Encrusted upon these memories, however, are popular and somewhat inaccurate ideas that some of Spalding's former neighbors had come to associate with the Book of Mormon, but that are not found in the Book of Mormon itself. Additional elements such as the names *Nephi* or *Lehi* and the structure of the statements themselves are largely due to coaching by Philastus Hurlbut and can be explained by Hurlbut's manner of questioning witnesses and by his subsequent drafting of the statements prior to their being signed.

Howe's suspicious behavior. On 19 April 1839, a letter appeared in the *Boston Recorder* over the name of Matilda Spalding Davison, widow of Solomon Spalding. Davison recounted memories of her late husband, his deteriorating health, and his work on a story called "Manuscript Found." She said that while they lived in Pittsburgh, her husband had taken the manuscript to the office of a Mr. Patterson, a printer, who suggested that if Spalding made revisions and polished the tale, he might consider it for publication. Davison claimed that Sidney Rigdon, who she thought was associated with the printer, must have made a copy of the manuscript. However, "At length the manuscript was returned to its author, and soon after we removed to Amity, Washington county, Pa., where Mr. S. deceased in 1816. The manuscript then fell into my hands and was carefully preserved."[78] Later, she said, when a Mormon preacher visited the Spaldings' former neighborhood in Pennsylvania and read from the Book of Mormon, residents of the town, including Spalding's brother John, recognized her husband's writings in the Book of Mormon and suspected fraud.

> The excitement in New Salem became so great, that the inhabitants had a meeting and deputed Dr. Philastus Hurlbut, one of their number to repair to this place and to obtain from me the original manuscript of Mr. Spaulding, for the purpose of comparing it with the Mormon Bible, to satisfy their own minds and to prevent their friends from embracing an error so delusive. This was in the year 1834. Dr. Hurlbut brought with him an introduction and request for the manuscript, signed

78. Davison, "Origin of the 'Book of Mormon.'"

> by Messrs. Henry Lake, Aaron Wright and others, with all whom I was acquainted, as they were my neighbors, when I resided in New Salem.[79]

Since 1839 Latter-day Saint critics of the Spalding theory have noted irregularities in how the Davison statement was prepared and presented to the press, sometimes attempting to show that enemies of the church falsified the widow's testimony. However, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick correctly observe that while she did not draft the statement, the elderly widow had apparently given tacit approval for the statement. More significant, in my view, is the information the widow's statement reveals about Hurlbut, Howe, and the Spalding manuscript itself. Davison identified the manuscript entrusted to Hurlbut as "Manuscript Found." It was the same manuscript that Spalding took to the printer in Pittsburgh and that ended up in the widow's trunk in New York, from which it was retrieved by Hurlbut. This information seems to contradict the earlier claim of Howe and of Spalding's Conneaut neighbors that "Manuscript Story" was not the same as "Manuscript Found." Upon reading the Davison statement, one non-Mormon observer noted that the statement stopped short of providing a most important piece of information:

> The writer does not tell us, whether the manuscript was sent to New Salem—whether it was compared with the Mormon Bible, what was the result of that comparison, or *where it may now be found,* and in what manner these facts can be proved, other than by her attested statements! . . . And again, *what became of the manuscript?* It had just been proved to be an important document, and it surely could not have been wantonly destroyed? if still in existence can it not be produced to corroborate the statements of Mrs Davison?[80]

Parley P. Pratt pointed out that

79. Davison, "Origin of the 'Book of Mormon.'"

80. C., "For the Register and Observer," *Christian Register and Boston Observer* (11 May 1839), emphasis added.

> the statement does not say whether he [Hurlbut] obtained the manuscript ["Manuscript Found"], but still leaves the impression that he did, and that it was compared with the Book of Mormon. Now whoever will read the work got up by said Hurlburt, entitled "Mormonism Unveiled," will find that he there states that the said manuscript of Spaulding's romance was lost and could no where be found. But the widow is here made to say that it is carefully preserved. Here seems to be some knavery or crooked work. . . . Now *if there is such a manuscript in existence, let it come forward at once, and not be kept in the dark.*[81]

Jesse Haven, a Latter-day Saint, interviewed Spalding's widow shortly after the publication of her letter and obtained additional details concerning the manuscript and her interaction with Hurlbut. When asked if "Manuscript Found" dealt with a religious people or an idolatrous people, both she and her daughter indicated that it told of an idolatrous people. When asked where the manuscript was, Davison explained, "Dr. P. Hurlburt came here and took it, said he would get it printed, and let me have one-half the profits." Hurlbut, however, never got the manuscript printed, she said. "I received a letter stating it did not read as they expected, and they should not print it."[82] These additional details cast suspicion on Howe's earlier claims about "Manuscript Found." Howe insisted that there was more than one Spalding manuscript and that the one recovered from his widow was not "Manuscript Found." However, Spalding's widow states that it was "Manuscript Found" that was carefully preserved in a trunk until entrusted to the care of Hurlbut. The manuscript was never published nor returned, leading some to suspect that it was knowingly suppressed. Charles Thompson speculated that, after Hurlbut's supporters sent him to Spalding's widow to retrieve the manuscript,

81. Parley P. Pratt, letter to the editor of the *New Era,* 27 November 1839, in *Weekly Democratic Republican New Era and American Courier* (between 27 November and early December 1839), emphasis added; reprinted in the *Times and Seasons* 1/3 (January 1840): 46.

82. Jesse Haven interview with Mrs. Davison (identified as Mrs. Davidson in this source), in A. Badlam, "A Cunning Device Detected," *Quincy Whig,* 16 November 1839.

> He starts for Massachusetts after the "Manuscript Found," gets it by promising to publish it and give the owner one half the profits—returns—compares it with the "Book of Mormon"—finds it does not agree. Now what is to be done? If this manuscript should fall into the hands of the Mormons, his scheme which he had devised to enhance his speculation and to more successfully prejudice the minds of the people against the Book of Mormon, would be counteracted and destroyed. Therefore to carry out the scheme the "Manuscript Found" was either destroyed or carefully concealed.[83]

The recovery of "Manuscript Story" in 1884 proved that it was not destroyed. However, suspicions about Hurlbut and Howe's actions in relation to the manuscript remain, and *The Spalding Enigma* does little to alleviate these suspicions. "Thus," it says, "for purposes of brevity and personally regarding it as being largely insignificant to the matter at hand, Howe made only passing reference to Spalding's *Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek* and to Hurlbut's having returned to Conneaut to show it to his witnesses for their identification" (p. 60). "Because it was not *A Manuscript Found,* [Howe] placed little value upon it and soon lost it amidst the clutter of his printing business" (p. 77). These statements raise the question of whether it was relevant or not, since the hypothetical second Spalding manuscript on ancient America has never been found nor, even, demonstrated ever to have existed. Unable to obtain the kind of document that would have provided source material for the Book of Mormon, Howe was forced either to argue for a second Spalding tale or to abandon the Spalding argument altogether. In light of this problem, "Manuscript Story" was of little use and in fact an embarrassment.

After providing his brief 1834 description of "Manuscript Story," Howe gave no intimation as to the fate of this recovered manuscript, which he then had in his possession. While arguing for a lost Spalding story, the anti-Mormon editor omitted significant details about the recovered novel that parallel elements attributed by Spalding witnesses

83. Charles Thompson, *Evidences in Proof of the Book of Mormon* (Batavia, NY: Waite, 1841), 177.

to the hypothetical "Manuscript Found." While the authors skirt over these problems, the omissions suggest that Howe was driven by animosity against the Saints and wanted his readers to believe that what Spalding's former associates had described as "Manuscript Found" was something different from "Manuscript Story." Was it possible that Spalding's Conneaut neighbors mistakenly confounded their twenty-year old memories of "Manuscript Story" with their muddled ideas about the Book of Mormon? Since it was Howe (and not the Saints) who possessed the manuscript, the likelihood is that those omissions may have been deliberate.

Was Howe afraid that "Manuscript Story" would undermine the argument for a possible second Spalding manuscript on ancient America? The fact that the borrowed manuscript was never returned to Spalding's widow, was never published by Howe, and was subsequently "lost" by him seems a little too convenient to be mere coincidence. In a statement made in 1879, Hurlbut said he brought the manuscript home with him and gave it to Howe. "Mr. Howe received it under the condition on which I took it from Mrs. Davison—to compare it with the 'Book of Mormon,' and then return it to her." Hurlbut denied that he promised to give Davison any portion of the profits if the manuscript was published.[84] In another statement made two years later, Hurlbut said, "This manuscript I left with E. D. Howe, of Painesville, Geauga Co., Ohio, now Lake Co., 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."[85] For his part, Howe claimed that Hurlbut "never said a word to me about returning the MS. that he brought me, as it was of no earthly importance as far as the Mormon Bible was concerned." He also said that he never had any correspondence with Mrs. Davison.[86] When Ellen Dickenson interviewed Howe in 1880, she reported that

84. D. P. Hurlbut statement, 19 August 1879, Gibsonburg, Ohio, in Ellen E. Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 260.

85. D. P. Hurlbut statement, 10 January 1881, Gibsonburg, Ohio, in Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism,* 245.

86. E. D. Howe to Robert Patterson Jr., 24 September 1879, Painesville, Ohio, from transcript of Arthur D. Vanick, Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis, and Hugh L. O'Neal, *The Spalding Enigma: Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* CD © 2000.

Howe said that he "considered it [the manuscript] of no account, and did not know what became of it." When asked if he had not agreed to return it to Mrs. Davison, he replied: "Perhaps I did; but it wasn't of no account, so I did not think of it."[87]

There is some evidence that Howe was not entirely happy with the rediscovery of "Manuscript Story" in 1884. Arthur B. Deming, an anti-Mormon collector of negative statements about Joseph Smith and early Mormonism, visited and obtained testimony from early residents of northeastern Ohio in 1884 and 1885. After learning of the rediscovery of the Spalding manuscript in Hawaii, Deming reported that he visited E. D. Howe in Painesville.

> I told Mr. E. D. Howe that word had been received from the Sandwich Islands that Spaulding's manuscript from which the "Book of Mormon" was made, had been found there, without mentioning Rice's name. Mr. Howe trembled and become greatly excited. I told a clergyman in the town that he could not have been much more so if the Sheriff had read his death warrant. A few days later he said he was failing and wanted to die. I finally read to him Mr. W. H. Rice's letter and that relieved his fears, for he said Rice used to edit the *Telegraph* and he probably had Conneaut story, which proved to be correct.[88]

The bottom line is that, whether deliberate or not, Howe's faulty 1834 description and subsequent suppression of "Manuscript Story" prevented early investigators from comparing the only evidence of Spalding's much vaunted literary skill and the manuscript's style with the Book of Mormon.[89] It also allowed some anti-Mormon

87. Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism,* 72.

88. Arthur B. Deming, "About Spalding," *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1/1 (January 1888): 2.

89. Years later, when interviewed in 1881 in his elderly years, Howe let slip that the recovered manuscript was "a common-place story of some Indian wars along the borders of our great Lakes, between the Chicagoes and Eries, as I now recollect—not in Bible style—but purely modern." E. D. Howe to Thomas W. Smith, 26 July 1881, in Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 1914), 75–76. In another interview two years later (August 1883), he remembered that "it only told

writers to claim that the Mormons had somehow obtained or purchased the real "Manuscript Found" from Hurlbut and subsequently destroyed it. (To their credit, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick reject this theory [p. 59].)

Genuine but vague memories of "Manuscript Story." The 1884 rediscovery of "Manuscript Story" supported the theory that Spalding's neighbors had mistakenly conflated "Manuscript Story" with popular ideas and perceptions they had about the Book of Mormon. In 1886 James Fairchild could grant that "the discovery of this manuscript does not prove that there may not have been another, which became the basis of the Book of Mormon, but it seems clearly to furnish a presumption against the existence of another; and it is doubtful whether the evidence on the subject, thus far published, can set aside this presumption."[90] "It would not be surprising," wrote George Gibson, "if the shadowy resemblance of a few names and incidents common to both, such as the finding of ancient records relating to aboriginal life, should after this long lapse of time persuade them that one was based upon the other. . . . The writer believes that

about some tribes of Indians and their wars along the lakes here and pretended to be the writing of some shipwrecked crew. It was the wars of the Winnebagoes, Chicagoes or Niagaries, I believe." E. L. Kelley interview with E. D. Howe, August 1883, in E. L. Kelley, *Public Discussion of the Issues between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ (Disciples), held in Kirtland, Ohio, beginning February 12, and closing March 8, 1884, between E. L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and Clark Braden, of the Church of Christ* (St. Louis, MO: Christian and Smart, 1884), 83. In 1834, Howe had not mentioned that the retrieved manuscript dealt with wars among the Indians. Upon learning of these additional details some observers understandably wondered how many other details had been omitted by Howe from his 1834 description. After learning of Howe's statement, Joseph Smith III, president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, suggested, "The statement of Mr. Howe in regard to the manuscript which he received from Mr. Hurlbut, that it was a history of war between hostile tribes of Indians 'along the borders of our great lakes,' opens ground for the presumption that this was the production read to the family and neighbors of Rev. Spaulding, and accounts for the recollection of the destructive battles fought in the regions of western New York and northern Ohio, of which so much is made as to their similarity to the Book of Mormon." Joseph Smith III to R. Patterson, 20 January 1883, in *The Spaulding Story Re-examined* (Lamoni, IO: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1883), 9.

90. James H. Fairchild, "Mormonism and the Spaulding Manuscript," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 43 (January 1886): 171.

any other Spaulding manuscript than this is a myth, and that the story is due to imagination, allied to defective memory."[91] German historian Eduard Meyer suggested that Spalding's former neighbors "unconsciously projected" the contents of the Book of Mormon into their recollections of the "Manuscript Story."[92]

Howe reported that, after examining the manuscript retrieved by Hurlbut, some of Spalding's former neighbors claimed that it bore "*no resemblance* to the '*Manuscript Found*.'"[93] A comparison between their statements and "Manuscript Story," however, shows otherwise. While the resemblances do not account for the entire content of those statements, they suggest that the signers of the eight statements had in fact recalled elements in "Manuscript Story," even if they later denied having done so. Artemus Cunningham claimed that the Book of Mormon derived its outlines from Spalding's manuscript, even though he had only "partially examined" the Book of Mormon and admitted that "the general features of the story have passed from my memory through the lapse of 22 years." One feature he did recall was Spalding's fictitious description of finding his manuscript "buried in the earth, or in a cave."[94] That statement matches Spalding's description in the introduction to "Manuscript Story" of uncovering a stone, which proved to be the opening to "an artificial cave," and his claim that at the bottom of the cave he discovered the manuscripts from which he took his story.[95]

In another statement, John Miller affirmed that Spalding often shared his manuscript with him. "From this he would frequently read some humorous passages to the company present."[96] Any reference to "humorous passages" in the Book of Mormon is untenable, though, as anyone who has read it can attest. However, obvious attempts at

91. George R. Gibson, "The Origin of a Great Delusion," *New Princeton Review* 61/5 (September 1886): 214–15.

92. Eduard Meyer, *The Origin and History of the Mormons,* trans. Heinz F. Rahde and Eugene Seaich (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1961), 29.

93. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 288, emphasis added (*no resemblance*).

94. Cunningham, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 287.

95. *MS,* 1, in Spaulding, *Manuscript Found* (Jackson ed.), 1.

96. Miller, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283.

lowbrow humor *are* found in the Spalding manuscript.[97] Moreover, Miller's reference to the "manners [and] customs"[98] of the people in Spalding's manuscripts may recall the concern of Spalding's fictional narrator Fabius about "preserving our customs, manners" and his wondering if the posterity of their colony would "preserve our customs & manners."[99]

Henry Lake was the only individual among the eight former neighbors who said that he remembered the name *Laban.* "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."[100] Lake never specified what the inconsistency was, nor did he describe the details of a Laban story in either the Book of Mormon or Spalding's manuscript. There is, though, nothing particularly tragic about the death of Laban in the Book of Mormon; he was a wicked and greedy individual who tried several times to murder Nephi and Nephi's brothers (see 1 Nephi 3–4). The description fits quite well, however, with Spalding's narrative of honorable *Labanko,* whose death at the hands of the villain Sambal led to further hostilities and bloodshed among the opposing groups in Spalding's story. One might argue that Lake is remembering another manuscript, but a more plausible interpretation is that he had a vague recollection of the Labanko episode and, in 1833, after hearing of the Book of Mormon, confused the two somewhat similar names. The comparison is shown below.

97. For example, one of the Roman sailors in the Spalding story mused on the possibility of choosing a native wife: "I could pick out a healthy plum Lass from the copper coloured tribe that washing & scrubbing her fore & aft & upon the labbord & stabbord sides she would become a wholesome bedfellow." *MS,* 20, in Spaulding, *Manuscript Found* (Jackson ed.), 12. This is, to put it mildly, a rather different style of writing than that found in the Book of Mormon.

98. Miller, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283.

99. *MS,* 19, 30, in Spaulding, *Manuscript Found* (Jackson ed.), 12, 21.

100. Lake, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282.

Henry Lake Statement (Sept. 1833)	***Manuscript Story,* Jackson edition**
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.[101]	While *Labanko* was engaged in combat with another chief, Sambal th<r>ust his sword into his side—Thus *Labanko* fell lamented & beloved by all the subjects of the empire of Kentuck. His learning wisdom & penetration of mind—his integrity, firmness & courage had gained him universal respect & given him a commanding influence over the Emperor & his other Councellors—He was viewed with such respect & reverance, that the death of no man could have produced more grief & lamentation—& excited in the minds of the Kentucks a more ardent thirst for revenge.—The officers of his phalanx exclaimed revenge the death of *Labanko* (*MS,* 148).[102]

In addition to the examples above, the two statements by John and Martha Spalding also have many elements that correspond well to the language and themes found in "Manuscript Story." In order to highlight these elements, representative parallels are given in the columns below.

John and Martha Spalding Statements[103]	***Manuscript Story,* Jackson edition**
They afterwards had quarrels and *contentions* (John Spalding) disputes arose *between the chiefs* (Martha Spalding)	Frequent bickerings, *contentions* & wars took place *among these Chiefs*, which were often attended with pernicious consequences (*MS,* 85).

101. Lake, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282, emphasis added.

102. These excerpts are facsimile transcriptions that reflect the writing on the original manuscript, including original spelling and punctuation, deletions (cross-outs), and insertions in angle brackets. Italics are not in the original but are added for emphasis.

103. For the statements by John Spalding and Martha Spalding, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279–80.

John and Martha Spalding Statements	***Manuscript Story,* Jackson edition**
and separated into *two distinct nations* (John Spalding) which caused them to separate into different lands (Martha Spalding)	Lobaska had formed a system of Government, with a design of establishing *two great empires*—one on each side of the River Ohio (*MS,* 86).
Their arts, sciences and civilization were brought into view (John Spalding)	religion ~~&~~ *arts and sciences* (*MS,* 19) the *arts and sciences* (*MS,* 29)
He represented them as an enlightened and warlike people (Martha Spalding)	~~Thou must know that this Country was once. Inhabited by great and powerful nations. C]onsiderably civilized & skilled in the arts [ ]ts of war~~ (*MS,* 3).
Cruel and *bloody wars* ensued, in which great multitudes were slain (John Spalding) Between these were recounted tremendous *battles* (Martha Spalding)	~~On the ground wher thou [ ] treadest many an hard fou a *bloody Battle* hath been faught & heroes by thousand have been made to bite the dust~~ (*MS,* 3–4). An emence slaughter was made. Near One hundred thousand were extended breathless on the field (*MS,* 151–52).
Between these were recounted tremendous battles, which frequently covered the ground with the slain (Martha Spalding)	The field was wid<e>ly strewed, & in many places thickly *covered* with human bodies—extended in various positions—on their sides the backs & faces—~~some with their arms & legs widely spread some with their mouths open & eyes stairing~~ mangled with swords spears & arrows & besmeared with blood & dirt—Most hedious forms & dreadful to behold! Such objects excited horror & all the sympathetic & compassionate feelings of the human heart (*MS,* 153).

John and Martha Spalding Statements	***Manuscript Story,* Jackson edition**
They *buried* their dead in *large* heaps, which caused the *mounds* so common in this country (John Spalding) and their being buried in *large heaps* was the cause of the numerous *mounds* in the country (Martha Spalding)	They dug holes about three feet deep & in a circular form & of about twenty or thirty feet diamiter. In these they deposited the bodies of their deceased heroes & then raised over them *large mounds* of earth. The bodies of the Chiefs who had fallen were carried to their respective armies & *buried* with all the sollemnities of woe—over them they raised prodigious *mounds* of earth—which will remain for ages, as monuments to commemorate the valiant feats of these heroes & the great battle of Geheno (*MS,* 153). Many hundreds of their Enimies they perced with their deadly weapons & caused *heaps* of them to lie prostrate (*MS,* 157).
Their arts, sciences and civilization were brought into view, in order to account for all the curious antiquities, found in various parts of North and South America (John Spalding)	~~In the history given of these nations by my Author you will find nothing but what will correspond with the natural sentiments we should form on viewing the innumerable remains of Antiquity which are scattered over an extensive Country.~~ (*MS,* 4).
Some of these people he represented as being very *large* (Martha Spalding)	As to their persons, they were taller on an avarage than I hade ever seen in any nation—their bones wer *large*, limbs strait & shoulders broad (*MS,* 40).

Additional evidence suggests that another of Spalding's former neighbors may also have remembered elements from Spalding's romance. Joseph Miller Sr., who lived near Spalding after his move from Conneaut, Ohio, to Amity, Pennsylvania, provided statements in 1869 and 1879 that seem to point to Spalding's manuscript. In the Book

of Mormon, "the heads of the Lamanites were shorn" (Alma 3:5), while the Amlicites had not shaved their heads but "had marked themselves with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites" (Alma 3:4). In 1869 and in 1879 Miller said that after having his son read to him portions of the Book of Mormon he thought that he recalled an element that he believed paralleled the account of the Amlicites marking themselves before their battle with the Nephites. As the comparison below suggests, however, it is more likely that Miller actually recalled what he considered similarities from "Manuscript Story."

Joseph Miller Statements	***Manuscript Story,* Jackson edition**
He speaks of a battle, and says the Amelikites had *marked themselves with red* on their *foreheads* to distinguish them from the Nephites. The thought of being marked on the forehead with red was so strange, it fixed itself in my memory.[104] Then on hearing read the account from the book of the battle between the Amalekites and the Nephites, in which the soldiers of one army, had placed a *red mark* on their *foreheads* to distinguish them from their enemies, it seemed to reproduce in my mind not only the narrative, but the very words as they had been impressed on my mind by the reading of Spaulding's manuscript.[105]	The one half of the *head* <of the men> was shaved & *painted with red*—& the one half of the face was painted with black (*MS,* 21).

The above examples suggest a clear relationship between the statements purportedly describing "Manuscript Found" and the contents of "Manuscript Story." Spalding proponents may reason that if "Manuscript Story" was an early version of Spalding's novel, later abandoned and revised for "Manuscript Found," one could expect such similarities in

104. Joseph Miller Sr. statement, 26 March 1869, in the *Washington Reporter,* 8 April 1869; reprinted in *Historical Magazine* (August 1869): 68.

105. Joseph Miller Sr. statement, in Pittsburgh *Telegraph,* 6 February 1879.

an earlier version. But why, then, does Howe represent the Conneaut neighbors as claiming that there *were* no such similarities? That Howe and these witnesses would suggest that the recovered manuscript bore "*no* resemblance" to what they described in their statements to Hurlbut raises questions about the reliability of their testimony since there *are* obvious resemblances upon which their later perceptions and ideas about the Book of Mormon may have been grafted.

Remembering things that were never there. While the 1833 Spalding testimonies reflect memories of "Manuscript Story," this does not account for the entire content of those statements. *The Spalding Enigma* argues that these additional unique elements not found in "Manuscript Story" show that some Conneaut residents recalled content from a now missing "Manuscript Found." These individuals outlined the main elements of the Spalding narrative as they said they remembered it; they indicated that it exactly or nearly exactly resembled the historical part of the Book of Mormon. They claimed that they first made the connection between Spalding's unpublished novel and the Mormon scripture only after having read the Book of Mormon. But what they describe in their testimony is a rather vague, general, popularized perception of the Book of Mormon rather than a careful description of the text itself. Significant details about the Book of Mormon narrative are utterly lacking from these statements. Spalding's "Manuscript Found," they said, was a story of the first settlers of America, in which the Indians were shown to be descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel, who came from Jerusalem under Lehi and Nephi, journeyed by land and sea to America, divided into two rival groups, and had bloody and destructive wars. The mounds, fortifications, and other American antiquities proved the ancient existence of their civilization.

Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick believe that, since some of these elements are not found in "Manuscript Story" but are mentioned in the 1833 affidavits, they could only have come from a second manuscript that contained the additional material and was also close to the Book of Mormon story. It is likely, however, that the Spalding witnesses were influenced by popular characterizations then current about the Book

of Mormon, which they came to associate with Spalding's unfinished tale. General outlines of the Book of Mormon narrative were published in the American press between 1830 and 1834. In addition to newspapers, many New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio residents would have heard similar descriptions in discussions and town meetings held by missionaries or their opponents without ever having read the Book of Mormon. What the 1833 Spalding testimony contains are general descriptions that might have been gathered from popular sources and that lack the details that would be gleaned from reading the book itself. In addition to these vague generalities, Spalding's former Conneaut neighbors also associate ideas with the Book of Mormon account that are not actually contained *in* it but were commonplace in discussions *about* it. This, in my view, is a strong indicator that they were influenced by popular perceptions rather than a careful reading of the Book of Mormon text (even if they had read it at all). It also lends support to the suspicion that they confused these popular nontextual themes with their memories of "Manuscript Story."

The Spalding statements describe that manuscript as an account of the "first settlers of America," an idea they also attribute to the Book of Mormon. That this was a common public perception of the Book of Mormon can be seen in various newspaper accounts of the time. For example, as one writer observed, the Book of Mormon addresses important questions such as "Who were the discoverers of America?" and "How [did] this continent originally became peopled?"[106] This, in fact, was the interpretation of many early Latter-day Saints as well. After attending several church meetings in Missouri, a non–Latter-day Saint reported: "They contended that in this way alone could we rationally account for the fact that the New World and all the South Sea Islands were inhabited by human beings when first discovered by Columbus, Cook, and other navigators."[107] While this was a common assumption, it was not one based on the Book of Mormon text, which

106. *Vermont Patriot and State Gazette,* 19 September 1831, found at sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/NE/miscne01.htm#091931 (accessed 27 February 2006).

107. P. H. B., "The Mormonites," *Ohio Eagle,* 20 April 1833.

never claims that its peoples were the first or the only peoples in pre-Columbian America.[108]

In 1833, John Spalding recalled that, in "Manuscript Found," his brother endeavored "to show that the American Indians are the descendants of the Jews, or the *lost tribes*."[109] In another statement, published in 1851, John Spalding remembered that "Nephi, of the tribe of Joseph, emigrated to America with a large portion of the ten tribes whom Shalmanezer led away from Palestine, and scattered among the Midian cities."[110] Solomon Spalding "had for many years," according to Martha Spalding, "contended that the aborigines of America were descendants of some of the *lost tribes of Israel*, and this idea he carried out in the book in question."[111] "This book," according to Henry Lake, "represented the American Indians as the descendants of the *lost tribes*."[112] Aaron Wright claims he saw "a history he [Spalding] was writing, of the *lost tribes of Israel,* purporting that they were the first settlers of America, and that the Indians were their descendants."[113] The idea that the Book of Mormon was about the fate of the lost ten tribes was an inaccurate but common early perception. Just months after the publication of the Book of Mormon, one article reported that "the book purports to give an account of the 'Ten Tribes.'"[114] "On these plates," agreed Baptist David Marks, "was engraved the history of the ten lost tribes of Israel."[115]

As Latter-day Saints and other critics of the Spalding theory have observed, though, this is not an accurate description of the Book of Mormon, which actually concerns only a small remnant of the tribe

108. Matthew Roper, "Nephi's Neighbors: Book of Mormon Peoples and Pre-Columbian Populations," *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): 91–128; and John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper, "Before DNA," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/1 (2003): 6–23.

109. John Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279, emphasis added.

110. John Spalding statement, 1851, in "The Yankee Mahomet," *American Whig Review* 13/78 (June 1851): 554.

111. Martha Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280, emphasis added.

112. Lake, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282, emphasis added.

113. Wright, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284, emphasis added.

114. *Wayne County Inquirer,* circa May 1830, reprinted in the *Cincinnati Advertiser and Ohio Phoenix,* 2 June 1830.

115. *Morning Star,* 7 March 1833.

of Joseph. The Book of Mormon is a record of that group and not of the lost tribes of Israel, whose history falls entirely outside the knowledge of Nephite writers. "And behold, there are many who are already lost from the knowledge of those who are at Jerusalem. Yea, the more part of all the tribes have been led away; and they are scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea; and *whither they are none of us knoweth,* save that we know that they have been led away" (1 Nephi 22:4). The account in 3 Nephi indicates that Jesus visited them after he appeared to the Nephites in America, but the Book of Mormon is silent regarding their location and history (3 Nephi 17:4).

The claim that Spalding's work was a "history" of the lost ten tribes raises other significant problems for the theory as well, since Spalding's story was said to be identical or nearly so with the Book of Mormon narrative (p. 28). The ten tribes were a numerous host, while Lehi's party in the Book of Mormon was only a small group of several families. Key events described in the text about Lehi's family make sense only in the context of a small group traveling through the wilderness. The episode with Laban, the quest for wives for Lehi's sons, the problem of supplying food encountered when Nephi's bow broke, and the building of Nephi's single ship are not consistent with the idea of a numerous host of Israelites, yet the historical parts of the Book of Mormon are supposed to be the same as those attributed to Spalding.[116] The attribution of this mistaken history of the lost ten tribes to the Book of Mormon again manifests the influence of rumor or hearsay about it rather than of a meaningful perusal.

In describing the people portrayed in his brother's manuscript, John Spalding indicated that "they buried their dead in large heaps, which caused the *mounds so common in this country.* Their *arts, sciences* and *civilization* were brought into view, in order to account for all the curious *antiquities,* found in various parts of North and South America."[117] In similar language, Martha Spalding says that "their being buried in large heaps was the cause of the numerous *mounds* in

116. George Reynolds, *The Myth of the "Manuscript Found," or the Absurdities of the "Spaulding Story"* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888), 47–51.

117. John Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279–80, emphasis added.

the *country*."[118] "He told me," reported Aaron Wright, "his object was to account for all the *fortifications*, &c. to be found in *this country,* and said that in time it would be fully believed by all."[119] By producing his manuscript, Spalding, according to Oliver Smith, "would give a satisfactory account of all the old *mounds, so common to this country*."[120] "I once in conversation with him," remembered Nahum Howard, "expressed a surprise at not having any account of the inhabitants once in *this country,* who erected the old *forts*, *mounds*, &c."[121] According to Artemus Cunningham, Spalding, in his work, "attempted to account for the numerous antiquities which are found upon *this continent*."[122]

The Book of Mormon appeals to revelation from God, not to archaeological evidence, for verification of its truthfulness (Moroni 10:3–7). But Latter-day Saint writers and missionaries have often appealed to such evidence in presentations of the Book of Mormon and have sometimes used the subject of archaeological remains as a means of generating and promoting interest in the book. Moreover, in the early 1830s (before Stephens and Catherwood made the spectacular ruins in Mesoamerica famous), their thinking about American antiquities was primarily focused, just as Solomon Spalding's had been two decades earlier, *but in a manner extraneous to the Book of Mormon text itself,* on North American Indian mounds and fortifications. In June 1833, using language similar to that of the 1833 Spalding testimony, William W. Phelps wrote, "No people that have lived on *this continent,* since the flood, understood many of the *arts and sciences,* better than the Jaredites and Nephites, whose brief history is sketched in the Book of Mormon." Phelps described an ancient structure found in North Carolina as a "relic of *antiquity*" that "showed the *arts of civilized life* were well understood by *the inhabitants* of this antique dwelling place of human beings."[123] The history of Book of Mormon peoples and their wars "is manifest from the existing remains of *mounds* and

118. Martha Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280, emphasis added.
119. Wright, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284, emphasis added.
120. Smith, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 285, emphasis added.
121. Nahum Howard, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 285–86, emphasis added.
122. Cunningham, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 287, emphasis added.
123. "Good Proof," *Evening and Morning Star,* June 1833, 99, emphasis added.

fortifications [that] have formerly been on *this continent*."[124] One visitor to the early Latter-day Saints noted that "they referred to the relics of *ancient structures* which are to be found in many parts of *our contry* to prove the fact that *this continent* was long since inhabited by a race of men acquainted with many of the *arts* of *civilized* life."[125] As noted above already, Spalding's former neighbors seem to have retained some recollections of "Manuscript Story," but their attempt to connect Spalding's theories about American antiquities to something in the Book of Mormon narrative manifests the influence of popular perceptions and theories about the Book of Mormon in their minds, rather than a reading of the Book of Mormon text itself.

In his 1833 statement, John Miller claimed that Spalding, in explaining his unpublished novel, "landed his people near the Straits of Darien, which I am very confident he called *Zarahemla,* they were marched about the country for a length of time, in which wars and great blood shed ensued, he brought them across North America in a north east direction."[126] *The Spalding Enigma* presents this statement as compelling evidence that, in his writings, Spalding "had his immigrants land in Central America, and not in the area of the Chesapeake Bay as is found in *Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek*" (p. 87). "Because Miller could not have gotten the name 'Darien' from *The Book of Mormon,* it becomes difficult to explain where he did get it, unless it was from Spalding himself—which means that the literary creation recalled by Miller could not have been *Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek*, but rather had to have been some other Spalding work" (p. 87).

It is true, of course, that the word *Darien* never occurs in the Book of Mormon. A more plausible explanation for John Miller's apparent memory, however, is that Miller gleaned these ideas from public descriptions of the Book of Mormon by missionaries who visited Erie County, Pennsylvania, where he lived, and that he then attributed these later ideas to Spalding. In fact, Miller's statement sounds like the early geographical view advanced by Orson Pratt. A young convert in 1830, Pratt

124. *Morning Star,* 7 March 1833, emphasis added.
125. P. H. B., "The Mormonites," emphasis added.
126. Miller, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283.

was ordained an apostle in 1835 after having served many missions for the church. In 1832 and 1833 these took him through various parts of northwestern Pennsylvania. During his long and distinguished service as a defender of the Book of Mormon, Pratt's arguments were highly influential, as were his geographical views. In his first published work on the Book of Mormon, Pratt placed the narrow neck of land on the Isthmus of Darien and suggested that the "people of Zarahemla" eventually settled south of that location in the northern regions of South America, where they ultimately united with the Nephites.[127] Although he first published this view in 1840, he and others publicly discussed those ideas much earlier. Howe seemed to be aware of this Book of Mormon theory when he called Lehi "the founder of the vast settlements which were situated on the isthmus of Darien."[128]

In early 1832, a year before Hurlbut joined the church, Orson Pratt and Lyman Johnson served a mission to the eastern states during which they passed through northwestern Pennsylvania. A newspaper correspondent in Mercer Country, Pennsylvania, described a cottage meeting in which Johnson and Pratt preached and gave a brief description of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the Nephite narrative. According to this report, the missionaries said that "the last battle that was fought among these parties was on the *very ground* where the plates were found, but it had been a running battle, for they commenced at the Isthmus of Darien and ended at Manchester,"[129] which would, obviously, have them moving in a northeast direction, just as in John Miller's statement. When we compare Pratt's popularized narrative of the Book of Mormon with 1833 descriptions of the Spalding manuscript, each comparison suggests the borrowing of themes and language from the former for the latter, as shown in the columns below. In the left column are selections from Orson Pratt's first published account on the Book of Mormon in 1840 and the secondhand description of the earlier Pennsylvania correspondent's

127. Orson Pratt, *A Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1840), 18, 21.

128. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 23.

129. "The Orators of Mormon," Cincinnati, Ohio, *Catholic Telegraph,* 14 April 1832, emphasis in original.

report from 1832. On the right are parallels from the Hurlbut statements, which clearly reflect similar ideas and phraseology.

Orson Pratt	Hurlbut statements[130]
A certain prophet called *Lehi* went out to declare and promulgate the prophecies to come (1832).[131]	[People in ms were led] under the command of Nephi and *Lehi* (John Spalding) the names of Nephi and *Lehi* are yet fresh in my memory (Martha Spalding)
He came across the *water* into *South America* (1832). They came to the great waters, where, by the commandment of God, they built a vessel, in which they were safely brought across the great Pacific ocean, and landed on the western coast of *South America* (1840).[132]	It gave a detailed account of their journey from Jerusalem, by land and *sea*, till they arrived in *America* (John Spalding) He gave a particular account of their journey by land and *sea*, til they arrived in America (Martha Spalding) Spalding's story accounts "for all the curious antiquities, found in various parts of North and *South America*" (John Spalding)
Who with others went to *Jerusalem* (1832). This remnant of Joseph were also led in a miraculous manner *from Jerusalem* (1840).	It gave a detailed account of their journey *from Jerusalem* (John Spalding) which first came off *from Jerusalem* (Martha Spalding)
They were divided into *two parties*; one wise, the other foolish (1832). From these ancient records, we learn, that this remnant of Joseph, soon after they landed, s*eparated* themselves into *two distinct nations* (1840).	They afterwards had quarrels and contentions, and *separated into two distinct nations,* one of which he denominated Nephites and the other Lamanites (John Spalding)

130. For these statements from John Spalding, Martha Spalding, and Miller, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279–80, 283.

131. For these 1832 citations, see "The Orators of Mormon."

132. For these 1840 citations, see O. Pratt, *Interesting Account,* 16, 7, 18, 21.

Orson Pratt	Hurlbut statements
The former were called *Nephites,* being led by a prophet whose name was Nephi. The latter were called *Lamanites,* being led by a very wicked man whose name was Laman (1840).	one of which he denominated *Nephites* and the other *Lamanites* (John Spalding)
[The Lamanites are] the *Indians* of the Rocky Mountains (1832). It was also made manifest to him, that the "*American Indians*" were a remnant of Israel (1840).	endeavoring to show that the *American Indians* are the descendants of the Jews, or the lost tribes (John Spalding)
Tens of thousands were very frequently slain, after which they were *piled together in great heaps* upon the face of the ground, and covered with a shallow covering of earth, which will satisfactorily account for those ancient *mounds,* filled with human bones, *so numerous* at the present day, both in *North and South America* (1840).	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. Their arts, sciences and civilization were brought into view, in order to account for all the curious antiquities, found in various parts of *North and South America* (John Spalding) Between these were recounted *tremendous battles,* which frequently covered the ground with the *slain*; and their being *buried in large heaps* was the cause of the *numerous mounds in the country* (Martha Spalding)
The *last battle* was fought among these parties was on the very ground where the plates were found, but it had been a running battle, for they *commenced at the Isthmus of Darien* and ended at Manchester (1832). This *war commenced at the Isthmus of Darien,* and was very destructive to both nations for many years. At length the Nephites were driven before their enemies, a great distance to the north, and *north-east* (1840).	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 blood shed ensued, he brought them across North America in a *north east* direction (John Miller)

The secondhand report shows that Pratt (and probably others) were expressing similar views in their missionary presentations of the Book of Mormon in northwestern Pennsylvania as early as the winter of 1832. The comparison also shows that the Spalding statements share specific words and phrases used by Orson Pratt. Instead of evidence for a second Spalding manuscript, Miller's statement more likely reflects early Latter-day Saint interpretations of Book of Mormon geography as expressed by early missionaries. Significantly, Pratt visited Springfield, Erie County, Pennsylvania, a year later, in 1833, and preached to a congregation there on 4 April 1833.[133] Hurlbut, then a recent convert serving a mission, was also in attendance at that meeting, although there is no record of him preaching.[134] Springfield is the very place where John Miller lived when he provided Hurlbut with a statement in September of that year. Did he hear Orson Pratt in Springfield or at least rumors of Pratt's preaching? While we cannot be certain, the similarity in language suggests that, later that year, in his statement to Hurlbut, Miller attributed these popularized missionary views to Spalding's "Manuscript Story." It is also highly probable that Hurlbut as a missionary would have been familiar with these ideas and themes—we know that he heard Orson Pratt speak in person at least once, and Pratt's geographical speculations would probably have been circulating in the small Mormon community of the time—and it may well be that Hurlbut himself prompted Miller to think of Darien and related matters. Either possibility could account for the geographical reference without the need to see it as evidence for a second manuscript. More important, attribution of this geographic view to the Book of Mormon suggests that Miller's statement is not based on careful examination of the Book of Mormon text but is, instead, based on extemporized missionary discussions, local rumor, newspaper accounts, or some combination of the three. Since Hurlbut was responsible for gathering the Spalding statements, we have to wonder about Hurlbut's possible influence on the structure, language, and content of those 1833 testimonies concerning Spalding. Before addressing

133. Zebedee Coltrin journal, 4 April 1833, typescript on New Mormon Studies CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998).

134. Zebedee Coltrin journal, 4 April 1833.

the question of such influences, I will first review the background of Philastus Hurlbut himself.

Hurlbut: A Man, a Legend, a Way of Life

The basic tale of Doctor Philastus Hurlbut is well known to scholars of early Mormon history.[135] However, in view of his pivotal role in developing both the Spalding theory and much of its alleged supporting evidence, it seems advisable to summarize his career here.

Early background of Hurlbut. Scant sources on his early life suggest that he, prior to joining the church, had previously been a Methodist preacher in New York but had been excluded from that society for immoral conduct.[136] By early March 1833, he had joined the Latter-day Saints and visited with the Prophet in Kirtland. In an account of this visit, written about a year afterward, Joseph Smith recalled that "Docter P. Hurlbut came to my house; I conversed with him considerably about the Book of Mormon. . . . According to my best recollection, I heard him say, in the course of conversing with him, that if he ever became convinced that the Book of Mormon was false, he would be the cause of my destruction."[137] Shortly thereafter, Hurlbut was ordained an elder and sent on a mission to western Pennsylvania.[138] While a missionary, however, he was accused of immoral behavior. Benjamin Winchester, a young convert at the time of Hurlbut's odyssey in and out of the church, provided an unflattering portrait of him:

135. Dale W. Adams, "Doctor Philastus Hurlbut: Originator of Derogatory Statements about Joseph Smith, Jr.," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 20 (2000): 76–93; Max H. Parkin, "The Nature and Cause of Internal and External Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio between 1830 and 1838" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966), 88–92. On Hurlbut's 1834 trial involving Joseph Smith, see David W. Grua, "Joseph Smith and the 1834 D. P. Hurlbut Case," *BYU Studies* 44/1 (2005): 33–54.

136. Benjamin Winchester, *The Origin of the Spaulding Story: Concerning the Manuscript Found* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking, and Guilpert, 1840), 5; Hiram Rathbun, to Joseph Smith III, 17 July 1884, in *Saints Herald* (2 August 1884).

137. Joseph Smith journal, 13 March 1833, in *The Papers of Joseph Smith,* ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 2:20.

138. Kirtland Council Minute Book, 18–19 March 1833, in *Kirtland Council Minute Book,* ed. Fred C. Collier and William S. Harwell (Salt Lake City: Collier's, 1996), 11–12; Winchester, *Origin of the Spalding Story,* 6.

> While in this region of country, he made several converts in Crawford county, Pa. He frequently called, and stayed over night, at my father's; which afforded me an opportunity of forming a correct estimate of the man. The church ultimately lost their confidence in him, in consequence of the discovery, that the organ of amativeness, philoprogenitiveness, or some other organ, not of a moral mould, was unduly developed, and that the gratification of these propensities manifested itself in numerous peccadillos, disgraceful to the man, and calculated to bring upon him the reproach of every lover of virtue and correct morals.[139]

Orson Hyde, who was Hurlbut's missionary companion at the time, related that, "while the said Mr. Hurlburt was a member of our church, and an elder also, it fell to my lot to travel with him to preach the gospel; and it was at my instance that a charge was preferred against him before the Council of the church for an attempt at seduction and crime."[140] Hyde and Hyrum Smith then returned to Kirtland, where they filed charges against Hurlbut. According to the minutes of the council, the

> first case before the conference was that of Doctor Hurlburt who was accused of unchristian conduct with the female sex while on a mission to the East. It was decided that his commission be taken from him and that he be no longer a member of the Church of Christ.[141]

139. Winchester, *Origin of the Spaulding Story,* 6. In later years an older, religiously disaffected Winchester, no longer a member, recalled that he "was deputed by them to hunt up the Hurlbert case. It was Hurlbert (A relative of mine) that got up the Spaulding story. Hurlbert was a sharp, tonguey fellow. He joined the Mormans and became an elder. He seduced a girl named Barns. We as the church, to cover up the matter, urged him to marry her. He refused and then we expelled him" (Testimony of Benjamin Winchester, 27 November 1900). For background on Winchester, see David J. Whittaker, "East of Nauvoo: Benjamin Winchester and the Early Mormon Church," *Journal of Mormon History* 21/2 (1995): 31–83; Stephen J. Fleming, "Discord in the City of Brotherly Love: The Story of Early Mormonism in Philadelphia," *Mormon Historical Studies* 5/1 (2004): 3–28.

140. Hyde to Adams, in Page, *Spaulding Story,* 10.

141. Kirtland Council Minute Book, 3 June 1833, in *Kirtland Council Minute Book,* ed. Collier and Harwell, 14.

Shortly afterward, Hurlbut petitioned the council for a rehearing because he had not been present, and on 21 June 1833, the council reviewed the matter:

> Bro Hurlburt's case was laid before the court & the testimony against him given by Orson Hyde & Hyrum Smith and duly investigated. It was decided that Bro H should be forgiven because of the liberal confession which he made. The council decided that the Bishop's council decided correctly before, and that Bro H's crime was sufficient to cut him off from the Church, but on his confession, he was restored.[142]

George A. Smith, who was present at this meeting later recalled:

> He confessed his wickedness to the Council. I was present, and heard him. He promised before God, angels, and men that he would from that time forth live his religion and preserve his integrity, if they would only forgive him. He wept like a child, and prayed and begged to be forgiven. The Council forgave him; but Joseph told him, "You are not honest in this confession."[143]

"In returning into Pennsylvania," according to Winchester, "he stopped at Thompson, Geauga county, Ohio, and immediately commenced his old practices, in attempting to seduce a young female, but Providence interposing, frustrated his diabolical designs. For this crime he was immediately expelled from the church, and his license [to preach] called for, but he refused to give it up."[144] Benjamin F. Johnson

142. Kirtland Council Minute Book, 21 June 1833, in *Kirtland Council Minute Book,* ed. Collier and Harwell, 16.

143. *Journal of Discourses,* 7:113 (10 January 1858). George A. Smith said at a later date: "Hurlburt did not deny the charge, but begged to be forgiven, made every promise that a man could make that he would from that day live a virtuous life. Finally the Council accepted of his confession, and agreed that he might on public confession be restored to the Church again. . . . As soon as the Council had made this decision upon Hurlburt, Joseph arose, and said to the Council, he is not honest, and what he has promised he will not fulfil; what he has confessed are not the thoughts and intents of his heart, and time will prove it." George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses,* 11:8 (15 November 1864).

144. Winchester, *Origin of the Spaulding Story,* 6.

indicates that, after his reinstatement, Hurlbut "became enamored or greatly in love with Electra, sister of L[yman] R. Sherman; and because she dispised him for his immorality and rejected his suit he swore revenge upon the whole community, and boastfully declared he would destroy the church."[145] It was apparently this episode to which Sidney Rigdon had reference in 1839 when he claimed that Hurlbut "was excluded for using obscene language to a young lady, a member of said Church, who resented his insult with indignation, which became both her character and profession."[146] At the time, Hurlbut apparently boasted that he had deceived Joseph Smith with a false confession. Two days after his reinstatement on 23 June, the council met again to review Hurlbut's case.

> Bro D. P. Hurlburt's case was called in question this day before a general council and upon the testimony of Bro Gee of Thompson, who testified that Bro D. P. H. said that he had deceived Joseph Smith, God, or the Spirit by which he is actuated &c&c. The council proceeded to cut him off from the Church. There was also corroborating testimony brought against him by Bro Hodges.[147]

Following his excommunication, Hurlbut began to lecture against Mormonism. Having heard rumors that Solomon Spalding, a former resident of Conneaut, Ohio, had written a manuscript about a pre-Columbian migration to the Americas, he was hired by local anti-Mormons to go to Pennsylvania and New York to gather testimony against the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith. During late August and September 1833, he obtained testimony from some of Spalding's former neighbors in western Pennsylvania and then went to New York, where in November and December he solicited and obtained a set of negative affidavits from some of Joseph Smith's former neighbors in

145. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review: Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin Johnson* (Provo, UT: Grandin Book, 1997), 18.

146. Sidney Rigdon, "Communications," *Quincy Whig,* 8 June 1839 (penned 27 May 1839).

147. Kirtland Council Minute Book, 23 June 1833, in Collier and Harwell, *Kirtland Council Minute Book,* 16.

Palmyra and Manchester. He also retrieved the "Manuscript Story" from a trunk belonging to Spalding's widow, after which he returned to Kirtland to continue his lectures.

It was in late December 1833, apparently during one of his lectures, that Hurlbut reportedly threatened the life of Joseph Smith. No contemporary accounts of the event are known; however, later accounts indicate that Hurlbut had actually threatened to kill Joseph. George A. Smith, the Prophet's cousin, recounted in Utah that Hurlbut "had said he would wash his hands in Joseph Smith's blood."[148] Other sources less critical of Hurlbut claim that the apostate only meant that he would kill Mormonism, not Joseph Smith.[149] After lengthy testimony, however, the judge ruled that Joseph Smith *did* have reason to fear physical harm from Hurlbut, who was fined and ordered to keep the peace for six months.[150] Hurlbut turned over his materials to E. D. Howe, soon left town and got married, and moved to Girard, Pennsylvania.

Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick accuse early Latter-day Saints of exaggerating the reasons for Hurlbut's excommunication and suggest that they maliciously smeared Hurlbut with unfair charges of immoral and adulterous behavior for what may have been a mere verbal indiscretion. "It was not until considerably later—some time after a strongly anti-Mormon book (in which Doctor Hurlbut had a hand) was published in November 1834—that Mormons began to actively circulate more lurid stories about Hurlbut and adultery in what appears to have been an active smear campaign" (p. 35). Some of the confusion over the reasons for Hurlbut's excommunication arises from a letter Rigdon wrote to the *Quincy Whig* in 1839.[151] There he says that Hurlbut "imposed himself on the Church of the 'Latter-day Saints,' and was excluded for using obscene language to a young lady, a member of said Church, who resented his insult with indignation, which became both her character and profession." This has led some

148. *Journal of Discourses,* 11:8.

149. J. C. Dowen statement, 20 January 1885, Arthur B. Deming File, Mormon Collection, Chicago Historical Society.

150. For a detailed discussion of this legal proceeding, see Grua, "Joseph Smith and the 1834 D. P. Hurlbut Case," 33–54.

151. Rigdon, "Communications," 8 June 1839.

writers to conclude that Hurlbut's offense was merely verbal in nature. Picking up on this, the authors suggest that the Saints had expelled poor Hurlbut simply because "something he said had allegedly outraged a young lady" (p. 167). They also note that obscene language "is a far cry from the 'attempt at seduction and crime'" that was attributed to him by other Latter-day Saints (p. 167). Rigdon, however, also associates Hurlbut with lying and adultery in the same letter, so his reference to Hurlbut's profanity more likely has reference to his activities in Thompson before his final exclusion, rather than to his earlier behavior in Pennsylvania or New York. Most other sources speak of Hurlbut's "adultery" or "adulterous" behavior, which suggests that more than offensive language was involved.[152]

According to Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick, "The earliest direct claim that Hurlbut was 'excluded from the Church for adultery'" did not appear until 1838 (p. 436 n. 49). This is incorrect. The reasons for Hurlbut's excommunication were discussed by Joseph Smith shortly after the apostate's final excommunication. On 18 August 1833, Joseph Smith wrote to W. W. Phelps in Missouri:

> We are suffering great persicution on account of one man by the name of Docter Hurlburt who has been expeled from the chirch for lude and adulterous conduct and to spite us he is lieing in a wonderful manner and the peopl are running after him and giveing him mony to brake down mormanism which much endangers <our lives> at pre=asnt but god will put a stop to his carear soon and all will be well[153]

152. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) defined *adultery* as "1. Violation of the marriage bed; a crime, or a civil injury" and also "2. In a *scriptural sense, all manner of lewdness or unchastity,* as in the seventh commandment," emphasis added. Marriage is not a prerequisite for adulterous behavior in this latter sense; consequently, *adultery* or *adulterous* under early nineteenth-century usage could include a variety of immoral behaviors from fornication to other unspecified actions.

153. Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps and others, 18 August 1833, in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith,* ed. and comp. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 287. Joseph Smith's description is consistent with the later recollection of anti-Mormon S. F. Whitney, who stated in 1885 that, in Hurlbut's 1834 trial, Joseph Smith said that Hurlbut had been "expelled for base conduct with lude women." S. F. Whitney statement, March 1885, in *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1/1 (January 1888): 3.

Those sources that mention Hurlbut's excommunication, some of them written by persons who were present at his disciplinary proceedings, give a generally consistent picture of Hurlbut's moral problem. Joseph Smith, who presided at the proceeding, described "lude and adulterous conduct"[154] or "adultery,"[155] a description that agrees with that offered by Parley P. Pratt.[156] Orson Hyde, Hurlbut's missionary companion during the Pennsylvania transgressions, characterized Hurlbut's behavior as "an attempt at seduction and crime."[157] Benjamin Winchester spoke of "numerous peccadillos" and immoral tendencies, which included seduction of a girl in Pennsylvania[158] and later an "attempt to seduce a young female" at Thompson, Ohio.[159] The official church record spoke of "unchristian conduct with the female sex."[160] George A. Smith, another witness of the proceedings, mentioned "improper conduct among females,"[161] Benjamin F. Johnson mentioned "illicit association,"[162] and Joel Johnson "illicit intercourse [interaction] with the sex."[163] Even Rigdon's 1839 reference links Hurlbut with adultery. Whatever the specifics of Hurlbut's behavior, these descriptions are fairly consistent and do not support the charge that Latter-day Saints had misrepresented the facts of Hurlbut's case. The statements above indicate that Joseph Smith and others consistently characterized Hurlbut's behavior as adulterous.

Hurlbut's later difficulties. In a footnote, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick briefly mention evidence that Hurlbut, who joined the United Brethren in Christ in the 1840s, was excluded from that denomina-

154. Joseph Smith to W. W. Phelps and others, 18 August 1833, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith,* 287.

155. "Argument to Argument Where I Find It; Ridicule to Ridicule; and Scorn to Scorn," *Elders Journal* 1/4 (August 1838): 59.

156. Parley P. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled: Zion's Watchman Unmasked, and Its Editor, Mr. L. R. Sunderland Exposed* . . . (New York: Pratt, 1838), 37.

157. Hyde to Adams, in Page, *Spaulding Story,* 10.

158. Winchester, *Origin of the Spaulding Story,* 6.

159. Winchester, *Origin of the Spaulding Story,* 6.

160. Kirtland Council Minute Book, 3 June 1833, in *Kirtland Council Minute Book,* ed. Collier and Harwell, 14.

161. George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses,* 7:113.

162. B. F. Johnson, *My Life's Review,* 18.

163. J. E. Johnson, *Deseret Evening News,* 3 January 1881.

tion for charges similar to those for which he had earlier been excommunicated by the Latter-day Saints (as well as to those for which he may have been expelled, even earlier, from the Methodists). Although not quoted by the authors, they allude to a statement made by Hiram Rathbun in 1884. Rathbun had been a member of the United Brethren and a minister in that church at the time of Hurlbut's exclusion and was personally familiar with the events surrounding that action. Speaking of Hurlbut, Rathbun remembered "a constantly growing uneasiness about his improprieties; until the fall of 1851, when he was held before the Sandusky Annual Conference of said church, for a trial on charges of gross improprieties toward the opposite sex, lying, and intemperance." Rathbun claimed that "each charge; to wit, First improprieties toward the opposite sex; Second, lying; Third, intemperance, was clearly and fully sustained; and he was suspended from the ministry one year; and as that year he grew from bad to worse, he was entirely excommunicated at the next session of the conference which was held in the fall of 1852."[164] The authors discount this evidence as coming from "pro-Mormon" sources (p. 450 n. 42). Support for Rathbun's account, however, can be found in the minutes of the Sandusky Annual Conference, extracts of which were published in the Ohio *Religious Telescope*. According to these minutes, the deliberations over Hurlbut's case began on Friday, 19 September 1851, but the conference did not vote until Monday morning, 22 September, giving the members of the conference time to evaluate and ponder their decision over the weekend. In his later account, Rathbun asserted that he

> was one of that honorable, august body of Elders, who for over two days before Bishop Edwards; patiently heard his trial, and thoroughly and faithfully investigated all the testimony in his case. And we all came to the same conclusion, that he was a very bad man, and guilty of each charge made against him. We all voted yes. I, *Hiram Rathbun, voted* on the case to suspend him from the ministry for one year, and by so doing

164. Hiram Rathbun to Joseph Smith III, Lansing, Michigan, 17 July 1884, in *Saints Herald* 31/31 (2 August 1884): 492.

> give him a chance to redeem himself, but he went on from bad to worse, and at the next Annual Conference of 1852, by vote we excommunicated him from the church for improprieties with the opposite sex, for lying, and for intemperance.[165]

The official minutes for 1851 list Hurlbut as present, and in 1852 as present, but under suspension. The minutes also list Rathbun among the ministers present at the 1852 conference, showing that he was there, but do not list him as a minister, either present or absent in 1851. This is probably because Rathbun did not receive approval from the committee on examination to receive a license to preach until the Saturday morning session, the day after the Hurlbut deliberations began. Since his recommendation for the ministry was pending midconference, he may have been allowed to attend the Friday deliberations on Hurlbut. If not, he could still have learned of them over the weekend before the Monday morning decision.

The 1851 minutes relevant to the Hurlbut case appear as follows:

> In the progress of the examination the name of D P Hurlbut being called, and it appearing that he had been suspended from the office of the ministry until the session of this body, conference resolved itself into committee of the whole to try the case.
>
> The charges on which he had been tried and suspended, were as follows:
>
> 1st. For trying to take advantage of his fellow-men.
>
> 2d. For making assertions which he afterwards contradicted.
>
> 3d. For making use of light and unchristian conversation, and thereby lessening his usefulness as a minister of the Gospel.
>
> . . . . After a hearing of the testimony and the remarks of the plaintiff and defendent, it was
>
> *Resolved,* That the case be deferred for decision until Monday morning—at which time the following action was taken.

165. Rathbun to Joseph Smith III, 17 July 1884, 492.

> *Resolved,* 1st. That in the case of Br. D. P. Hurlbut, we believe there is dishonesty in the land case.
>
> 2d. That the third charge is sustained by testimony.
>
> 3d. That he be suspended from the office of the ministry until the setting of the next Sandusky Annual Conference, where the case may come up for final decision.
>
> *Resolved,* That this conference feels deeply wounded by the reflections cast by way of imputation by D. P. Hurlbut and others, on those whom duty called to inquire into the moral deportment of said D. P. H. for the last year.[166]

Although given a chance to reform, Hurlbut apparently did not; such was the judgment of the 1852 conference one year later:

> The name of D P Hurlbut being called, the journal relating to the action of last conference in his case, was read, and his case taken up for final decision. After considerable deliberation it was moved, that D P Hurlbut be entirely suspended from the ministerial office. This resolution was adopted.
>
> Reasons for this suspension,—
>
> 1st. For having failed to render that satisfaction to conference and others, (by repentance and otherwise,) which they had a just cause to expect of him, in consequence of charges detrimental to the sacred office of the ministry sustained against him, for which he was suspended for one year.
>
> 2nd. Upon reliable testimony given to this conference, his deportment during suspension, has been unworthy of the sacred office of a minister of the gospel.[167]

The description of charges in the minutes is general and, as is frequently the case in church records, there is no mention of the specifics of the actions in question. Rathbun, who states he attended both the 1851 and 1852 proceedings, remembered the charges more specifically as "lying," "intemperance," and "gross improprieties with the

166. "Conference Minutes," *Religious Telescope,* 8 October 1851, emphasis in original.
167. "Conference Minutes," *Religious Telescope,* 6 October 1852.

opposite sex." Does Rathbun's account contradict the official minutes? Although, at first glance, this description may not seem to agree with the church record, a more careful examination shows that Rathbun's account, though more specific, is consistent with that description. This can be shown if we look at each of the three charges in turn.

The 1851 minutes call the first charge against Hurlbut "trying to take advantage of his fellow men" and reports that, after examination of testimony, Hurlbut's dishonesty, apparently in relation to a land deal, was sustained. This is consistent with Rathbun's charge of lying. The second charge noted in the minutes was "making assertions which he afterwards contradicted," without stating what specific assertions were made. One clue to the nature of the charge, however, appears in the notation in the minutes for 1851: "The question was asked whether a preacher may be tried after an acquittal on the same charge before a similar tribunal. The chair decided in the affirmative." Where had Hurlbut been "acquitted on the same charge before a similar tribunal"? In 1848, Hurlbut had been charged before this same religious body with "imprudent conduct towards women," but the charge at that time was not sustained. Additionally, he was accused in 1848 of "clubbing [i.e., abusing] other denominations when preaching" (also not sustained for want of evidence), and also for "trifling conversation when out of pulpit." The 1848 minutes say that Hurlbut confessed to the third charge but promised to improve, "though improvement is claimed by defendant, and promise of future amendment."[168]

Today the word *conversation* usually refers to "speaking"; however, in nineteenth-century usage the term *conversation* was not confined to this but, as Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* indicates, referred more broadly to "general course of manners; behavior; deportment; especially as it respects morals."[169] The word *trifling* denotes a lack of seriousness as in the word *trifle,* mean-

168. "Minutes of the Sandusky Annual Conference," *Religious Telescope,* 8 March 1848.

169. Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), s.v. "conversation." Apparently unaware of this distinction, Dale Adams mistakenly describes the 1848 charge as participating in "trifling conversations," implying only verbal activity. Adams, "Doctor Philastus Hurlbut," 86. In the 1848 minutes, the word is in the singular ("conversation"). "Conference Minutes," *Religious Telescope,* 8 March 1848.

ing "to act or talk without seriousness or gravity, weight or dignity; to act or talk with levity." The 1848 charge to which Hurlbut confessed, though not specifically described, would have been behavior of some kind that was inconsistent with the solemnity or seriousness becoming a minister. Hurlbut apparently saw the 1851 charges as related or similar to one or more of these earlier ones. So to what did the language of the official second charge in 1851—"making assertions which he afterwards contradicted"—refer? Rathbun's firsthand testimony suggests that the second charge was related to intemperance. If so, the reference in the minutes to assertions later contradicted likely refers to earlier pledges to either give up drinking or to avoid drunkenness. Although temperance is not stated in the language of the official charge, circumstantial evidence appears in the minutes for the 1852 conference, where, following the account of Hurlbut's final suspension, a resolution to support temperance legislation was adopted, "so as effectually to stay the immolation of the innumerable sacrifices daily made to the Moloch of intemperance, of the interests, bodies and souls of men."[170]

The third charge in the 1851 minutes, of "making use of light and unchristian conversation," was also sustained by testimony. While the term *light* can denote the practice of giving something little weight or concern, it can also mean "wanton" or "unchaste." Rathbun remembered Hurlbut using foul language: "The obscene language I heard him use to an old minister in abusing him when all alone, and as he supposed, no one hearing him, was so disgraceful and black that I would not tell it under any consideration, except under oath." Here one is reminded of Rigdon's reference to Hurlbut. Rathbun, however, claimed that the third charge of "gross improprieties with the opposite sex" was sustained. Based on these considerations, the question before the ministers of the United Brethren in 1851 and 1852 was not simply one of foul language, but apparently of unchaste or immoral behavior with the opposite sex. Whatever the specific details of that behavior, by 1852, the conference decided that Hurlbut had not repented, and he was "entirely suspended from the ministerial office."

170. "Conference Minutes," *Religious Telescope,* 6 October 1852.

Although these activities occurred a number of years after Philastus Hurlbut's encounter with Joseph Smith, one cannot help but be struck by the similarities between the reasons for his 1850s exclusion from the United Brethren, his earlier excommunication from the Latter-day Saints for immoral behavior and making false professions of repentance, and even his reported pre-Mormon expulsion from the Methodists. The record is clear and regrettably consistent, suggestive of a pattern of behavior. An indication of possible marital difficulties between Hurlbut and his wife after his ejection by the United Brethren may also be relevant in this context: Citing census data, Dale Adams has shown that Hurlbut was not living with his wife Maria in 1860 but with another woman, two years his junior, and three of her children. Whatever the nature of that relationship, he was living with his wife again by 1870.[171]

The Clapp trap. In his 1839 letter to the *Quincy Whig,* Sidney Rigdon alluded to a strange episode that, he claimed, had occurred between Hurlbut and the Campbellite deacon Onis Clapp in Ohio some time after Hurlbut's excommunication from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

> While Hulburt was busily employed in the service of the company, old deacon Clapp was employed in taking care of his wife. How many others of the company aided in this business must be left to futurity to disclose. At a certain time, Hulburt being out till a late hour in the night, returned to his house, and in going to his bed-room where his wife was, behold and lo! there was the pious old deacon, either in the bed with his wife, or at the side of it. He had a five dollar banknote in his hand, and his dress was rather light to suit the Doctor's taste; for he was not quite as well off as was Aaron, when he offered sacrifice; not even having on a pair of "linen breaches." Hulburt laid hold of him and called for help, which soon came to his assistance. The pious old deacon was arraigned before a justice of the peace, and was on the eve of being bound over for his appearance to the county court,

171. Adams, "Doctor Philastus Hurlbut," 87.

> when to put an end to the evils which might result from his pious care of Mrs. Hulburt, he kindly offered a yoke of oxen and a hundred dollars; this was accepted. Hulburt took his wife and left the county forthwith.[172]

According to Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick, Rigdon's story is an example of "outrageous falsehood," and they see this as evidence of deliberate lying on Rigdon's part. "The truth is, Mrs. Hurlbut could not possibly have been seeing Deacon Clapp as Rigdon accused because Doctor Hurlbut was a bachelor at the time, and there simply was not any Mrs. Hurlbut." Hurlbut married Maria Sheldon Woodbury on 29 April 1834. "Several weeks after that, he and his new bride moved to Girard settlement, Elk Creek Township, Erie County, Pennsylvania." Consequently, "Rigdon's scurrilous allegation quickly evaporates into nothing more than the vitriolic hot air from whence it came" (p. 168).

But while Rigdon may have enjoyed relating the story and may perhaps be accused of a lack of charity toward an enemy, the accusation of willful deception on this point seems unfounded. Rigdon may even have gotten the chronology wrong in relating the episode, mistakenly assuming that it occurred while Hurlbut was still employed as an anti-Mormon researcher, but the authors present no evidence to indicate that Rigdon knew that Hurlbut's anti-Mormon activities had ceased after Hurlbut left Kirtland. Based on the undeniably zealous

172. Rigdon, "Communications," 8 June 1839. Sidney Rigdon apparently alluded to the episode in 1836 when he suggested that Campbellite opponents of the church such as Darwin Atwater, who were circulating copies of *Mormonism Unvailed,* might do well to get "the history of old Clapp, his wife's father, to carry with him; so that he can shew the people Campbellism unveiled also." Sidney Rigdon to Oliver Cowdery, *Messenger and Advocate* 2/9 (June 1836): 385. In a lengthy editorial on persecution, and apparently interpreting the affair in the worst light possible, Rigdon referred to "The shameful and disgraceful house kept by old Clapp, of Mentor, where all men and women were at liberty to come and slander the saints, not even prostitutes excepted, *as late revelations have shown*: Let it be remembered, that this old Clapp is a Campbellite deacon, whose house was devoted to defamation, slander, and to crown the whole, ADULTERY! How far the priests, who frequented his house, have criminated themselves in this last act of impropriety, remains yet to be disclosed; but people have a just right to draw their own conclusion, respecting the character of the priests, from the company they keep, and the character of the house they frequent." Sidney Rigdon, "Persecution," *Messenger and Advocate* 3/4 (January 1837): 436–37.

anti-Mormonism of both men, Rigdon may simply have wrongly but understandably interpreted any additional association between Hurlbut and Clapp as likewise anti-Mormon. But being mistaken on a detail is not the same as being deliberately deceitful nor even the same as being altogether wrong. As we shall see, although it obviously could not have occurred before Hurlbut's marriage, reports of the incident cannot be summarily brushed aside.

The evidence suggests that, after residing for a year in Pennsylvania from June 1834 to June 1835, the Hurlbuts spent several months back in Mentor, Ohio, perhaps trying to pick up the pieces after their unsuccessful farming venture in Pennsylvania, and that after several months they left there in the fall of 1835. Maria Hurlbut informs us that "in June we settled in Elk Creek Township Erie Co Pa and made improvements one year and [then] found our title to the land was <u>not</u> good. We moved to Mentor O and left there in the fall and moved to Bedford St. Laurence Co Mich."[173]

The first reference in print to the incident of Deacon Clapp and Mrs. Hurlbut appeared in a December 1835 editorial in the *Messenger and Advocate,* which noted that Hurlbut "is also an associate of the celebrated Mr. Clapp, who has of late immortalised his name by swearing that he would not believe a Mormon under oath; and by his polite introduction to said Hurlburt's wife, which cost him (as we have been informed) a round sum."[174] This would place the incident no later than December 1835. There was, thus, plenty of time between the Hurlbuts' move to Mentor, Ohio, in June of 1835 and the reference to the episode of Deacon Clapp at the end of that year for the event to have occurred—and, if so, it would have occurred well after the April 1834 marriage of Philastus Hurlbut to Maria Woodbury. Accordingly, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick's chronological objection does not appear to be sustained by the facts.

In an editorial in 1838, Joseph Smith indicated that "old deacon Clapp of Mentor ran and took him [Hurlbut] and his family into the house with himself, and so exceedingly was he pleased with him, that

173. Maria S. Hurlbut statement, 15 April 1885, Deming File, emphasis in original.
174. Smith, "To the Elders of the Church of the Latter Day Saints," 228.

purely out of respect to him, he went to bed to his wife. This great kindness and respect, Hurlburt did not feel just so well about but the pious old deacon gave him a hundred dollars and a yoke of oxen, and all was well again."[175] In 1838, Parley P. Pratt reported that, for a time, Hurlbut "was assisted by one Deacon Clapp, who, by and by, became so familiar with Hurlburt's wife, that he had some hundred dollars to pay; besides endangering his *Deaconship*."[176]

Other descriptions of the incident give it a different twist. In later years Benjamin F. Johnson indicated that, after Hurlbut was married, the apostate and his wife stayed for a time with a wealthy citizen who had previously supported his anti-Mormon activities. Johnson says that his non-Mormon father, Ezekiel Johnson, related to him that Hurlbut, "in connection with his wife, put up a job on the old man, and drew him into a woman snare, from which they would not release him until after payment of $500.00. With this money, despised and hated by all parties, he left that vicinity."[177] Calvin Ingersoll, a non-Mormon who lived in Mentor, Ohio, said that Hurlbut worked for him for a time. "He [Hurlbut] lived at the time in Judge Clapp's house. Hurlbut's wife inticed a wealth[y] citizen to go to bed with her. When this party was in the act of getting into bed, Hurlbut, who was secreted under the bed, caught him by the legs. Hurlbut began a lawsuit for damages, which was settled by the defendant without trial."[178]

The usual suspect. As if these sordid rumors about him were not enough, *The Spalding Enigma* makes passing mention of a more disturbing possibility noted by others that Philastus Hurlbut may have been involved in the robbery and murder of an elderly man in Mentor, Ohio, in 1837 (p. 363).[179] On 30 November 1837, the *Painesville Republican*

175. "Argument to Argument," 59.

176. P. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled,* 37.

177. B. F. Johnson, *My Life's Review,* 18–19. Johnson's identification of the wealthy citizen as a man named Randall is probably mistaken, given that all other sources indicate that it was Deacon Clapp.

178. Calvin Ingersoll statement, [1885], Arthur B. Deming File, Mormon Collection, Chicago Historical Society.

179. See also Dale Broadhurst, "D. P. Hurlbut and the 1837 Death of Garrit Brass in Mentor, Ohio," at home1.gte.net/dbroadhu/RESTOR/Lib/Dmg1885b.htm (accessed 9 December 2005).

reported the death of a "Mr. Brass," of Mentor, Ohio, an old war veteran, who was receiving a pension for his Revolutionary War services and who had been living alone. His partially burned body was found in the ruins of his log cabin, which had burned to the ground.[180] In a statement made in 1885, published by A. B. Deming, Mrs. H. W. Wilson said, "I was well acquainted with Garrit Brass and his family. It was generally believed by the citizens of Mentor that Mr. Brass was murdered, his house robbed and then burned to conceal the crime. The ruins were searched for specie [coins] Mr. Brass was known to have, but none was found."[181]

In December 1947, Dale Morgan wrote to Fawn Brodie describing a set of affidavits in the Chicago Historical Society that had been collected by A. B. Deming in 1885 but that had never been published. "Deming also had half a dozen statements bearing on Hurlbut in 1836–37, which he may have kept unpublished because they weren't especially helpful to his anti-Mormon crusade—they had to do with accusations of theft made against Hurlbut at that time."[182] These include four statements by Esther Brass Scott, Calvin Ingersoll, Mrs. J. D. Barber, and Mrs. Alvors, residents of Mentor, Ohio, which after Rigdon's conversion to Mormonism in late 1830 became a center of anti-Mormon activity. The unpublished Deming statements indicate that Hurlbut returned to Mentor in late 1837, at least briefly working odd jobs for local residents such as Calvin Ingersoll, with whom he often took meals.[183] During this time, Ingersoll claimed, "Hurlbut, who lived in Henry Munson's house, moved west the night Mr. Bras was burned with his cabin. He was pursued by citizens of Mentor who recovered from him various articles which he had stolen."[184] In her statement, Mrs. Barber declared, "D. P. Hurlbut, who lived in my cousin's Harry [Henry?] Munson's house, in Mentor, moved west the

180. "Shocking Calamity," *Painesville Republican,* 30 November 1837.

181. Mrs. H. W. Wilson statement, 23 April 1885, in *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1/2 (April 1888): 3.

182. Dale Morgan to Fawn Brodie, 24 December 1947, in *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence & A New History,* ed. John Phillip Walker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 142–43. I would like to thank Dale Broadhurst for bringing these documents to my attention.

183. There is no indication that his wife, Maria, was living with him at the time.

184. Ingersoll statement, 1885, Deming File.

night of the fire. He was pursued and overtaken by citizens who recovered from him carpets, chains, farming tools, and other things which he had stolen from them."[185] In another statement, Esther Brass Scott, a daughter of Garrit Brass, noted that when the ruins of the cabin were examined, "No trace of feathers from his bedding being found, and no money of which he was known to have, several hundred dollars in gold and silver, part of which was paid to him a few days before by a neighbor, and his pension money received the day before."[186]

Some Mentor neighbors reported that Hurlbut had been spending a lot of time with Brass before his sudden departure the night of the fire and suspected that he was responsible and that he had robbed the old man of his money and set the fire to hide the crime. Esther Scott said that her sister, a Mrs. Bronson, was living in Michigan at the time. Bronson reported that, shortly after the death of her father, a man matching Hurlbut's description stopped at her house for a meal. Learning from where he came, she asked if he knew Mr. Brass and that he had been murdered. She said "he seemed uneasy, acted strangely and soon left. It so impressed her that he knew something about it, she wrote back with a description of him which satisfied my brother that it was the same Hurlbut that left Mentor, and it helped to strengthen and confirm them in their previous suspicions. I think that a warrant was issued, but in those early times the roads were bad, settlements sparse, and so much uncertainty and expense attending the pursuit of criminals they were unable to make the arrest, and pursue it as it could be done now should anything occur."[187] This information is consistent with Winchester's 1840 claim that, after his unsuccessful farming venture in Girard, Pennsylvania, Hurlbut "was reduced to beggary, took to stealing for a livelihood, was detected in stealing a log chain, fled the country, to escape justice, and that is the last of him, so far as I know."[188] If Hurlbut was responsible for the death of Brass, Joseph Smith's earlier fears that

185. Mrs. J. D. Barber statement, 1885, Arthur B. Deming File, Mormon Collection, Chicago Historical Society.

186. Esther Brass Scott statement, May 1885, Arthur B. Deming File, Mormon Collection, Chicago Historical Society.

187. Scott statement, May 1885, Deming File.

188. Winchester, *Origin of the Spaulding Story,* 11.

Hurlbut was capable of physical violence were well founded. The evidence available so far, however, does not allow us to establish Hurlbut's culpability beyond dispute. What we can say is that Latter-day Saints were scarcely the only people who held Hurlbut in low esteem.

While the evidence above paints an unflattering picture of Hurlbut, it does not prove that he invented the Spalding theory itself. As already noted, it appears that at least some of Spalding's former neighbors had already come to associate his unpublished tale with the Book of Mormon before Hurlbut arrived on the scene. Given his animosity toward Joseph Smith and potential financial motivations for exposing Mormonism, I suspect that Hurlbut dearly wanted to prove a Spalding connection and pursued that goal with zeal and enthusiasm. Given his background and incentive, however, one must wonder what impact or influence—intentional or unintentional—Hurlbut had on the testimony published by Howe.

Hurlbut's likely influence on the Spalding testimonies. When evaluating the Spalding statements gathered by Philastus Hurlbut and published by E. D. Howe, one must remember that these statements were not solicited in a vacuum but were solicited and obtained in a region where the church was already known and vilified. Historians have noted the almost universally negative image of Mormonism in the early press accounts of the day. Just a few months after the publication of the Book of Mormon, missionaries were making their message known as they traveled through New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Many of the earliest converts joined the church as a result of these activities. After the Saints established themselves in Kirtland, missionaries continued to labor in northeastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania, where they continued to encounter success. Such missionary activity was alarming to rival religionists and troubling to those who saw many of their former friends and neighbors joining the movement. This concern often manifested itself in opposition to the missionaries and the Saints.

In 1832, Samuel Smith and Orson Hyde traveled through northeastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania. On 2 February, Hyde and the Prophet's brother preached in Perry, Ohio, to "a large congregation, principally Campbellites; much prejudiced and hard against the work

and they were much stirred up to oppose and to contend."[189] Nine days later they passed through Salem, Ohio: "Found some friendly and some enemies."[190] The next day, according to Samuel Smith, they preached to a congregation: "They paid good attention; were much disappointed in the things we declared unto them for they had heard much evil concerning this sect. They [the congregation] requested us to tarry and preach again, accordingly the next evening."[191] A year later, while trying to hold a meeting at Elk Creek, Pennsylvania, missionary Evan M. Greene reported that he "had some persecution. None came in to oppose, but were around the house firing guns and covering up the chimney."[192] On 17 March, at the same place, Greene wrote: "Had a meeting at school house. Baptist man arose and began throwing clubs but put the cudgel in our hands and we used it. After meeting had the privilege of baptizing three."[193] "By mid 1833, the Church of Christ (Mormonism's official title in the early 1830s) was well established in Erie County, having well over a hundred local members."[194] Some of Spalding's former neighbors who did not accept the message of the restoration would not have been happy about that.

So when Hurlbut visited Erie County, Pennsylvania, in early 1833, first as a missionary and then later that same year, after his excommunication, to lecture and solicit testimony against the Book of Mormon, he was in a place where some were already vehemently opposed to Mormonism. Those in such a position would gain a certain amount of notoriety by having their statements and opinions published in a book exposing what they already considered to be a delusion. This has

189. Samuel H. Smith journal, 2 February 1832, in Cheryl Harmon Bean and Pamela Call Johnson, *Rediscovering History: Mormons in Erie County, Pennsylvania 1832–1833* (St. Anthony, ID: Cheryl's Creations and Publications, 1995), 14.

190. Orson Hyde journal, 11 February 1832, in Bean and Johnson, *Rediscovering History,* 20.

191. Samuel H. Smith journal, 12 February 1832, in Bean and Johnson, *Rediscovering History,* 15.

192. Evan M. Greene missionary journal, 2 February 1833, in Bean and Johnson, *Rediscovering History,* 26.

193. Greene missionary journal, 17 March 1833, in Bean and Johnson, *Rediscovering History,* 32.

194. Steven C. Harper, "The Restoration of Mormonism to Erie County, Pennsylvania," *Mormon Historical Studies* 1/1 (1999): 8.

led critics of the Spalding theory to believe that, either deliberately or inadvertently, Hurlbut put thoughts into the minds of his respondents, and words into their mouths.

> Undoubtedly some of the former neighbors and associates of Mr. Spaulding must have remembered that he had written a romance of ancient America, and the suggestion would have been natural that his book, never printed, "might have been the same" as this new "revelation." The lapse from the subjunctive mood to the indicative is easy in the case of rumors in rural communities. Consequently, within a short time, numerous persons might be found willing to state that the two books were certainly the same. But, as frequently remarked, rumor travels almost as fast as it grows in bulk. The professed identification of the writings of Spaulding coming to the ears of such men as Hurlburt and Howe, would have been eagerly followed up by them, and worked to the limit.[195]

As for Spalding's former neighbors,

> The *Book of Mormon* was fresh in their minds, while their memories of Spaulding's reading from his manuscript reached decades into the past. . . . We must suspect that [Hurlbut] was not without his own manipulative abilities as he pursued what he was after. He was grinding an important ax, and his respondents were certainly also motivated: The manuscript of their brother, relative, and friend had been plagiarized—in what they considered to be a blasphemous cause—and they would have vengeance. So they remembered what Hurlbut suggested, thus giving birth to the Spaulding-Rigdon theory.[196]

According to *The Spalding Enigma,* Hurlbut probably visited John and Martha Spalding first and "then used what they had told him

195. Robert C. Webb (pseudonym for James E. Homans), *The Case against Mormonism* (New York: Walton, 1915), 51.

196. Ernest H. Taves, *Trouble Enough: Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1984), 54–55, emphasis in original.

to prepare a list of written questions for use as a guideline in interviewing subsequent witnesses" (pp. 49–50). One problem is that this method would, perhaps even inadvertently, narrow the range of questions asked and information given by respondents as Hurlbut zealously sought confirmation for what John and Martha told him from subsequent witnesses. Hurlbut's method was one of "first interviewing or questioning his witnesses at length, then preparing a written statement for signature summarizing the results" (p. 51). The explanation in *The Spalding Enigma* tacitly concedes the contention of Brodie and others that the voice in the Spalding affidavits is Philastus Hurlbut's rather than that of Spalding's neighbors. This explains the similar language in the eight statements. If Hurlbut was asking the questions and then writing the statements himself based on those answers, the odd references to similar names also make sense. That they had already come to believe that the Book of Mormon was based on Spalding's manuscript and were willing to assist Hurlbut in his quest to debunk Mormonism is obvious. The problem for historians, however, is that since these eight individuals did not write the statements themselves, we cannot know what their testimony might have been in the absence of Hurlbut. Put another way, how much of Hurlbut is in the Spalding testimonies? Does his involvement enhance or diminish their credibility? Hurlbut's influence is apparent in his selection of testimony, in the structure and language of the statements themselves, and in the choice of names and phrases attributed to "Manuscript Found."

One area in which Hurlbut's influence is unavoidable is in his *selection* of testimony. In 1834 Howe stated: "We *might* therefore introduce *a great number of witnesses* all testifying to the same general facts; but we have not taken the trouble to *procure* the statements of *but few,* all of whom are the most respectable men, and highly esteemed for their moral worth, and their characters for truth and veracity, are unimpeachable."[197] This was the face that Howe put on the statements, but he may have been trying to justify why he had only eight. While it is certainly possible that Howe "might" have been able to find others willing to offer similar testimony, the fact remains that, by his own

197. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 281, emphasis added.

admission in 1834, he did not "procure" any more. He insisted that additional statements were unnecessary, yet that claim, though possible, rings hollow. Would not Howe have printed all the statements he could find supporting the Spalding theory if he considered them reliable? After all, he published over twenty-two affidavits from residents of Palmyra and Manchester, New York, and Harmony, Pennsylvania, without any concern for space, redundancy, or overkill.[198] If there really was additional testimony available, why did Howe publish only eight in support of the Spalding hypothesis? Not entirely trustful of Hurlbut's reliability as an investigator, Howe did some investigative work on his own, previous to the publication of his book. In a later statement he noted, "Before publishing my Book I went to Conneaut and saw most of the witnesses who had seen Spauldings Manuscript Found and had testified to its identity with the Book of Mormon as published in my book and was satisfied that they were men of intelligence and respectibility and were not mistaken in their statements."[199] Howe says he visited "most" but not all of those who had provided testimony about Spalding and his manuscript. When questioned again in 1881 he stated, "I never saw or heard read the 'Manuscript Found,' but have seen *five or six persons* who had, and from their testimony, concluded it was very much like the Mormon Bible."[200] Howe published testimony from eight people, but only visited or was able to visit and check up on the statements of five or six. Perhaps he was unable to visit John and Martha Spalding, who apparently lived in Crawford County and not in Conneaut. Following the recovery of "Manuscript Story" in 1884, Howe asserted, "I published only a small part of the statements Hurlbut let me have." Again, however, this sounds like bravado. Perhaps some Hurlbut statements were too unreliable even for Howe. I suspect, given his earlier statements and the fact that he published so few in 1834, that by 1885 he was exaggerating. In 1881 Howe maintained,

198. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 231–69.

199. E. D. Howe statement, 8 April 1885, Arthur B. Deming File, Mormon Collection, Chicago Historical Society.

200. Howe to Smith, 26 July 1881, in Shook, *True Origin of the Book of Mormon,* 76, emphasis added.

> I think there has been much mist thrown around the whole subject of the origin of the Mormon Bible and the "Manuscript Found," by the several statements that have been made by those who have been endeavoring to solve the problem after sleeping quietly for half a century. Every effort was made to unravel the mystery at the time, when nearly all the parties were on earth, and the result published at the time, and I think it all folly to try to dig out anything more.[201]

In his 1840 rebuttal of the Spalding theory, Benjamin Winchester referred to a former neighbor, a non-Mormon by the name of Jackson, who remembered Spalding's manuscript but thought it quite different from the Book of Mormon.

> Here, while in conversation with them, Mr. H[urlbut] learned that Mr. S., while alive, wrote a work called the Manuscript Found. Not that any of these persons had the most distant idea that this novel had ever been converted into the Book of Mormon; or that there was any connexion between them. Indeed, Mr. Jackson, who had read both the Book of Mormon, and Spaulding's manuscript, told Mr. H. when he came to get his signature to a writing, testifying to the probability that Mr. S.'s manuscript had been converted into the Book of Mormon; that there was no agreement between them; for, said he, Mr. S.'s manuscript was a very small work, in the form of a novel, saying 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. S said he had translated from a Latin parchment that he had found. The Book of Mormon, he added, purports to be written by a branch of the house of Israel; is written in a different style, and altogether different; for this reason Mr. Jackson refused to lend his name to the lie, and expressed his indignation and contempt at the base and wicked project to deceive the public.
>
> Mr. Jackson was a disinterested man, and a good citizen.[202]

201. Howe to Smith, 26 July 1881, in Shook, *True Origin of the Book of Mormon,* 76.
202. Winchester, *Origin of the Spaulding Story,* 8–9.

The Spalding Enigma suggests that such testimony may reflect earlier encounters with Spalding in Conneaut before he commenced work on a hypothetical "Manuscript Found" or even that Winchester fabricated Jackson's testimony. More likely, it could suggest what testimony unmolded by Hurlbut might show—that "Manuscript Story" and "Manuscript Found" were in fact identical. In a letter written in 1841, Orson Hyde reported,

> In the spring of 1832 I preached in New Salem, Ohio, the place where Rev. Mr. Spaulding resided at the time he wrote his romance. I raised up a branch of the church at that place, and baptized many of Mr. Spaulding's old neighbors, but they never intimated to me that there was any similarity between the Book of Mormon and Mr. Spaulding's romance; neither did I hear such an intimation from any quarter, until the immoral Hurlbert, a long time after . . . brought forth the idea. I then went to these neighbors of Mr. Spaulding, and enquired of them if they knew any thing about his writing a romance; and if so, whether the romance was any thing like the Book of Mormon. They said that Mr. Spaulding wrote a book, and that they frequently heard him read the manuscript: but that any one should say that it was like the Book of Mormon, was most surprising, and must be the last pitiful resort that the devil had.[203]

The authors may be inclined to believe that Hyde, too, was simply fabricating evidence, but there is no compelling reason to make such an assumption. Hurlbut, who was employed by other enemies of Joseph Smith to collect negative information against the Prophet and the Book of Mormon, would not likely have tried to obtain testimony from former Spalding neighbors who had joined a church with whom he was now out of favor. Early Mormon convert Daniel Tyler noted that in 1832, before his own baptism, several others in his neighborhood joined the church, including "Erastus Rudd, in whose house much of the romance was formerly written."[204] Unfortunately, Rudd

203. Hyde to Adams, in Page, *Spaulding Story,* 10.
204. Daniel Tyler statement, in *Deseret Evening News*, 16 January 1878.

died on the Zion's Camp expedition to Missouri in 1834. Today we can lament that Latter-day Saints did not record and preserve more of such testimony, but what little we have suggests that Hurlbut was selective in his gathering of statements.

Another area in which Hurlbut's influence is apparent is in the language of the statements themselves. This has often been noticed by those critical of the Spalding theory. That each of these eight persons "profess[es] to describe Spaulding's manuscript, not seen or heard read by any one of them for over twenty years, constitutes a very suspiciously vivid suggestion that their 'testimonies' are not in the form in which they originated them, or, at the least, were not volunteered by any of them, apart from suggestions and questionings by an interested party."[205] That the Spalding neighbors remembered that Spalding had written a manuscript describing a group who came from the Old World to the New, likely "constituted a temptation far too strong to be resisted that the story should be elaborated and given definite shape, as a real weapon for opposing, and, if possible, destroying Mormonism. Thus, although they could find many who could remember Spaulding and his book, they undoubtedly put into their mouths many things that had nothing to do with either the *Manuscript Found,* or the Book of Mormon."[206] "It can clearly be seen," Fawn Brodie acknowledges, "that the affidavits were written by Hurlbut, since the style is the same throughout."[207] Essentially agreeing with Brodie's assessment, another secular critic noted that "the affidavits have the tone of common authorship."[208] My own examination of the Spalding statements is consistent with these observations. The similarity in language, noted above, can be seen by comparing statements by John and Martha Spalding, who were possibly the first to be interviewed by Spalding, and those of the other Spalding witnesses.

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205. Webb, *Case against Mormonism,* 49.

206. Robert C. Webb (pseudonym for James E. Homans), *The Real Mormonism: A Candid Analysis of an Interesting but Much Misunderstood Subject in History, Life and Thought* (New York: Sturgis & Walton, 1916), 406, emphasis in original.

207. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 446.

208. Taves, *Trouble Enough,* 54.

Statements by John and Martha Spalding[209]	Statements by Other Spalding Witnesses
It was an historical romance of the *first settlers of America* (John Spalding) a historical novel founded upon the *first settlers of America* (Martha Spalding)	It purported to be the history of the *first settlement of America* (John Miller) they were the *first settlers of America* (Aaron Wright) a historical novel, founded upon the *first settlers of this country* (Oliver Smith) the history of the *first settlement of America* (Oliver Smith) [a] romantic history of the *first settlement of this country* (Artemus Cunningham)[210]
endeavoring to show that the *American Indians are the descendants* of the Jews, or the *lost tribes* (John Spalding) He had for many years contended that the aborigines of America were the *descendants* of some of the *lost tribes* of Israel, and this idea he carried out in the book in question (Martha Spalding)	This book represented the American *Indians* as the *descendants of the lost tribes* (Henry Lake) 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* (Aaron Wright)[211]
It gave a detailed account of *their journey from Jerusalem, by land and sea,* till they arrived in *America* (John Spalding) He gave a particular account of *their journey by land and sea,* till they arrived in *America* (Martha Spalding)	He *traced their journey from Jerusalem to America,* as it is given in the Book of Mormon (Aaron Wright) He said he intended to *trace their journey from Jerusalem, by land and sea,* till their arrival in *America* (Oliver Smith)[212]

209. For statements by John Spalding and Martha Spalding, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 279–81.

210. For the statements in this section, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283–86.

211. For the statements in this section, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282, 284.

212. For the statements in this section, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284–85.

Statements by John and Martha Spalding	Statements by Other Spalding Witnesses
Cruel and bloody *wars* ensued, in which great multitudes were slain (John Spalding) He represented them as an enlightened and warlike people (Martha Spalding)	their contentions and *wars,* which were many and great (Henry Lake) detailing their . . . *wars* (John Miller) give an account of their . . . *wars* and contentions (Oliver Smith)[213]
Their arts, sciences and civilization were brought into view (John Spalding)	give an account of *their arts, sciences, civilization,* wars and contentions (Oliver Smith)[214]
They buried their dead in large heaps, which caused the *mounds so common in this country.* Their arts, sciences and civilization were brought into view, in order to *account for* all the curious *antiquities,* found *in various parts of North and South America* (John Spalding) and their being buried in large heaps was the cause of the *numerous mounds in the country* (Martha Spalding)	He told me his object was to *account for* all the fortifications, &c. to be *found in this country,* and said that in time it would be fully believed by all (Aaron Wright) In this way, he would give a satisfactory *account of* all the old *mounds, so common to this country* (Oliver Smith) I once in conversation with him expressed a surprise at not having any *account of* the inhabitants once *in this country,* who erected the old forts, *mounds,* &c. (Nahum Howard) He attempted to *account for* the *numerous antiquities* which are found *upon this continent* (Artemus Cunningham)[215]
"and it came to pass," or "now it came to pass" (John Spalding) "and it came to pass" (Martha Spalding)	"And it came to pass," "Now it came to pass" (Henry Lake)[216]

213. For the statements in this section, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282–83, 285.
214. O. Smith, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 285.
215. For the statements in this section, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284–87.
216. Lake, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282.

Statements by John and Martha Spalding	Statements by Other Spalding Witnesses
NEPHI and LEHI . . . Nephites and . . . Lamanites (John Spalding) Nephi and Lehi, . . . Lamanites and . . . Nephites (Martha Spalding)	Nephi, Lehi, Moroni, . . . Zarahemla (John Miller) Nephi and Lehi (Oliver Smith) Nephi (Artemus Cunningham)[217]
I have recently read the Book of Mormon, and to my great surprize I find nearly the same *historical matter,* names, &c. as they were in my brother's writings. . . . and according to the best of my recollection and belief, it is the same as my brother Solomon wrote, with the exception of the religious matter (John Spalding) I have read the Book of Mormon, which has brought fresh to my recollection the writings of Solomon Spalding; and I have no manner of doubt that *the historical part* of it, is the same that I read and heard read (Martha Spalding)	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" (Henry Lake) 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, which I did not meet with in the "Manuscript Found" (John Miller) as it is given in the Book of Mormon, excepting the religious matter. *The historical part* of the Book of Mormon, I know to be the same as I read and heard read from the writings of Spalding, . . . the names more especially are the same without any alteration (Aaron Wright) When I heard *the historical part* of it related, I at once said it was the writings of old Solomon Spalding (Oliver Smith)[218]

The evidence above suggests that Philastus Hurlbut, a man of dubious character, whose passionate hostility to Joseph Smith and Mormonism is beyond dispute, was intimately involved with both the

217. For the statements in this section, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283, 285–86.
218. For the statements in this section, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 282–85.

selection of the Spalding testimonials that we have today and the language in which they were formulated.

A third manner in which Hurlbut likely influenced the 1833 Spalding testimony is in the references to names and phrases supposedly shared by "Manuscript Found" and the Book of Mormon. Of the eight former neighbors of the Spaldings, five (John and Martha Spalding, John Miller, Oliver Smith, Artemus Cunningham) mention the name *Nephi,* and four (John and Martha Spalding, John Miller, Oliver Smith) the name *Lehi.* Two of them (John and Martha Spalding) remembered the terms *Nephites* and *Lamanites.* One neighbor (Henry Lake) said he remembered the name *Laban,* and another (John Miller) said he remembered the names *Moroni* and *Zarahemla.* Out of a potential two hundred and forty Book of Mormon personal or place-names, the combined memories of eight of Spalding's former neighbors recalled only seven. So why did they remember so few names, and why only these?

> It is strange, for example, that none of these "deponents," all so familiar, as represented, with Spaulding's works, should have remembered to mention Coriantumr, or Jared, or his unnamed brother; or to have remarked that Nephi had a brother named Sam, which moves a certain critic to animadvert sarcastically on this "Yankee nickname"; or to have remembered that their "curiosity had been excited by the mention of the 'cumoms' and 'cureloms,'" supposed to have been some kind of domestic animals.[219]

John Spalding stated that the names in the Book of Mormon were "nearly the same" as those in his brother's manuscript, and Martha Spalding claimed that the names "Nephi and Lehi" were "yet fresh" in her memory. "The names of Nephi, Lehi, Moroni, and in fact *all* the principal names," remembered John Miller, "are bro't fresh to my recollection, by the Gold Bible." According to Aaron Wright, "the names more especially are the same without any alteration" and the names in the Book of Mormon "were as familiar to me before I read it, as most

219. Webb, *Case against Mormonism,* 48–49.

modern history."[220] Yet, significantly, Wright fails to mention so much as one. Since "*all* the principal names" were "the same without any alteration" and as familiar to these witnesses as most modern history, why do they mention only these? How much did they really remember of Spalding's old tale, and how much was or was not suggested by Hurlbut or others? "It is a conclusion almost obvious that the names of Nephi, Lehi, etc., were given affirmatively as answers to direct questions, asked by persons having a very meagre knowledge of the 'Book of Mormon.'"[221]

Later Spalding statements suffer from a similar problem. In her 1839 statement, Spalding's widow presumably said that her husband "was enabled from his acquaintance with the classics and ancient history, to introduce *many singular names,* which were particularly noticed by the people and could be easily recognized by them."[222] At that time, however, neither she nor her daughter offered as much as one Book of Mormon name from their recollection. In a subsequent interview with Jesse Haven shortly thereafter, the former Mrs. Spalding (then Mrs. Davison) was asked:

> Ques. Have you read the book of Mormon?
> Ans: I have read some in it;
> Ques. Does Mr. Spauldings manuscript, and the Book of Mormon agree?
> [Ans:] *I think some few of the names are alike. . . .*

The daughter, Mrs. Matilda Spalding McKinstry was also questioned as follows:

> Ques.—Does the manuscript and the Book of Mormon agree?
> Ans: I think some of the names agree.
> Ques. *Are you certain that some of the names agree?*
> Ans: *I am not.*

220. For the statements in this section, see Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280, 283–84.

221. Webb, *Case against Mormonism,* 49.

222. Davison, "Origin of the 'Book of Mormon.'"

Ques. Have you ever read any in the Book of Mormon?
Ans: I have not.[223]

In 1880, however, McKinstry displayed a remarkable enlargement of memory: "Some of the names that he mentioned while reading to these people I have never forgotten. They are as fresh to me to-day as though I heard them yesterday. They were '*Mormon*,' '*Maroni*,' '*Lamenite*,' '*Nephi*.'"[224] When interviewed by Edmund Kelley some time afterwards, McKinstry was asked, "When did you first think about the names in the Book of Mormon and the manuscript agreeing?" To this she responded: "My attention was first called to it by some parties who asked me if I did not remember it, and then I remembered that they were."[225] "It is to be regretted," noted one wry observer, "that the 'parties' questioning this lady—and others—did not have a larger supply of 'Book of Mormon' names to 'recall to her mind.'"[226]

As noted above, some of Spalding's former neighbors claimed that his story mentioned the division of the American inhabitants into two rival groups and their recollection generally matches that of "Manuscript Story," in which, under Lobaska, the people are divided into "two great empires," the kingdoms of Sciota and Kentuck on opposite sides of the Ohio River. Though not impossible, after twenty years or more, it would be difficult to remember Spalding's original names for these tribes. As with the other names, it is likely that the names *Nephites* and *Lamanites* were volunteered by Hurlbut or those sympathetic to his cause. Howe himself incorrectly described the names of the rival tribes in Spalding's romance on at least three separate occasions, even though he had once had the manuscript in his personal possession for several years. "It was a common-place story of some Indian wars along the borders of our Great Lakes, between

223. Jesse Haven interview with Mrs. Davison (identified as Mrs. Davidson in this source) and her daughter Matilda Spalding McKinstry (McKenestry), 1839, in A. Badlam, "A Cunning Device Detected," *Times and Seasons* 1/3 (January 1840): 47, emphasis added (lines separated for ease of reading); originally in the *Quincy Whig,* 16 November 1839, 615.

224. McKinstry statement, 3 April 1880, in Dickinson, "The Book of Mormon," 615.

225. E. L. Kelley interview with McKinstry, 4 April 1882, in *Public Discussion,* 82.

226. Webb, *Case against Mormonism,* 56.

the Chicagoes and Eries as I now recollect."[227] "It was the wars of the Winnebagoes, Chicagoes or Niagaries, I believe."[228] It was "a Romance of Indian wars along the shore of Lake Erie between various Tribes one of which he called Erie another Chicago."[229] The last statement was made even after the rediscovery of the manuscript in question, where the rival factions are identified as the Sciotons and the Kentucks.

It seems likely that Philastus Hurlbut influenced the selection, the language, and the content of the 1833 Spalding testimonials. This fact should trouble believers in the Spalding theory of Book of Mormon authorship.

Spalding Family Testimony

When Solomon Spalding lived in Conneaut, Ohio, John and Martha Spalding were not his only relatives who lived there. His brother, Josiah Spalding, lived with Solomon at the time he began writing his manuscript. In 1855, Josiah authored a short sketch of his brother's life.[230] Although written twenty-two years after the Hurlbut statements and over forty years after the events he describes, it is significant for several reasons. First, it represents testimony from another member of the Spalding family. Second, Josiah had heard rumors that the manuscript might have been a source for the Book of Mormon and seems to have believed them, but his actual acquaintance with Mormonism was minimal. "I never saw the Mormon Bible but once, and then only for a minute, no time to examine it. I have but little knowledge of 'Mormonism.'" Third, in his sketch, he describes his brother's novel "Manuscript Found" in terms that clearly refer to "Manuscript Story," even describing elements in the story not mentioned by Howe. Other elements, such as the words *Lehi, Nephi, Nephite, Lamanite, Moroni,*

227. Howe to Smith, 26 July 1881, in Shook, *True Origin of the Book of Mormon,* 75–76.

228. E. L. Kelley interview with Howe, August 1883, in *Public Discussion,* 83.

229. Howe statement, 8 April 1885, Deming File.

230. Josiah Spalding statement, 6 January 1855, Eastford [Connecticut], in Samuel J. Spalding, *Spalding Memorial: A Genealogical History of Edward Spalding of Massachusetts Bay, and His Descendants* (Boston: Mudge & Son, 1872), 160–62.

and *Zarahemla* and the phrases *I Nephi* and *and it came to pass* are not mentioned.

The Josiah Spalding statement thus provides a good check against the Hurlbut statements since it gives a picture of what descriptions of Spalding's work might have looked like without Hurlbut's coloring. The following is an extract from Josiah Spalding's letter:

> In the town where he lived, which I expect is now called Salem, Ohio, there is the appearance of an ancient fort, and near by a large mound, which, when opened, was found to contain human bones. These things give it the appearance of its being inhabited by a civilized people. These appearances furnished a topic of conversation among the people. My brother told me that a young man told him that he had a wonderful dream. He dreamed that he himself (if I recollect right) opened a great mound, where there were human bones. There he found a written history that would answer the inquiry respecting the civilized people that once inhabited that country until they were destroyed by the savages. This story suggested the idea of writing a novel merely for amusement. The title of this novel, I think, was "Historical Novel," or "Manuscript Found." This novel is the history contained in the manuscript found. The author of it he brings from the Old World, but from what nation I do not recollect, I think not a Jew; nor do I recollect how long since, but I think before the Christian Era. He was a man of superior learning suited to that day. He went to sea, lost his point of compass, and finally landed on the American shore, I think near the mouth of the Mississippi River. There he reflects most feelingly on what he suffered, his present condition and future prospects; he likewise makes some lengthy remarks on astronomy and philosophy, which I should think would agree in sentiment and style with very ancient writings. He then started and travelled a great distance through a wilderness country inhabited by savages, until he came to a country where the inhabitants were civilized, cultivated their land, and had a regular form of government which was

> at war with the savages. There I left him and never saw him nor his writings any more. He soon after moved to Pittsburg, in Pennsylvania, where he lived awhile and then moved farther, to a place where he died. His widow then returned to the State of New York, and lived there awhile and then came to Connecticut. She informed me, if I recollect right, that my brother continued his history of the civilized nation and the progress of the war until the triumph of the savages to the destruction of the civilized government.[231]

John and Martha Spalding described one manuscript, which they called "Manuscript Found." Matilda Davison likewise described only one manuscript and claims that it was this same manuscript that was taken to the printer in Pittsburgh for possible consideration and then returned to the trunk in New York until it was entrusted to Hurlbut. She identified it as "Manuscript Found." Josiah Spalding also speaks only of one manuscript, which matches the content of "Manuscript Story." He also called it "Manuscript Found."

Although they advanced the claim that "Manuscript Found" was not "Manuscript Story," why did Hurlbut or Howe never solicit or obtain additional testimony from the Spalding family in support of that claim? In fact, with the exception of the very late testimony of Matilda Spalding McKinstry following the rediscovery of "Manuscript Story," *all* Spalding family members who left firsthand testimony—John, Martha, Matilda, and Josiah—mention *only one* Spalding manuscript on ancient America and they all refer to it as "Manuscript Found." This supports the conclusion that "Manuscript Found" and "Manuscript Story" were in fact one and the same.

Religious Material and the Book of Mormon

In their statements published by E. D. Howe, former Spalding neighbors claimed that Spalding's manuscript was identical or nearly identical to the historical parts of the Book of Mormon but that the Book of Mormon contained religious material that was not found in

231. Josiah Spalding statement, 6 January 1855, in Spalding, *Spalding Memorial,* 161.

Spalding's novel. John Spalding asserted that the Book of Mormon "is the same as my brother Solomon wrote, *with the exception of the religious matter.*"[232] John Miller claimed that he found in the Book of Mormon "the writings of Solomon Spalding, from beginning to end, but *mixed up with scripture and other religious matter,* which I did not meet with in the 'Manuscript Found.'"[233] Aaron Wright claimed that Spalding's story read just "as it is given in the Book of Mormon, *excepting the religious matter.*"[234] An 1839 statement attributed to Spalding's widow claimed that the Book of Mormon was "an historical romance," plagiarized from her late husband, "with the addition of *a few pious expressions and extracts from the sacred Scriptures.*"[235]

For those familiar with the Book of Mormon, however, such descriptions are extremely problematic. Attempting to explain these statements, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick claim that "the witnesses probably meant that *A Manuscript Found* did not repeat the lengthy portions of Isaiah or the larger part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which can be found in *The Book of Mormon*" (p. 88). But it is not merely a question of the citation of a few biblical passages or the words found in Jesus's sermon at the temple. Biblical language and themes *permeate* the Book of Mormon text even in its so-called "historical" sections. And where does one draw the line between religious and nonreligious material in the Book of Mormon? Not only do Book of Mormon prophets quote from Isaiah, Jesus, and Malachi, but there are also many allusions to biblical prophets and their teachings that are not explicitly stated. What about dreams, visions and revelations, prayers, sermons and doctrinal teachings, descriptions of ordinances?

Both Latter-day Saint and non–Latter-day Saint critics of the Spalding theory have discussed the problematic nature of this claim. In an 1883 rebuttal to the Spalding theory, Latter-day Saint George Reynolds set out the nature of the problem:

232. John Spalding, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 280, emphasis added.
233. Miller, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 283, emphasis added.
234. Wright, in Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 284, emphasis added.
235. Davison, "Origin of the 'Book of Mormon,'" emphasis added.

Persons unacquainted with the contents of the Book of Mormon . . . have suggested that Solomon Spaulding wrote the historical portion . . . and that Joseph Smith or somebody else added the religious portion. To those who have read the Book of Mormon, this hypothesis is supremely ridiculous.

An objector to the Bible might, with equal consistency, assert that somebody wrote the historical portion of the Old and New Testaments, and somebody else, after the historical portion was all written, introduced the religious teachings. One is as impossible as the other. Every one who knows anything of the Book of Mormon knows that the narrative of events grows out of and is inseparably connected with the religious idea. The book opens with the statement that Lehi was a prophet, bearing Jehovah's unwelcome message of destruction to the inhabitants of the sin-seared city of Jerusalem. They rejected and persecuted him. By divine command he fled with his family into the wilderness and was led by that same inspiratian to the American continent. The reason why the Lord thus delivered him was, that he might raise up to Himself a people that would serve Him. He covenanted to give Lehi and his posterity this most precious land as their inheritance if they kept His commandments. How they fulfilled His law, how they prospered when obedient, how they suffered when disobedient, is the burden of the story of the writers of the Book of Mormon. It is the main idea to which all others are incidental, the controlling thought around which all others concentrate; it is the life of the whole record, the golden thread running through all its pages, which gives consistency to all its parts. A man might just as well attempt to write the gospel of St. Matthew and leave out all references to the Lord Jesus Christ, as write the Book of Mormon without its religious theory and teachings.

The creature who invented the idea of the dual authorship of this book must have imagined that the doctrinal portion was dropped in by lumps or clumsily inserted between differ-

> ent historical epochs. It is true there are places where liberal extracts from the Bible are quoted, and if these were all, there might be some semblance of consistency in the supposition. But it is not so, the doctrinal and historical portions are, as a general thing, so intermingled and blended that neither could be withdrawn without destroying the sense of the other. If it were possible to conceive of the amalgamation of two separate documents—one religious and the other historical—it would be much easier to believe that the doctrinal portions were written first and that the historical ideas were afterwards filled in; for, as before mentioned, the historical narrative is but secondary and tributary to the religious idea. But this would not support the theory of the Spauldingites; it would, in fact, entirely upset all their arguments for the reason that they claim that the "Manuscript Found," a historical romance of an idolatrous people, be it remembered, was written by Spaulding not later than 1812, while the Book of Mormon was not published by Joseph Smith until 1830, consequently such an arrangement would be fatal to their hypothesis.[236]

Following the recovery of "Manuscript Story," James Fairchild, president of Oberlin College, observed:

> The "Book of Mormon" is permeated in every page and paragraph with religious and Scriptural ideas. It is first and foremost a religious book, and the contrast between it and the supposed manuscript must have been very striking to have led five of these witnesses to call this difference to mind and mention it, after the lapse of twenty years and more. . . . Now it is difficult—almost impossible, to believe that the religious sentiments of the "Book of Mormon" were wrought into interpolation. They are of the original tissue and substance of the document, and a man as self-reliant and smart as Sidney Rigdon, with a superabundant gift of tongue and every form of utterance, would never have accepted this servile task. . . .

236. Reynolds, *Myth of the "Manuscript Found,"* 95–96.

> He had a gift of speech which would have made the style distasteful and impossible to him.[237]

George Gibson, a critic of the Latter-day Saints, noted of the Spalding manuscript in 1886:

> The Oberlin manuscript has no moral or religious purpose or matter, and the original *Manuscript Found,* according to almost uniform testimony, was devoid of the religious element. From a literary point of view, it would be hard to conceive of the sterility of the *Book of Mormon,* if divested of its religious purpose. Its purpose, its literary garb, the very warp and woof of the entire work are, essentially and intrinsically, religious. The events all hang on moral and religious conduct, and to say, as the affidavits in 1833–4 do, that the *Book of Mormon* resembles the original Spaulding story as remembered by witnesses, except in its religious part, is obviously a fatal admission.[238]

According to German historian Eduard Meyer,

> The significant fact is that all the witnesses said Spaulding's work had no religious content. The Book of Mormon is nothing but religion; if one were to remove the religious content, the whole would collapse. Even the framework of the action is filled with religious tendencies and is connected with the religious problems which the book would answer. In other words: if we discount the part of the work which is certainly Joseph Smith's, practically nothing else remains.[239]

Fawn Brodie wrote in 1945:

> It is significant that five of Hurlbut's witnesses were careful to except the "religious" matter of the Book of Mormon as not contained in the Spaulding manuscript, and the oth-

237. Fairchild, "Manuscript of Solomon Spaulding and the Book of Mormon," 197–98.

238. Gibson, "The Origin of a Great Delusion," 214.

239. Meyer, *Origin and History of the Mormons,* 29, emphasis in original.

> ers stated that "the historical parts" were derived from the Spaulding story. The narrative Hurlbut found had no religious matter whatever, but the Book of Mormon was permeated with religious ideas. It was first and foremost a religious book. The theology could not have been wrought by interpolation, since practically every historical event was motivated either by Satan or the Lord.[240]

The late anti-Mormon researcher Wesley Walters, to whom the authors dedicate this most recent book, observed:

> According to the older Spalding theory, based on the extant testimony, while Spalding's novel may have had some religious content, it is Rigdon who is credited with adding most of the religious material. If one looks at the content of the alleged Spalding portion [of the Book of Mormon], however, he notices that nearly the entire material is religious in nature. It speaks of there being a "church" at Jerusalem about 600 B.C., writes approving of being a "visionary man," portrays New Testament Christianity as being well known in the Old Testament period, and even depicts Christianity as being established in America before the arrival of the Europeans. These are some of the main features of early Mormonism, and if regarded as Spalding's work it would make Spalding rather than Smith or Rigdon the originator of the religious aspects of Mormonism. This is not the impression one gets from reading the early descriptions by witnesses who claimed to have heard Spalding's alleged manuscript read.[241]

The notion that the Book of Mormon was produced by simply grafting a few religious elements onto an essentially secular story is implausible.

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240. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 449.

241. Wesley P. Walters, review of *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* by Davis, Scales, and Cowdrey, *Contemporary Christianity* (Winter 1977–78), cited in Tanner and Tanner, *Did Spalding Write the Book of Mormon?* 32.

Questions of Style and Ability

The Joseph Smith Enigma

It is also highly unlikely that Joseph Smith, let alone Solomon Spalding, was capable of writing anything like the Book of Mormon. In 1948, James Black wrote:

> The historiographer's admission that Smith was "but poorly educated" introduces us to what must be considered as the only real problem in Mormonism, viz. how an ill-educated man like Joseph Smith could have invented such an elaborate system of rules and ideas, with many interesting historical references, ingenious speculations, and imaginative flights, and moreover how he could have expounded them in a style of writing apparently foreign to his ordinary speech and range of culture. His own followers regard this interesting fact as the best proof that his work was indeed a "revelation" in a real sense; for they freely admit, even boast, that his usual level of knowledge and speech was low and mean. On the other hand the charge of his enemies, that the whole system is merely a clever invention and fraud, does not touch the problem; for this charge does not explain, and cannot explain, how such an ill-educated man could produce so elaborate a system. This is a bigger problem than most people imagine. It requires an exceedingly able scholar to foist a highly wrought-out fraud that lasts for over a century upon the public, however credulous. The mere credulity of the people in any case does not explain the matter; for the elaborate system, expressed in fairly dignified language, and with some interesting historical speculations, still remains unexplained. . . .
>
> Mere "fraud" and clever "invention" only aggravate the problem, for this makes Smith to be much more accomplished than either friends or foes believed.[242]

242. James Black, *New Forms of the Old Faith* (London: Nelson and Sons, 1948), 247–48.

Sixty years later, the problem described by Black has become not less but more of an enigma since subsequent research on the Book of Mormon has revealed a book not less but far more sophisticated than either critics or Latter-day Saints ever imagined.[243] Unless one is willing to accept the Spalding explanation or some similar theory, one has to explain not only *if* he could have, but *how* Joseph Smith could have written such a book, a point upon which critics have never agreed. The believing Latter-day Saint, of course, has an explanation that nicely circumvents that puzzle. "The Book of Mormon," wrote B. H. Roberts nearly a hundred years ago, "so long as the truth respecting it is unbelieved, will remain to the world an enigma, a veritable literary Sphinx, challenging the inquiry and speculations of the learned. But to those who in simple faith will accept it for what it is, a revelation from God, it will minister spiritual consolation, and by its plainness and truth draw men into closer communion with God."[244]

"That there has been, from the beginning of the imposture," wrote Howe, "a more talented knave behind the curtain, is evident to our mind, at least; but whether he will ever be clearly, fully and positively *unvailed* and brought into open day-light, may of course be doubted."[245] The whole rationale behind the Spalding theory originally was to account for the complexities in the Book of Mormon text. Joseph Smith, it was argued, lacked the ability to produce such a work; therefore, there must have been someone with greater ability and sophistication who was responsible. In 1836 a writer explained: "Not believing that it was discovered in the earth by the help of an angel,

243. For a few representative examples, see Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997); Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephite Kingship Reconsidered," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson,* ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 153–89; Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch, eds., *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002); Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World,* 191–243; John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper, "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 40–51; and Thomas A. Wayment, "The Hebrew Text of Alma 7:11," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14/1 (2005): 98–103.

244. B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 3:406.

245. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 278, emphasis in original.

as its friends pretended, I presumed it was written by some person of more literature and mental improvement, than Jo Smith, the professed finder, and prophet of the deluded sect, is said to be even by his dupes."[246] "It is agreed on all hands," said another in 1837, "that Smith is too ignorant and stupid to have originated such a book. This his followers readily admit and glory in it as an evidence that he must have been divinely inspired. But others regard it as a proof of nothing more than that the book was indited by some other man."[247]

In 1839, a writer for the Boston *Christian Register* wrote approvingly of the Spalding theory because

> it accounts most satisfactorily for the existence of the book, a fact which heretofore it has been *difficult to explain*. It was difficult to imagine how a work containing so many indications of being the production of a cultivated mind, should be connected with a knavery so impudent, and a superstition so gross as that which must have characterized the founders of this pretended religious sect.[248]

In 1840, Reverend John Clark wrote: "The origin of this volume—how it came into being—is a grave question. It is quite certain that neither Jo Smith nor Martin Harris had intelligence or literary qualification adequate to the production of a work of this sort. Who then was its author?" Like many other residents of Palmyra who believed the Book of Mormon a fraud, Clark had difficulty seeing Joseph Smith as responsible for its contents:

> The people of Palmyra, at the commencement of the printing of this book, only laughed at the ridiculousness of the thing, and wondered at the credulity of Harris. As the publication progressed, and the contents of the book began to be known, the conviction became general that there was an actor behind

246. "Mormonism," *Christian Register,* 24 December 1836.
247. "Author of the Book of Mormon," *Zion's Advocate,* 20 December 1837.
248. "The Mormon Bible," *Christian Register,* 4 May 1839, emphasis added.

> the scene, moving the machinery, of far higher intellectual qualifications than Smith or Harris.[249]

Theodore Schroeder, one of the most staunch advocates of the Spalding theory, insisted that "Joseph Smith, the nominal founder and first prophet of Mormonism, was probably too ignorant to have produced the volume unaided."[250] This is why it was important for Spalding proponents to emphasize from the beginning the learning of Spalding, who must be made to appear capable of the kind of sophistication found in the Book of Mormon. The strength of the theory, however, lay in the fact that the unbeliever did not have to prove it and the believer had no way to refute it. In 1901, according to William Linn:

> The most careful student of the career of Joseph Smith, Jr., and of his family and his associates, up to the year 1827, will fail to find any ground for the belief that he alone, or simply with their assistance, was capable of composing the Book of Mormon, crude in every sense as that work is. We must therefore accept, as do the Mormons, the statement that the text was divinely revealed to Smith, or must look for some directing hand behind the scene, which supplied the historical part and applied the theological. The "Spaulding manuscript" is believed to have furnished the basis of the historical part of the work.[251]

The question-begging at the heart of the various versions of the Spalding theory is captured in the following conversation, conducted in 1881 by William H. Kelley, an RLDS leader. In that interview Kelley asked Palmyra resident John Stafford, "If young Smith was as illiterate as you say, Doctor, how do you account for the Book of Mormon? 'Well, I can't; except that Sidney Rigdon was connected with them.'

249. John A. Clark, "Gleanings by the Way," *Episcopal Recorder,* 12 September 1840.

250. Theodore Schroeder, "The Origin of the Book of Mormon," *American Historical Magazine* 1/5 (September 1906): 380.

251. William A. Linn, *The Story of the Mormons: From the Date of Their Origin to the Year 1901* (London: Macmillan, 1902), 50.

What makes you think he was connected with them? 'Because I can't account for the Book of Mormon any other way.'"[252]

Spalding's Literary Abilities

Although Spalding proponents have argued that "Manuscript Story" was not "Manuscript Found," its recovery in 1884 (and its subsequent publication) made this proposal, at least for many critics, no longer plausible. Spalding theorists such as Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick now must demonstrate that "Manuscript Story" was only a crude first effort at producing fiction and that Spalding wrote another, much different book. Yet, as many critics of the revised Spalding theory have observed, the existence of a lengthy sample of Spalding's actual writing provides a clear picture of Spalding's literary abilities. "Whatever may be said of Mr. Spaulding's spelling, diction, and sentential structure, his invention is even worse. His plot—if plot it may be called—lacks prospectiveness. Not once does he excite suspense as to the outcome of any situation. Indeed, his characters are so wooden that the reader can feel no interest in them whatever." The hero and heroine Elseon and Lamesa are "poor saw dust figures."[253]

> It is not possible for the author of the crude story . . . to have changed his style to one so totally unlike it as that of the Book of Mormon. On this point no bolstering by false affidavits will count: there are the two styles side by side. The transition from one to the other would not have been possible, even to the versatility of a Shakespeare, without leaving some trace of similarity in name, geographical allusion, diction, phraseology, or imagery. Yet this very miracle of transformation, which, as every scholar will admit, would not be possible even to a master of style, [Spalding theorists] would have us believe possible to a mind all but fossilized in its sterile rigidity,—a

252. John Stafford interview with William H. Kelley, March 1881, in *Saints Herald* 28/11 (1 June 1881): 167.

253. Nels Lars Nelson, "The Dictionary of Slander," *Mormon Point of View* 1/1 (1 January 1904): 99.

style whose very sentential structure proclaims almost an entire absence of versatility![254]

We have a sufficient arc of Mr. Spaulding's authorship to determine accurately his literary orbit; and as before suggested, ten thousand affidavits could not bring that orbit within the circle of the Book of Mormon. The proof of this, for any sane man, is the unbiased reading of both books. As no scintilla of reliable evidence exists that Spaulding ever wrote another book, and as the proof is overwhelming that he could not, from sheer want of literary power, have written the Book of Mormon,—as, in short, there was no Spaulding's story for Rigdon to steal and doctor up.[255]

"Manuscript Story" is certainly his "first effort"—one would dislike reading anything earlier and worse from his pen—and gives very poor promise of improvement as a storyteller, or originator of readable narrations, since at this time, Spaulding was certainly between 48 and 49 years of age; quite too old "to learn a new trade." The construction of his plot, indeed, shows very unhopeful signs of ability to do more extended work, or to produce any writing as elaborate as the "Book of Mormon." He was evidently, also, a slow and laborious writer, constantly erasing and rewriting: which facts show that this Oberlin manuscript was his "first draft."[256]

The author of this story is not a trained writer, nor even one of experience in producing "copy." But, if this work was produced after 1809, when Spaulding was 48 years of age, there is very small chance that his talents so improved in the remaining seven years of his life that he would have developed ability to produce so highly elaborated a work as the Book of Mormon. His first book shows no traces of such talents, and it was rather late in life to develop them; also, there was very

254. Nelson, "Dictionary of Slander," 165–66.
255. Nelson, "Dictionary of Slander," 167–68.
256. Webb, *Case against Mormonism,* 52–53.

> little time left to him. He must have worked night and day. Small wonder he "failed in business," also that he died at the comparatively early age of fifty-five![257]

Such has been the conclusion of many critics of the Spalding theory, both Latter-day Saints as well as non–Latter-day Saints. "If there was another manuscript," wrote Fawn Brodie,

> one might reasonably expect stylistic similarities between the Book of Mormon and the extant manuscript, 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.[258]

Secular critic Ernest Taves wrote in 1984:

> It has been suggested that there was another Spaulding work, that the manuscript Hurlbut unearthed was not what everyone was referring to as *Manuscript Found*. This is, of course, a possibility, but the question might seem, at first glance, irrelevant. If there was another Spaulding manuscript would it not be stylistically similar to the one Hurlbut found, and thus have little in common with the *Book of Mormon*? Only a skillful writer indeed—a gifted parodist, for example—can significantly alter his way of writing. The signature is there, as with a thumbprint. Whatever else can be said of Joseph Smith and Solomon Spaulding, neither was a skillful writer. It suf-

257. Webb, *Real Mormonism,* 426.

258. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 449–50; see John Gee, "The Wrong Type of Book," in *Echoes and Evidences,* 307–29.

> fices to read a page or two of Joseph Smith and of Spaulding to understand that those pages were written by different writers. The same would probably apply to any other manuscript written by Spaulding.
>
> Hurlbut must have understood, and with great disappointment, that the manuscript he found was, in respect of supporting his thesis, worthless.[259]

There is some indication that even Hurlbut, for all his work, was not entirely satisfied with the Spalding theory. After his death in 1884, his wife, Maria, said her husband "spent about six months time and a good deal of money looking up the Spaulding manuscript and other evidence, but he was disappointed in not finding what he wanted. This was the reason he turned the whole thing over to Howe. He never was satisfied with what he found, and while on his death-bed he would have given everything he had in the world could he have been certain there was ever a 'Manuscript Found,' as claimed, similar to the Book of Mormon."[260]

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259. Taves, *Trouble Enough,* 54, emphasis in original. Empirical support for this view is found in wordprint studies of the Book of Mormon. The pioneering work in this area was done by Wayne A. Larsen, Alvin C. Rencher, and Tim Layton, "Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? An Analysis of Wordprints," *BYU Studies* 20/3 (1980): 225–51. A careful and important critique of this article was offered by D. James Croft, "Book of Mormon 'Wordprints' Re-examined," *Sunstone,* March–April 1981, 15–21. Mindful of the criticisms, and initially skeptical whether objective measurement could show who did or did not write a religious document like the Book of Mormon, John Hilton and the so-called "Berkeley Group," which included a Jew and an agnostic, developed and refined a more reliable model for wordprint analysis. "By using a new wordprint measuring methodology which has been verified," they show that "it is statistically indefensible to propose Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery or Solomon Spaulding as the author of the 30,000 words from the Book of Mormon manuscript texts attributed to Nephi and Alma. Additionally these two Book of Mormon writers have wordprints unique to themselves and measure statistically independent from each other in the same fashion that other uncontested authors do." John L. Hilton, "On Verifying Wordprint Studies: Book of Mormon Authorship," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited,* ed. Reynolds, 241; see also G. Bruce Schaalje, John L. Hilton, and John B. Archer, "Comparative Power of Three Author-Attribution Techniques for Differentiating Authors," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/1 (1997): 47–63.

260. Maria S. Hurlbut statement, 5 February 1884, in *Public Discussion,* 135.

Early Conspiracy Theories Implicating Sidney Rigdon

The earliest newspaper accounts attributed the Book of Mormon entirely to Joseph Smith. They often also picture it as part of Joseph's moneymaking scheme. That Smith alone was responsible for the contents of the Book of Mormon was emphatically stated by Alexander Campbell in 1831: "There never was a book more evidently written by *one set of fingers,* nor more certainly conceived in *one cranium* since the first book appeared in the human language, than this same book. If I could swear to any man's voice, face, or person, assuming different names, I could swear that this book was written by *one man.* And as *Joseph Smith* is a very ignorant man and is called the author on the title page, I cannot doubt for a single moment but that he is the sole author and proprietor of it."[261]

Fawn Brodie adopted Campbell's 1831 position. The tendency of most late twentieth-century critics of the Book of Mormon has been to advance some version of this explanation. But months before Campbell made his 1831 statement, other critics of the Book of Mormon began to express doubts that Smith alone could have been responsible for its production. Oliver Cowdery and other missionaries passed through Ohio and testified of the Book of Mormon; some wondered if Oliver might possess the requisite abilities: "The only opinion we have of the origin of this Golden Bible is, that Mr. Cowdry and Mr. Smith, the reputed author, have taken the old Bible to keep up a train of circumstances, and by altering names and language have produced the string of jargon called the 'Book of Mormon,' with the intention of making money by the sale of their Books; and being aware that they would not sell unless an excitement and curiosity could be raised in the public mind."[262] In early January 1831, gossipmonger Abner Cole, who edited the *Palmyra Reflector,* expressed impatience with the quality of information available on the origin of the Book of Mormon. Unable to accept the Prophet's account of its coming forth, he was anxious to provide another. "We have long been waiting, with *considerable anxiety,* to see some of our

261. Campbell, "Delusions," 93, emphasis added and deleted.

262. "The Golden Bible," *Cleveland Herald,* 25 November 1830; reprinted in the *Ashtabula Journal,* 4 December 1830.

contemporaries attempt to explain the immediate causes, which produced that anomoly in religion and literature, which has most strikingly excited the curiosity of our friends at a distance, generally known under the cognomen of the Book of Mormon, or the Gold Bible. The few notices heretofore given in the public prints," Cole lamented, "are quite vague and uncertain, and throw but a faint light on the subject."[263] In order to satisfy the demand of his readership, Cole wrote a series of articles placing Joseph Smith in the mold of a "juggler," "false prophet," and "money digger." Cole also claimed that a locally notorious "vagabond fortune-teller by the name of Walters" had once been an associate of Joseph Smith and others in money-digging. He further noted that some local residents were of the opinion that it was Walters who "first suggested to Smith the idea of finding a book."[264]

Cole did not claim that Walters wrote the Book of Mormon or supplied any of its contents, but rather that some of the locals believed that Walters might have "suggested" the idea to Joseph Smith. In an article published in March 1831, David Burnett suggested that there must have been "some person behind the curtain" for whom Joseph Smith was merely a suitable "tool," but he gave no indication as to who he thought that might be.[265] In another article, A. W. Benton thought Joseph Smith could only have produced a work like the Book of Mormon "by the help of others more skilled in the ways of iniquity than himself."[266] Fortunately for those anxiously seeking an alternative explanation for the Book of Mormon, a seemingly suitable candidate soon arrived on the scene. By late 1830, after the publication of the Book of Mormon, Sidney Rigdon, then a prominent Campbellite preacher from western Ohio, learned of the book and was baptized in Ohio. He then traveled to New York to meet Joseph Smith before returning to Kirtland, Ohio, where he would quickly become an important church leader.

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263. "Gold Bible," *The Reflector,* Palmyra, New York, 6 January 1831.

264. "Gold Bible, No. 5," *The Reflector,* Palmyra, New York, 28 February 1831.

265. David S. Burnett, "Something New.—The Golden Bible," *Evangelical Inquirer,* Dayton, Ohio, March 1831, 218.

266. A. W. Benton, "Mormonites," *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* (Utica, NY), 9 April 1831.

In what appears to have been a mixture of fact, rumor, and speculation, James Gordon Bennett proposed that a preacher named "Henry Rangdon" may have been the chief conspirator in the Book of Mormon enterprise.[267] "Henry Rangdon" might have been a badly garbled reference to Sidney Rigdon. If so, Bennett's remark is the first setting out of a theory that has received wide circulation. It shows that some early critics wanted to link some more learned person to Book of Mormon origins and that Rigdon seemed a good candidate. In *Mormonism Unvailed,* Howe indicated that "an opinion has prevailed, to a considerable extent, that Rigdon has been the *Iago,* the prime mover, of the whole conspiracy. Of this, however, we have no positive proof; but many circumstances have carried a *suspicious* appearance; and further developments may establish the fact."[268] This was, of course, simply an opinion. There was little evidence to support it, but it is obvious in his writing that Howe and his supporters and those who backed Hurlbut desperately wanted to show that Rigdon was in some way responsible for the Book of Mormon. So when Hurlbut was employed in 1833 by Grandison Newell and other Ohio anti-Mormons to collect testimony on Spalding's manuscript, there was also the necessity of finding or forcing a connection to Rigdon. Whether or not Hurlbut found one is a key question.

In chapters 4–6 (pp. 99–193) of *The Spalding Enigma,* an attempt is made to outline Sidney Rigdon's supposed role as chief villain in the Spalding conspiracy. In this section the authors marshal what they consider evidence for Rigdon's presence in Pittsburgh in the years previous to his becoming a Campbellite minister. It was during this period that, they believe, Rigdon somehow must have learned of Spalding's "Manuscript Found" and that the first seeds of an eventual Gold Bible conspiracy were sown. They argue that the origins of this claim can be traced to Mr. and Mrs. Spalding, thus predating the actions of Hurlbut. "Although Rigdon had been publicly suspected as early as 1831 of having been a shady behind-the-scenes player in

267. "Mormonism—Religious Fanaticism—Church and State Party," *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer,* 31 August 1831.

268. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 100, emphasis in original.

the production of *The Book of Mormon,* by all indications it was the former Mrs. Spalding's testimony that first connected him with the removal of her late husband's manuscript from the Pattersons' shop" (p. 58). As evidence for this, the authors reference an article published in the Palmyra *Wayne Sentinel* on 20 December 1833.

> Doct. P. Hurlbert, of Kirtland, Ohio, who has been engaged for some time in different parts of this state, but chiefly in this neighborhood, on behalf of his fellow-townsmen, in the pursuit of facts and information concerning the origin and design of the *Book of Mormon,* which, to the surprize of all in this region who know the character of the leaders in the bungling imposition, seems already to have gained multitudes of believers in various parts of the country, requests us to say, that he has succeeded in accomplishing the object of his mission, and that an authentic history of the whole affair will shortly be given to the public. The original manuscript of the Book was written some thirty years since, by a respectable clergyman, now deceased, whose name we are not permitted to give. It was designed to be published as a romance, but the author died soon after it was written; and hence the plan failed. The pretended religious character of the work has been superadded by some more modern hand—believed to be the notorious Rigdon. These particulars have been derived by Dr. Hurlbert from the widow of the author of the original manuscript.[269]

Since the article attributes the connection of Rigdon and the manuscript to Spalding's widow, the authors claim that it was she and not Hurlbut who first suggested the link. There are, though, several problems with this claim. First of all, Davison is not speaking for herself. This is the *Wayne Sentinel* reporting what Hurlbut had "requested" them to print. So it is really thirdhand. Second, if reported accurately, the article would suggest that by late 1833 Davison had come to associate Rigdon with the Spalding manuscript; yet other questions remain. Did Davison

269. "The Mormon Mystery Developed," *Wayne Sentinel,* Palmyra, New York (20 December 1833).

volunteer the idea about Rigdon herself or was it first suggested to her in her interview with Hurlbut? Or is it possible that others first suggested Rigdon's involvement even before Hurlbut arrived?

In 1880, Matilda Spalding McKinstry recalled the events leading up to her mother's 1839 letter as follows:

> We heard, not long after she came to live with me—I do not remember just how long,—something of Mormonism, and the report that it had been taken from my father's "Manuscript Found"; and then came to us direct an account of the Mormon meeting at Conneaut, Ohio, and that, on one occasion when the Mormon Bible was read there in public, my father's brother, John Spaulding, Mr. Lake, and many other persons who were present, at once recognized its similarity to "The Manuscript Found," which they had heard read years before by my father in the same town. There was a great deal of talk and a great deal published at this time about Mormonism all over the country. I believe it was in 1834 that a man named Hurlburt came to my house at Monson to see my mother, who told us that he had been sent by a committee to procure the "Manuscript Found," written by the Reverend Solomon Spaulding, so as to compare it with the Mormon Bible. He presented a letter to my mother from my uncle, William H. Sabine, of Onondaga Valley, in which he requested her to loan this manuscript to Hurlburt, as he (my uncle) was desirous "to uproot" (as he expressed it) "this Mormon fraud." Hurlburt represented that he had been a convert to Mormonism, but had given it up, and through the "Manuscript Found" wished to expose its wickedness. My mother was careful to have me with her in all the conversations she had with Hurlburt, who spent a day at my house. She did not like his appearance and mistrusted his motives; but, having great respect for her brother's wishes and opinions, she reluctantly consented to his request.[270]

270. Matilda Spalding McKinstry's statement, 3 April 1880, in "The Book of Mormon," *Scribner's Monthly* 20/4 (August 1880): 615.

The chronology of events described by McKinstry is informative. *First,* she says they heard something about Mormonism and "the report that it had been taken from my father's 'Manuscript Found.'" *Then,* after the initial report, "came to us direct an account of the Mormon meeting at Conneaut, Ohio." After they heard these initial reports, *then* Hurlbut visited their home with a letter from her uncle, William Sabine, asking Spalding's elderly widow to lend Hurlbut the manuscript in order to uproot the Mormon fraud. McKinstry's 1880 statement suggests that by late 1833 Davison and her daughter had already become familiar with reports suggesting this relationship and that they had been told by relatives and others in whom they had confidence that there was a connection between Rigdon and the Spalding manuscript and that they should give Hurlbut their support. This raises the question as to whether the idea of connecting Rigdon with Spalding's manuscript did not originate with Davison but was first suggested by others.

In his 1855 statement, Josiah Spalding stated that some time after his brother's widow had moved to Connecticut she spoke of a man who was employed with a printer in Pittsburgh who expressed an interest in her husband's manuscript and that this man "was afterwards known to be a leading Mormon," although he could not recall the name of the person to whom she referred.[271] Certainly, by late 1833 Davison had come to believe that Rigdon was involved, but since Josiah did not say when she said this, it is impossible to know whether it was before 1833 or after that time when her views connecting Rigdon to the Spalding manuscript are documented.

The only other evidence that Davison may have expressed such a view earlier than 1833 comes from a late statement by Ann Treadwell Redfield, who claimed to have lived with Sabine from 1818 to November 1819, while Davison and her daughter lived there. In 1880, Redfield claimed that Davison had once told her that she believed Sidney Rigdon must have made a copy of her late husband's manuscript "while

271. Josiah Spalding statement, 6 January 1855, in Spalding, *Spalding Memorial,* 161–62.

it was in Patterson's printing-office, in Pittsburg."[272] Redfield said she never saw Spalding's widow after "her marriage to Mr. Davison of Hartwick," and so this could be taken as evidence that Davison saw a Rigdon connection by that time. Assuming that Redfield was not prevaricating, it is also possible that after the passage of sixty-two years she may have confused some earlier discussion about the manuscript in 1819 with published reports or rumors of Davison's 1839 letter in the press that received wide circulation at that time.

The Spalding Enigma contains another set of later statements suggesting that Solomon Spalding told former neighbors in Amity, Pennsylvania, that Rigdon may have copied or stolen his manuscript. These include testimony from Joseph Miller Sr. and Redick McKee (pp. 122–27). Miller made statements in 1869 and 1879 and two in 1882. In the 1879 and 1882 statements, Miller explains that Spalding told him before his death that Sidney Rigdon had worked in the printing office where his manuscript was taken and that he thought that Rigdon had stolen it. In his earliest statement in 1869, however, Miller makes no mention of this, "From what I know of Mr. Spalding's *Manuscript* and *The Book of Mormon,* I firmly believe that Joseph Smith, *by some means,* got possession of Mr. Spalding's *Manuscript,* and possibly made some changes in it and called it *The Book of Mormon*."[273] There is *no mention of Rigdon* or his involvement with the Pittsburgh printer, nor is there any suggestion that Spalding said Rigdon had stolen it. Redick McKee also gave statements in 1869, 1879, and 1886. In the 1879 and 1886 statements McKee says that Spalding had spoken of Rigdon as an employee or as being in some way associated with Patterson's printing business. Spalding told him that Patterson had lost the manuscript while it was at the printer, causing Spalding to be suspicious that Rigdon was responsible. However, the claim of both

272. Ann Treadwell Redfield statement, 17 June 1880, in Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism,* 241–42. Treadwell said she remembered hearing Mrs. Spalding talk about her late husband's manuscript, but it is not entirely clear from the statement if her comments about the widow's beliefs about Rigdon came from conversations with the widow in 1818–19 or from things she learned or heard from Sabine.

273. Joseph Miller Sr. statement, 26 March 1869, in the *Washington Reporter,* 8 April 1869; reprinted in *Historical Magazine* (August 1869): 68, emphasis added.

neighbors that Spalding's manuscript was stolen is inconsistent with the claims of Spalding's widow and daughter that it was returned by Patterson to Spalding. And, again, none of this occurs in McKee's 1869 testimony, in which he says that Mrs. Spalding took the manuscript with her when she moved.[274] While some elements in the Miller and McKee statements might reflect genuine recollections of Spalding, the convenient additions in the later statements cast doubt upon the accuracy of their claims about Rigdon. It is thus likely that Spalding never said such a thing.

The authors note that Rigdon was apparently a lover of books and while growing up read all the histories he could get his hands on. They assert that the only place Rigdon could have found and read books to satisfy his appetite for learning was in Pittsburgh. But is that really the only possibility? Might he not have borrowed books from friends or neighbors? Convinced that Rigdon could only have gratified his supposed appetite for books in Pittsburgh, they further suggest that he must have frequented R & J Patterson's printing establishment. The implication is that anyone who passed through Pittsburgh or made an occasional visit there would have visited the place. Are such assumptions justified? Did every traveler through Pittsburgh stop at R&J Patterson's?

In 1879, Rebecca Eichbaum provided a statement to Spalding-theory proponent Robert Patterson Jr. Eichbaum was the daughter of John Johnston, a postmaster in Pittsburgh, and the wife of William Eichbaum, who continued to serve in that capacity after her father retired. William was postmaster from 1822 to 1833, but Rebecca assisted her father as a clerk from 1811 to 1816, before she married. There she was often involved in sorting and distributing mail. In her 1879 statement Rebecca Eichbaum said she remembered many of the people who came in to retrieve their mail. These included, she said, Robert and Joseph Patterson, J. Harrison Lambdin, Silas Engles, Sidney Rigdon, and Solomon Spalding. "I remember that there was an evident intimacy between Lambdin and Rigdon. They very often came

274. Redick McKee statement, 14 April 1869, in Washington, Pennsylvania, *Reporter,* 21 April 1869.

to the office together." She said that while she did not know "what position, if any, Rigdon filled in Patterson's store or printing office," she was confident that Rigdon "was frequently, if not constantly, there for a large part of the time when I was clerk in the post-office." She said she remembered that Engles once told her, "Rigdon was always hanging around the printing-office."[275] She was describing people and events that were supposed to have taken place over sixty years earlier.

Partial support for Eichbaum's statement has been found in a list of unclaimed letters that had been held at the Pittsburgh post office for more than thirty days. Such lists were compiled and published in several newspapers. After surveying a list of such letters in the *Commonwealth* and *Statesmen* newspapers, Cowdrey, Vanick, and Davis located references to letters being held for several persons of interest, including Solomon Spalding, John Spalding, and Sidney Rigdon. Letters for Solomon Spalding are dated 30 April and 31 October 1813 and 30 June 1816, and for John and Solomon Spalding on 31 January 1815. Letters for Sidney Rigdon were dated 30 June 1816 and 31 August and 31 October 1818. Letters so dated were listed as having been unclaimed for at least thirty days at the Pittsburgh post office. This evidence gives partial support for Eichbaum's claim to have seen both Sidney Rigdon and Solomon Spalding in the Pittsburgh post office during the period from 1811 to 1816, showing that Rigdon likely did visit the post office in Pittsburgh on occasion to retrieve his mail during the same time that Spalding did the same thing. But while the authors must be commended for a good piece of detective work, they greatly exaggerate the implications of the find:

> The importance of this material cannot be overstated, for not only does it provide incontrovertible proof of Sidney Rigdon's presence in Pittsburgh well before 1821, but it places him there during the very time Solomon Spalding is known to have been involved with the Patterson brothers seeking publication of *A Manuscript Found*. At the same time, any question

275. Rebecca J. Eichbaum statement, 18 September 1879, in Boyd Crumrine, ed., *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: Everts, 1882), 433.

> of Mrs. Eichbaum's credibility is effectively laid aside by the fact that these new revelations firmly support her 1879 statement. (p. 137)

There are problems with this reasoning. First, although the letters show that both Spalding and Rigdon had unclaimed mail at the Pittsburgh post office (which is not really that surprising since Rigdon lived only a few miles away at the time), the letters do not show that the two ever met, nor do they provide support for Eichbaum's claim that Rigdon was intimately associated with Patterson's business before 1822. Eichbaum's important claims remain unsupported. Second, although some critics of the Spalding theory may have been wrong in claiming that Rigdon *never* went to Pittsburgh before 1822, Rigdon himself never denied visiting the place before 1822; he only denied that he resided there before that time. The most important question with the Eichbaum statement is not whether Rigdon visited Pittsburgh, but whether he was connected with R&J Patterson prior to 1822. That has not been demonstrated.

Red Herring or Wishful Thinking?

In 1839, in response to claims made by Matilda Davison that he had been closely associated with Patterson's Pittsburgh printing business at the time Spalding submitted his manuscript for consideration, Sidney Rigdon issued a strong statement denying any association with an alleged Spalding conspiracy. The authors argue that Rigdon lied in this statement about his past involvement with Patterson and that he therefore lacks credibility when denying knowledge of the Book of Mormon before his conversion in late 1830.

> There was no man by the name of Patterson, during my residence at Pittsburgh, who had a printing office; what might have been before I lived there I know not. Mr. Robert Patterson, I was told, had owned a printing office before I lived in that city, but had been unfortunate in business, and failed before my residence there. This Mr. Patterson, who was a Presbyterian preacher, I had a very slight acquaintance with during my

> residence in Pittsburgh. He was then acting under an agency, in the book and stationery business, and was the owner of no property of any kind, printing office or anything else, during the time I resided in the city. . . .
>
> Why was not the testimony of Mr. Patterson obtained to give force to this shameful tale of lies? The only reason is, that he was not a fit tool for them to work with; he would not lie for them; for, if he were called on, he would testify to what I have here said.[276]

Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick acknowledge evidence supporting Rigdon's claim not to have *resided* in Pittsburgh previous to 1822 (pp. 104–5), but, "of course, the question was not whether Rigdon had ever *lived* in the city, but whether he *frequented* it on a regular basis" (p. 104, emphasis in original). But since Rigdon only denied *residence* during that time, not visits, there is no evidence of deception.

In a brief history of Robert Patterson's printing activities (pp. 119–20), *The Spalding Enigma* notes that Reverend Robert Patterson Sr. (1773–1854) helped establish Patterson & Hopkins as a publisher and marketer of books on 14 June 1810. The connection with Hopkins was discontinued on 31 October 1812, at which time Robert's brother Joseph joined the venture and the name became R&J Patterson. Later, in January 1818, the business became R. Patterson & Lambdin, which lasted until February 1823, at which time the company collapsed. Robert Patterson then operated a small bookshop in town in association with Lambdin until Lambdin's death in 1825.

Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick consider the Patterson & Lambdin incarnation to still be a "printing office" because it printed an almanac in 1822, although they do not say if this was before or after Rigdon's move to the city. Rigdon took up residence in Pittsburgh in 1822 and, while in Pittsburgh, preached in close vicinity to the bookshop in 1823 and 1824. According to legal papers cited, Patterson & Lambdin did not officially collapse until February 1823. While Rigdon remembered that Patterson had a bookstore, he had no recollection of Patterson &

276. Rigdon, "Communications," 8 June 1839.

Lambdin having been a "printing office" during his residence. The authors suggest that, because Rigdon arrived in 1822, he must have been familiar with all this and therefore was lying when he claimed not to know a Patterson with a printing office during his Pittsburgh residence. They contend that Rigdon must have known about it when he resided in Pittsburgh and suggest, because Rigdon lived in Pittsburgh and preached there, that he had to have been familiar with these details and that he was being deliberately deceitful.

In her 1839 statement, Matilda Davison did not mention Patterson's first name. Following an argument posed by earlier Spalding researchers, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick cite several late statements suggesting that she may have been referring to Joseph Patterson rather than the older brother Robert and that it was this younger Patterson with whom Spalding actually met when submitting his manuscript for publication, rather than Robert. According to Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick, if Spalding investigators had only been able to locate Joseph Patterson, he would have confirmed Rigdon's involvement with Patterson's business. They claim that Sidney Rigdon knew that it was Joseph and not Robert who knew about the Spalding manuscript. In order to mislead investigators, Rigdon presumably fingered Robert Patterson as a possible source of information rather than Joseph. This, the authors claim, was a red herring to distract attention from Joseph Patterson.

> Sidney Rigdon, of course, could have known that Joseph Patterson was the knowledgeable brother and that Spalding's involvement with Robert had been minimal. When he read Eber Howe's account of Doctor Hurlbut's unproductive interview with Robert Patterson, Rigdon knew no one was likely to get anything damaging out of "this Mr. Patterson" because the man did not know anything. Five years later, while formulating his reply to Mrs. Davison's statement, he noted her mention of a "Mr. Patterson," first name not given, and the idea struck him. Now that Jonathan Lambdin and Silas Engles were both dead, and as Robert Patterson's name had already been connected with the Spalding Enigma, here was an excellent opportunity to plant a very large red herring. "*Why was*

> *not the testimony of Mr. Patterson obtained . . . for, if he were called on, he would testify to what I have here said,*" Rigdon thundered forth in righteous indignation—knowing full well that his saccharine invitation was intended to lead his would-be critics down that well known garden path. Joseph Patterson had long since left Pittsburgh, and Robert had little to tell. (p. 151, emphasis in original)

According to *The Spalding Enigma,* this red herring "was a truly brilliant maneuver, for with it he successfully managed to mislead every effort to investigate the Spalding Enigma to date" (p. 121). In fact, it represents Sidney Rigdon's "strongest and most artful effort to mislead his public" (p. 165).

Where, however, is the evidence that Joseph Patterson, had he been located, would have supported this theory? Since there is no way of proving that Joseph Patterson knew Rigdon or that he would have confirmed the claims connecting him with Spalding, this is merely a convenient and unproven supposition.

Of course, one very good reason for Rigdon to mention Robert Patterson is that he *knew* Robert Patterson, if only slightly, and *did not know* Joseph Patterson. The authors seem to think that Rigdon should have known him since he lived in Pittsburgh. In the July 1839 issue of his periodical the *Evangelist,* Walter Scott, a former associate of both Rigdon and Alexander Campbell, reprinted the Davison letter with apparent approval, but was doubtful of the claimed connection between Rigdon and Patterson. Although Davison had not mentioned Patterson's first name, Scott also assumed, just as Rigdon did in his letter to the *Quincy Whig,* that she had made reference to Robert Patterson.

> That Rigdon was ever connected with the printing office of Mr. Patterson or that this gentleman ever possessed a printing office in Pittsburgh, is unknown to me, although I lived there, and also know Mr. Patterson very well, who is a bookseller. But Rigdon was a Baptist minister in Pittsburgh, and I knew him to be perfectly known to Mr. Robert Patterson.

> Why is not Mr. Patterson's testimony adduced in this case? He is now in Pittsburgh, and can doubtless throw light upon this part of the narrative, which, to me at least, appears exceedingly doubtful, if not positively erroneous. The Lord willing, we shall see to this matter and report accordingly.[277]

Several elements of this statement are noteworthy in light of the authors' claims about Rigdon's alleged deception. First, like Rigdon, Reverend Scott also assumes that it is Robert Patterson to whom Davison refers. Second, like Rigdon, Scott also lived in Pittsburgh in the 1820s, but did not know if Patterson ever possessed a printing office, although he did know Robert Patterson more recently as a bookseller, just as Rigdon did. However, if Walter Scott could live in Pittsburgh for several years and not know whether or not Robert Patterson had a printing office, why must we assume that Rigdon must have known and hence that he was being dishonest? Third, like Rigdon, Scott suggests that someone should obtain testimony from Robert Patterson. Apparently, this suggestion was made by Scott in good faith. Why should we not conclude the same for Rigdon? Finally, he expresses serious doubt about the whole alleged connection between Patterson and Rigdon, which he considers "exceedingly doubtful, if not positively erroneous." So much for the authors' own red herring.

"The *Iago*" and "prime mover of the whole conspiracy"[278]

The portrayal of Rigdon in the Spalding theory does not explain why he would settle for second best to Joseph Smith. Rigdon is often described by those who knew him as talented, but egotistical and proud. As an early preacher in Ohio, he was offended when others took credit for his accomplishments.[279] Yet we are to believe that this is the same man who played second fiddle to the ignorant "money digger" from Palmyra. After all he had done, would he not

277. Walter Scott, "The Mormon Bible," *Evangelist of the True Gospel,* n.s., 7/7 (1 July 1839): 160–61.

278. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 100, emphasis in original.

279. F. Mark McKiernan, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer 1793–1876* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado, 1971), 28.

have chafed at the public rebukes that came from the Prophet in revelations and before the church? William McLellin, onetime apostle turned enemy, who believed Joseph Smith a fallen prophet, once summarized his view:

> You seem to think S. Rigdon the bottom of all M[ormonism]. Many people know better. He never heard of the work of Smith & Cowdery until C[owdery] and P[arley] P. Pratt brought the Book to him in Mentor, O[hio]. True enough, I have but little confidence in S. Rigdon, but I know he was more the tool of J. Smith than his teacher and director. He was docile in J.S. hands to my knowledge.[280]

One anecdote from the Missouri experience illustrates this point. There was a Sunday morning when some of the brethren were camped at Adam-ondi-Ahman with the Prophet. It had rained the night before and it was very cold, so the Prophet encouraged the brethren to get up together and wrestle to raise their spirits and keep warm.

> While the sport was at its height Sidney Rigdon, the mouthpiece of the Prophet, rushed into the ring, sword in hand, and said that he would not suffer a lot of men to break the Sabbath day in that manner. For a moment all were silent, then one of the brethren, with more presence of mind than the others, said to the Prophet, "Brother Joseph, we want you to clear us from blame, for we formed the ring by your request. You told us to wrestle, and now Brother Rigdon is bringing us to account for it."
>
> The Prophet walked into the ring and said, as he made a motion with his hand: "Brother Sidney, you had better go out of here and let the boys alone; they are amusing themselves according to my orders. You are an old man. You go and get ready for meeting and let the boys alone." Just then catching Rigdon off his guard, as quick as a flash he knocked

280. William E. McLellin to James T. Cobb, Independence, Missouri, 14 August 1880, cited in LDS *Church News,* 8 December 1985, 10.

> the sword from Rigdon's hand, then caught him by the shoulder, and said: "Now old man, you must go out, or I will throw you down." Rigdon was as large a man as the Prophet, but not so tall. The prospect of a tussel between the Prophet and the mouthpiece of the Prophet was fun for all but Rigdon, who pulled back like a crawfish, but the resistance was useless, the Prophet dragged him from the ring, bareheaded, and tore Rigdon's fine pulpit coat from the collar to the waist; then he turned to the men and said: "Go in, boys, and have your fun. You shall never have it to say that I got you into any trouble that I did not get you out of."
>
> Rigdon complained about the loss of his hat and the tearing of his coat. The Prophet said to him: "You were out of your place. Always keep your place and you will not suffer; but you got a little out of your place and you have suffered for it. You have no one to blame but yourself." After that Rigdon never countermanded the orders of the Prophet, to my knowledge—he knew who was the boss.[281]

Another recollection comes from Howard Coray, one of Joseph's scribes in Nauvoo.

> I had heard it remarked that Joseph Smith was Sidney Rigdon's cat's paw: soon after he returned from the East he came to see Joseph, and the thought went through my mind: now I will see, who the cats paw is.—well, I did see; after passing the usual compliments, Rigdon said to Joseph:—"When I was preaching in Philadelphia after I had finished my discourse a man stepped up to me and desired me to explain something in John's Revelation, mentioning at the same time what it was)—"Well, I could not do it, how is it Joseph?" Joseph cited him at once right off hand to a passage in Ezekiel and something in some other book of the old Testament, saying that

281. John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled?* (St. Louis: Moffatt, 1881), 76–78.

> they explained all about it." I thought to myself, that don't look much like Joseph being a cats paw.[282]

Spalding theorists want to see Rigdon as the source of inspiration behind the doctrines and teachings of Joseph Smith. Some who observed the Prophet's interactions with others on a daily basis, however, had difficulty reconciling that picture with what they saw and heard. While Rigdon was a talented preacher, Joseph seemed to be his superior. Philo Dibble was present with about a dozen others when Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received and described a vision of the heavens and the three degrees of glory in 1832 (D&C 76). "There were other men in the room, perhaps twelve, among whom I was one during a part of the time—probably two-thirds of the time. I saw the glory and felt the power, but did not see the vision." Dibble observed a significant difference between Joseph and Sidney. "Not a sound nor motion [was] made by anyone but Joseph and Sidney, and it seemed to me that they never moved a joint or limb during the time I was there, which I think was over an hour, and to the end of the vision. Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which, Joseph remarked smilingly, 'Sidney is not as used to it as I am.'"[283]

Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick mention a statement attributed to Walter Sidney Rigdon, a grandchild of Sidney, from an interview published by J. H. Beadle in 1888. Walter Rigdon is reported by Beadle to have "talked with old Sidney hundreds of times about the 'scheme of the Golden Bible,'"[284] and is also reported to have claimed that his

282. Howard Coray MS#1, cited in Dean Jessee, "Howard Coray's Recollections of Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 17/3 (1977): 343.

283. Philo Dibble, "Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith," *Juvenile Instructor* 27/10 (1892): 303–4.

284. John H. Beadle, "The Golden Bible," *Salt Lake Tribune,* 15 April 1888. The authors blithely note that Beadle "was the author of the 1870 book *Life in Utah*." Actually, the full title of Beadle's book was *Life in Utah; Or, The Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism,* and it went through at least six editions from 1870 to 1904. He also published *Brigham's Destroying Angel; Being the Life, Confession, and Startling Disclosures of the Notorious Bill Hickman, The Danite Chief of Utah.* "One feels certain that Beadle did some retouching of the Hickman manuscript, if he did no more than that. There are phrases in the Hickman confessions that

father and other members of the family knew that the Book of Mormon was derived from the Spalding manuscript, but refused to talk about it while their father was alive (p. 354). But the Beadle interview is inconsistent with the testimony of other family members and friends, who consistently affirmed that Rigdon disclaimed any involvement with the production of the Book of Mormon.

The Spalding Enigma protests that Rigdon never made any attempt to respond to the Spalding theory in print until 1839 (pp. 109–13). They claim that this is because he must have had something to hide. However, although there may not be any printed accounts of such a response, some who lived in Kirtland remembered public rebuttals to claims linking him with the origin of the Book of Mormon. Phineas, Hiel, and Mary D. Bronson recalled:

> In the spring of 1833 or 1834, at the house of Samuel Baker, near New Portage, Medina county, Ohio, we, whose signatures are affixed, did hear Elder Sidney Rigdon, in the presence of a large congregation, say he had been informed that some in the neighborhood had accused him of being the instigator of the Book of Mormon. Standing in the door-way, there being many standing in the door-yard, he, holding up the Book of Mormon, said, "I testify in the presence of this congregation, and before God and all the Holy Angels up yonder, (pointing towards heaven), before whom I expect to give an account at the judgment day, that I never saw a sentence of the Book of Mormon, I never penned a sentence of the Book of Mormon, I never knew that there was such a book in existence as the Book of Mormon, until it was presented to me by Parley P. Pratt, in the form that it now is."[285]

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are typically Beadle. This may or may not mean an inaccurate confession, but it does mean some friendly editorial assistance, if not ghost-writing, and probably a market orientation." Leonard J. Arrington, "Kate Field and J. H. Beadle: Manipulators of the Mormon Past," lecture given at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 31 March 1971, 17 n. 53.

285. Statement by Phineas Bronson, Hiel Bronson, and Mary D. Bronson, in Rudolph Etzenhouser, *From Palmyra, New York, 1830, to Independence, Missouri, 1894* (Independence, MO: Ensign Publishing House, 1894), 388.

David Whitmer also remembered that Rigdon frequently responded to these charges. According to an interview published in the *Chicago Times* on 14 October 1881, "Mr Whitmer emphatically asserts that he has heard Rigdon, in the pulpit and in private conversations, declare that the Spaulding story, that he had used a book called 'The Manuscript Found' for the purpose of preparing the 'Book of Mormon,' was as false as were many other [charges] that were then being made against the infant church, and he assures me that the story is as untruthful as it is ridiculous."[286]

Others who visited Rigdon following his excommunication in 1844 also note that he always affirmed that he had nothing to do with the origin of the Book of Mormon. One visitor at Rigdon's home in Friendship, New York, in 1867 described the former church leader as a "grand looking old man, large and portly," who exuded a manner of "intellectual importance" and was "an intellectual giant of a certain type," "a man of extraordinary spiritual aspirations," yet "lacking in the elements of a great leader." He reported, "Mr. Rigdon still felt bad towards President Young, whom he accused of supplanting him and by his shrewdness depriving him of his rights as the lawful successor to Joseph Smith." He then asked, "Elder Rigdon, it is reputed that you wrote the Book of Mormon; did you or did you not?" To which he replied, "I did *not* write the Book of Mormon. It is the revelations of Jesus Christ."[287] In an interview with A. W. Cowles published in 1869, Rigdon "solemnly affirm[ed]" that when Oliver Cowdery and others gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon in late 1830 it "was his first personal knowledge of Joe Smith and the Mormons."[288]

Several members of Rigdon's family who were present when Mormon missionaries first contacted Rigdon in Mentor, Ohio, also provided supporting testimony. In a sworn statement made in 1904, Athalia Robinson, Rigdon's oldest daughter, said that both she "and

286. *Chicago Times* correspondent interview, 14 October 1881, Richmond, Missouri, *Chicago Times,* 17 October 1881, in *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness,* ed. Lyndon W. Cook (Orem, UT: Grandin Book, 1991), 77.

287. "Abram Hatch," in Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Cannon & Sons, 1904), 4:167, emphasis in original.

288. *Moore's Rural New Yorker* 20/4 (23 January 1869).

her mother were present when the book was presented which was a bound volume. Her father stated and she is positive it was the first time he ever saw the book and that he was not the author of it and had nothing to do with its production. This was the first time he had ever heard of Joseph Smith."[289]

Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick are aware that "Rigdon denied having anything to do with the Spalding Enigma on several occasions" but dismiss these denials as subterfuge since they believe that they have shown Rigdon to be dishonest about his past and about Hurlbut (p. 353). However, their claim for Rigdon's dishonesty on these matters appears to be exaggerated, if not unfounded. They also suggest that "Rigdon had simply come to believe his own lies, though one must concede the possibility that he truly did live in fear of reprisals from the agents of those whose secrets he kept" (p. 353). They cite no evidence that Rigdon himself lived in such a state but mention later rumors suggesting that a son-in-law, George W. Robinson, who had left the church in Nauvoo, may have feared for his life. The rumor comes from an elderly grandchild of Sidney Rigdon who reportedly told Noel B. Croft that Athalia Robinson told her that her husband George Robinson had been part of a plot to kill Joseph Smith and replace him with Rigdon, who could then be easily controlled by others. According to other local rumors, George Robinson went "so far as to have a bullet-proof room constructed for him in his bank and heavy bars placed over some of the lower windows of his home" (p. 353). This rumored paranoia is supposed to show that Sidney Rigdon and his children were so afraid of possible vengeance from unnamed and undocumented agents of the dead Spalding conspirators that they made statements affirming that Rigdon said he had nothing to do with the origin of the Book of Mormon.

E. L. Kelley and W. H. Kelley interviewed Rigdon's daughter Nancy Rigdon Ellis in 1884. Nancy was eight years old at the time her father joined the church. According to E. L. Kelley,

> She says she was eight years of age at the time that the preachers of the Latter Day Saints first came to her father's in Mentor,

289. Athalia Robinson, notarized statement, 26 May 1904.

> Ohio; and has a full remembrance of it because of the contest which soon arose between her father and Pratt and Cowdery, over the Book of Mormon. She says:
>
> "I saw them hand him the book, and I am positive as can be that he never saw it before. He read it and examined it for about an hour and then threw it down, and said he did not believe a word in it."
>
> She further stated that her father in the last years of his life called his family together and told them, that as sure as there was a God in heaven, he never had anything to do in getting up the Book of Mormon. And never saw any such thing as a manuscript written by Solomon Spalding.[290]

That same year she was interviewed by a reporter for the *Pittsburgh Leader*. In an article that had previously appeared in that newspaper, a Reverend Coovert had repeated the allegation that Rigdon had stolen the Spalding manuscript from Patterson's printing office. Her response was then published in that paper on 18 May 1884:

> I have never had the honor of seeing this so-called Reverend Coovert, who of late had been so free in his use of dead men's names, but I understand he parts his hair in the middle of his head, a fact which, from what I have heard and read of him, is no surprise to me. Now, while I most emphatically decline to be drawn into any controversy over that story of Coovert, which, if there was any foundation for it, I can not, for the life of me, see why it was allowed to remain quiet for years after all the actors are laid in their graves. Yet I will say this, that my father, who had the respect of all who knew him, and at a time when he had but little hope of living from one day to another, said to the clergymen around him, of which there was a number belonging to various denominations. These were his words: "As I expect to die and meet my Maker,

290. *Saints Herald* 31 (1884): 339, reprinted in *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1967), 4:451–52.

> I know nothing about where the manuscript of the Mormon bible came from."[291]

Perhaps the most poignant account was written by John Wycliff Rigdon, a son, who interviewed his father in 1865. John had visited the Latter-day Saints in Utah and had not been favorably impressed.

> I concluded I would make an investigation for my own satisfaction and find out, if I could, if he had all these years been deceiving his family and the world, by telling that which was not true, and I was in earnest about it. If Sidney Rigdon, my father, had thrown his life away by telling a falsehood and bringing sorrow and disgrace upon his family, I wanted to know it and was determined to find out the facts, no matter what the consequences might be. I reached home in the fall of 1865, found my father in good health and (he) was very much pleased to see me. As he had not heard anything from me for some time, he was afraid that I had been killed by the Indians. Shortly after I had arrived home, I went to my father's room; he was there and alone, and now was the time for me to commence my inquiries in regard to the origin of the *Book of Mormon,* and as to the truth of the Mormon religion. I told him what I had seen in Salt Lake City, and I said to him that what I had seen in Salt Lake had not impressed me very favorably toward the Mormon church, and as to the origin of the *Book of Mormon* I had some doubts. You have been charged with writing that book and giving it to Joseph Smith to introduce to the world. You have always told me one story; that you never saw the book until it was presented to you by Parley P. Pratt and Oliver Cowdery; and all you ever knew of the origin of that book was what they told you and what Joseph Smith and the witnesses who claimed to have seen the plates had told you. Is this true? If so, all right; if it is not, you owe it to me and to your family to tell it. You are an old man and you

291. *Pittsburgh Leader,* 18 May 1884, as cited in *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,* 4:453.

will soon pass away, and I wish to know if Joseph Smith, in your intimacy with him for fourteen years, has not said something to you that led you to believe he obtained that book in some other way than what he had told you. Give me all you know about it, that I may know the truth. My father, after I had finished saying what I have repeated above, looked at me a moment, raised his hand above his head and slowly said, with tears glistening in his eyes: "My son, I can swear before high heaven that what I have told you about the origin of that book is true. Your mother and sister, Mrs. Athalia Robinson, were present when that book was handed to me in Mentor Ohio, and all I ever knew about the origin of that book was what Parley P. Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith and the witnesses who claimed they saw the plates have told me, and in all of my intimacy with Joseph Smith he never told me but one story, and that was that he found it engraved upon gold plates in a hill near Palmyra, New York, and that an angel had appeared to him and directed him where to find it; and I have never, to you or to any one else, told but the one story, and that I now repeat to you." I believed him, and now believe he told me the truth. He also said to me after[ward] that Mormonism was true; that Joseph Smith was a Prophet, and this world would find it out some day.

After my father's death, my mother, who survived him several years was in the enjoyment of good health up to the time of her last sickness, she being eighty-six years old. A short time before her death I had a conversation with her about the origin of the *Book of Mormon* and wanted to know what she remembered about its being presented to my father. She said to me in that conversation that what my father had told me about the book being presented to him was true for she was present at the time and knew that was the first time he ever saw it, and that the stories told about my father writing the *Book of Mormon* were not true.[292]

292. *Comprehensive History of the Church,* 1:234–35.

There is simply no good reason to view Sidney Rigdon as a conspirator behind the scenes to produce the Book of Mormon, but there are good reasons to reject the suggestion.

Oliver Cowdery

In order to link Rigdon and Joseph Smith, the authors claim that Oliver Cowdery was responsible for bringing Rigdon and Joseph Smith together.[293] They make their argument for this claim in chapters 8, 9, and 10 (pp. 209–308). Noting significant gaps of information or limited sources on portions of Oliver Cowdery's life, they suggest that Cowdery may have been ashamed of his past and therefore deliberately concealed much of this information (p. 210). Those who work with historical sources, however—in family history, for example—realize that this is a common problem in tracing the history of individuals that is far from unique to Oliver Cowdery. Nonetheless, the authors prefer to see conspiracies everywhere: "One must also question why pro-Mormon historians do not seem to have been particularly concerned with uncovering who this man was," they complain. They also fault Latter-day Saint scholars for making "so slight an effort to fill the void" (p. 210). But their complaints are misconceived. There is a substantial literature on Oliver Cowdery of which the authors show little or no awareness and with which they make little attempt to engage.[294]

Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick paint Oliver Cowdery as a none too smart dupe of Sidney Rigdon who "was simply too credulous for his own good" and "too weak to resist the sly manipulations of Joseph Smith's overpowering personality. In short, Oliver was a convenient stooge to machinations that were, at first, largely over his head—things that, when he finally began to perceive what was really happening, he was powerless to stop or withdraw from without considerable risk" (p. 211). While this is the proposed view, it is dramatically inconsistent with the actual Oliver, who appears to have been a man of exceptional

293. I wish to thank Larry E. Morris for his suggestions on this section.
294. See the appendix for further bibliographic sources on Oliver Cowdery.

intelligence and ability both as an elder of the church and as a non-Mormon lawyer.[295]

Mistaken Identities

In November 1830, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer Jr., and Ziba Peterson visited western Ohio on their way to Missouri to fulfill a mission to the Lamanites.[296] Local Ohio newspapers took note of the missionary visit and some of their activities. On 30 November 1830, the *Cleveland Herald* printed an article on Mormonism; the writer—probably the editor, John St. John—had noticed the name of Oliver Cowdery in some of the newspaper descriptions of the missionaries' activities.

> On reading the name of Oliver Cowdry, in support of the divine authenticity of the work, whatever faith we might have been inspired with on reading the certificate, was banished,

295. See, for example, Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 37–65, 170–75, 178–79; Scott H. Faulring, "The Return of Oliver Cowdery," in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson,* ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 117–73. W. Lang—a lawyer who read and studied law with Oliver Cowdery in Tiffin, Ohio, before passing the bar and who had a distinguished career as an attorney, mayor, and state senator—said, "Mr Cowdery was an able lawyer and a great advocate. His manners were easy and gentlemanly; he was polite, dignified, yet courteous. He had an open countenance, high forehead, dark brown eyes, Roman nose, clenched lips and prominent lower jaw. He shaved smooth and was neat and cleanly in his person. He was of light stature, about five feet, five inches high, and had a loose, easy walk. With all his kind and friendly disposition, there was a certain degree of sadness that seemed to pervade his whole being. His association with others was marked by the great amount of information his conversation conveyed and the beauty of his musical voice. His addresses to the court and jury were characterized by a high order of oratory, with brilliant and forensic force. He was modest and reserved, never spoke ill of any one, never complained. He left Tiffin with his family for Elkhorn, in Wisconsin, in 1847, where he remained but a short time, and then moved to Missouri, where he died in 1848 [1850]. The writer read law with Mr. Cowdery in Tiffin, and was intimately acquainted with him from the time he came here until he left, which afforded me every opportunity to study and love his noble and true manhood." W. Lang, *History of Seneca County* (Springfield, OH: Transcript Printing, 1880), 365.

296. For an overview, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio," *BYU Studies* 11/4 (1971): 474–96.

> for we had known Cowdry some seven or eight years ago, when he was a dabbler in the art of Printing, and principally occupied in writing and printing pamphlets, with which, as a pedestrian Pedlar he visited the towns and villages of western New-York and Canada.[297]

In what may be an echo of this earlier article, the *Lockport Balance* in New York printed another piece in 1832 on Mormonism. The author, probably the editor Orsamus Turner, portrayed the Book of Mormon witness, without further explanation, as "an itinerant pamphlet pedlar, and occasionally, a journeyman printer, named *Oliver Cowdry.*"[298] In 1849, Turner published a local history of western New York in which he described early settlers and pioneers of the region. In a short sketch for the town of Albion, New York, near Lockport, he recalled, "In 1823 it ["the fine lands in the immediate neighborhood of Albion"] had sufficiently advanced to indicate the necessity of a press and newspaper, and Oliver Cowdery, (who has been the pioneer printer in at least a half dozen localities,) took a part of the old battered 'small pica' that had been used in printing the Lockport Observatory, and adding to it indifferent materials from other sources, commenced the publication of the 'Newport Patriot.'"[299]

If correct, these two newspaper articles and Turner's 1849 recollection would place Oliver in New York around 1822 or 1823, working there as a "pioneer printer" and "journeyman printer," a veteran of various publishing ventures that included commencing a paper in Albion in 1823 and writing and publishing pamphlets in western New York and Canada, which he peddled and sold in those locations. The authors favor these sources because they would, if accepted, place Oliver in New York—where they could more easily connect him with their hypothetical Gold Bible conspiracy.[300]

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297. "The Golden Bible," *Cleveland Herald*, 25 November 1830.

298. "Mormonism," *Lockport Balance,* circa September 1832; reprinted in the *Boston Recorder,* 10 October 1832.

299. Orsamus Turner, *Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York . . .* (Buffalo: Jewett, Thomas, 1849), 658.

300. Cowdery, who was born in October 1806, could scarcely have been a veteran of anything in 1822–23.

Unfortunately for the authors, though, there is no supporting evidence for the claim that Oliver was involved in printing before December 1829, when he provided some assistance in the preparation of the Book of Mormon for publication. In a letter to Joseph Smith in December 1829, Oliver wrote: "It may look rather strange to you to find that I have so soon become a printer."[301] The clear implication in this private letter to Joseph Smith is that printing was a new experience for him. Moreover, it can be clearly shown that it was *Franklin* Cowdery, Oliver's uncle, and not Oliver Cowdery, who began publication of the *Newport Patriot* in 1822.[302]

It is true that, during the Kirtland period and after his excommunication in 1838, Oliver engaged in a few printing ventures, but there is no support for this kind of activity before 1829. Second, a family source, Oliver's half-sister Lucy Cowdery Young, said that when Oliver, who had previously lived in Vermont, "arrived at the age of twenty he went to the State of New York where his older brothers were married and settled." This would be around 1826. During that time, she said, he clerked in a store and after two years went to Manchester, where he taught school.[303] While Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick assert that Lucy was mistaken about this, no evidence refutes her recollection. The authors also undercut their own theory in their characterization of Oliver's health, describing him as weak, not very intelligent, and a "poor, consumptive, wheezing 'little man'" (p. 211) with an often fragile constitution. Yet it is this same individual who is supposed to have traveled on foot across the length and breadth of western New York and Canada, writing, printing, and peddling pamphlets, all at the tender age of 16! This seems unlikely.

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301. Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, 28 December 1829, in Richard L. Anderson and Scott H. Faulring, eds., *Witness of the Second Elder: The Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery,* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 1:80.

302. Milton W. Hamilton, *The Country Printer: New York State, 1785–1830* (Port Washington, NY: Friedman, 1936), 266. Turner's 1849 recollection seems to have been off by a year.

303. Lucy Cowdery Young to Brigham H. Young, 7 March 1887, Milo, Ms 842, Family and Church History Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; see Anderson and Faulring, *Witness of the Second Elder,* 4.

A better explanation is that the sources above represent a case of mistaken identity in which the two editors confused Oliver with Franklin Cowdery. Franklin *was* a pioneer printer who engaged in numerous publishing ventures in New York from 1817–48, which included the *Moscow Advertiser and Livingston Farmer* (1817), the Olean *Hamilton Recorder* (1819–20), the Angelica *Allegany Republican* (1820–22), the Angelica *News Record and Allegany Patron of Industry* (1822), the *Newport Patriot* (1824–25), the Geneva *Ontario Chronicle* (1828–29), the *Geneva Chronicle* (1829), the Albion *Orleans Mercury* (1832), the *Cuylerville Telegraph* (1847–48), the Rochester *Genesee Olio* (1847), and, in Ohio, the *Oberlin Evangelist* (1847). In 1852, Turner quoted an old resident of Allegany who remembered that, in 1820, "the *pioneer printer* in so many different localities—Franklin Cowdery—had moved a rude press, and a few fonts of battered type, from Olean, where he had published the Hamilton Recorder, and had started the first paper in Allegany county, the Angelica Republican."[304] "It was a pretty hard place for newspaper publishing," Franklin recalled,

> I had to take my pay in all manner of traps—just what I could get. I feasted upon fat venison; it hung around my domicil in the shape of saddles, quarters, and hams; and I had maple sugar in profusion; the great trouble was to get something the paper and ink maker would take in payment. . . . To print for a livelihood there, was up-hill work—rather less lucrative than hunting and trapping. And so little intercourse was there with the business world, that the highways were often so bad getting over, that paper had to be carried on horseback; and ink manufactories so distant, that typo made his own printing ink, composed mostly of linseed oil, lamp black, and rosin; during the three years he *luminated* the woods of Cattaraugus and Allegany.[305]

304. Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps & Gorham's Purchase, and Morris' Reserve* (Rochester: Alling, 1852), 554.

305. Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement,* 554, emphasis in original.

One historian of New York printers noted that there was a "general opinion" that "Franklin Cowdery, was poorly qualified to speak for the printers. . . . He had complained constantly about the public patronage and his own meager support."[306] With Oliver's notoriety as one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon and as one of the early missionaries to Ohio, it would have been easy to mistake one Cowdery for the other. The authors speculate that on occasion from 1822 to 1827 Oliver may have *worked for* Franklin in several of these printing ventures, but there is no evidence for this.

It is not enough, though, to get Oliver Cowdery to New York in 1822. They also want to place him in or near Palmyra where he can conspire with the Smith family in the early 1820s. In order to bolster this claim, they cite an 1869 history of Vermont by Robert Parks and an 1849 history of New York by Orsamus Turner. 1n 1869, Parks recalled, "'We well remember this same Oliver Cowdery when in our boyhood. . . . He attended school in the District where we reside[d] in 1821 and 1822. He then went to Palmyra, N.Y.'" (p. 237). Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick take this rather dogmatically to mean that Oliver left Wells, Vermont, and arrived in Palmyra in late 1822 or 1823, but there is no reason to interpret Parks's statement so narrowly. Oliver *did* go to Palmyra *after* he left Vermont. Writing almost fifty years after the event, Parks could easily mean by "then" anything from 1823 to 1829.

In another mid-nineteenth-century history of New York, Orsamus Turner wrote a brief sketch of early Mormonism. As a young man, Turner began his apprenticeship in late 1818 with Timothy Strong at the *Palmyra Register*. He appears to have spent 1821 and 1822 in Canandaigua, where he finished his apprenticeship working for James Beamis. After this, during a brief return to Palmyra, Turner heard of a printer position in Lockport about one hundred miles away. He then moved there and purchased the *Lockport Observatory* in August 1822. Turner's brief discussion of early Mormonism is a mixture of hearsay and personal recollection and is filled with sarcasm and permeated with a tone of ridicule. Turner admitted that he did not take

306. Hamilton, *Country Printer,* 92. On Franklin's publishing ventures, see 265–66.

Mormonism seriously, treating it "lightly—with a seeming levity."[307] Still, his own personal recollections, where they can be shown to be such, are valuable in that they tend to confirm and flesh out details about the Smith family residence in Palmyra. As Richard L. Anderson explains, however, "Turner's personal recollections of Joseph Smith of necessity refer to the period *prior to* the late summer of 1822 and are probably no later than 1820, the latest date of Palmyra memoirs in his writings."[308] Dan Vogel, while admitting that it was possible for Turner to have occasionally visited Palmyra after that time, claims that "much of what Turner writes, particularly about events subsequent to his departure from the area, is from the standpoint of a distant observer."[309]

Eager to put Cowdery in Palmyra by 1822, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick uncritically accept all of Turner's statements, including passing remarks about Cowdery, as events observed. But this is obviously problematic. For example, Turner said that after the death of Alvin Smith, "the mantle of the Prophet which Mrs. and Mr. Joseph Smith and one Oliver Cowdery, had wove of themselves—every thread of it—fell upon their next eldest son, Joseph Smith, Jr."[310] *The Spalding Enigma* transfigures this comment, along with Turner's 1832 *Lockport Balance* article, into firsthand testimony for Oliver being in Palmyra

307. In Turner's opinion, Mormonism was a "bald, clumsy cheat" that only "an enthusiast, a monomaniac or a knave" could believe in. It could only be treated with ridicule "because it will admit of no other treatment. There is no dignity about the whole thing; nothing to entitle it to mild treatment. It deserves none of the charity extended to ordinary religious fanaticism, for knavery and fraud has been with it incipiently and progressively. It has not even the poor merit of ingenuity. Its success is a slur upon the age. Fanaticism promoted it at first; then ill advised persecution; then the designs of demagogues who wished to command the suffrages of its followers; until finally an American Congress has abetted the fraud and imposition by its acts, and we are to have a state of our proud Union—in this boasted era of light and knowledge—the very name of which will sanction and dignify the fraud and falsehood of Mormon Hill, the gold plates, and the spurious revelation" (Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement,* 217). According to Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick, though, Turner "had no particular religious axe to grind" (p. 242).

308. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Circumstantial Confirmation of the First Vision through Reminiscences," *BYU Studies* 9/3 (1969): 378, emphasis added.

309. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents,* 3:47.

310. Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement,* 213.

in 1823 (p. 243). But Turner was living in Lockport in 1823 when Alvin died—approximately a hundred miles away—and there is simply no evidence that he was present in Palmyra, even less that he was lurking at Alvin's deathbed when Alvin passed away. There is no basis upon which to assert that Turner's comments on Alvin's death were based upon anything more than distant hearsay. The same can be said of his comments about Oliver. In fact, while Turner describes firsthand experiences with Joseph Smith, he never gives any indication that he had so much as met the Book of Mormon scribe. Based upon this dubious foundation, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick then embark on a series of bewildering speculations and irrelevancies as they opine where Oliver *may* have been and what he *might* have been doing. *Maybe* he was dousing with Walters the magician over in Sodus or Palmyra or wherever. *Maybe* he was scribing for William Morgan on his exposé of Freemasonry. This kind of thing can be fun, of course. Stacking each unproven assumption upon the previous unproven assumption, the authors construct an ugly theoretical caricature of Cowdery, a veritable castle in the clouds, but it has no foundation and the picture is a mirage. It is their wish list, not history. Those seeking to know the historical Oliver Cowdery will have to look elsewhere.

Other Enigmas

While not critical to supporting their Spalding thesis, some errors in *The Spalding Enigma* are notable and tend to reduce confidence in its authors and their work. In their summary of the Book of Mormon, for example, they assert that "According to the story written on the plates, there were three separate migrations of Israelites. The first was a tribe known as the Jaredites" (p. 24). However, the Jaredites are not Israelite but leave Mesopotamia at the time of the great Tower of Babel and the confounding of languages, long before Israel came into existence. Another claim is that Moroni explained to Joseph Smith that the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated had been buried in a cave near his home. "During this experience, Smith was informed that several groups of Israelites

had migrated to North America many centuries before, and a sacred record of their ancient wanderings had been preserved and lay hidden in a cave beneath a small hill near Palmyra" (p. 23). Actually, though, according to Joseph Smith's own account, "not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner towards the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth" (Joseph Smith—History 1:51–52). The plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were found within this box, *not in any "cave."* There is folklore revolving around a later vision of a cave with wagonloads of Nephite records, but none of the sources for this come from Joseph Smith, only through secondary and tertiary and sometimes untraceable sources.[311] None of these accounts suggests that Joseph Smith retrieved the plates for the Book of Mormon from the cave. It may be that the authors want to portray the cave story as the traditional account in order to make the Book of Mormon account sound more like Spalding's "Manuscript Story," in which the author finds the record in a cave. But this is misleading.

A more significant issue has to do with their characterization of events relating to conditions under which the Book of Mormon was translated. For example, the book reports that Joseph Smith, in dictating the text of the Book of Mormon, "reportedly read them aloud from a place of concealment behind a curtain while various amanuenses (or 'scribes') carefully took down his words" (p. 24). The reports about the curtain come from Rev. John Clark, Professor Charles Anthon, and the Palmyra gossipmonger Abner Cole.[312] Clark and Anthon spoke to Harris during his trip to New York City in the winter of 1827 and 1828, when Harris carried the characters to New York City for examination. Cole does not say when in the process the curtain was used, but it is likely that he refers to the same time period. Additional testimony

311. Cameron J. Packer, "Cumorah's Cave," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 13/1–2 (2004): 50–57.

312. "Gold Bible, No. 6," *Reflector,* Palmyra, New York, 9 March 1831; Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed,* 270–71. John A. Clark, "Gleanings by the Way," *Episcopal Recorder,* 5 September 1840.

from Martin Harris describes his activities as scribe during the translation of the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. That testimony suggests that after his return from New York, Joseph Smith used the seer stone while dictating and that there was nothing present to obstruct the translator from his view. A similar situation is described by subsequent scribes and witnesses for the remainder of the translation in Harmony, Pennsylvania, and at the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York. Speaking of the translation activities at his home in Fayette, New York, David Whitmer related, as reported by the *Chicago Tribune* correspondent:

> In order to give privacy to the proceeding a blanket, which served as a portiere, was stretched across the family living room to shelter the translators and the plates from the eye of any who might call at the house while the work was in progress. This, Mr. Whitmer says, was the only use made of the blanket, and it was not for the purpose of concealing the plates or the translator from the eyes of the amanuensis. In fact, Smith was at no time hidden from his collaborators, and the translation was performed in the presence of not only the persons mentioned, but of the entire Whitmer household and several of Smith's relatives besides.[313]

On another occasion, Whitmer recalled, "'I often sat by and saw and heard them translate and write for hours together. Joseph never had a curtain drawn between him and his scribe while he was translating. He would place the director in his hat, and then place his face in his hat, so as to exclude the light, and then [read the words?] as they appeared before him.'"[314] The key point is that the Book of Mormon text, as we know it today, was—according to those who witnessed its dictation—dictated by Joseph Smith by placing the seer stone in a hat, covering his face or eyes with the hat, and dictating hour after hour without the apparent aid of papers or manuscript of any kind. While

313. *Chicago Tribune,* 17 December 1885, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews,* 173.

314. William E. McLellin to My Dear Friends, February 1870, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews,* 233–34, brackets in original.

we have no way of knowing firsthand precisely what was going on in Joseph Smith's mind while he was doing this, evidence for these observations by scribes and family can be found in what remains of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon itself.[315] It seems to me that this is a key problem for theories of Book of Mormon origins that suggest that Joseph Smith was reading something from notes or a prepared manuscript. In order to support such an explanation, one has to dismiss the firsthand testimony of those who were there as well as evidence in the original manuscript.[316]

Readers may also be misled by the authors' statement that the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon took about two and one-half years (p. 178). This merely describes Joseph Smith's experiences with the plates but not the period of translation. The Book of Mormon text as we have it was essentially dictated after the arrival of Oliver Cowdery in early April 1829. When the translation recommenced after the loss of the 116 pages, Joseph and Oliver continued with the book of Mosiah through Moroni and then 1 Nephi through Words of Mormon, the later phase being completed after the 1829 move to the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York. The original manuscript for the book of Mosiah is no longer extant; however, the earliest surviving portion of that manuscript—Alma 10:31–45 through Ether 15:17, with the exception of Alma 45:22—was written in the hand of Oliver Cowdery. Most of what survives of 1 Nephi through Enos also shows Cowdery to be the main scribe, with the exception of a few chapters.[317] Since Cowdery did not arrive in Harmony, Pennsylvania, until April 1829 and the translation was completed in June, this means that most of the Book of Mormon was dictated in about two and a half months, and not two and a half years.

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315. Royal Skousen, "Translating the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited,* ed. Reynolds, 61–93.

316. See Daniel C. Peterson, "Not So Easily Dismissed: Some Facts for Which Counterexplanations of the Book of Mormon Will Need to Account," in this number, xii–xxiv.

317. Skousen, *Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon,* 13–14.

Book of Mormon Witnesses and the "Eye of Faith"

An additional claim that requires response has to do with the nature of the testimony of the Book of Mormon witnesses. Speaking of the plates, the authors quip in passing, "Naturally, no one has seen them since; and, as it turns out, no one really saw them then, except with 'spiritual eyes'—a point various writers have written much about over the years" (p. 24). Later on, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick also insist that "In fact, it has never been established that *anyone,* not even the Mormons' much touted witnesses to *The Book of Mormon* themselves, ever saw the plates in a physical sense, but rather only with their 'spiritual eyes of faith'" (p. 178, emphasis in original). But the Eight Witnesses claimed to have both seen and hefted the plates. It is difficult to characterize their testimony as anything other than physical in nature. While the Three Witnesses saw the angel and the plates in vision, it is misleading to imply that they did not claim that what they saw was real. Quite the contrary. For the witnesses, at least, the plates were no less real than the resurrected Jesus was to his disciples. One may choose to believe or not to believe such testimony, but to mischaracterize the nature of what they claimed is bad history. On this, the reader will want to consider Richard Anderson's important recent discussion of the issue.[318]

One key question that is almost never asked by critics is what terms such as *eye of faith* and *spiritual eyes* may have meant to the witnesses. The term *eye of faith* cannot be accurately understood unless one is familiar with the scriptural context behind its usage. The Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon were familiar with the scriptures in which that language is found, and when they felt that they had been misunderstood, they gave additional clarification. None of this is discussed in *The Spalding Enigma.* What is meant by having an "eye of faith"? When the Lord gives a promise, those who believe in his words, those with faith, look forward to their eventual and *actual* realization, even though the promises are not fulfilled at first.

318. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Attempts to Redefine the Experience of the Eight Witnesses," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14/1 (2005): 18–31.

In one Book of Mormon example, Alma asks: "Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an *eye of faith,* and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?" (Alma 5:15). So here we have the Lord's promise of a resurrection for the just and the unjust, a subsequent righteous judgment from God for our deeds, and rewards of good or bad things according to his promises. Even though we will not experience the resurrection until later, we believe now that we actually will one day. In light of that belief, we live our lives in a way that is consistent with that expectation, looking forward to the time when through Christ we are truly resurrected.

In another passage from the Book of Mormon, we again see the pattern. "And there were many," Moroni says, "whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but *truly saw with their eyes* the things which they had beheld with an *eye of faith,* and they were glad" (Ether 12:19). They had an eye of faith in the past, but later "truly saw." The Book of Mormon witnesses also at first had an eye of faith and lived accordingly, but later they were blessed with an actual view of the plates and truly saw with their eyes the things that earlier they had only hoped for, just as prophets of old received knowledge after first exercising faith (see Ether 12:19; D&C 17:2). Additional confusion regarding the witnesses can also arise among those only partially acquainted with the historical sources because Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery also spoke of other experiences that preceded their vision in which they hefted or handled the covered plates during the translation. During those earlier experiences, they looked forward with an "eye of faith" to the things they eventually *truly saw* with their eyes. One has to keep these two kinds of testimony in mind when evaluating their statements.

Similarly, to conclude that a vision with "spiritual eyes" means "imaginary" is unjustified and does not do justice to sources on the witnesses for whom the plates and the angel were clearly a reality. The

term *spiritual eyes* in Latter-day Saint usage comes from the experience of Moses on Mount Sinai. "The glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence" (Moses 1:2). Moses, being mortal, had to be transfigured by the glory and power of God for his own protection in order to speak with God face to face. Concerning this experience, Moses said, "But now *mine own eyes* have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him" (Moses 1:11). Mortality has limitations, but God can increase man's ability through divine power to see things "not visible to the natural eye" (Moses 6:36).

This seems to be what David Whitmer meant when he tried to clarify the reality of his vision of the plates and the angel: "Of course we were in the spirit when we had the view, for no man can behold the face of an angel, except in a spiritual view, but we were in the body also, and everything was as natural to us, as it is at any time."[319] To put it another way, "spiritual eyes," in scriptural terms and in the context of the witnesses' testimony, experience *increased* perception, not less. "I saw them [the plates and the other artifacts] just as plain as I see this bed (striking the bed beside him with his hand)."[320] "I heard the voice of the Angel just as stated in said Book, and the engravings on the plates were shown to us, and we were commanded to bear record of them; and if they are not true, then there is no truth."[321] On another occasion, a visitor to David Whitmer's home suggested "if it might not have been possible that he, Mr. Whitmer, had been mistaken and had simply been moved upon by some mental disturbance, or halluci[n]ation, which had deceived him into *thinking* he saw the Personage, the Angel, the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the

319. David Whitmer to Anthony Metcalf, 2 April 1887, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews,* 247.

320. Orson Pratt, Joseph F. Smith interview, 16 November 1878, Richmond, Missouri, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews,* 40.

321. James H. Hart Interview (1), 21 August 1883, Richmond, Missouri, James H. Hart Notebook, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews,* 96.

sword of Laban."[322] Joseph Smith III, who was present at the time, declared, "How well and distinctly I remember the manner in which Elder Whitmer arose and drew himself up to his full height—a little over six feet—and said, in solemn and impressive tones: 'No, Sir! I was not under any hallucination, nor was I deceived! I saw with these eyes and I heard with these ears! *I know whereof I speak*!"[323]

Although not interviewed as frequently as David Whitmer, Martin Harris also emphasized the reality of the experience. One account is typical. When asked if he was sure that he had seen the angel and the plates, he replied, "'Gentlemen,' and he held out his right hand, 'do you see that hand? Are you sure you see it? Or are your eyes playing you a trick or something? No. Well, as sure as you see my hand so sure did I see the Angel and the plates. Brethren, I know I saw and heard these things, and the Lord knows I know these things of which I have spoken are true.'"[324] To Jacob Gates, Oliver Cowdery bore a similar testimony, "My eyes saw, my ears heard, and my understanding was touched, and I know that whereof I testified is true. It was no dream, no vain imagination of the mind—it was real."[325]

In contrast to the experience of the Three Witnesses, the experience of the Eight Witnesses with the plates involved no vision, but included the additional element of physically handling the plates. "Joseph Smith Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work and of curious workmanship." The term *curious,* in its early nineteenth-century sense, meant "wrought with care and art; elegant, neat." The Eight not only saw but said they "hefted." They

322. Joseph Smith III et al. interview, mid-July 1884, Richmond, Missouri, *Saints Herald*, 28 January 1936, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews,* 135.

323. Joseph Smith III et al. interview, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews,* 134–35, emphasis in original.

324. Statement of William Glen to O. E. Fischbacher, 30 May 1943, Cardston, Alberta, Canada, in C. Frank Steele, "Harris Testimony Recalled: Canadian Tells of Seeing Witness," *Deseret News,* Church Edition, 2 October 1943, 6.

325. Jacob F. Gates, "Testimony of Jacob Gates" (30 January 1912), *Improvement Era,* March 1912, 418–19.

knew "of a surety" that Joseph Smith had the plates because they had seen and handled them. In 1838, Sally Parker heard Hyrum Smith, one of the Eight Witnesses, speak in direct refutation to the accusations of some dissenters that the experience was illusionary. "He said he had but [two] hands and [two] eyes he said he had [seen] the plates with his eyes and handled them with his hands."[326] Clearly, the witnesses meant to convey that their testimony was no less real than that given by New Testament apostles concerning the resurrected body of Jesus, "For we have not followed," said Peter, "cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were *eyewitnesses* of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16, emphasis added). The apostle John spoke of that "which we have *heard,* which we have *seen with our eyes,* which we have *looked upon,* and our *hands have handled,* of the Word of life. . . . That which we have *seen* and *heard* declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1, 3, emphasis added).

Such was also the claim of three Book of Mormon witnesses who saw the plates and heard the angel and the voice of God, and eight others who saw and examined the plates with their eyes and hands. A buried record from the dust, words of hope and warning written by saints long dead, comes forth again in power and mercy like the resurrected Jesus from the tomb, out of the ground, and is seen, handled, and declared by special chosen witnesses. Again, one may believe it to be true or dismiss it as false but one should never misrepresent the nature of what is claimed or what is at stake.

Conclusion

Whether one accepts the Spalding explanation or some other theory, one still has to explain not only *if,* but *how* Joseph Smith or any other candidate could write such a book, a point upon which critics have never agreed and probably never will agree. The Book of Mormon will always be an enigma for the unbeliever. The Latter-day Saint, of course, already has an explanation that nicely circumvents that puz-

326. Sally Parker to John Kempton, 26 August 1838, Family and Church History Department Archives.

zle. For those who are unwilling to believe Joseph Smith's explanation of the origin of the Book of Mormon but who still cannot see the ignorant Palmyra plowboy as responsible for its contents, some variation of the Spalding theory with its mythical "Manuscript Found" may be the best fiction they can contrive.[327]

Appendix

A more complete bibliography on Cowdery would include Richard L. Anderson, "Reuben Miller, Recorder of Oliver Cowdery's Reaffirmations," *BYU Studies* 8/3 (1968): 277–93; Anderson, "Oliver Cowdery's Non-Mormon Reputation," *Improvement Era,* August 1968, 18–26; Anderson, "The Scribe as Witness: 'New Evidence from Modern Witnesses,'" *Improvement Era,* January 1969, 53–59; Anderson, "The Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration," *Improvement Era,* September 1968, 15–24; Anderson, "The Second Witness of Priesthood Succession," *Improvement Era,* November 1968, 14–20; Anderson, "The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 474–96; Anderson, "Oliver Cowdery, Esq.: His Non-Church Decade," in *To the Glory of God: Mormon Essays on Great Issues,* ed. Truman G. Madsen and Charles D. Tate (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 199–216; Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 37–65, 151–91; Anderson, "The Credibility of the Book of Mormon Translators," in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins,* ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 213–37; Anderson, "The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Seeking," *BYU Studies* 24/4 (1984): 521–32; Anderson, "Did Oliver Cowdery, one of the three special Book of Mormon witnesses, express doubt about his testimony?" I Have a Question, *Ensign* (April 1987): 23–25; Anderson, "Cowdery, Oliver," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 1:335–40; Scott H. Faulring, "The Book of Mormon: A Blueprint for Organizing the Church," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 60–69; Faulring, "The Return of Oliver

327. See, for example, Peterson, "Not So Easily Dismissed," in this number of the *Review,* pages xxxv–xliv.

Cowdery," in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson,* ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 117–73; John W. Welch, "Oliver Cowdery's 1835 Response to Alexander Campbell's 1831 'Delusions,'" in *Disciple as Witness,* 435–58; Larry E. Morris, "Oliver Cowdery's Vermont Years and the Origins of Mormonism," *BYU Studies* 39/1 (2000): 106–29; Morris, "'The Private Character of the Man Who Bore That Testimony': Oliver Cowdery and His Critics," *FARMS Review* 15/1 (2003): 311–51. Much important information can also be found in John W. Welch, ed., with Erick B. Carlson, *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press and Deseret Book, 2005). In addition to the above, a multivolume work by Richard Anderson and Scott Faulring that will publish all known documents relating to Oliver Cowdery has been in preparation for over a decade and is expected to appear in the near future. A preliminary copy of this work, entitled *Witness of the Second Elder: The Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery,* was completed in 1999 and has been on file since then in the FARMS Library.

The failure of Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick to engage serious scholarship on Cowdery is apparent in their discussion of the so-called Wood Scrape episode in Middletown, Vermont (pp. 213–14). As Anderson and Morris demonstrate, there is little historical foundation for attempts to link the Cowderys and the Smiths to the event. Anderson, "The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Seeking," 521–32; Morris, "Oliver Cowdery's Vermont Years and the Origins of Mormonism," 113–18.