



Type: Book Chapter

Counter Theories of Origin

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

Source: *New Witnesses for God: Volume III - The Book of Mormon*

Published: Salt Lake City; Deseret News, 1909

Pages: 347-406

CHAPTER XLIV.

COUNTER THEORIES OF ORIGIN.

“No sane man dreams of maintaining that a religion is true because of the difficulties which it involves; the utmost that can reasonably be maintained is that it may be true in spite of them.”^a

The necessity for a counter theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon was early recognized. Sectarian Christendom felt that Joseph Smith's story of the book's origin must be overthrown, else what would come of this new revelation, this new dispensation of God's word? Joseph Smith's account of the origin of the book was a direct challenge to the teachings of modern Christendom that revelation had ceased; that the awful voice of prophecy would no more be heard; that the volume of scripture was completed and forever closed; and that the Bible was the only volume of scripture. Hence Christendom must find some other origin for this book than that given by Joseph Smith. The first objection then to be considered is the objection to the book's origin by examining the counter theories.

I.

Alexander Campbell's Theory:

Alexander Campbell, founder of the sect of the “Disciples,” or “Campbellites,” as they are more commonly called, was the first who in any formal, public manner assailed the Book of Mormon, and proposed a counter theory of its origin than that given by Joseph Smith.

Alexander Campbell was born in Ireland, 1788, but

^a“Limits of Religious Thought,” Mansel, Preface.

educated at Glasgow University, Scotland, where he graduated with the title of Doctor of Divinity. He came to the United States in 1809, settling in Bethany, Virginia, and for some time filled the position of pastor of the Presbyterian church at that place. He soon parted from this communion, however, and began religious work on independent lines; and organized a society whose doctrine was that the Bible should be the sole creed of the church. This led to the establishment of a "Reformed Baptist Church," which finally took the name of "Disciples" or "Christians." Mr. Campbell has generally been accounted—and indeed was—one of the most learned divines of the country and century in which he lived. He founded a college at Bethany, Virginia; and was also the founder of the "Christian Baptist," which finally merged (1830) into the "Millennial Harbinger," both as their titles indicate being religious periodicals. He was the author of a number of works on religious subjects, but is generally remembered through his public debates with Robert Owen, the celebrated English Deist and social reformer; Archbishop Purcell, of the Roman Catholic Church, whose diocese was Cincinnati and vicinity; Rev. N. L. Rice, of the Presbyterian Church; and the Rev. William McCalla.

It will be seen from the foregoing sketch of this celebrated man, that so far as scholarship and trained ability in religious controversy is concerned, he was competent to analyze and make a severe criticism of the Book of Mormon. Before going into that, however, I think there is one other fact bearing on his career that should be noted. It will perhaps be remembered that Walter Scott and Sidney Rigdon were associated with Mr. Campbell in his reform operations in the state of Pennsylvania and Ohio. Up to 1830, the last named gentleman was as energetic in the in-

terests of the "Disciples" as Mr. Scott or Mr. Campbell.

Cardinal points in the reformation proposed by these gentlemen were, first: the recognition of the Bible as the only creed of the church; and after that faith in God and Christ, and the Holy Spirit; repentance of sin, and baptism in water by immersion for the remission of sins. It will be seen at once that in these doctrines the reformers were really preaching a number of the first principles and ordinances of the gospel; and when Sidney Rigdon became interested in Mormonism and visited the Prophet Joseph in New York, December, 1830, a revelation was given through the Prophet to Sidney Rigdon, in which the Lord claimed this reform work, in a way, as his:

Behold, verily, verily, I say unto my servant Sidney, I have looked upon thee and thy works. I have heard thy prayers and prepared thee for a greater work. Thou art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. Behold, thou wast sent forth, even as John, to prepare the way before me, and before Elijah which should come, and thou knewest it not. Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost. But now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, even as the apostles of old.^a

From this it appears that Sidney Rigdon was unconsciously inspired of God in teaching faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins. In evidence that the work of these reformers was a preparatory work to the coming forth of the fullness of the gospel, I may say that perhaps more people joined the Church in an early day from this sect of "Disciples" than from any other denomina-

^aDoctrine and Covenants, Sec. 35.

tion whatsoever. But if Sidney Rigdon was inspired of God in this work, and was sent forth even as John the Baptist to prepare the way for the incoming of a still greater work, may it not also be true that Alexander Campbell was inspired of God, and in like manner sent forth to prepare the way for the coming forth of the greater work? Undoubtedly; for if Sidney Rigdon could be thus sent forth, one could easily believe that Alexander Campbell, with his larger knowledge and greater capacity, would more likely be sent forth on such a mission. When, however, the new dispensation of the gospel was brought to his attention, and he came in contact with the Book of Mormon, instead of accepting it, as Sidney Rigdon did, he rejected it; pride of opinion, pride of intellectual attainments, pride as a leader of men, and the founder of a sect are doubtless the causes which induced the spiritual darkness that prevented him from seeing the truth; or, if he saw it, prevented him from accepting it; and hence he chose to reject it, and assail it, and for a number of years was its most pronounced antagonist.

I have already remarked upon the educational and intellectual abilities of Mr. Campbell as fitting him for the work of thorough analysis and criticism of the Book of Mormon; but when one compares his criticism of the book with his debate with Robert Owen, in which he makes a most masterful defense of historic Christianity; or with his debate with Archbishop Purcell which, at the time it took place, was called "The Battle of the Giants"—one can but feel that his performance with reference to the Book of Mormon was wholly unworthy of him. Unworthy both of his great intellect and high character. In his assault upon that book there is a bitterness, and even a vulgarity, entirely absent from his other works, and utterly

unaccountable for, unless one can think that in the background of his consciousness there was a realization that the work he assailed was true, and hence his assault is tinged with a bitterness likely to result from such a circumstance.

I shall have occasion to refer to several, in fact to all of Mr. Campbell's objections, in the course of this division of my treatise, but at present I shall confine myself to his theory of the Book of Mormon's origin.

His theory respecting the origin of the book was that Joseph Smith was its author. This he repeats at various places in his criticism.

"Smith," he says, "its real author, as ignorant and as impudent a knave as ever wrote a book, betrays the cloven foot in basing his whole book upon a false fact, or a pretended fact, which makes God a lair," etc.

Again:

The book proposes to be written at intervals and by different persons during the long period of 1020 years, and yet for uniformity of style, 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 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 sole author and proprietor of it.^b

From this it appears that the reasons which induced Alexander Campbell to conclude that Joseph Smith was

^bMr. Campbell's criticism of the Book of Mormon was published in the "Millennial Harbinger," Vol. II, pp. 86-96, February, 1831.

the "sole author and proprietor" of the Book of Mormon, are,

First: that he is called the Author and Proprietor of it on the title page,^c and

Second: that there is a uniformity of style throughout the book.

The reason for Joseph Smith calling himself "Author and Proprietor" of the Book of Mormon is easily accounted for. The copyright law of the United States, in force at the time of the publication of the Book of Mormon, secured the rights to copies of maps, charts, and books, "to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned," but the law said nothing respecting the rights of translators of books, hence Joseph Smith adopted the legal phraseology of the law, and secured the copyright to the Book of Mormon as "author and proprietor," since he could not obtain the copyright as "translator."^d

That Joseph Smith from the first claimed only to be the translator of the Book of Mormon is evident from the preface to the first edition, where he says:

"I would inform you that I '*translated*' by the gift and power of God, and caused to be written 116 pages [of manuscript] which I took from the Book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi by the hand of Mormon," etc.

Throughout the preface he speaks of his work as a

^cThe same phrase appears in the testimony of the Eight Witnesses, as published in the first edition of the Book of Mormon, and the preface published in the first edition, but omitted in all other editions, is signed "The Author."

^dSee announcement of copyright privileges in first edition of the Book of Mormon 1830. It is also copied into the History of the Church, Vol. I, pp. 58, 59.

“translation.” So that it cannot be said that Joseph Smith claimed at any time to be other than a translator of the work, hence any argument based upon Joseph Smith announcing himself as “author and proprietor” of the Book of Mormon merely to comply with the phraseology of the copyright law, is technical and without force.^e

As to the argument based upon the uniformity of literary style throughout the book, I have already called attention to the requirements both of unity and diversity of style, resulting in the conclusion that the construction of the book does not require a wide diversity of literary style, because of the fact that it is composed chiefly of four writers, two living in the sixth century B. C., and the other two living 400 A. D.^f

Moreover, it is conceded in these pages that the translation by Joseph Smith was made in such language and literary style as he was competent to execute, and hence uniformity in literary style is to be looked for in the translation since the English is his.^g

Campbell's theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon, notwithstanding his learning and acknowledged literary ability, failed to be convincing; the evidence of the fact is seen in this that his theory was soon abandoned for another, hence it can be concluded that it was entirely unsatisfactory—that is, failed. Indeed Mr. Campbell himself, as soon as the “Spaulding Theory” of the book's origin was

^eYet, in a work as late as 1902, on the subject of Mormonism, published by Dodd, Mead & Co., great importance is attached to this “author and proprietor” phrase, and indeed much of the force of the author's argument is based upon it. See “Founder of Mormonism” I, Woodbridge Riley, chapter iv.

^fSee Vol. II., chapter ix.

^gSee Vol. II., chapter vii.

launched, abandoned his own and gave to that his support.^h

II.

The Spaulding Theory of the Origin of the Book of Mormon.

Taking its source in Erie county, Pennsylvania, and flowing generally in a north-westerly course into Ohio, thence northward through Ashtabula county, Ohio, until it empties into Lake Erie, is Conneaut Creek. It meanders through a country somewhat rich in mounds and other evidences of the existence of civilized races that anciently inhabited America. Very naturally the people inhabiting that section of the country were interested in these subjects. Here resided in the early years of the nineteenth century one Solomon Spaulding, a graduate, it is said, of Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. According to those who have recorded his history, he was born in Ashford, Connecticut, 1761, and graduated at Dartmouth in 1785 with the degree of A. B. He subsequently studied theology, and began preaching in 1800, but on account of failing health he went into the merchandise business at Cherry Valley, New York. He failed in merchandising, and moved to New Salem, Ashtabula county, Ohio, 1807 or 1808.

New Salem is on the banks of the Conneaut Creek, and sometimes is called "Conneaut." Here Spaulding went into

^hSee "Latter-day Saints Messenger and Advocate," Vol. II, p. 242, where Mr. Campbell is represented as recommending Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," which first set forth and was mainly devoted to the Spaulding theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon.

the iron foundry business, but failed in that also. In 1809 he began writing a religious romance, incited to the undertaking by reason of the numerous evidences of the civilized races by which he was surrounded at Conneaut. This work, from the concensus of the recollections of those who claimed to have heard portions of it read, he called the "Manuscript Found," from the circumstance of his romance being based upon the pretended finding of the manuscript of it in a cave in the vicinity of New Salem. It feigned also to give an account of the migration of a colony to America in ancient times.

Mr. Spaulding continued to live in New Salem until 1812, when he removed from that place to Pittsburg, Penn., where it is supposed that he resided some two years. It is claimed that while living here Mr. Spaulding placed his manuscript story in the hands of a Mr. Patterson, a printer and publisher of Pittsburg, who retained it for some time; read it and urged Mr. Spaulding to write a title page and preface for it, saying that he would publish it, and that it might be "a source of profit." This, for some unaccountable reason, Mr. Spaulding refused to do. At length the manuscript was returned to its author, "and soon after," said Mrs. Spaulding in a narrative attributed to her, "we moved to Amity, Washington county, Penn., where Mr. Spaulding in 1816 died."

It is claimed, by the advocates of this Spaulding theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon, that Sidney Rigdon, through a Mr. Lambdin, an employe of Patterson's publishing establishment, became acquainted with this manuscript story; "borrowed" it and copied it, as some say; "stole" it according to the theory of others. Afterwards by some means unexplained, and as I think unexplainable, Sidney Rigdon, it is claimed, became associated with Joseph

Smith living in Manchester Township, New York, or in Susquehanna county, Pennsylvania—from 250 to 300 miles distant from any point where Sidney Rigdon resided during those years when the Book of Mormon was coming forth,—collaborated with him, and published Spaulding's romance, with religious doctrinal matter added by Rigdon, as the Book of Mormon. This is the theory most generally accepted by those who recognize the importance of overthrowing the account of the book's origin given by Joseph Smith.

I wish now to call attention to the circumstance under which this theory came to be substituted for the much more tenable, though inadequate one, advanced some years earlier by Alexander Campbell.

This settlement on Conneaut Creek, called New Salem, was on the route usually traveled by the Saints and Elders in their journey from New York to Kirtland, Ohio, and from Kirtland, Ohio, to the branches of the Church, established in Canada, New York, and Pennsylvania, hence the people of that neighborhood were frequently brought in contact with Mormonism, and the story of its origin was often before them.

In the fall of 1833, a number of affidavits were taken from the former neighbors and friends of Solomon Spaulding, and one was given by his brother, John Spaulding, and one by the latter's wife, Martha Spaulding. They at the time were residing at Crawford, Pennsylvania, and both testified they had "recently read the Book of Mormon," and recognized in it the general outlines of Solomon Spaulding's story, claiming especially to remember the names "Nephi and Lehi;" the words "Nephites and Lamanites;" and also the ancient scriptural style and the frequent use of the phrase "and it came to pass;" and that the American Indians

are descendants of the Jews, or "lost tribes of Israel."

Mr. Henry Lake, an associate in business with Mr. Spaulding, living at Conneaut in the fall of 1833, in connection with others that will be named, living in the same neighborhood, testified that Solomon Spaulding read to him the "Manuscript Found;" that it represented the American Indians as the descendants of the "lost tribes" of Israel, and that he suggested to Mr. Spaulding that the frequent use of the phrase "and it came to pass" rendered the book ridiculous.

John N. Miller testified substantially to the same things saying in addition that Spaulding's story landed his colony near the "Straits of Darien," which he was confident he called "Zarahemla."

Aaron Wright testified to substantially the same things as the foregoing. That the American Indians, according to Spaulding's story, were descendants of the "lost tribes" of Israel, and claims especially that the historical part of the Book of Mormon is substantially what he heard read from the "Manuscript Found," though he excepts out of the work, as not being Spaulding's, the religious matter.

Oliver Smith testified substantially to the same things, saying in effect that on reading the Book of Mormon he at once recognized it as the writings of Solomon Spaulding.

Nahum Howard, testified that he had recently read the Book of Mormon, and believed that all but the religious part of it was the same as that written by Spaulding.

Artemas Cunningham, living in Perry, Geauga county, Ohio, testified that in 1811 he waited upon Solomon Spaulding at his home in New Salem, to collect debts, and that the latter read to him on that occasion some parts of his manuscript story, partially examining the Book of Mormon he

became convinced that Spaulding had written its outlines before he left Conneaut.¹

It is upon the testimony of these parties that the Spaulding theory rests. Subsequently many others claimed to have information upon the subject, and gave statements to newspapers almost *ad infinitum*, constantly varying the claims and adding items that so burdened the theory with inconsistencies and contradictions that it breaks down, as we shall see, under the accumulation. But now as to the manner in which this theory came to be exploited.

As in former dispensations of the gospel, so in this last dispensation, the gospel net gathers of all kinds. Some are fit for the Master's use, and some fit only to be cast back into the world, as worthless fish are cast back into the sea. Of such was one "Doctor" Philastus Hurlburt. He made his first appearance in Kirtland in the early spring of 1833, where, after investigating Mormonism, he accepted it, and on the 18th of March of that year was ordained an Elder. Soon afterwards he went on a brief mission to the east, where he was guilty of unchristianlike conduct in his deportment with women. On his return to Kirtland he was confronted with this charge, and at a conference of High Priests was deprived of his license as an Elder, and excommunicated from the Church. From this decision he appealed to the Council of the First Presidency, and because of his confession and apparent repentance he was restored. Shortly afterwards, however, he boasted of having deceived both the Prophet and the council, and he was again excommunicated from the Church, after which he avowed himself the enemy of the Prophet Joseph and of Mormonism, and sought by all means within his power to destroy both. His threats against the Prophet's life be-

¹Mormonism Unveiled, (Howe), pp. 278-287.

came so violent that he was arraigned before the court in Chardon, the county seat of Geauga county, and bound over in the sum of two hundred dollar bonds, to keep the peace, and to pay the cost of the proceedings.^j

The title of "Doctor" given to this man, and which when rightfully held gives evidence of respectability as well as of professional standing, did not grow out of the fact that he was a physician, nor was it a little of honor at all with him, but was given to him because he was the "seventh son" in his family, who, according to the old folklore, should be made a physician, hence he was called "Doc" or "Doctor." According to the statement of Joseph E. Johnson, who was acquainted with him at Kirtland, Hurlburt was a man of fine physique, very good looking but pompous and ambitious, which lead him to seek position in the Church and solicit marriage with the "first families;" but his evil character thwarted all such efforts.

It is this man who is chiefly responsible for the Spaulding theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon. Having heard of Spaulding's "Manuscript Found" on Conneaut Creek, he immediately entered into negotiations with the Prophet's enemies in and about Kirtland, and by them was employed to gather up the statements to which reference has been made, as also, if possible, to secure the Spaulding manuscript for the purpose of comparing it with the Book of Mormon. He also went to the former home of the Prophet, for the purpose of collecting all the scandal and rumors that could be gathered up or manufactured against the Smith family; as also all the stories and neighborhood gossip which became current about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Meantime, however, the true character of Hurlburt became so generally known and

^jSee Church History, Vol. I., chapter xxv; Vol. II., chapter iv.

was so unsavory, that those who had employed him to gather this material for the contemplated anti-Mormon book found it necessary to drop Hurlburt, and leave the publication in the hands of others.

Among those who had interested themselves in these plans for the destruction of the Book of Mormon and the Church, was E. D. Howe, of Painsville, Ohio. Painsville is but a few miles distant northwest of Kirtland. One of Mr. Howe's reasons for anger against the Church was the fact that both his wife and sister had become converts to the new faith. He purchased the materials that had been gathered for Hurlburt's Anti-Mormon book, and published them under the title of "Mormonism Unveiled," (1834). It is the first Anti-Mormon book of any pretensions, and has been the chief source of "information" for all the Anti-Mormon publications which have followed it, that pretend to relate at all the early events connected with the coming forth of the great latter-day work. It took some six years to dispose of the first edition, as the second edition was not issued until 1840. So little influence, however, did "Mormonism Unveiled" have that many people in the very region of its origin continued to accept the Book of Mormon, and became members of the Church of the Latter-day Saints.

After the publication of Howe's book in 1834, there were no further developments in the Spaulding Theory until May, 1839, when attention was again called to it through the publication of what purported to be either an affidavit or signed statement^b by Mrs. Matilda Davison.

^bBy some, it is claimed that Mrs. Davison's statement was put forth in the "Boston Recorder" as an affidavit, but I have never seen it in the form of an affidavit. All versions of it that have fallen into my hands are merely in the form of a signed statement.

This lady was formerly Solomon Spaulding's wife, and lived with him until his death in 1816. Four years later she married Mr. Davison, and at the time of the publication of the signed statement here referred to, was living with her daughter, Mrs. M'Kenstry, at Monson, Massachusetts. Her statement follows :

ALLEGED STATEMENT OF MRS. DAVISON, FORMERLY THE WIFE OF SOLOMON SPAULDING.

As the Book of Mormon, or Golden Bible (as it was originally called) has excited much attention, and is deemed by a certain new sect of equal authority with the Sacred Scriptures, I think it a duty which I owe to the public to state what I know touching its origin.

That its claims to a divine origin are wholly unfounded needs no proof to a mind unperverted by the grossest illusions. That any sane person should rank it higher than any other merely human composition is a matter of the greatest astonishment; yet it is received as divine by some who dwell in enlightened New England, and even by those who have sustained the character of devoted Christians. Learning recently that Mormonism had found its way into a church in Massachusetts, and has impregnated some with its gross delusions, so that excommunication has been necessary, I am determined to delay no longer in doing what I can to strip the mask from this mother of sin, and to lay open this pit of abominations.

Solomon Spaulding, to whom I was united in marriage in early life, was a graduate of Dartmouth College, and was distinguished for a lively imagination, and a great fondness for history. At the time of our marriage he resided in Cherry Valley, New York. From this place we removed to New Salem, Ashtabula county, Ohio, sometimes called Conneaut, as it is situated on Conneaut Creek. Shortly after our removal to this place, his health sunk, and he was laid aside from active labors. In the town of New Salem there are numerous mounds and forts supposed by many to be the dilapidated dwellings and fortifications of a race now extinct. These ancient relics arrest the at-

tention of the new settlers, and become objects of research for the curious. Numerous implements were found, and other articles evincing great skill in the arts. Mr. Spaulding being an educated man, and passionately fond of history, took a lively interest in these developments of antiquity; and in order to beguile the hours of retirement and furnish employment for his lively imagination, he conceived the idea of giving an historical sketch of this long lost race. Their extreme antiquity led him to write in the most ancient style, and as the Old Testament is the most ancient book in the world, he imitated its style as nearly as possible. His sole object in writing this imaginary history was to amuse himself and his neighbors. This was about the year 1812. Hull's surrender at Detroit occurred near the same time, and I recollect the date well from that circumstance. As he progressed in his narrative the neighbors would come in from time to time to hear portions read, and a great interest in the work was excited among them. It claimed to have been written by one of the lost nation, and to have been recovered from the earth, and assumed the title of "Manuscript Found." The neighbors would often inquire how Mr. Spaulding progressed in deciphering the manuscript; and when he had sufficient portion prepared, he would inform them, and they would assemble to hear it read. He 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. Mr. Solomon Spaulding had a brother, Mr. John Spaulding, residing in the place at the time, who was perfectly familiar with the work, and repeatedly heard the whole of it read. From New Salem we removed to Pittsburg, in Pennsylvania. Here Mr. Spaulding found a friend and acquaintance, in the person of Mr. Patterson, an editor of a newspaper. He exhibited his manuscript to Mr. Patterson, who was very much pleased with it, and borrowed it for perusal. He retained it for a long time, and informed Mr. Spaulding 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. Spaulding refused to do. Sidney Rigdon, who has figured so largely in the history of the Mormons, was at that time connected with the printing office of Mr. Patterson, as is well known in that region,

and as Rigdon himself has frequently stated, became acquainted with Mr. Spaulding's manuscript, and copied it. It was a matter of notoriety and interest to all connected with the printing establishment. At length the manuscript was returned to its author, and soon after we removed to Amity, Washington county, etc., where Mr. Spaulding deceased in 1816. The manuscript then fell into my hands, and was carefully preserved. It has frequently been examined by my daughter, Mrs. M'Kenstry, of Monson, Mass., with whom I now reside, and by other friends.

After the Book of Mormon came out, a copy of it was taken to New Salem, the place of Mr. Spaulding's former residence, and the very place where the "Manuscript Found" was written. A woman preacher appointed a meeting there; and in the meeting read and repeated copious extracts from the Book of Mormon. The historical part was immediately recognized by all the older inhabitants, as the identical work of Mr. Spaulding, in which they had all been so deeply interested years before. Mr. John Spaulding was present and recognized perfectly the work of his brother. He was amazed and afflicted that it should have been perverted to so wicked a purpose. His grief found vent in a flood of tears, and he arose on the spot, and expressed to the meeting his sorrow and regret that the writings of his deceased brother should be used for a purpose so vile and shocking. The excitement in New Salem became so great that the inhabitants had a meeting and deputed Dr. Philastus Hurlburt, 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. Hurlburt brought with him an introduction and request for the manuscript, which was signed by Messrs. Henry Lake, Aaron Wright, and others, with all of whom I was acquainted, as they were my neighbors when I resided at New Salem. I am sure that nothing would grieve my husband more, were he living, than the use which has been made of his work. The air of antiquity which was thrown about the composition, doubtless suggested the idea of converting it to the purposes of delusion. Thus an historical romance, with the addition of a few pious expressions, and extracts from the sa-

cred Scriptures, has been construed into a new Bible, and palmed off upon a company of poor deluded fanatics as divine. I have given the previous brief narration that this work of deep deception and wickedness may be searched to the foundation and the authors exposed to the contempt and execration they so justly deserve.

(Signed)

MATILDA DAVISON.

This statement was published at the instance of Dr. John Storrs, a Congregational minister of Holliston, Massachusetts. The incentive for his action was the fact that a number of his congregation had become converts to the Mormon faith and he was angry.^k Mrs. Davison, however, denied ever having given such a signed statement, as appears from the following communication published in the "Quincy Whig," at Quincy, Illinois. It was published in the Illinois paper shortly after the "Davison Statement" appeared in the "Boston Recorder," under the following title:

A CUNNING DEVICE DETECTED.

It will be recollected that a few months since an article appeared in several of the papers, purporting to give an account of the origin of the Book of Mormon. How far the writer of that piece has effected his purposes, or what his purposes were in pursuing the course he has, I shall not attempt to say at this time, but shall call upon every candid man to judge in this matter for himself, and shall content myself by presenting before the public the other side of the question in the form of a letter, as follows:

Copy of a letter written by Mr. John Haven, of Holliston, Middlesex Co., Massachusetts, to his daughter, Elizabeth Haven, of Quincy, Adams Co., Illinois.

Your brother Jesse passed through Monson where he saw Mrs. Davison and her daughter Mrs. McKenstry and also Dr.

^kSee Thompson's "Evidences," pp. 176-7.

Ely and spent several hours with them, during which time he asked them the following questions, viz.:

“Question.—Did you, Mrs. Davison, write a letter to John Storrs, giving an account of the origin of the Book of Mormon?

Answer.—I did not.

Q.—Did you sign your name to it?

A.—I did not, neither did I ever see the letter until I saw it in the “Boston Recorder,” the letter was never brought to me to sign.

Q.—What agency had you in having this letter sent to Mr. Storrs?

A.—D. R. Austin came to my house and asked me some questions, took some minutes on paper, and from these minutes wrote that letter.

Q.—Is what is written in the letter true?

A.—In the main it is.

Q. Have you read the Book of Mormon?

A.—I have read some in it.

Q.—Does Mr. Spaulding’s manuscript and the Book of Mormon agree?

A.—I think some few of the names are alike.

Q.—Does the manuscript describe an idolatrous or a religious people?

A.—An idolatrous people?

Q.—Where is the manuscript?

A.—D. P. Hurlburt came here and took it, said he would get it printed and let me have one-half the profits.

Q.—Has D. P. Hurlburt got the manuscript printed?

A.—I received a letter stating that it did not read as he expected, and he should not print it.

Q.—How large is Mr. Spaulding’s manuscript?

A.—About one-third as large as the Book of Mormon.

Q.—To Mrs. McKinstry: How old were you when your father wrote the manuscript?

A.—About five years of age.

Q.—Did you ever read the manuscript?

A.—When I was about twelve years old I used to read it for diversion.

Q.—Did the manuscript describe an idolatrous or a religious people?

A.—An idolatrous people.

Q.—Does the manuscript and the Book of Mormon agree?

A.—I think some of the names agree.

Q.—Are you certain that some of the names agree?

A.—I am not.

Q.—Have you read any in the Book of Mormon?

A.—I have not.

Q.—Was your name attached to that letter, which was sent to Mr. John Storrs, by your order?

A.—No, I never meant that my name should be there.

You see by the above questions and answers, that Mr. Austin, in his great zeal to destroy the Latter-day Saints, has asked Mrs. Davison a few questions, then wrote a letter to Mr. Storrs, in his own language. I do not say that the above questions and answers were given in the form that I have written them, but these questions were asked, and these answers given. Mrs. Davison is about seventy years of age, and somewhat broke.”

This may certify that I am personally acquainted with Mr. Haven, his son and daughter, and am satisfied they are persons of truth. I have also read Mr. Haven’s letter to his daughter, which has induced me to copy it for publication, and I further say, the above is a correct copy of Mr. Haven’s letter.

(Signed)

A. BADLAM.^k

The foregoing statement from the “Quincy Whig” is considerably strengthened by a work published by “Funk & Wagnalls” (1885), by Mrs. Ellen E. Dickinson, a grand daughter of Willian H. Sabine, a brother of Mrs. (Spaulding) Davison. Mrs. Dickenson, whose work is called “New Light on Mormonism,” devotes a number of her chapters to the elaboration of the Spaulding theory, and in an appendix publishes twenty-seven documents bearing upon the subject of the Spaulding manuscript; but nowhere, either in the body of her work or in this appendix, publishes

^kTimes and Seasons, Vol. I., p. 47.

the alleged statement of Mrs. Davison, which is pretty clear evidence that the statement was never given by Mrs. Davison nor authorized by her. Mrs. Dickinson from the amount of research she devoted to the subject could not have been ignorant of its existence, and more especially as she was a relative of Mrs. Davison—grand-niece—and wrote her book as the representative of the Spaulding relatives to set forth the Spaulding theory in its proper light.¹ Of course had Mrs. Davison done her full duty in the premises as an author, she would have made reference to this forged statement credited to her grand-aunt and repudiated it in her name; but this she failed to do. However, her silence with reference to this statement and her failure to place it in her collection of documents on the subject, amounts to the same thing—a repudiation of it.

But even if Mrs. Davison's repudiation of the article, to which her name was attached by others, did not exist, and if the repudiation of it by her grand-niece by refusing it admission into her collection of documents on the Spaulding theory did not exist, there is enough in the statement itself to establish its utter unreliability. These are:

First: The description of the manner in which John Spaulding, brother of Solomon Spaulding, learned of the identity between the Book of Mormon and his brother's "Manuscript Found." According to the "Davison statement," he was at New Salem when a public speaker read excerpts from the Book of Mormon, and immediately recognized the work of his brother. Whereupon, his amazement and grief found vent in "a flood of tears," and he rose "on the spot" and expressed his sorrow and regrets that his brother's writings should be used for a purpose so "vile and shocking." In the statement of John Spaulding, published

¹See Preface to "New Light on Mormonism."

in Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," there is nothing of all this dramatic circumstance. In that statement^m there is no agony of grief; no flood of tears; no denunciation on the spot; no reference to a purpose "vile and shocking;" just a plain statement that he had "recently read the Book of Mormon;" and the claim that he found nearly the same historical matter in it as in his brother's writings; some names that were alike, and that the "Manuscript Found" held to the theory that the American Indians were descendants of the "lost tribes;" and evidently supposes that the Book of Mormon held the same theory. Had any such circumstance as described in the "Davison Statement" occurred, it would undoubtedly have appeared in John Spaulding's statement published by Howe five years before this second version was put forth. Had such incidents really taken place, they would have been too rich in dramatic incident to have escaped the publishers of "Mormonism Unveiled."

Second: The "Davison Statement" represents that it was through a "woman preacher" that the Book of Mormon was represented at the public meeting at New Salem, where John Spaulding denounced it on the spot. It is well known that the Church of the Latter-day Saints at that time had no "woman preacher," hence no such circumstance could have occurred.ⁿ

Third: The "Davison Statement" represents Sidney Rigdon as being connected with the printing office of Mr. Patterson, of Pittsburg, but strangest of all it represents that gentleman as having frequently admitted that con-

^mSee "Mormonism Unveiled," pp. 278-280.

ⁿWhen this fact was brought to light in the early controversy over the subject, it was claimed by Messrs. Austin—Storrs—Clark, who were responsible for this forgery, that "Woman" in the text was a typographical error and should be "Mormon." See Clark's Gleanings "By the Way."

nection, whereas, as we shall see later, Sidney Rigdon every where and at all times expressly denied any such connection.

These inconsistencies of the "Davison Statement" with the well known facts in the case reveal its utterly fraudulent character; and here we may pause just long enough to remark the desperate straits the opponents of the Book of Mormon were driven to in those days, when they must needs resort to such methods of opposition as are apparent in this bogus statement. Does it not cast suspicion upon the whole Spaulding theory? A suspicion which not all the supposed respectability that goes with titles of "Doctor of Divinity," "Reverend," "Ministers of the Gospel," etc., can remove?

After this attempt to galvanize into life the Spaulding theory by the Reverend John Storrs,—by methods, as we have seen, that were infamous!—it slumbered until the year 1880, when Mrs. Ellen E. Dickinson, the grand-niece of Mrs. Davison, again revived it by the publication of an article in "*Scribner's Magazine*" for August of that year. The chief item of interest in Mrs. Dickenson's publication was an affidavit by Mrs. M. S. McKenstry, the daughter of Solomon Spaulding, who claimed to have some childhood recollections of her father's manuscript story. Her affidavit follows:

MRS. MATILDA (SPAULDING) M'KENSTRY'S STATEMENT REGARDING "THE
MANUSCRIPT FOUND."

Washington, D. C., April 3, 1880.

So much has been published that is erroneous concerning "The Manuscript Found," written by my father, the Rev. Solomon Spaulding, and its supposed connection with the book called the Mormon Bible, I have willingly consented to make the fol-

lowing statement regarding it, repeating all that I remember personally of this manuscript, and all that is of importance which my mother related to me in connection with it, at the same time affirming that I am in tolerable health and vigor, and that my memory, in common with elderly people, is clearer in regard to the events of my earlier years rather than those of my maturer life.

During the war of 1812 I was residing with my parents in a little town in Ohio called Conneaut. I was then in my sixth year. My father was in business there, and I remember his iron foundry and the men he had at work, but that he remained at home most of the time, and was reading and writing a great deal. He frequently wrote little stories, which he read to me. There were some round mounds of earth near our house which greatly interested him, and he said a tree on the top of one of them was a thousand years old. He set some of his men to work digging into one of these mounds, and I vividly remember how excited he became when he heard that they had exhumed some human bones, portions of gigantic skeletons, and various relics. He talked with my mother of these discoveries in the mound, and was writing every day as the work progressed. Afterwards he read the manuscript which I had seen him writing, to the neighbors, and to the clergyman, a friend of his who came to see him. Some of the names that he mentioned while reading to these people I have never forgotten. They are as fresh to me today as though I heard them yesterday. They were "Mormon," "Maroni," "Lamenite,"ⁿ "Nephi."

We removed from Conneaut to Pittsburg while I was still very young, but every circumstance of this removal is distinct in my memory. In that city my father had an intimate friend named Patterson, and I frequently visited Mr. Patterson's library with him, and heard my father talk about books with him. In 1816 my father died at Amity, Penn., and directly after his death my mother and myself went to visit at the residence of my mother's brother, William H. Sabine, at Onondaga Valley, Onondaga Co., N. Y. Mr. Sabine was a lawyer of distinction and wealth, and greatly respected. We carried all our personal

ⁿThe orthography is the affidavit's.

effects with us, and one of these was an old trunk, in which my mother had placed all my father's writings which had been preserved. I perfectly remember the appearance of this trunk, and of looking at its contents. There were sermons and other papers, and I saw a manuscript about an inch thick, closely written, tied with some of the stories my father had written for me, one of which he called "The Frogs of Wyndham." On the outside of this manuscript were written the words, "Manuscript Found." I did not read it, but looked through it, and had it in my hands many times, and saw the names I had heard at Conneaut, when my father read it to his friends. I was about eleven years of age at this time.

After we had been at my uncle's for some time my mother left me there and went to her father's house at Pomfret, Conn., but did not take her furniture nor the old trunk of manuscripts with her. In 1820 she married Mr. Davison, of Hartwicks, a village near Cooperstown, N. Y., and sent for the things she had left at Onondaga Valley, and I remember that the old trunk with its contents, reached her in safety. In 1828 I was married to Dr. A. McKinstry, of Monson, Hampden Co., Mass., and went there to reside. Very soon after my mother joined me there, and was with me most of the time until her death, in 1844. 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 Rev. 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 Val-

ley, 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. The old trunk, containing the desired "Manuscript Found," she had placed in the care of Mr. Jerome Clark, of Hartwicks, when she came to Monson, intending to send for it. On the repeated promise of Hurlburt to return the manuscript to us, she gave him a letter to Mr. Clark to open the trunk and deliver it to him. We afterwards heard that he did receive it from Mr. Clark at Hartwicks, but from that time we have never had it in our possession, and I have no present knowledge of its existence, Hurlburt never returning it or answering letters requesting him to do so. Two years ago I heard he was still living in Ohio, and with my consent he was asked for "The Manuscript Found." He made no response, although we have evidence that he received the letter containing the request. So far I have stated facts within my own knowledge. My mother mentioned many other circumstances to me in connection with this subject which are interesting, of my father's literary tastes, his fine education, and peculiar temperament. She stated to me that she had heard the manuscript alluded to read by my father, was familiar with its contents, and she deeply regretted that her husband, as she believed, had innocently been the means of furnishing matter for a religious delusion. She said that my father loaned this "Manuscript Found" to Mr. Patterson, of Pittsburg, and that, when he returned it to my father, he said: "Polish it up, finish it, and you will make money out of it." My mother confirmed my remembrances of my father's fondness for history, and told me of his frequent conversations regarding a theory which he had of a prehistoric race which had inhabited this continent, etc., all showing that his mind dwelt on this subject. "The Manuscript Found," she said, was a romance written in Biblical style, and

that while she heard it read she had no especial admiration for it more than for other romances he wrote and read to her. We never, either of us, ever saw, or in any way communicated with the Mormons, save Hurlburt, as above described; and while we had no personal knowledge that the Mormon Bible was taken from "The Manuscript Found," there were many evidences to us that it was, and that Hurlburt and others at the time thought so. A convincing proof to us of this belief was that my uncle, William H. Sabine, had undoubtedly read the manuscript which was in his house, and his faith that its production would show to the world that the Mormon Bible had been taken from it, or was the same with slight alterations. I have frequently answered questions which have been asked me by different persons regarding "The Manuscript Found," but until now have never made a statement at length for publication.

(Signed)

M. S. McKENSTRY.

Sworn and subscribed to before me this 3rd day of April, A. D. 1880, at the city of Washington, D. C.

CHARLES WALTER,

Notary Public.

The items to be noted in this affidavit are :

First: That Mrs. McKenstry was in her sixth year (i. e., five years old) in 1812, the year that the Spaulding family left Conneaut, Ohio, for Pennsylvania. Four years later, in 1816, her father died, so that she was in her tenth year when that event took place, hence all her recollections concerning the matter were those of a child between the ages of five and nine years. When it is remembered how the half recollections of childhood blend in with, and are modified by—or half made up—of things that one hears about such days, no very great importance can be attached to the statements she makes from personal knowledge of what "Manuscript Found" contained.

Second: When about eleven years of age, when living at her uncle's in Onondaga Valley, New York, (to which

place she had removed with her mother) she finds in an old trunk the writings of her father, and among them a manuscript about an inch thick, closely written, and entitled "Manuscript Found." She did not read it, but had it in her hands many times, and saw the names she claims to have heard at Conneaut.

Third: The visit of Hurlburt many years later, 1834, to herself and mother then residing at Monson, Massachusetts, who presented a letter from her uncle, W. H. Sabine, in which he requested Mrs. Davison (formerly wife of Spaulding, it will be remembered) to loan the manuscript of Spaulding's to Hurlburt for the purpose of "uprooting Mormonism."

Fourth: That Mrs. Davison gave an order to Hurlburt on Mr. Jerome Clark of Hartwicks, New York, with whom she had left the trunk containing the manuscript.

Fifth: That Hurlburt obtained "Manuscript Found" upon this order, and that Mrs. Davison could never afterwards obtain any information from him concerning it.

The interest created by Mrs. Dickenson's article in Scribner's, lead to her making a more ambitious effort, and in 1885 she published a book of some 275 pages under the title, "New Light on Mormonism," (which by the way, is a sad misnomer, since it is but a rehash of all the stale, Anti-Mormon stories in existence) which failed of making any great stir in the world, just as all Anti-Mormon books up to date, by the way, have failed.

The last phase in the development of the Spaulding theory is a denouement; namely, the discovery and publication of Spaulding's "Manuscript Found," which determines forever the fact that it was not the source whence the Book of Mormon was derived.

In 1839 or 1840, a Mr. L. L. Rice purchased the "Paines-

ville Telegraph," a newspaper, of Mr. E. D. Howe, the publisher of "Mormonism Unveiled." The transfer of the printing department, types, press, etc., was accompanied with a large collection of books and manuscripts, and undoubtedly the Spaulding manuscript, which Hurlburt had delivered to Howe, was with the rest. Some years afterwards, Mr. Rice closed up his business affairs in Painesville and finally made his home in Honolulu, Sandwich Islands, taking with him his books, papers, etc. In 1884 Mr. James H. Fairchild, President of Oberlin College, Ohio, visited Mr. Rice, and suggested that the latter look through his numerous papers for the purpose of finding among them anti-slavery documents (slavery being a subject in which Mr. Rice had been much interested when living in Ohio) that might be of value. Mr. Rice accepted the suggestions and, in his search discovered a package marked in pencil on the outside "Manuscript Story, Conneaut Creek;" and on the last page of the manuscript the following inscription:

The Writings of Solomon Spaulding Proved by Aaron Wright, Oliver Smith, John Miller and Others, the Testimonies of the Above Gentlemen are Now in My Possession.

D. P. HURLBURT.

This document proved to be the long lost romance of Solomon Spaulding. President Fairchild gave the following account of the document and its discovery in the January number, 1885, of the "Bibliotheca Sacra," published at Oberlin, Ohio:

The theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon in the traditional manuscript of Solomon Spaulding will probably have to be relinquished. That manuscript is doubtless now in the possession of Mr. L. L. Rice, of Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands, form-

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

There seems to be no reason to doubt that this is the long-lost story. Mr. Rice himself and others compared it with the Book of Mormon and could detect no resemblance between the two, in general or in detail. There seems to be no name or incident common to the two. The solemn style of the Book of Mormon, in imitation of the English scriptures, does not appear in the manuscript. The only resemblance is the fact that both profess to set forth the history of lost tribes. Some other explanation of the origin of the Book of Mormon must be found if any explanation is required.

JAMES H. FAIRCHILD.

The means now of ascertaining whether the Book of Mormon came from Spaulding's manuscript was completed. A *verbatim et literatim* transcript was obtained from Mr. L. L. Rice by President Joseph F. Smith, who in 1884 and 1885 was residing in the Sandwich Islands. This, in 1886, was published by the "Deseret News" exactly according to the transcript, with all its errors of grammar and orthog-

raphy, as also with all the alterations, erasures, etc., made by its author, indicated. After a careful examination of it, I think everybody will come to the same conclusion that President Fairchild did: namely, that there is "no resemblance between the two, in general or in detail. There seems to be no name or incident common to the two—a fact that completely explodes the theory that Spaulding's manuscript was the origin of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Rice is of the same opinion as President Fairchild, though more emphatic in the expression of it. He says:

I should as soon think the Book of Revelation was written by the author of "Don Quixote," as that the writer of this manuscript was the author of the Book of Mormon.

Then in a postscript to the letter from which the above is a quotation, he says:

Upon reflection, since writing the foregoing, I am of the opinion that no one who reads this manuscript will give credit to the story that Solomon Spaulding was in any wise the author of the Book of Mormon. It is unlikely that any one who wrote so elaborate a work as the Mormon Bible would spend his time in getting up so shallow a story as this, which at best is but a feeble imitation of the other. Finally I am more than half convinced that this is his only writing of the sort, and that any pretense that Spaulding was in any sense the author of the other is a sheer fabrication. It was easy for anybody who may have seen this, or heard anything of its contents, to get up the story that they were identical.

Subsequently and in another letter he said:

My opinion is, from all I have seen and learned, that this is the only writing of Spaulding, and there is no foundation for the statement of Deming and others that Spaulding made an-

other story, more elaborate, of which several copies were written, one of which Rigdon stole from a printing office in Pittsburg, etc."

Mr. Rice finally deposited the original Spaulding manuscript with the Oberlin College, where it now lies secure for the inspection of the curious, and a standing refutation to the extravagant claims that have been made respecting the part it played in the origin of the Book of Mormon.

Let us now review the course of those who originated this Spaulding theory, and foister it upon the world. It was evidently conceived by "Doctor" Philastus Hurlburt, the enemy of the Prophet Joseph and of Mormonism. He had heard of Spaulding's writings in Pennsylvania, also at Conneaut, Ohio, and in his hatred of Mormonism determined to show some connection between the writings of Spaulding and the Book of Mormon, in the hope of destroying faith in the divine origin of the latter. He appealed to other enemies of the Prophet, and with their financial assistance started out to collect affidavits and statements that would prove his theory. Hurlburt, under Mrs. Davison's order, as already seen, obtained Spaulding's story "The Manuscript Found," undoubtedly the identical story which Spaulding had read to his neighbors on Conneaut Creek. This is proved by the fact that the document which Hurlburt turned over to Howe^o corresponds with every description that

^oSee letters of Mr. Rice to Mr. Joseph Smith, President of the "Reorganized Church," "History of the Church of Jesus Christ," [Reorganized] Vol. IV., pp. 471-473.

^oThis is confirmed by a letter written by Hurlburt himself, in 1881, at the request of Mrs. Ellen E. Dickenson, as follows:

Gibsonburg, Ohio, January 10, 1881.

To all whom it may concern:

In the year eighteen hundred and thirty-four (1834) I went from Geauga Co., Ohio, to Munson, Hampden Co., Mass., where I found Mrs. Davison, late widow of the Rev. Solomon Spauld-

is given concerning the size and character of the manuscript.

Mrs. Davison, in her conversation with Jesse Haven, declares that the manuscript would be "about one-third as large as the Book of Mormon"^p (that is, would produce about one-third of the printed matter in that book.)

Mrs. McKinstry, in describing "Manuscript Found" which she had in her hands many times, says that the manuscript was "about one inch thick, and closely written." This agrees closely with the statement of Mrs. Davison on the subject.

Mr. Howe, in his book, declares that the "Manuscript Found" in Mrs. Spaulding Davison's trunk was "in Spaulding's hand writing, containing about one quire of paper."^r

All witnesses who came in contact with this manuscript story declare that the title of it was "The Manuscript Found;" or "Manuscript Found." This is the statement of nearly all the witnesses on Conneaut Creek, whose testimony appears in Howe's "Mormonism," and that it contained the names of "Nephi," "Lehi," "Mormon," "Lamanites," etc., and was based on the theory that the American Indians were the "Lost tribes of Israel." But when Hurlburt returned to Conneaut with this precious "Manuscript Found,"

ing, late of Conneaut, Ashtabula Co., Ohio. Of her I obtained a manuscript, supposing it to be the manuscript of the romance written by the said Solomon Spaulding, called "The Manuscript Found," which was reported to be the foundation of the "Book of Mormon." I did not examine the manuscript until I got home, when, upon examination, I found it to contain nothing of the kind, but being a manuscript upon an entirely different subject. This manuscript I left with E. D. Howe, of Painsville, Geauga 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.

(Signed)

D. P. HURLBURT.

^p"New Light on Mormonism," p. 245.

^rHowe's "Mormonism," p. 288.

according to Howe's own statement, it was not at all what it had been represented to be. Howe says of the manuscript :

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 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 manuscript has been shown to several of the foregoing witnesses,^s who recognize it as Spaulding's.

The foregoing accurately describes the "Manuscript Found," since obtained of Mr. L. L. Rice and published; and by both its title and its size is identified to be the manuscript read by Spaulding to his neighbors.

This manuscript must have been a very great disappointment to the conspirators against the Book of Mormon. They had staked their all on the fact of Spaulding's "Manuscript Found" being the foundation matter of the Book of Mormon, but when found it proved to be so dissimilar that they could not, with any face, undertake to maintain that this manuscript was the source whence the Book of Mormon was derived. What must be done to meet this dilemma? That those who had gone this far in opposing the work of God would repent of their folly, and admit their defeat would be too much to expect. No; instead of doing that they resorted to the following subterfuge. I quote Howe:

This manuscript has been shown to several of the foregoing witnesses who recognize it as Spaulding's, he having told them that he had altered his first plan of writing, by going far-

^sHe refers to the witnesses living at Conneaut Creek, the substance of whose testimony is previously quoted in his book, pp. 357-8.

ther 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."¹

Two things, in this statement, are extremely unfortunate for the reputation of Mr. Howe, and those who have been beguiled into accepting the theory of his book respecting the origin of the Book of Mormon:

First: The fact that in none of the statements of the witnesses who heard Mr. Spaulding read his manuscript is there any account of his having made two drafts of his story, one which he found too modern to suit the antiquities of America, and written in modern style; and the other going farther back in time and written in the old scripture style, in order to make it appear more ancient. All this seems to have been an after thought, a subterfuge, when it was learned that "The Manuscript Found" did not warrant the theory that it was the foundation of the Book of Mormon. The things it is here claimed were said by these Conneaut witnesses concerning a second Spaulding Manuscript on American antiquities, are not said *by* them, but *for* them by Mr. Howe.

Second: That Mr. Howe himself wickedly conceals the fact that this old Roman story of Spaulding's was labeled "Manuscript Found;" and in addition to concealing that fact declares that the witnesses say "that it bears no resemblance to the "Manuscript Found," when, as a matter of fact, this Roman story itself was the "Manuscript Found." Comment is unnecessary; a bare statement of the facts expose the villainy of these conspirators."

Relative to the manner in which it is supposed the

¹Howe's "Mormonism," p. 288, (first edition, 1834).

²Howe's "Mormonism," pp. 289, 290. "This manuscript received by Hurlburt and by him given to Howe is the only

Spaulding manuscript came into the hands of Joseph Smith, the theories differ. Howe supposes that Lambdin, alleged partner of Patterson in the printing business at Pittsburg, placed in the hands of Sidney Rigdon the "Manuscript Found," to be "embellished, altered, and added to as he might think expedient" to transform it into what is now the Book of Mormon." When Howe put forth this theory, Lambdin had been dead some eight years."

Query: Did Howe select this dead man as the medium through which the Spaulding manuscript reached the hands of Sidney Rigdon, and thence to Joseph Smith, for the reason that the dead man could not arise to contradict it? We shall see that Patterson contradicted it when that gentleman was appealed to in order to confirm his connection with Sidney Rigdon.

The Rev. John Storrs, in the bogus signed statement he put forth as coming from Mrs. Davison, represents her as saying that Rigdon became acquainted with Spaulding's manuscript "and copied it," and that this was a "matter

Spaulding manuscript written by Spaulding, making any reference to the antiquities of America. It is the simon-pure and only "Manuscript Found." Against this it is urged by our opponents that "no such title is discoverable anywhere upon or in the body of the manuscript in the Oberlin library. (American Historical Magazine, Sept. 1906, p. 386). And yet with strange inconsistency the writer himself a few pages further on admits. —"It is even possible that this first manuscript. [meaning the one now at Oberlin], may at sometime have been labeled "Manuscript Found." But what is better than any "label" on the manuscript inside or outside; better than any admission of our opponent, is the fact that this manuscript is the one Mr. Spaulding feigned to have found, and that he pretended to translate into English. It is the "found" manuscript, and the only one that Spaulding pretended or feigned to have found. It is the one that Mrs. McKenstry says she had in her hands "many times" at Sabine's after 1816; and that "on the outside of this manuscript were written the words, "Manuscript Found." (American Historical Magazine, March, 1909, pp. 190, 191.

"Howe's "Mormonism," pp. 289-290.

"Ibid p. 289. Lambdin died 1826.

of notoriety and interest to all connected with the printing establishment." According to this "Davison Statement," the manuscript was returned to Mr. Spaulding before he left Pittsburg for Amity (where he died), and that the manuscript after this was "carefully preserved" by Mrs. Spaulding, until delivered to Hurlburt, in 1834.

Rev. Clark Braden, a Campbellite minister, in a protracted debate on the Book of Mormon in Kirtland, 1884, declares that Sidney Rigdon stole the Spaulding manuscript and that Mrs. (Spaulding) Davison—he should have said rather the Rev. John Storrs, the real author of the "Davison Statement"—was mistaken in saying that Rigdon "copied it" and returned the original to Mr. Spaulding.^w

Mrs. McKenstry's affidavit on the subject, published in Scribner's for August, 1880, says he (Solomon Spaulding) loaned the manuscript to Mr. Patterson; that he read it and returned it to its author, with the suggestion that he "polish it up and finish it," and that he might make money out of it; but when Mr. Patterson was appealed to for information on the subject he said he had "no recollection of any such manuscript being brought there (i. e., to his establishment in Pittsburg) for publication."^x

Mrs. Ellen E. Dickinson, grand-niece of Solomon Spaulding and the author of "New Light on Mormonism," holds that the Spaulding manuscript remained safely in the hands of the family until turned over to Hurlburt. At this point she thinks several things may have befallen the manuscript. One, that Hurlburt "sold the manuscript to the Mormons for a sum of money which he used in purchasing a farm near Gibonsburg, Ohio, where he now [1880] resides; and that the Mormons burned the manuscript at Conneaut."

^w"Braden and Kelly Debate," p. 44.

^xHowe's "Mormonism," p. 289.

Another, that "Hurlburt sold it with a sworn agreement that it should not be given to the world until after his death." Then she concludes :

There are circumstances which support both theories; but the author's opinion, after a careful study of the matter, is, that Hurlburt made a copy of the original manuscript, which he sold to E. D. Howe, of Painsville, to use in writing the book "Mormonism Unveiled," and sold the original to the Mormons, who destroyed it. The life of Hurlburt since his return from his errand of duplicity to Munson shows conclusively that he wishes to hide himself from the world, and that he is burdened with a secret which he does not intend shall come to light through any act or revelation of his own.^y * * * Beyond a shadow of doubt Hurlburt, after getting the genuine Spaulding romance at Munson, destroyed it or saw it destroyed by the Mormons at Conneaut, in 1834, after his being paid for his share of this transaction.^z

This theory Mrs. Davison maintains throughout her book with something more than a half hysterical style meant to be very sensational.

Thus these originators and promulgators of the Spaulding theory, having started with conjecture and falsehood, go on varying, changing, and patching up their story until they are involved in innumerable inconsistencies and contradictions, which constantly makes more apparent the absurdity of this attempt to construct a counter theory for the origin of the Book of Mormon to that given by Joseph Smith. The theory, however, fails by dint of its own inconsistencies, and by the discovery and publication of the manuscript with which the theory started; and that in another way, and in addition to the fact that there is no incident, or name, or set of ideas, common to the two productions. The publication

^y"New Light on Mormonism," p. 62.

^zIbid p. 71.

of the "Manuscript Found" not only demonstrates that this particular manuscript was not the foundation of the Book of Mormon, but it demonstrates, also, that no other writings of Solomon Spaulding's could possibly be the Book of Mormon. Spaulding's manuscript, as published, makes a pamphlet of some 112 pages, of about 350 words to the page, enough matter to give a clear idea of his literary style. I am sure that no person, having any literary judgment will think it possible for the author of "Manuscript Found" to be the author of the Book of Mormon. Composition in writers becomes individualized as distinctly as the looks, or appearance, or character, of separate individuals; and they can no more write in several styles than individuals can impersonate different characters. True, by special efforts this latter may be done to a limited extent by a change of tone, costume and the like, but underneath these impersonations is to be seen the real individual; and so with authors. One may sometimes affect a light, and sometimes a serious vein, in prose and poetry. He may imitate a solemn scriptural style or the diction of some Greek or Roman author, but underneath it all will be seen the individuality of the writer from which he cannot separate himself any more than he can separate himself from his true form, features, or character. Since we have in this "Manuscript Found" enough of Mr. Spaulding's style to determine its nature, if this manuscript of his was used either as the foundation or the complete work of the Book of Mormon, we should be able to detect Spauldingisms in it; identity of style would be apparent; but these things are entirely absent from every page of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Rice does not overstate the matter when he says: "I should as soon think the Book of Revelation was written by the author of "Don Quixote," as that the writer of this manuscript was the author of the Book of

Mormon." And again, he is right when he says: "It is unlikely that any one who wrote so elaborate a work as the Mormon Bible would spend his time in getting up so shallow a story as this"—the Spaulding Story.

Another point at which the Spaulding theory goes to pieces is in the utter inability of its advocates to bring together the parties to the conspiracy in which the Book of Mormon is supposed to have had its origin. They fail even to bring Joseph Smith in contact with the Spaulding manuscript; they also fail to connect Sidney Rigdon with the manuscript; they fail to bring together Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, previous to the publication of the Book of Mormon. In all these things, vital to the maintenance of their theory, they fail. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, until after the publication of the Book of Mormon, are from 200 to 300 miles apart, with no means of communication or of collaboration, which would be necessary if the Spaulding theory were correct. Of the necessary extent and greatness of this conspiracy, Elder George Reynolds justly remarks:

Whole families must have been engaged in it. Men of all ages and various conditions in life, and living in widely separate portions of the country must have been connected with it. First, we must include in the catalogue of conspirators the whole of the Smith family, then the Whitmers, Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery; further, to carry out this absurd idea, Sidney Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt must have been their active fellow-conspirators in arranging, carrying out and consummating their iniquitous fraud. To do this they must have traveled thousands of miles and spent months, perhaps years, to accomplish—what? That is the unsolved problem. Was it for the purpose of duping the world? They, at any rate the great majority of them, were of all men most unlikely to be engaged in such a folly. Their habits, surroundings, station in life, youth and inexperience all forbid such a thought. What could they gain, in any light that could be then presented to their minds, by palming such a deception

upon the world? This is another unanswerable question. Then comes the staggering fact, if the book be a falsity, that all these families, all these diverse characters, in all the trouble, perplexity, persecution and suffering through which they passed, never wavered in their testimony, never changed their statements, never "went back" on their original declarations, but continued unto death, and they have all passed away (save a very few), proclaiming that the Book of Mormon was a divine revelation, and that its record was true. Was there ever such an exhibition in the history of the world of such continued, such unabating, such undeviating falsehood if falsehood it was? We cannot find a place in the annals of their lives where they wavered, and what makes the matter more remarkable is that it can be said of most of them, as is elsewhere said of the three witnesses, they became offended with the Prophet Joseph, and a number of them openly rebelled against him; but they never retracted one word with regard to the genuineness of Mormon's inspired record. Whether they were friends or foes to Joseph, whether they regarded him as God's continued mouthpiece or as a fallen Prophet, they still persisted in their statements with regard to the book and the veracity of their earlier testimonies. How can we possibly, with our knowledge of human nature, make this undeviating, unchanging, unwavering course, continuing over fifty years consistent with a deliberate, premeditated and cunningly-devised and executed fraud!^a

III.

.The Sidney Rigdon Theory.

It will be seen, by those who have followed us through the treatise on the Spaulding Theory, that Sidney Rigdon is

^aMyth of the "Manuscript Found" (1883), pp. 35, 36. See also an exhaustive treatise on the "Origin of the Book of Mormon", in the "American Historical Magazine," published in New York by the American Historical Society, during the years 1906-7; 1908-9. The articles in support of the Spaulding theory are by Mr. Theodore Schroeder; and the answer to these papers are by the author of this work, who hopes to publish the discussion in his second volume on the "Defense of the Faith and the Saints," now in course of preparation.

considered a factor in that supposed scheme. It is generally thought that it was he who supplied the religious matter of the book, and who determined the parts of the Hebrew scripture that should be interwoven in its alleged historical parts. Such prominence, in fact, is given to Sidney Rigdon in bringing forth the Book of Mormon that I decided to consider his connection with it under this separate heading.

Mr. Sidney Rigdon always, and most emphatically, denied the story of his connection with Patterson and his printing establishment. In the January number (1836) of the "Latter-day Saints Messenger and Advocate" he denounces Howe's book and those who advocated it. Referring to Mr. Scott, Mr. Campbell and other professed ministers of the gospel, he said :

In order to avoid investigation this brotherhood will condescend to mean, low subterfuges, to which a noble-minded man would never condescend; no, he would suffer martyrdom first. Witness Mr. Campbell's recommendation of Howe's book, while he knows, as well as every person who reads it, that it is a batch of falsehoods

Later, in a letter to Messrs. Bartlett and Sullivan, written from Commerce (afterwards Nauvoo), May 27, 1839, in a communication called forth by the publication of the bogus statement purporting to come from Mrs. Davison and published by the Rev. John Storrs, Elder Rigdon said :

Commerce, May 27, 1839.

Messrs. Bartlett and Sullivan:—In your paper of the 18th instant, I see a letter signed my somebody calling herself Matilda Davison, pretending to give the origin of Mormonism, as she is pleased to call it, by relating a moonshine story about a certain Solomon Spaulding, a creature with the knowledge of whose earthly existence I am entirely indebted to this production; for, surely, until Dr. Philastus Hurlburt informed me that such a being lived, at some former period, I had not the most distant

knowledge of his existence; and all I know about his character is the opinion I form from what is attributed to his wife in obtruding my name upon the public in the manner in which she is said to have done, by trying to make the public believe that I had knowledge of the ignorant, and, according to her own testimony, the lying scribblings of her deceased husband; for if her testimony is to be credited, her pious husband, in his lifetime, wrote a bundle of lies for the righteous purpose of getting money. How many lies he had told for the same purpose, while he was preaching, she has not so kindly informed us; but we are at liberty to draw our own conclusions, for he that would write lies to get money, would also preach lies for the same object. This being the only information which I have, or ever had, of the said Rev. Solomon Spaulding, I, of necessity, have but a very light opinion of him as a gentleman, a scholar, or a man of piety, for had he been either, he certainly would have taught his pious wife not to lie, nor unite herself with adulterers, liars, and the basest of mankind.

It is only necessary to say, in relation to the whole story about Spaulding's writings being in the hands of Mr. Patterson, who was in Pittsburg, and who is said to have kept a printing office, and my saying that I was concerned in the said office, etc., is the most base of lies, without even a shadow of truth. There was no man by the name of Patterson, during my residence at Pittsburg, 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 Pittsburg. 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.^b

One can but regret the tone and coarseness of this letter of Sidney Rigdon's, but it cannot be denied but that it is a

^b"Boston Journal." See also Smucker's "History of the Mormons," where the letter is given in full, pp. 45-8.

very emphatic contradiction of the charge that he was connected with the Spaulding manuscript theory of the Book of Mormon's origin, and it is very natural that a man of the nervous, irritable temperament of Sidney Rigdon would be very much vexed at connecting him with such a theory.

On the matter of Sidney Rigdon not being connected with the origin of the Book of Mormon we have also the statement of Oliver Cowdery, made on his return to the Church at Kanesville (now Council Bluffs), in October, 1848, a statement that was made in the presence of 2,000 Saints. In the course of his remarks, Oliver Cowdery then said:

I wrote, with my own pen, the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he translated it, by the gift and power of God, by means of the Urim and Thummim, or, as it is called by that book, "Holy Interpreters." I beheld with my eyes, and handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was transcribed. I also saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the "holy interpreters." That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr. Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet.^c

Parley P. Pratt, who, with Oliver Cowdery, was the first to present the Book of Mormon to Sidney Rigdon some six months after its publication, is also on record as denying the story of Sidney Rigdon's connection with the origin of the Book of Mormon. When the "Davison Statement" was copied from the "Boston Recorder" into the "New York Era," Elder Pratt promptly denied the falsehood. The "Era" published the "Davison Statement" on the 20th, and in its issue of the 27th Elder Pratt published a somewhat exhaustive treatise in which the following occurs:

^cNew Witnesses, Vol. II., pp. 250, 251.

The piece in your paper states that "Sidney Rigdon was connected in the printing office of Mr. Patterson" (in Pittsburg), and that this is a fact well known in that region, and as Rigdon himself has frequently stated. Here he had ample opportunity to become acquainted with Mr. Spaulding's manuscript (romance) and to copy it if he chose. This statement is utterly and entirely false. Mr. Rigdon was never connected with the said printing establishment, either directly or indirectly, and we defy the world to bring proof of any such connection. * * The statement that Sidney Rigdon is one of the founders of the said religious sect is also incorrect.

The sect was founded in the state of New York, while Mr. Rigdon resided in Ohio, several hundred miles distant. Mr. Rigdon embraced the doctrine through my instrumentality. I first presented the Book of Mormon to him. I stood upon the bank of the stream while he was baptized, and assisted to officiate in his ordination, and I myself was unacquainted with the system until some months after its organization, which was on the 6th of April, 1830, and I embraced it in September following.

Again, in 1840, in a work entitled "Late Persecutions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Later-day Saints," referring to the persecutions in Missouri, in the course of which he also gave an account of the rise and progress of the doctrine of the Church, Elder Pratt says, relative to this Spaulding story:

There is one story, however, which I will notice, because some religious journals have given some credit to it. It is the story of Solomon Spaulding writing a romance of the ancient inhabitants of America which is said to be converted by Mr. Sidney Rigdon into the Book of Mormon. This is another base fabrication got up by the devil and his servants to deceive the world. Mr. Sidney Rigdon never saw the Book of Mormon until it had been published more than six months; it was then presented to him by the author of this history.^e

^e"Late Persecutions," etc., Introduction, p. xi, xii.

From another source there is also an emphatic denial of Sidney Rigdon's connection with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. This is the statement of Mr. Rigdon's son, John W. Rigdon. This gentleman wrote a somewhat extended biography of his father, Sidney Rigdon, which he placed in its manuscript form in the Church Historian's office, at Salt Lake City, where it is now on file. Mr. John W. Rigdon's account of his father's connection with the Book of Mormon agrees with the statement of Elder Pratt; and then, near the close of his narrative, he relates his own experience in connection with Mormonism, and his attempt to learn the truth from his father respecting the latter's early connection with the Book of Mormon. John W. Rigdon tells of his own visit to Utah, in 1863, where he spent the winter among the Mormon people. He was not favorably impressed with their religious life, and came to the conclusion that the Book of Mormon itself was a fraud. He determined in his own heart that if ever he returned home and found his father, Sidney Rigdon, alive, he would try and find out what he knew of the origin of the Book of Mormon. "Although," he adds, "he had never told but one story about it, and that was that Parley P. Pratt and Oliver Cowdery presented him with a bound volume of that book in the year 1830, while he (Sidney Rigdon) was preaching Campbellism at Mentor, Ohio." What John W. Rigdon claims to have seen in Utah, however, together with the fact that Sidney Rigdon had been charged with writing the Book of Mormon, made him suspicious; and he remarks:

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 at Salt Lake City, and I said to him that what I had seen at 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 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 the 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 that that Mormonism was true; that Joseph Smith was a Prophet, and this world would find it out some day.^f

In addition to these solemn denials of Sidney Rigdon's connection with this Spaulding theory, we have another means of testing whether or not Sidney Rigdon was the author of the Book of Mormon. That test is the one already referred to when considering the difference of style between Spaulding's manuscript story, and the Book of Mormon. We have enough of Sidney Rigdon's writings before us to determine his literary style; namely, in the Historian's office we have in manuscript his description of the land of Zion, Jackson County, which he was commanded of the Lord to write. We have a number of his communications published in the "Evening and Morning Star," and also the "Messenger and Advocate." In these two publications also there are thirteen articles on the subject of the "Millennium" from his pen, and after careful comparison of his style with that of the Book of Mormon, I do not hesitate to say that Sidney Rigdon, not only never did, but never could have written the Book of Mormon. There are no phrases or conceptions in the Book of Mormon that are Sidney Rigdon's. There is nothing in common between his style and that of the Book of Mormon. There can be no doubt about it; Sidney Rigdon as the author of the Book of Mormon is impossible.

IV.

The "Joachim" fragment of the Spaulding-Rigdon Theory.

It was reserved for William Linn, author of the "Story of the Mormons,"^g a pretentious work of nearly 650 pages, to

^f"Church History," Vol. I., p. 122, 123.

^gPublished by McMillan Co., 1902.

go "a far way" for an additional item which, in the full pride of an author who has made a new discovery, he adds to the Spaulding-Rigdon theory of the Book of Mormon's origin. This new item I have called the "Joachim Fragment of the Spaulding-Rigdon Theory." Mr. Linn, with evident pride, makes this mention of it in the preface of his book: "The probable service of Joachim's 'Everlasting Gospel,' as suggesting the story of the revelation of the plates, has been hitherto overlooked."^h In the body of his work he

^h"The Story of the Mormons," Preface, p. vi.

thus sets forth his idea of the part played by the "Everlasting Gospel," sometimes called by other writers, "The Eternal Gospel," and in the thirteenth century, when it was supposed to be in circulation among the Franciscan order of monks, it is spoken of as "The Book of Joachim."

That the idea of the revelation (i. e., of the existence of the Book of Mormon) as described by Smith in his autobiography was not original is shown by the fact that a similar divine message, engraved on plates, was announced to have been received from an angel nearly six hundred years before the alleged visit of an angel to Smith. These original plates were described as a copper, and the recipient was a monk named Cyril, from whom their contents passed into the possession of the Abbot Joachim, whose "Everlasting Gospel," founded thereon, was offered to the church as supplanting the New Testament, just as the New Testament had supplanted the Old, and caused so serious a schism that Pope Alexander IV took the severest measures against it.ⁱ

This description of the origin of Joachim's "Everlasting Gospel" rests upon the respectable authority of Draper, in his "Intellectual Development of Europe."^j

ⁱ"Story of the Mormons," Chapter ix, p. 74.

^jVol. II, chapter iii.

Linn's argument is to the effect that this origin of the "Everlasting Gospel" suggested the origin of the Book of Mormon because of the resemblance between the celestial announcement of both, and also because that both, according to his idea of them, were declared to have the same purport—each was to be "a forerunner of the end of the world." He also urges the frequent use of the phrase, "Everlasting Gospel," in the discourses of the early Elders of the Church as evidence that there was some connection between these two things, the Book of Mormon and "The Book of Joachim." He further holds that Sidney Rigdon, in the course of his ecclesiastical reading would come in contact with the story of Joachim's "Everlasting Gospel;" that it would be just such a story as would be attractive to one of Sidney Rigdon's temperament. Linn throughout his work assumes a connection and collaboration between Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, and claims that the latter suggested the story of the "Book of Joachim," as the ground-work of Joseph Smith's account of the origin of the Book of Mormon. Our author thinks that Rigdon may even have found sufficient matter in relation to Joachim's "Everlasting Gospel," in Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History," to suggest the account he induced Joseph Smith to give of the origin of the Book of Mormon, and makes the following quotation from Mosheim in proof of his contention :

About the commencement of this [the thirteenth] century there were handed about in Italy several pretended prophecies of the famous Joachim, Abbot of Sora, in Calabria, whom the multitude revered as a person divinely inspired, and equal to the most illustrious prophets of ancient times. The greatest part of these predictions were contained in a certain book entitled, "The Everlasting Gospel," and which was also commonly called the Book of Joachim. This Joachim, whether a real or fictitious

person we shall not pretend to determine, among many other future events, foretold the destruction of the Church of Rome, whose corruptions he censured with the greatest severity, and the promulgation of a new and more perfect gospel in the age of the Holy Ghost, by the set of poor and austere ministers, whom God was to raise up and employ for that purpose.

It is to be observed of this passage, as indeed of all that is said by Mosheim upon the subject, that there is no account here of an angel revealing the existence of the Book of Joachim to Cyril, or to any one else, which is the chief item of resemblance between Joseph Smith's story of the origin of the Book of Mormon and the alleged origin of "The Everlasting Gospel," as related by Draper and Linn. Indeed, in the closing lines of the very paragraph from Mosheim which Linn quotes as being the possible source of Sidney Rigdon's knowledge of the "Book of Joachim," it is stated that the Franciscans who accepted Joachim's book maintained that Saint Francis, the founder of their Order, had "spoken to mankind the true gospel, and that he was the angel whom Saint John saw flying in the midst of heaven;" which is quite a different account of this matter than that given by Draper. Whether or not Sidney Rigdon had access to the same source of information as Draper had, is, of course, not known; but certainly Draper did not obtain the account of the angel appearing to Cyril from Mosheim. As a matter of fact, there is much confusion and uncertainty among authorities respecting the origin of this "Everlasting Gospel," and some question whether such a book was ever put forth by Joachim. The work used at the time it was current in the thirteenth century was very often confounded with an introduction to the so-called "Everlasting Gospel," written, as Draper says, by John of Parma; and as others say by Gerhard, a Franciscan friar. The celebrated Dr. Augustus Ne-

ander, in his "General History of the Christian Religion and Church," holds to this same theory. He says:

A great sensation was now created by a commentary on the "eternal gospel," which after the middle of the thirteenth century the Franciscan Gerhard, who, by his zeal for Joachim's doctrines, involved himself in many persecutions and incurred an eighteen years' imprisonment, published under the title of "Introduction to the Eternal Gospel." Many vague notions were entertained about the "eternal gospel" of the Franciscans, arising from superficial views, or a superficial understanding of Joachim's writings, and the offspring of mere rumor of the heresy-hunting spirit. Men spoke of the "eternal gospel" as of a book composed under this title, and circulated among the Franciscans. Occasionally, also, this "eternal gospel" was confounded perhaps with the above-mentioned "Introduction." In reality, there was no book existing under this title of the "Eternal Gospel;" but all that is said about it relates simply to the writings of Joachim. * * * The whole matter of this work also seems to have consisted in an explanation of the fundamental ideas of the Abbot Joachim, and in the application of them to the genuine Franciscan order."^k

This exhibits much confusion and uncertainty concerning the story of Joachim and his book. Of course, it may be argued that this story of the Book of Joachim, as told by Draper and repeated by Linn, would furnish equally well the suggestion of the origin of the Book of Mormon, whether it was the statement of an historical fact or only the wild invention of a fanatical Franciscan, but it would be incumbent upon those who make such an argument to prove that Sidney Rigdon had knowledge of such a story.

Another suggestion may be argued that would tend to

^kNeander's "General History of the Christian Religion and Church," Vol. IV, pp. 618-20.

break down the probability of the origin of the "Everlasting Gospel" suggesting the origin of the Book of Mormon; and that is: Had Sidney Rigdon or any one else taken the story of the revelation of the Book of Joachim" to Cyril and from it invented the account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, he would very likely have taken other ideas attributed to this very worthy but over-zealous and weak-minded man of the thirteenth century. As, for example, Linn himself declares that the "Everlasting Gospel was offered to the Church as supplanting the New Testament, just as the New Testament had supplanted the Old," etc., a theory that would very likely have caught the fancy of such a man as Linn conceives Rigdon to have been. Yet Mormonism is as far removed from any such conception as this, as the east is from the west; for Mormonism gives full force to the present authority of both the Old and New Testaments as containing the word of God, and the Book of Mormon nowhere supplants these existing scriptures. Neander presents a more elaborate view of some of the theories of this same Joachim, and represents him as teaching the following:

"The times of the Old Testament belong especially to God the Father; in it, God revealed himself as the Almighty, by signs and wonders; next, followed the times of the New Testament, in which God, as the Word, revealed himself in his wisdom, where the striving after a comprehensible knowledge of mysteries predominates; the last times belong to the Holy Spirit, when the first of love in contemplation will predominate. As the letter of the Old Testament answers to God the Father, the letter of the New Testament more especially to the Son, so the spiritual understanding, which proceeds from both, answers to the Holy Spirit. As all things were created by the Father through the Son; so in the Holy Spirit, as love, all were to find their completion. To the working of the Father—power, fear,

faith, more especially correspond; to the working of the Son—humility, truth, and wisdom; to the working of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, and freedom.¹

In like manner he takes up the Apostles Peter, James, and John as in a way representing in the earth, respectively, the three periods in the process of the development of the Church. I insist that if Sidney Rigdon had become acquainted with that story of the “Everlasting Gospel,” as it is told by Draper, he would unquestionably also have come to the knowledge of these theories of Joachim’s; and if Sidney Rigdon was the kind of character that Linn represents him to be, he would unquestionably have taken up some of these vagaries and exploited them, either in the Book of Mormon or in the subsequent development of the Church and its system of doctrine. It is scarcely necessary to say that none of these ideas of the thirteenth century man is to be found in Mormonism, nor are any other of Joachim’s ideas found in the Latter-day dispensation of the Gospel. The mere matter of using the phrase, “Everlasting Gospel,” by the early Elders of the Church—and for matter of that by the present ministry of the Church—in their discourses and books, scarcely rises to dignity of a coincidence, since we have the phrase suggested in the remarkable prophecy on the restoration of the Gospel in the Revelations of St. John,^m without referring to any circumstance of the thirteenth century and the obscure literature concerning the Book of Joachim.

This whole theory of the suggested origin of the Book of Mormon from the story of the Book of Joachim, however ingenious it may be regarded, breaks down as the Spaulding-Rigdon theory does, under the absolute inability of all

¹Neander’s “General History of the Christian Religion and Church,” Vol. IV, p. 227.

^mRevelations xiv: 6. 7.

these speculators to show any connection, or collaboration, between Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon previous to the publication of the Book of Mormon. Their inventions fail; their speculations amount to nothing. It is impossible to show any contact between Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon before the Book of Mormon was published, therefore, whatever opportunity Sidney Rigdon may have had to become acquainted with the story of Joachim's "Everlasting Gospel," that knowledge could play no part whatever in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

v.

I. *Woodbridge Riley's Theory of the Origin of the Book of Mormon.*

This theory may be said, in a way, to be a reversion to that of Alexander Campbell's; that is, a return to the theory that Joseph Smith was the "author" of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Riley's book, of 446 pages, is a well written thesis on the "Founder of Mormonism." It was published by Dodd, Mead & Company, 1902. It is a psychological study of Joseph Smith the Prophet. The purpose of the work is set forth in the author's preface, as follows:

The aim of this work is to examine Joseph Smith's character and achievements from the standpoint of recent psychology. Sectarians and phrenologists, spiritualists and mesmerists have variously interpreted his more or less abnormal performances—it now remains for the psychologist to have a try at them.

The work also has an introductory preface by Professor George Trumbull Ladd, of Yale University, in which Mr. Riley's essay is very highly praised. Indeed the work was

offered to the Philosophical Faculty of Yale University as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and before this the matter of the essay had been utilized in 1898 for a Master of Arts thesis, under the title of "Metaphysics of Mormonism," so that from these circumstances we may venture the remark that Mr. Riley's book is of highly scientific character, at least in its literary structure, and has already attracted some considerable notice in the world.

To the Latter-day Saints it will be interesting, and of value at least in this, that they may accept it as one of many manifestations that the other theories accounting for the origin of the Book of Mormon are regarded as inadequate, if not exploded, since the learned find it necessary to set forth now a new theory, both for the origin of the Book of Mormon, and the life work of the Prophet Joseph.

Mr. Riley's conclusions, after patient consideration of what he regards as the elements entering into the composition of the Book of Mormon, are thus stated:

In spite of a continuous stream of conjectural literature, it is as yet impossible to pick out any special document as an original source of the Book of Mormon. In particular the commonly-accepted Spaulding theory is insoluble from external evidence and disproved by internal evidence. Joseph Smith's "Record of the Indians" is a product indigenous to the New York "Wilderness," and the authentic work of its "author and proprietor." Outwardly, it reflects the local color of Palmyra and Manchester, inwardly, its complexity of thought is a replica of Smith's muddled brain. This monument of misplaced energy was possible to the impressionable youth constituted and circumstanced as he was."

As for the process by which the book was produced, our author conceives it thus:

"The Founder of Mormonism," p. 172.

It was in western New York that the son of an obscure farmer gazed in his magic crystal, automatically wrote "a transcription of gold plates," dictated the Book of Mormon, and after strange signs and wonders, started his communistic sect.^o

Our author makes an extended pathological study of the prophet's ancestry, and arrives at the conclusion that their mental peculiarities and defects, culminate in epilepsy in Joseph Smith the Prophet. So that we may say, roughly speaking, that Mr. Riley's explanation of the origin of the Book of Mormon, and Mormonism, is that it has its source in an epileptic, whose hallucinations are honestly mistaken for inspired visions, and who possesses partly conscious and partly unconscious hypnotic power over others. And this theory is presented seriously to one of the first institutions of learning in America as a rational explanation of "Mormonism!"

Unfortunately for Mr. Riley's theory, however, another writer, an authority in his chosen field of investigation, a writer of text books for higher institutions of learning on this very subject, has spoken with marked emphasis not only with reference to epilepsy in general and the milder forms of its manifestation under the head of Paranoia, but has spoken of it with special reference to Joseph Smith, and distinctly separates him from such class of persons. Following are passages from Mr. Dana's works upon the subject:

"A certain rather small per centage of epileptics become either demented or insane. True epilepsy is not compatible with extraordinary intellectual endowments. Caesar, Napoleon, Peter the Great and other geniuses may have had some symptomatic fits, but not idispathic [primary] epilepsy."^q

^oIbid, p. 11.

^q"Nervous Diseases, Text Book on" (third edition), p. 408.

Again:

Paranoia is a chronic psychosis characterized by the development gradually and soon after maturity of systematized delusion, without other serious disturbances of the mind and without much tendency to dementia. * * * With some the systematized idea takes a religious turn, and the patient thinks he has some divine mission, or has received some inspiration from God; or the idea may take a devotional turn and the patient become an ascetic. It is not, however, to be assumed that all promoters of new religious and novel social ideas are paranoics. Many of these are simply the natural developments of ignorance and a somewhat emotional and unbalanced temperament. The characteristics of the paranoic is that his work is ineffective, his influence brief and trivial, his ideas really too absurd and impractical for even ignorant men to receive. *I do not class successful prophets and organizers like Joseph Smith, or great apostles of social reforms like Rousseau as paranoics.* Insane minds are not creative, but are weak and lack persistence in purpose or power of execution.^r

It is not possible in this writing to enter into an extended consideration of this theory. Neither indeed is it necessary. One consideration alone is sufficient to overthrow these fanciful speculations of Mr. Riley. "Hitherto," says Renan in his *Life of Christ*, "it has never been given to aberration of mind to produce a serious effect upon the progress of humanity."^p As stated by Dana, the work of the paranoic is ineffective, his influence brief and trivial, his ideas impractical and absurd. I believe that doctrine. The dreams and hallucinations of the epileptic end in mere dreams and hallucinations; they never crystalize into great systems of philosophy or into rational religious institutions. They never result in great organizations capable of perpetu-

^r"Text Book of Nervous Diseases and Psychiatry (sixth edition), pp. 649-50.

^p"Life of Christ," p. 105.

ating that philosophy and that religion in the world. No matter how nearly genius may be allied to madness, it must remain genius and not degenerate to madness if it exercises any permanent influence over the minds of men, such as Mormonism has done over a large body of people, and resulted in permanent institutions. There is much glamor of sophistry, which may be taken by some for profound reason and argument, in Mr. Riley's book, but one word answers this so called philosophical accounting for our Prophet: The work accomplished by him, the institutions he founded, destroy the whole fabric of premises and argument on which this theory is based. Great as was the Prophet Joseph Smith—and he was great; to him more than to any other man of modern times was it given to look deep into the things that are; to comprehend the heavens, and the laws that obtain there; to understand the earth, its history, and its mission. He looked into the deep things of God, and out of the rich treasure of divine knowledge there, he brought forth things both new and old for the instruction of our race, the like of which, in some respects, had not been known in previous dispensations. But great as Joseph Smith was, rising up and towering far above him is the work that he accomplished through divine guidance; that work is infinitely greater than the Prophet, greater than all the prophets connected with it. Its consistency, its permanency, its institutions, contradict the hallucination theory advanced to account for its origin.⁵

⁵During the October conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, held in Salt Lake City, October, 1903, this writer then made some remarks in criticism of Mr. Riley's book, at the close of which remarks President Joseph F. Smith said:

"I have been delighted with the most excellent discourse that we have listened to; but I desire to say that it is a wonderful revelation to the Latter-day Saints, and especially to those who were familiar with the Prophet Joseph Smith, to learn in

This theory of Mr. Riley's may be said to now occupy the attention of men, but as the theories of Campbell, the Spaulding theory, and the Rigdon theory of origin have one by one been discarded as untenable, and inadequate for the purposes for which they were invoked, so, too, will this epilepsy and hallucination theory of Mr. Riley's be discarded, since it will fail to give an adequate accounting for the Book of Mormon, which, 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.

these latter days that he was an epileptic! I will simply remark, God be praised, that there are so many still living who knew the Prophet Joseph well, and who are in a position to bear testimony to the truth that no such condition ever existed in the man."

See also "Defense of the Faith and the Saints," pp. 42-61.