

# “Manuscript Found” and the Moroni Myth: The Importance of Being Honest

A Reply to the Matthew Roper-BYU/FARMS review of  
*Who Really Wrote The Book of Mormon?—The Spalding Enigma*  
(St.Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005)

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## I. Synopsis:

*“The Spalding theory for The Book of Mormon’s authorship did not begin as a conjectural hypothesis, but rather as the positive assertions of some of Solomon Spalding’s old associates, who recognized that the Saints’ new scriptures resembled some of Spalding’s unpublished fictional writings.... The Spalding Enigma is not a religious book, it is a book about a religious book.”*

On the night of the autumnal equinox in the year 1827, young Joseph Smith, Jr. encountered an angel. According to Smith, this angel, whose name was Moroni, gave him an ancient book written in strange hieroglyphics on sheets of gold. Later, after Smith had translated these hieroglyphics by miraculous means, and after this translation had been duly recorded by a carefully chosen scribe, the angel came again and took the original back. Smith’s translation, which he called *The Book of Mormon*, was published in 1830 and shortly thereafter became the a cornerstone of a new religion. Today that religion is known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the Mormons—and Joseph Smith, Jr. is the man they revere as their prophet.

Did Joseph Smith really get *The Book of Mormon* from an angel, or did it perhaps have some other, more mundane, origin? Could it, for example, have been painstakingly adapted from an unpublished work of fiction called *Manuscript Found*, allegedly composed by a down-and-out ex-minister named Solomon Spalding, between 1810 and his death in 1816? Although Smith and Mormonism occupy an unquestionably prominent place in American history, the nagging question of *Who Really Wrote The Book of Mormon?* has never really been laid to rest except by those willing to accept Smith’s personal version of events on strength of faith alone.

The Spalding theory (or the Spalding-Rigdon theory) for *The Book of Mormon’s* authorship did not begin as a conjectural hypothesis, but rather as the positive assertions of some of Solomon Spalding’s old associates, who recognized that the Saints’ new scriptures resembled some of Spalding’s unpublished fictional writings. When, at the end of 1833, Sidney Rigdon’s name was joined with those assertions as having been the probable editor of Spalding’s writings, then and only then, was the “theory” born. It is important that our readers keep this fact in mind, for the traditional Latter-day Saint

arguments against a Spalding authorship for *The Book of Mormon* have always sought to dismiss such claims as being founded upon mere speculation or malicious intention, rather than upon the clear and simple assertions of people who knew Solomon Spalding and were personally familiar with his fictional stories.

Our purpose in compiling *Who Really Wrote The Book of Mormon: The Spalding Enigma* (hereinafter simply *The Spalding Enigma*) was threefold: to bring together in a single volume pertinent information from many different historical sources; to introduce new and compelling evidence to the controversy; and, as a result, to reopen the subject for serious discussion among scholars and laypeople alike. Although it is inevitable that some of the Mormon faithful will be inclined to see *The Spalding Enigma* as an anti-Mormon book, its central theme will be better understood if readers consider that it is actually written from a *pro-Spalding* point of view. If, in presenting its evidence from that perspective, our volume still appears to be anti-Mormon, it is only because the facts of history are what they are. Although our publisher, editors, and the writer of our book's *Foreword* represent a non-LDS religious community (The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod), they are not dedicated anti-Mormons. In the final analysis, *The Spalding Enigma* is not a religious book, it is a book *about* a religious book.

In mid-2006, Brigham Young University historian Matthew Roper, writing for the admittedly pro-Mormon BYU/FARMS organization, and at the behest of his editor, Daniel C. Peterson, published a lengthy review of *The Spalding Enigma* in which he dutifully reasserted all of the old Mormon arguments against the Spalding theory without offering anything new.

Unfortunately, BYU Professor Dr. Daniel C. Peterson, the man who seems to have inspired Mr. Roper to write his review, strikes us as more of a preacher of LDS orthodoxy than a scholar of Mormon history. If we have assessed him correctly, from his 2004 editorial on the subject and from his subsequent remarks, he appears to be of the rigid opinion that practically all non-Mormon response to *The Book of Mormon* has come as a result of persecution from anti-Mormon ingrates and ex-Mormon apostates, who have either manufactured or misused historical evidence in order to counter the Mormon-establishment claims, and to defame Joseph Smith, Jr. Let us therefore state here and now that we are neither ingrates, nor apostates; nor do we have any desire to defame Joseph Smith, Jr., the man that Mormons refer to as their prophet. Rather, we are rational students of history interested in uncovering the answer to a mystery which has vexed Mormons and non-Mormons alike, ever since a man named D.P. Hurlbut began to make his case against Joseph Smith, Jr. and the origin of his religion only a few years after it was founded. Indeed, when it comes to the historical origins of Mormonism, if there are major differences between us and Dr. Peterson, they stem from the reality that, even though we freely admit he could be right on some points, he seems completely unwilling to acknowledge that he could be wrong about anything. Such intransigence is not good historical scholarship; it is a product of faith-based justifications and rationalizations. History being what it is, a quest like ours must begin with open-mindedness—it must be evidence-driven, and allowed to go where it will. We are not interested in flinging every criticism made against the first Mormons upon a rhetorical wall to see what might stick

and what might not; nor are we dismissive of the early pro-Mormon witnesses. We simply see most of their testimony as having been self-serving, faith-based and untestable. In our view, nothing much is gained by the apologists' attempt to force square pegs of selected evidence into round holes of historical events just to keep the sacred cows of preconceived religious notions safe from disquieting, non-faith-promoting explanations.

In any case, clinging to a position that faithful Mormons have espoused since the 1880s, Roper/Peterson *et al.* (hereinafter, just Roper) construct their principal thesis around the argument that a fictional text now generally referred to as *Manuscript Story* is the only draft of the only novel Spalding ever wrote, and since it bears little overt resemblance to *The Book of Mormon*, it naturally follows that Spalding cannot have been the author of the latter. In addition, like others before them, they assert that much of the evidence which seems to favor the Spalding theory is suspect, because it was gathered and published by anti-Mormons, and because much of it was compiled and published too long after the fact to be considered credible.

In our book, *The Spalding Enigma*, and again in this detailed reply to the lengthy BYU/FARMS review to which Mr. Roper's name is attached, we provide evidence demonstrating that the standard arguments so-far offered in support of a Nephite origin for *The Book of Mormon* are seriously flawed, at least when examined from an historical rather than a religious perspective. In support of this, we not only introduce a large amount of hitherto unexamined material, but we also advance the hypothesis that Smith and Rigdon did not act alone to transform Solomon Spalding's old manuscript into *The Book of Mormon*, but rather that they acted in concert with one Oliver Cowdery, a cousin of Joseph Smith and the man Mormons refer to as the "*second elder*" of Mormonism. Although Cowdery's name has long been associated with the origins of Mormonism, up to now little has been said of his life prior to 1829, which is the year official versions of LDS history claim that he and Smith first met. In our book, we present evidence to show that these two men had actually known each other since 1822, and conclude that the events of their alleged first meeting in 1829 were carefully orchestrated to impress wealthy Martin Harris, and thus secure the financial support required to publish *The Book of Mormon*.

## II. Theory v/s Enigma:

"We... prefer the term *Spalding enigma*, because when more than one plausible theory exists to explain something, the result is an enigma—a mystery."

A theory, by definition, is an hypothesis that remains unfalsified—which means that even though it might not be true, no proof has been brought forward to show that it isn't. Therefore, it is entirely correct to apply the term *theory* to the hypothesis that Solomon Spalding was the creator and author-in-fact of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century literary production called *The Book of Mormon*—a volume which is presently accepted as God-given scripture by those who refer to themselves Latter-day Saints, but largely rejected as false by the vast majority of other Christians, both Catholic and Protestant alike.

Those who wish to go on calling these assertions the *Spalding theory* will see no censure from us. We, however, prefer the term *Spalding enigma*, because when more than one plausible theory exists to explain something, the result is an enigma—a mystery. At present, there are several viable theories which seek to explain the obscure origins of *The Book of Mormon*. The Spalding theory and the Latter-day Saints’ official version of their own history are the two with which we are primarily concerned. In both cases, when the available evidence is subjected to equally impartial consideration, neither side has yet been able to produce the incontrovertible proof necessary to falsify the opposing view—hence the matter has remained an enigma.

### III. Evidence v/s Prejudice:

*“[The] authors of The Spalding Enigma feel the publication of this research and analysis fulfills a calling to present interested scholars with an up-to-date volume containing as much evidence as we can reasonably bring together between two covers.”*

In the early days of Mormonism, LDS Apostle Orson Pratt issued a challenge to gentiles who harbored doubts about a divine authenticity for *The Book of Mormon*. “*If, after a rigid examination, [The Book of Mormon] be found an imposition,*” Pratt thundered forth in righteous indignation, “*it should be extensively published to the world as such; the evidences and arguments upon which the imposture was detected, should be clearly and logically stated, that those who have been sincerely yet unfortunately deceived, may perceive the nature of the deception, and be reclaimed, and that those who continue to publish the delusion, may be exposed and silenced...*” (Orson Pratt’s Works: Divine Authenticity for The Book of Mormon, [Liverpool, England: 1851], 1-2.)

It is impossible to say whether Elder Pratt had the Spalding enigma in mind when he wrote those words, but if he did, it would be interesting to know how he might reply, were he alive today to ponder the quantity and quality of evidence presented in our book. Would he encourage continuing efforts to uncover as many facts as possible about the historical origins of *The Book of Mormon*, or would he, like virtually every faithful Mormon writer since his day (and a few less faithful ones as well), attempt to discourage objective research into this sensitive subject? For our part, our goal is to *encourage* further research, not discourage it; and along those lines we believe we have offered a reasonable, alternative viewpoint, based neither upon attack nor defense, nor upon any particular religious belief-system, but upon valid historical evidence.

The sheer length of the Roper/FARMS review of our *Spalding Enigma* constitutes an unsolicited compliment to the book and its authors, since it indicates that the old mystery is not easily dismissed, even by one so eloquently erudite as Mr. Matthew Roper of Brigham Young University.

Historical evidence is a slippery commodity, however, and one in which the quality and value of the merchandise are entirely dependent upon the seller and the buyer coming to a mutually satisfactory agreement. Some scholars—those seeking to be as fair and unbiased

as possible in their investigation of history—are pleased to accept evidence from all sources; to carefully test its worth according to recognized academic standards held in common by most reputable scholars; and to let the results lead where they will. Other investigators, equally competent, perhaps, but being necessarily biased for reasons of occupation or personal belief, are inclined to accept useful evidence from only some sources. Having assured themselves that this carefully selected body of evidence is both authentic and credible, these latter investigators declare in the end what they knew before they began—that the case is proved in their favor, and that Providence is on their side. For LDS academics and scholars, who generally must begin with an implicit (if not an explicit) affirmation of *The Book of Mormon’s* authenticity, their conclusions regarding the book and its origins must, of course, correspond with their initial prejudgments. We understand that FARMS and its associate book reviewers operate under this restriction and we do not fault Mr. Roper for his having to abide by FARMS limitations; we only fault him for his not making this point in his clearly non-objective book review. This having been said, we, Messrs. Cowdrey, Davis and Vanick, as authors of *The Spalding Enigma*, feel the publication of this research and analysis fulfills a calling to present interested scholars with an up-to-date volume containing as much evidence as we can reasonably bring together between two covers. If, after reading *The Spalding Enigma*, anyone still wishes to pursue the subject from a strictly Mormon point of view, or from the parallel “*Smith-alone*” point of view, they should have no problem locating the relevant information they might need. In any case, those who still harbor doubts about the present status of “*the Spalding theory*” concerning the origin of *The Book of Mormon* need only consider the authors’ use of the word *enigma* in our title; for an enigma it has been, and an enigma it remains.

#### **IV. The Importance of Being Honest:**

*“[I]t appears to us that Mr. Roper and most of his colleagues are in complete agreement with... [the] philosophy that “Spiritual truths must be spiritually verified.” Such statements, however, leave us wondering why any of them seek to discuss *The Spalding Enigma* at all? Clearly they are already in possession of their own “truths” and therefore have little to gain in an ongoing debate.”*

Fortunately, Mr. Roper quickly admits where he stands when he says: “*While faithful Latter-day Saints have always defended the Book of Mormon and been critical of all naturalistic theories, it has been critics of Mormonism who have been primarily responsible for the acceptance (and then rejection) of the Spalding theory. The reason is that Latter-day Saints already have an explanation for the Book of Mormon, and so the quest for a plausible naturalistic alternative is an unbeliever’s affair.*”

Here Mr. Roper is to be congratulated for candidly admitting that, when it comes to the early history of his church, he and his Mormon colleagues would prefer not to be troubled with alternative evidence because their minds, or at least their Saintry testimonies, are already made-up. This monumental lack of objectivity, of course, constitutes the foremost problem with faith-based “*scholarship*” as perceived by those conducting research and reporting outside of a religious movement like Mormonism. With all due respect,

Mormons who seek to defend their church by citing verses from Mormon scriptures and expressing an inner confidence in Joseph Smith, Jr. are not a lot different from those National Socialist sympathizers who expressed a similar faith in Adolph Hitler while quoting passages from *Mein Kampf*. Although the basic philosophies behind the two movements are very different, their similar unquestioning adherence to a charismatic leader of controversial character and their elevation of that leader's publications to a super-human status, share much in common. When the objectivity, logic and common sense necessary to meaningful scholarship become subservient to a system of belief and practice which avoids rational consideration of adverse criticism, not only from the outside but also from within its ranks, the result is predictably undesirable.

Hypothetically speaking, if Mr. Roper and his colleagues at FARMS were involved in a serious legal case, how would they react if the judge informed them before the trial began that the matter was already decided and therefore no evidence favorable to Mr. Roper's case could be seriously considered? Yet, when Mr. Roper writes that "*Latter-day Saints already have an explanation for the Book of Mormon, and so the quest for a plausible naturalistic alternative is an unbeliever's affair,*" he tacitly admits that this is precisely the situation when it comes to Mormons and the Spalding enigma. Indeed, it appears to us that Mr. Roper and most of his colleagues are in complete agreement with Richard L. Anderson's stated philosophy that "*Spiritual truths must be spiritually verified.*" (Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1981], 82.) Such statements, however, leave us wondering why any of them seek to discuss *The Spalding Enigma* at all? Clearly they are already in possession of their own "*truths*" and therefore have little to gain in an ongoing debate.

As we have previously stated, Mormon history as a scholarly discipline has been in the process of a generally beneficial evolution for several years now. A number of historians not officially connected to any of the several Mormon denominations have lately produced a remarkable body of scholarship covering many aspects of the Mormon past. To these scholars and academics, it may appear unfortunate that *The Spalding Enigma* effectively removes the spotlight of history from the figure of Joseph Smith, Jr., and refocuses attention upon other, less lionized early Mormons.

## **V. A Brief Summary of Events:**

*"[The] secret collusion between Smith and Cowdery became one of the best-kept secrets of early Mormon history, and explains why the details of Oliver Cowdery's early life are only now beginning to emerge."*

Citing Ohio newspaper editor Eber D. Howe's seminal book *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH: the author, 1834), Mr. Roper introduces his lengthy review of *The Spalding Enigma* with this useful summary of the essential, and essentially undisputed, facts:

*"In 1834, relying on testimony gathered by one Doctor Philastus Hurlbut (a former Mormon who had been excommunicated from the church for*

*immoral behavior), [Painesville, Ohio newspaper editor] E[ber] D[udley] Howe suggested that the Book of Mormon was based on an unpublished novel called ‘Manuscript Found,’ written by a former minister named Solomon Spalding. In statements collected by Hurlbut, eight former neighbors of Spalding [sic; actually six former neighbors plus Spalding’s brother John and his wife] said they remembered elements of his story that resembled the historical portions of the Book of Mormon. Some said they recalled names shared by Spalding’s earlier tale and the Book of Mormon. Others claimed that the historical narrative of both stories was the same with the exception of the religious material in the Book of Mormon. Howe suggested that, by some means, Sidney Rigdon, a former Campbellite [Baptist] preacher in Ohio and Pennsylvania who had joined the church in November 1830, had obtained a copy of ‘Manuscript Found’ years before and had used it as the basis for the Book of Mormon, to which he also added religious material. Rigdon, Howe argued, must have conspired with Joseph Smith to pass the Book of Mormon off as a divinely revealed book of ancient American scripture as part of a moneymaking scheme.”*

With the mid-2005, publication of *The Spalding Enigma*, we effectively revitalized the old controversy by introducing a large amount of hitherto unexamined evidence, and by proposing that Smith and Rigdon did not act alone to transform Solomon Spalding’s manuscript into *The Book of Mormon*, but rather they were assisted by one Oliver Cowdery. In support of this, we offered evidence that Smith and Cowdery were well-acquainted since at least 1822, and ventured to conclude that the events of their alleged first meeting in 1829 were part of a carefully orchestrated plan designed to impress wealthy Martin Harris, and thus induce him to finance the printing of *The Book of Mormon*. Because they could never reveal the full truth of their actions without discrediting their goals and themselves in the process, we believe that this secret collusion between Smith and Cowdery became one of the best-kept secrets of early Mormon history, and that it helps explain why the details of Oliver Cowdery’s early life are only now beginning to emerge. (See later in this rebuttal.)

## **VI. Standards and Explanations:**

*“[T]he fact that ‘disagreements among critics over naturalistic explanations of the Book of Mormon are sometimes heated’ only serves to demonstrate how completely unconvincing Mormon explanations for the origin of The Book of Mormon are to those who hesitate to accept Joseph Smith’s claims of divine authenticity on strength of faith alone. While we may argue among ourselves... there is at least no disagreement on that point.”*

According to Roper, the Spalding theory “was once the standard critic’s explanation of the Book of Mormon,” but has since “fallen on hard times.” The two principal reasons for this, he claims, were the rediscovery of a Spalding manuscript in 1884 which bore little resemblance to *The Book of Mormon*, and the appearance of Fawn Brodie’s popular

biography of Joseph Smith in 1945, in which she rejected the Spalding theory and advanced one of her own.

The Spalding work rediscovered in 1884 and first published the following year, is an amateurish, incomplete work of mock-epic fiction, which we believe was originally called simply *Manuscript Story*, and which Mormons have consistently claimed was the only such story Spalding ever wrote. Brodie's conclusion was that Smith's own vivid imagination, coupled with sources and ideas popular at the time, were sufficient for him to have created *The Book of Mormon* entirely on his own and without the need of any assistance from either Solomon Spalding or Sidney Rigdon. However, whether or not Joseph Smith incorporated pre-existing texts and contemporary ideas into his 1830 book was never a matter of what he *needed*—it is a matter of what he *actually did*.

While discussions centering around *Manuscript Story* and its possible influences upon *The Book of Mormon* are admittedly esoteric and little-known, Brodie's dismissive conclusions in this regard were largely a compilation of several earlier authors' Smithcentric views, restated in easily digested prose by the (then) young Mormon writer. Brodie's 1945 book, *No Man Knows My History*, filled an obvious gap in Mormon history when it first appeared, and it has subsequently enjoyed wide circulation. The result, as Roper correctly informs us, is that most modern, non-LDS students and critics of Mormonism have elected to adopt some variant of her synthesis of the Smith-alone explanation.

According to the official LDS position, Brodie is an heretical, excommunicated ex-Mormon whose opinions about Joseph Smith and the origin of *The Book of Mormon* are not to be relied upon— UNLESS, of course, she offers something useful to the Mormon side of the argument, such as her unfavorable opinions concerning the Spalding enigma, in which case selectively quoting her has become perfectly acceptable among the modern apologists. Note the double standard here, about which we shall have more to say later. (For examples of prominent pro-Mormon writers quoting Brodie's work when convenient, see R.L. Anderson, "The Reliability of the Early History of Lucy and Joseph Smith," *Dialogue* IV:2,15-16; Lester E. Bush, Jr., "The Spalding Theory Then and Now," *Dialogue*, X:4,41; and R.L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Rolling Stone*, [NY: Knopf, 2006]. For some examples of the Mormon take on Brodie in general, see Leonard J. Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century," *Dialogue* I:1,15; Robert B. Flanders, "Reappraisals of Mormon History: Writing on the Mormon Past," *Dialogue* I:3,58-9; Hugh Nibley's "No Ma'am, That's Not History," pamphlet, 1946; F.L. Stewart's *Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, [New York: House of Stewart Publications, 1967]; N.G. Bringham, *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life*, [Norman, OK: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1999], and Marvin S. Hill, "Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal," *Dialogue* VII:4,72, in which Hill sums-up modern perceptions very nicely when he writes that "*There is evidence that [Brodie's] book has had strong negative impact on popular Mormon thought as well, since to this day in certain circles in Utah to acknowledge that one has 'read Fawn Brodie' is to create doubts as to one's loyalty to the Church.*")

In Mr. Roper's words, "*Though nominally a Latter-day Saint at the time she wrote her book, Fawn Brodie had become an atheist several years before, it appeared. She was excommunicated shortly after the publication of her book, and it can by no means be described as 'pro-Mormon.'* Such statements raise the question of how well Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick know the playing field."

They also raise the question of how well Mr. Roper knows the playing field outside of his own apparently limited circle. Perhaps present-day Saints do not necessarily view Brodie as "*pro-Mormon,*" but this does not keep many non-Mormons from seeing her as such. As to her excommunication, one problem here is that Roper seeks to transport Brodie's later atheism backwards in time to her research period. Indeed, he makes it sound as though she were always an insincere Mormon sailing under false colors in the exclusive society of elite LDS families. The fact is, Brodie went through a transition from being a faithful Mormon, to being a questioning Mormon, to being something of a rational Mormon. All through this transition, she remained a welcome patron of the LDS historian's archives, as well as an occasional visitor to the Reorganized LDS' equivalent historical collections. Mrs. Brodie was a product of her LDS upbringing within the center of Mormon culture, and her 1946 excommunication came as a shock to her. She expected to remain within the ranks, but her hoped-for rationalization of Mormon thought has been a long time in coming. Roper slides past all of this far too easily.

As a practicing Latter-day Saint who is secure in his faith that Joseph Smith was a latter-day prophet, Roper seems to take comfort from the fact that critics of Mormonism are unable to agree upon a single alternative explanation for the origin of *The Book of Mormon*. For example, he quotes a comment made around 1840 by the Mormon Elder John Taylor, who, upon reviewing two pamphlets containing contradicting accounts, wrote "*Which, then, of these accounts, I would ask, is true? ... both of them have got what they call FACTS, diametrically opposed to each other as light is from darkness.*"

We can only offer, as a much belated reply to Apostle Taylor, our view that there is more potential for the discovery of facts among a set of diverse conclusions than there will ever be among the artificially homogenous confessions of group-thinking partisans.

Roper next cites a second example, this one from the pen of Oliver Cowdery, who, in an 1835 editorial, takes Alexander Campbell and an anonymous critic called "*a friend of truth*" to task for failing to agree whether Joseph Smith or Solomon Spaulding wrote *The Book of Mormon*.

*"The... 'friend of truth' has certainly got ahead of Mr. Campbell: He says that the 'true origin' of the writing composing the book of Mormon, is from the pen of an eccentric Spaulding.... Mr. Campbell says, that 'Smith is its real author, and as ignorant and impudent a knave as ever wrote a book.' Will these two gentlemen settle this dispute; for it truly looks pitiful to see this wide disagreement...."*

Unfortunately, Roper fails to note that Alexander Campbell, at first a close colleague of Sidney Rigdon and later his arch-nemesis, only professed that Smith had written *The Book of Mormon* until he read Howe's 1834 book. After that, his published conclusion was that Spalding, in fact, was the true author of most of the Mormon book. Evidence that Campbell did endorse both Howe's work and the Spalding explanation once he learned about them is provided by none other than Sidney Rigdon himself writing in the January, 1836 issue of the *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, wherein he says (p.242): "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." (This, by the way, appears to be Rigdon's earliest published denial of the material in Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled*, even though that book had appeared fourteen months earlier.) Clearly, Rev. Campbell's ideas in this regard either evolved over time, or he at least became more comfortable during that same period of time in voicing his views regarding Sidney Rigdon and Mormon origins.

In any case, Roper summarizes his position by correctly observing that, "*The same lack of agreement among those who reject Joseph Smith's explanation of the Book of Mormon vexes critics today.*" No doubt the reason Mr. Roper has chosen to quote these two early writers is to demonstrate that there was disagreement over the issue then just as there is today. If that was his purpose, the point is happily conceded. However, the fact that "*disagreements among critics over naturalistic explanations of the Book of Mormon are sometimes heated*" only demonstrates how totally unconvincing Mormon explanations for the origin of *The Book of Mormon* are to those who do not accept Joseph Smith's claims on strength of faith alone. While critics may argue among themselves, as is typical in any free and unhampered exchange of information and ideas, there is at least no disagreement on that central point. One notable difference between Mormon and non-Mormon scholarship is that the non-Mormons are completely free to disagree with each other without any fear of church disciplinary reactions.

With respect to faith, while Mr. Roper finds fault with "*sentiments [which] reflect an emotional investment in the Spalding theory by certain critics of the Book of Mormon*" (he names Broadhurst, Cowdrey, and Davis), he fails to recognize that *faith*, by its very definition, is an existential or emotional investment in one's *personal* beliefs. This leads us to wonder whether Mr. Roper is trying to suggest that he and other proponents of *The Book of Mormon* have no emotional investment in defending their faith, or whether emotional and spiritual investment is only to be critically noticed when exhibited by those who disagree with the Saints on the question of Mormon origins? Let us take this opportunity to suggest that only when pro-Mormon writers begin subjecting their own work to the same rigid standards that they expect of their critics, will they be able to grasp the full truths of history. To a neutral observer with no emotional investment in Mormonism, it must appear that Mormons would much rather present negative evidence against their critics than offer positive proof that their prophet was what he claimed to be. Or, moving one step beyond that, to demonstrate through words and deeds that their religion has some intrinsic value regardless of whether the man behind it, or his book, are what their ancestors thought them to be. What a sad state of affairs to live in a glass house and be reduced to defending it by throwing rocks at one's neighbors.

At this point, let us reiterate: To those who will acknowledge that *The Spalding Enigma* presents much new information, but does so with a distinctly anti-Mormon tone, we wish to say that we are not anti-anything—we are pro-history. Our purpose is to stimulate further inquiry into a subject that has long cried out for attention. As such, our work should be considered a beginning, not an end to discussion on such an important topic; and any person in search of historical truths, even devout Mormons, should welcome its information.

With this in mind, readers are urged to test *The Spalding Enigma* not by applying each and every standard that we, the authors, might suggest, but rather by applying their own, and those of competent scholarship—only bearing in mind the essential caveat that once these standards have been established, they must be applied fairly, equally and impartially to *both* sides of the question. Do this, and a solution to the Spalding enigma emerges on a level that is at least as viable, every bit as logical, and in many ways more credible than any offered thus far by pro-Mormon writers in their efforts to support Joseph Smith’s version of how *The Book of Mormon* came into being.

## VII. Hurlbut and Howe:

“...Roper refuses to address the possibility that all of the statements collected by Hurlbut could just as well represent accurate and truthful recollections of honest and sincere people who, although they may not have been Mormons, had no particular reason to color their statements with anti-Mormon duplicity.”

Although Roper dutifully trots out the old Mormon chestnut that Hurlbut was the “legitimate” author of *Mormonism Unveiled* and Howe was its “illegitimate” author, he then goes on to acknowledge that we “*may be right*” about Hurlbut being only responsible for gathering most of the material which appears in the final 64 pages of that work. The Mormon position on this matter, he writes, “*appears to have been an overstatement.*” We are pleased to share this small patch of common ground with the FARMS reviewer—for we believe that an impartial examination of that 1834 volume will prove it to be largely a re-hash of reporting previously published by Howe in his newspaper, compiled for republication by a local accountant named Esak Rosa, and incorporating input from Hurlbut only in its sections devoted to the Smith family and the Spalding authorship claims.

Next, Roper accurately reports that, “*Leaders of the church... reacted to Mormonism Unveiled [by first] publish[ing] in the Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate a series of letters on the history of Joseph Smith and his early prophetic experiences. These materials were intended as a rebuttal to the negative testimony published by Howe.*”

Oliver Cowdery’s “*Early Scenes and Incidents in the Church*” is actually a series of eight letters published serially in the Kirtland, OH, *Messenger and Advocate* beginning with the issue for December, 1834 (I:3, 40). The *Messenger and Advocate* was, of course, the official Mormon newspaper, and Smith’s cousin Oliver Cowdery was its editor at the time. Since Howe and Hurlbut had sought to reveal one facet of Joseph Smith’s character,

so Oliver Cowdery attempted to reveal another, although, significantly, without the benefit of any supporting affidavits, and without providing any meaningful details of his own secretive past. As pointed out in *The Spalding Enigma*, neither Oliver nor Joseph could afford to admit they had known each other for some years prior to 1829 because they had deftly conspired to convince wealthy Martin Harris, for purposes of securing his continued financial support, that the first time they had ever met was in April of that year. In the words of Rodger I. Anderson:

*“Rather than a moral leper, Cowdery’s Joseph Smith was simply a man like other men ‘and liable, without the assisting grace of the Savior, to deviate from that perfect path in which all men are commanded to walk.’ Hurlbut’s witnesses remembered Smith as ‘entirely destitute of moral character, and addicted to vicious habits.’ The only sins of Cowdery’s Smith ‘were a light, and too often, vain mind, exhibiting a foolish and trifling conversation.’ Hurlbut’s Smith was animated by no loftier purpose than the love of money, but Cowdery’s Smith was in contrast motivated by a sincere desire ‘to know for himself of the certainty and reality of pure and holy religion.’ Hurlbut’s Smith was a money digger who told marvelous tales of enchanted treasure and infernal spirits, but Cowdery’s Smith had only ‘heard of the power of enchantment, and a thousand like stories, which held the hidden treasures of the earth.’”*  
(R.I. Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Reexamined* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990], 3.)

Oliver Cowdery’s “*History*” was only the first of many similar attempts by Mormon writers to disentangle their prophet from what were often derisively referred to as “*Hurlbut’s hurlings*.”

In his efforts to dismiss these “*hurlings*,” Roper refuses to address the possibility that all of the statements collected by Hurlbut could just as well represent accurate and truthful recollections of honest and sincere people who, although they may not have been Mormons, had no particular reason to color their statements with anti-Mormon duplicity. In other words, all things considered, it is far easier to ask a neutral observer to accept that these people were being truthful than it is to argue endlessly that their statements cannot be accepted at face value because Hurlbut must have put words into their mouths, or because they must have had personal axes to grind, or because they were simple dupes who relished the publicity. A careful inquiry into the lives of these early witnesses will show them to have been decent citizens with good reputations, and not a mob of Missouri-style persecutors. After a while, it must become obvious that most pro-Mormon apologists simply cannot accept *any*, much less all, of these witnesses’ first-hand testimony at face value, because to do so would require the admission that something was seriously wrong with Joseph Smith’s account of how he obtained *The Book of Mormon*. Rather than consider such a possibility, the predictable Sainly reaction has almost invariably been to shoot the messenger out of dislike for the message, and then to throw up a justifying smoke screen in an effort to confuse the issue. A far better reaction would be for them to pause a moment and consider that a clear rendering of the actual facts of Mormon history might eventually prove beneficial to everyone.

It is not our goal to present Doctor Philastus Hurlbut as a sterling fellow who is to be accepted, without critical review, in all his words and actions. But when the evidence he presents (or causes to be presented) forms a pattern consistent with known historical events and reasonable reconstructions of the probable past, we ask people to take that offered information seriously and judge its validity on its own merits.

In his efforts to disparage Hurlbut, Roper candidly informs us that, *“In an editorial, Oliver Cowdery warned readers that Hurlbut had been exploiting his given name “Doctor” in an effort to give his actions an air of authority.”* Yet this allegation is simply not supported by the available evidence.

Oliver Cowdery never accused Hurlbut of exploiting his own name, but rather Cowdery’s editorial states very clearly that his purpose in noticing Hurlbut at all was *“to undeceive those at a distance who are unacquainted with him and may be deceived in consequence of the above title, of Doctor.”* (*“Considerable Excitement,”* LDS Evening and Morning Star, II:19 [April 1834], 149.) In other words, Cowdery was simply alerting readers who did not reside in the Kirtland area, and were therefore unacquainted with Hurlbut, not to automatically presume that *“Doctor”* was Hurlbut’s title when in fact it was his real name.

The truth is, there is no known documentation that Hurlbut ever exploited his given name. In all his known communications, legal documents, correspondence, postal letter lists, etc., he is listed as *“D.P. Hurlbut.”* Since he reportedly tried to set up a *“root doctor”* practice in Mormon Kirtland, it is possible that he played upon his first name in some limited ways which have never been documented. A certain unidentified *“Doctor Hurlbut”* is known to have been advertising patent medicine in newspapers published near D.P.’s boyhood home in Yates county, NY. Possibly those ads are traceable to D.P. himself, but since there were plenty of Hurlbuts living around that area, they are just as likely from some other person. Late in life D.P. operated as some sort of non-standard *“Doctor”* in the Midwest, though the details of his practice are very sketchy and may have entailed nothing more than his selling herbal medicine. At any rate, it is unfair to the man to accuse him of something that cannot be documented, based solely upon hostile testimony from early Mormons. Can we trust those same Mormons when they spoke of there being no polygamy in their church, or on a dozen different matters where Mormons are known to have been economical with the truth? Probably not.

If this were the only instance of Roper’s fanciful embellishment of the facts in his review of *The Spalding Enigma*, we might be inclined to overlook it. Unfortunately, it is not the only such example of what we fear may be a pattern of deliberate prevarication.

A similar example can be found in the following paragraph, wherein Mr. Roper attempts to paint Howe as something of a cheat in his own right, and then seeks to boast a bit about copies of *The Book of Mormon* bringing a higher price than Howe’s book:

*“By some means, Howe had obtained Hurlbut’s list of subscriptions for the book, which Howe immediately filled. When Hurlbut received his*

*own allotted copies, he found that few wanted an additional copy. This forced him to sell his copies at a much reduced price. Orson Hyde noted with some amusement that investigators were still willing to pay more than full price for the Book of Mormon and playfully suggested, 'Tell every body to buy and read "Mormonism Unveiled" if they wish, for we are convinced of Paul's statement, where he says, "Ye can do nothing against the truth but for the truth."'"*

Needless to say, it was common practice at the time for editors to publish books “by subscription,” which enabled them to be reasonably sure of sufficient sales to defray the cost of printing. Since Howe had already been at work on *Mormonism Unveiled* well before making a deal with Hurlbut (c. January, 1834) to acquire his material, and since Hurlbut’s original plan seems to have been to publish his own book, perhaps Howe sincerely and innocently believed that his deal included whatever additional subscribers Hurlbut had managed to gather in the process. Moreover, Mr. Roper fails to note that there is no evidence Hurlbut himself ever made such an allegation against Howe, and that the only known source for this information is a statement Hurlbut’s widow Maria, made to A.B. Deming in April of 1885, nearly two years after her husband’s death.

All of this, of course, is reasonably straight-forward. It is in Roper’s boastful allusion to an incident he claims was recounted by Orson Hyde in which we once again we detect the hint of intellectual economy. First, Roper informs us that, due to Howe’s alleged perfidy, Hurlbut was forced to sell his copies “at a much reduced price.” Then he tells us, “Orson Hyde noted with some amusement that *investigators* were still willing to pay more than full price for the Book of Mormon... etc.” As his authority for all this, Roper cites an 1835 communication from Orson Hyde and William E. McLellin in LDS *Messenger and Advocate*, I:8,116. To the casual reader, the implication here is that the statement originated only with Orson Hyde, that it made some reference to the price of Howe’s book having been reduced, and that the “*investigators*” (note the plural) willing to pay more than full price for *The Book of Mormon* were people who were critical of Mormonism. Yet in comparing Roper’s assertions with the original source, we find that while Hyde/McLellin do mention the selling price of Howe’s book, they say nothing about the price having been reduced, nor does the word “*investigators*” appear anywhere in their communication, which in fact refers only to one person *friendly* to Mormonism and not several who were critical of it. The original text, this portion of which may have been written by McLellin and not Hyde since it makes reference to Mr. Hyde in the third person, reads as follows:

*“...one man came to us and said he could not rest nor be satisfied, until he had obeyed the everlasting Gospel. The church was called together soon and we prayed unto the Lord our Heavenly Father.... Elder O. Hyde administered baptism unto him and confirmed him by the water’s edge....*

*“One little circumstance we will briefly notice: We were told Messrs. How, Hulbert & Co’s. [sic] Mormonism Unveiled [sic] sold for eighteen and three quarter cents, while the Book of Mormon sold for two dollars.*

*It is true that two dollars is above the selling price of the Book of Mormon, but the anxiety of the gentleman to purchase it, and the owner having but one, and not wishing to part with it, is an explanation of this matter. Tell every body to buy and read 'Mormonism Unveiled' if they wish, for we are convinced of Paul's statement, where he says, 'Ye can do nothing against the truth but for the truth.'*"

As to why Mr. Roper has chosen to miscast the words of his own witnesses in this matter, we cannot say.

Undaunted however, Roper's next point of attack is to raise the question of whether Howe might actually have suppressed some of the evidence he had at one time in his hands. "*Was Howe afraid that Manuscript Story would undermine the argument for a possible second Spalding manuscript on ancient America? The fact that the borrowed manuscript was never returned to Spalding's widow, was never published by Howe, and was subsequently 'lost' by him seems a little too convenient to be mere coincidence,*" he writes.

Were we to dig very deeply into E.D. Howe's family life, we might find that there was pressure exerted upon him to suppress some of the anti-Mormon aspects of his book. Indeed, according to A.B. Deming, Howe admitted that W.W. Phelps came to him trying to get him to do just that (Deming re Spalding, Howe, Hurlbut, etc., 10 Jan. 1888, in Naked Truths 1). Perhaps Howe's sudden retirement from a productive lifetime in the journalism business had more reasons behind it than are evident at first glance. It certainly seems strange to us, that some months after Howe's book was printed and he had retired from his career in journalism, Joseph Smith himself tells (in his *Journal*, as recorded by Oliver Cowdery) of traveling to the Howe household in Painesville, and then of leaving his wife and family there to visit while he and his "scribe" (Cowdery?) rode into town to call "*on br. H. Kingsbury, at the bank, and at various other places,*"—after which he returned again to the Howe's. It is equally curious that the man Smith went to see was Horace Kingsbury (1798-1853), a prosperous Painesville silversmith, variety store owner and mapmaker, who served at various times as justice of the peace, mayor, and postmaster of that city, and who, although apparently a non-Mormon, appears to have been one of Smith's financial advisors. Could it be that the Mormons themselves purchased and destroyed the better part of Mr. Howe's limited edition publication? Certainly the book quickly became a very scarce commodity and most citations of its contents by 19th century writers come from its 1840 republication by Howe's successors in his printing and publishing business.

Mr. R. E. Woodbury of Kingsville, Ashtabula Co., Ohio, wrote to President James H. Fairchild of Oberlin College on Jan. 28. 1886, to inform Fairchild that, "*There were only about Sixty copies printed—the Mormons became so indignant and boisterous, threatening the said Hurlbut and the printers with assassination to such an extent that the type were thrown up and the same was never again set up.*" How much credibility such an old family tradition can be given, we cannot say: all we know is that it comes from one of the Woodburys (Maria Hurlbut was a Woodbury) and that it is true Mr. Howe

never republished his book nor subsequently had much to say about the Mormons. If Howe suppressed anything, it was material even more harmful to Smith. Ninety percent of his 1834 book is merely a rehash of old stuff he had already published in his newspaper, coupled with other contemporary reporting. Howe reserved the really damning material for the add-on chapter at the end of his book. Why did Howe not follow up on potential contacts with Isaac Hale, the Palmyra residents, the Spalding family, people in and around Pittsburgh, at Amity, etc.—and from such additional research not produce a truly new book in 1834? A few dozen paragraphs of supplementary reporting might have given Howe’s book the documented confirmation which Mormon writers have so often complained is lacking in its pages. Rather than compile and publish that sort of detailed new reporting, Eber D. Howe cashed in his business and went into the manufacture of woolen goods—a strange end to the journalistic career of one of Ohio’s foremost champions of Temperance, Anti-Masonry and Anti-Mormonism. Why did Howe end that notable career within a few weeks after publishing *Mormonism Unveiled*?

It is also curious no evidence exists to indicate that either Howe or Hurlbut ever attempted to visit Amity, PA, the place where Spalding had lived from 1814 until his death; nor does it appear that either of them made much more than a passing attempt to uncover the facts at Pittsburgh either. Clearly something occurred which discouraged Howe from making further inquiries during the months before his book was published, but we are without sufficient evidence to say what it might have been.

When it comes to matters that he did investigate however, clearly Howe made a significant effort to be both thorough and accurate, as is exemplified in Howe’s letter to Joseph Smith’s father-in-law, Isaac Hale—an extremely telling document which we reproduce in *The Spalding Enigma* (pp.73-4), but which Mr. Roper fails to reference in his efforts to discredit Howe. For those not familiar with it, here is the text of that letter:

*“Painesville, Ohio, Feb. 4, 1834. Mr. Isaac Hale, -- Dear Sir, -- I have a letter with your signature, postmarked Dec. 22, 1833 -- addressed to D. P. Hurlbut, on the subject of Mormonism. I have taken all the letters and documents from Mr. Hurlbut, with a view to their publication. An astonishing mass has been collected by him and others, who have determined to lay open the imposition to the world. And as the design is to present facts, and these well authenticated, and beyond dispute, it is very desirable that your testimony, whatever it may be, should come authenticated before a magistrate.*

*“Your [previous] letter has already been pronounced a forgery by the Mormons, who say you are blind and cannot write, even your name. I hope no one has attempted to deceive us; deception and falsehood in this business will do no good in the end, but will help build up the monstrous delusion. We look upon your connexion with Smith, and your knowledge of facts, as very important, in the chain of events, -- and if it be your desire to contribute what facts you have, in so desirable an undertaking, I hope you will, without delay, have drawn up a full narrative of every*

*transaction wherein Smith, jun'r. is concerned and attest them before a magistrate -- This is our plan.  
E. D. Howe"*

Even a cursory reading makes it clear why pro-Mormon writers have carefully avoided this item. Those who would question Howe's desire to report his facts accurately need only look to this letter to assure themselves that his effort was sincere. Yet if this is an indication of Howe's thoroughness, why did he terminate his investigation when he was so close to solving the mystery?

At least one man who knew Howe saw him as the type of person who might have accepted a bribe from Joseph Smith to suppress evidence. Judge John C. Downen of Kirtland once told A.B. Deming that it would not have surprised him to learn that Howe had sold Spalding's *Manuscript Found* to the Mormons. According to Downen, "*There was all kinds of iniquity practiced at that time.*" (Downen to Deming, Jan. 20, 1885, in *Naked Truths II.*) Whether Howe possessed *Manuscript Found* is not at issue here. What is important is Judge Downen's assessment of Howe as the kind of man who could be bought.

When Howe left the newspaper business early in 1835, he could not immediately find a buyer for his publishing enterprise, and so he sold controlling interest in the operation to his brother, Asahel, for six-hundred dollars. He remained part-owner, at least on paper, until 1839, when he finally sold-out to L.L. Rice and Philander Winchester. In the meanwhile he was making large financial investments in woolen mills with a relative. Where did Howe get that investment money, considering that he had not yet sold all of his interest in the printing business and his brother was taking a cut of the proceeds for his own salary? According to Dale R. Broadhurst,

*"I doubt the two investors could have even purchased the necessary land for that small a sum—businesses are typically not profitable right away: they require a cash flow of wages, purchases, transport costs, etc. If Smith did tender a bribe, perhaps it came in the form of an offer to buy-up most of Howe's first printing, which would explain why copies of that edition are so rare. Of course, Howe did have friends, and in the absence of a bribe from Smith (which could have been brokered by Howe's Mormon wife), he simply might have borrowed the necessary cash elsewhere."*

With respect to *Mormonism Unveiled*, Howe advertised his new book only three times in his *Painesville Telegraph*—on Nov. 28, Dec. 5 and Dec. 12, 1834, each time only in the form of a small ad placed on the back page. Moreover, he failed to mention this ad, or its contents, anywhere else in his newspaper; and as far as can be determined, his entire sales promotion program for *Mormonism Unveiled* appears to have been limited to this small announcement. How can it be that the leading anti-Mormon in Ohio (and probably in the world, at that time) failed to place so much as a single editorial paragraph about his new book in the November-December, 1834 issues of his newspaper? Surely one would expect a publisher to express more than passing interest in promoting his own book; yet

Howe did not even bother to bind up all the sheets for the book he had printed—the unbound sheets passed into the ownership of Rice and Winchester, who re-issued the discarded sheets with a new title-page, as a reprint book in 1840. Let Brother Roper explain these strange incongruities, if he will.

As to Roper’s argument that “*Howe’s faulty 1834 description and subsequent suppression of Manuscript Story prevented early investigators from comparing the only evidence of Spalding’s much vaunted literary skill and the manuscript’s style with the Book of Mormon,*” it seems more reasonable to presume that Howe’s reason for not rushing to publish *Manuscript Story* in 1834 had more to do with economics than suppression. Certainly, if he had truly intended to suppress the fact that this work existed, he would not have mentioned it at all.

Roper takes Howe to task again for reporting that when Hurlbut showed *Manuscript Story* to some of Spalding’s former neighbors, they claimed it bore no resemblance to *Manuscript Found*. “*A comparison between their statements and Manuscript Story... shows otherwise,*” he argues. The point he misses here is that if *Manuscript Found* was derived from *Manuscript Story*, or written as its more saleable replacement, one would expect there to be at least a few perceptible thematic and linguistic similarities between the Oberlin Spalding holograph and parts of *The Book of Mormon*. Indeed, a distinct lack of resemblance would make Mr. Roper’s case much stronger. As it is, he is left to dismiss these well documented literary similarities by arguing that the witnesses’ statements must have been derived from defective memories or from unconscious projections.

The December 31, 1833 Aron Wright draft letter helps us to understand the chronology of Solomon Spalding’s fictional writing projects, but Roper pays little attention to this pre-Howe clarification of things. Such first-hand documents generally supply a better window upon the past than does the hearsay of a book publisher like Howe, who was summarizing the opinions of a number of the Conneaut witnesses in a single, generalized sentence. Mr. Roper would have done well to have kept such an elementary thought in mind when offering his opinion that none of the Conneaut people recognized nor reported any resemblance whatever between the two Spalding productions. Indeed, he seems more interested in discrediting these early witnesses’ memories. Once again, he is constrained to force square pegs into round holes by those who engaged him to write his review.

This sort of approach to history can create many problems. For example, in attempting to convince his readers that testimony “*unmolded by Hurlbut might show [that] Manuscript Story and Manuscript Found were in fact identical,*” he quotes the following from an 1841 document by Orson Hyde:

*“In the spring of 1832 I preached in New Salem, Ohio, the place where Rev. Mr. Spaulding resided at the time he wrote his romance. I raised up a branch of the church at that place, and baptized many of Mr. Spaulding’s old neighbors, but they never intimated to me that there was any similarity between the Book of Mormon and Mr. Spaulding’s romance; neither did I hear such an intimation from any quarter, until*

*the immoral Hurlbert, a long time after . . . brought forth the idea. I then went to these neighbors of Mr. Spaulding, and enquired of them if they knew any thing about his writing a romance; and if so, whether the romance was any thing like the Book of Mormon. They said that Mr. Spaulding wrote a book, and that they frequently heard him read the manuscript: but that any one should say that it was like the Book of Mormon, was most surprising, and must be the last pitiful resort that the devil had.”*

Having quoted this passage, Roper boldly asserts that Hyde’s statement *must* be credible because, as he says, there is simply “*no compelling reason*” to assume Elder Hyde might have been “*fabricating evidence.*”

No compelling reason, except, of course, that when Orson Hyde wrote this in 1841, he was hardly a neutral observer, but rather one of the highest-ranking members of the Mormon hierarchy. Six years earlier, in 1835, Hyde had been called by the Three Witnesses (Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris) to be a member of the first Quorum of the Twelve, and he had also served as a member of the first high council and of Zion’s Camp, thus giving him every reason to want to protect not only his church but also the exalted position he held therein—a position similar in rank to that held by a Roman Catholic Cardinal. If on the one hand we are to accept the argument that Hurlbut was not above fabrication and embellishment because he was zealously anti-Mormon, then by the same logic one must also accept the proposition that Orson Hyde’s pro-Mormon zeal coupled with the high position he held in his church rendered him equally biased and thus equally capable of fabrication and embellishment in support of his cause.

All of these Mormon attacks on Hurlbut’s and Howe’s character and credibility fall under the category of “*shooting the messenger out of dislike for the message.*” Hurlbut and Howe may have been something less than perfect characters—but no matter whether that conclusion be true or false, the evidence they compiled speaks for itself. If Smith and the rest of the Mormon leadership could have effectively refuted it in 1834-35, they would have done just that. Orson Hyde says that he went to the Conneaut area at that time and interviewed people about the Spalding authorship claims, and he offers a single lame sentence to report that he found nothing to report. Had Hyde been able to uncover any really useful “*dirt*” on Spalding, Hurlbut, Howe, or the good people of Conneaut, we can be sure that he would have published it to the world. If the Mormons of those days had had any real intention of clearing the names of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, they would have published their own interviews with witnesses in Palmyra, Conneaut, Amity, and Pittsburgh. Rather than doing such a useful thing however, they have ever since concentrated on personal demonization of the Spalding claims advocates. This is a criminal’s defense—or worse, a politician’s defense. Mr. Roper has done better than many of his predecessors in avoiding this sort of demonization—but he seems unable to resist the old Sainly habit of portraying Hurlbut and Howe as the scum of the earth. Roper would have been better advised by his editors to have taken the high road of book reviewing, and thus to have avoided these distracting sloshings though the journalistic mud.

### VIII. Those Troublesome Allegations of Impropriety:

*“[M]uch of what now passes for early Mormon history not only came from the pens of Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith themselves, but was largely created by them in measured response to the devastating material published in Howe’s Mormonism Unveiled, and in any case was not published until 1835 or later.”*

Before undertaking further discussion of D.P. Hurlbut’s character, we should like to thank Mr. Roper for correcting us on a minor point. In *The Spalding Enigma* at page 436, note 49, we say that *“The earliest claim that Hurlbut ‘was excluded from the Church for adultery’ seems to have originated with none other than Smith and Rigdon themselves in a statement that appeared in The Elders’ Journal I,4, (August 1838):59-60.”* We also reference two similar, but less specific allegations which were published in 1835.

Mr. Roper corrects us by quoting a comment Joseph Smith made in a letter to W.W. Phelps dated August 18, 1833, wherein Smith wrote: *“We are suffering great persicution [sic] on account of one man by the name of Docter Hurlburt [sic] who has been expeled [sic] from the chirch [sic] for lude [sic] and adulterous conduct.”*

Regrettably, in researching this matter, we surveyed only published material, and were unaware of Smith’s communication until Roper cited it in his review. For the record, although the letter in question was written in 1833, it does not seem to have been published until 1984 (D.C. Jessee, ed., The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, [SLC: Deseret, 1984], 287). Perhaps most important here, however, is that both the early date of this letter and the fact that Joseph Smith wrote it, strongly reinforce our stated position on this matter, which is that *“The earliest claim that Hurlbut ‘was excluded from the Church for adultery’ seems to have originated with none other than Smith and Rigdon themselves.”* We are, therefore, grateful to Mr. Roper for having disabused us of the error and illuminated our point at the same time.

In his effort to provide support for Smith’s anti-Hurlbut allegations, Roper cites a number of other Mormon witnesses (Pratt, Hyde, Winchester, George Smith, etc.), all of whom are on record as having faithfully echoed their prophet’s claim that Hurlbut was expelled from the Church for lewd conduct and adultery. Roper then informs us that *“Joseph Smith’s [1833] description is consistent with the later recollection of anti-Mormon S. F. Whitney, who stated in 1885 that, in Hurlbut’s 1834 trial, Joseph Smith said that Hurlbut had been ‘expelled for base conduct with lude [sic] women.’”*

Unfortunately, Roper gets himself into a bit of trouble when he cites Whitney out of context on this matter. Although Whitney does confirm he was present at Hurlbut’s 1834 trial, and says that he heard Joseph Smith testify to Hurlbut’s having been *“expelled for base conduct with lude [sic] women,”* later in this same statement Whitney goes on to describe how he personally knew that Smith’s testimony was false! The salient portion of Whitney’s statement, in its proper context, is as follows:

*“D.P. Hurlbut had been a Mormon and was expelled.... Jo testified in court that Hurlbut was expelled for base conduct with lude [sic] women, but had been restored again before Jo knew the charges, which were afterwards received from New York State.... The day after Hurlbut’s trial in Chardon, while in my brother’s store, Jo Smith and many of his followers came in; Jo began to abuse me for testifying as I did. He ask me the reasons why I would not believe him under oath. I replied that he lied so like all possessed.... I told him he lied about the charges against Hurlbut, for Orson Hyde came into the store right after excluding Hurlbut and accidentally[sic] dropped the charges on the floor, and I picked them up and had them, and they were not as he testified....” (Deming, Naked Truths I:1,3)*

As to why Mr. Roper quotes only part of S.F. Whitney’s very important testimony on this matter, we cannot say. However, since Roper is happy to accept Whitney as a credible and accurate witness with respect to one portion of his statement, he can hardly reverse himself and claim that Whitney is being any less credible or accurate in the rest of what he says. Therefore, by accepting Whitney as a truthful witness, Mr. Roper at once impeaches the testimony of his own witnesses and thus effectively stalemates his own argument.

Naturally it would have been useful if Whitney had provided us with more details (why didn’t Deming ask him about this?), but even so, Whitney’s fascinating revelation is sufficient to cast serious doubt upon all of the other statements Roper cites with respect to this matter, since *all* of them were made by Mormons who would have dutifully repeated what Smith was actively promoting as “*the party line*” as far as Hurlbut was concerned (witness his 1833 letter to Phelps). This explains why all of these witnesses, in Roper’s words, “*give a generally consistent picture of Hurlbut’s moral problem.*” Had it not been for Whitney’s enlightening revelation, and Roper’s tacit endorsement of him as a credible witness, the truth of the matter might never have been known.

Whitney’s details of the trial at Chardon are consistent with other more contemporary accounts. Proof that Whitney was personally involved in the Hurlbut affair and thus knew whereof he spoke can be found in the fact that his name appears in the court dockets as one of those called to testify in the case. A.B. Deming spent two full days and evenings with Whitney, a Methodist minister, asking questions and writing out his lengthy statement.

In the final analysis, even though Whitney does not state precisely what the real charges against Hurlbut were, he makes it eminently clear that Smith had lied about this matter while on the witness stand, and that the charges against Hurlbut were not what Smith said they were.

In support of Whitney’s assertion that Smith had lied in court about Hurlbut, there is the strange matter of the *Kirtland Council Minute Book*, which Mr. Roper cites no less than three times in relation to Hurlbut (see his notes #138, 141 & 142). With respect to this handwritten volume, we find it extremely curious that the entries for June of 1833

covering the period of the Hurlbut controversy are not in their proper chronological order, that several pages which should contain material about key dates and events have been torn out and are missing entirely, and that the record gives every appearance of having been deliberately tampered with and/or altered at some later date! Given the subsequent court case mounted by Joseph Smith against Hurlbut, and S.F. Whitney's allegation that Smith had perjured himself when testifying, serious consideration must be given to the probability that Smith or one of his close associates (possibly Frederick Granger Williams) hastily and deliberately undertook to alter the record, lest it be subpoenaed and used as evidence.

### **IX. Murderers Most Foul?**

*"[N]o one really disputes that D.P. Hurlbut was something of a scoundrel, and there is even general agreement that... [he] could have been involved in the alleged murder of one Garrit Brass of Mentor, Ohio.... [I]n June of 1837, just five months before the Brass affair, Joseph Smith himself was hailed into court on a charge of conspiracy to commit murder."*

With respect to Hurlbut's later difficulties with the United Brethren denomination in the early 1850s, Roper cites an 1884 statement made by one Hiram Rathbun, and then takes *The Spalding Enigma* (p.450,n.42) to task for allegedly "*discount[ing] this evidence as coming from pro-Mormon sources.*" He misrepresents his case, however, because our endnote reads, "*Sometime around 1840, Hurlbut is reported to have become a United Brethren minister, but again, mostly according to pro-Mormon sources, allegations of intemperance, lying, and improprieties with women continued to surround him, until he was finally excommunicated in the fall of 1852.*" Either Mr. Roper has misread our text or he has deliberately sought to recast its meaning to suit his own purposes. In either case, it is something of a stretch to find derogatory intent in the words "*mostly according to pro-Mormon sources,*" when in fact the phrase is simply intended to indicate that most of the discussion around this material comes from writers who are pro-Mormon. The words "*but again*" refer to the allegations of intemperance, etc., and not to the pro-Mormon sources.

That having been said, no one really disputes that D.P. Hurlbut was something of a scoundrel, and there is even general agreement that, as Roper suggests, Hurlbut could have been involved in the alleged murder of one Garrit Brass of Mentor, Ohio, in November of 1837.

Recognizing that even *allegations* of murder can tarnish a person's reputation for life, it seems only fair to note that in June of 1837, just five months before the Brass affair, Joseph Smith himself was hailed into court on a charge of conspiracy to commit murder. In this case, about which both his personal diary and his official church history are strangely silent, Smith stood accused of conspiring to kill a prominent Kirtland anti-Mormon named Grandison Newell. His silence about the matter may have had to do with the fact that two of his supporting witnesses, both high-ranking Mormon apostles, admitted under oath that the prophet had indeed discussed with them the possibility of

killing Newell. According to apostle Orson Hyde, “*Smith seemed much excited and declared that Newell should be put out of the way, or where the crows could not find him; he said destroying Newell would be justifiable in the sight of God, that it was the will of God, &c.*” Similarly, apostle Luke Johnson testified that Smith had told him “*if Newell or any other man should head a mob against him, they ought to be put out of the way, and it would be our duty to do so.*” (Painesville Telegraph, 9 June 1837; Geauga County Court of Common Pleas, Book T, 52-3 [5 June 1837], Geauga Co. Court House, Chardon, OH; Edwin B. Firmage and Richard C. Mangrum, Zion in the Courts: A legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900 [Urbana, IL: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988], 55-6, 38n17; and History of the Church I: 405.)

In the end, just as with Hurlbut, the allegations against Smith were never proved. The point to be made here, however, is that if bad character and poor reputation constitute sufficient grounds for dismissing Hurlbut’s evidence that *The Book of Mormon* was derived from a work of fiction written by Solomon Spalding, then by the same logic one must also dismiss Joseph Smith’s claims concerning the divine origin of that very same book.

Perhaps the *real* reason Mr. Roper has devoted so much space to denigrating Hurlbut is that he sought to create a straw man which he could then easily attack and demolish. Executing the messenger out of dislike for the message is an old ploy and is often used in cases where one seeks to divert attention away from matters one would rather not discuss.

Granted that in some cases Hurlbut appears to have been a less than commendable character. He seems to have had no sense of duty in making sure that the pages he took from the trunk in Hartwick were ever properly returned to the Spalding family, and he may have played fast and loose with the truth—especially in his interactions with various young ladies in the churches he joined. That much admitted, why do the Mormons themselves trust him so much that they make very selective use of a few things he said? Fawn Brodie, for example, throws out the Conneaut witnesses’ statements but relies upon the Palmyra area statements as though they were gospel truth. Another example may be had in Mormon selective reliance upon what Hurlbut and Howe reported regarding the contents of the infamous trunk in Hartwick. Typical—sadly typical. The point to be made here is that Hurlbut’s character, however shady it may have been, cannot be interpreted to mean that all the witnesses he interviewed must have deliberately told him only what he wanted to hear. As in any court of law, those judging the case should not automatically presume all the witnesses are lying just because the lawyer is a disreputable scallywag.

Clearly the issue here has far less to do with the character and reputation of the players involved than it does with the quality of evidence they present in support of their individual causes. Unfortunately, it is precisely upon this point that faith-based scholarship founders every time; for while many pro-Mormon writers, such as Roper, are perfectly willing on the one hand to dismiss *The Spalding Enigma* on grounds that the evidence lacks sufficient credibility to prove the case, they refuse to recognize that applying the same critical standards to Joseph Smith and his claims produces an even weaker case for Smith that it does for Spalding. Confront such writers with this paradox

however, and rather than concede the point, they immediately seek to inject faith into the equation, thus abandoning all pretense of meaningful, academic discussion, and at once changing the nature of the dispute from scholarly to religious. Unfortunately, under such circumstances, true scholarship, logical thought processes and meaningful discussion simply are not possible. We therefore admit that our intended audience is not the Latter-day Saint faithful, but rather, the readership we seek are people who have not already made-up their minds beyond all possibility of change. It is not our purpose to talk followers of Joseph Smith out of their church of choice, and so we do not argue along those lines. If readers in our intended audience disagree with some, or all, of our conclusions, we thank them for at least taking the trouble to read what we have to say, and we invite them to share with us their differing viewpoints.

#### **X. Fact v/s Circumstance:**

*“If Hurlbut, a man of admittedly dubious character, cannot be relied upon to produce credible evidence in a matter of such paramount importance as the origin of a major religious movement, then how credible can any religious movement be which must trace its origins back to a man of equally dubious character?”*

With respect to logical thought processes, it is important to remember that for those who study history, there are two kinds of *proof*—that which uses *beyond reasonable doubt* as its standard (as in a criminal trial), and that which considers a matter proved based upon a *preponderance of evidence* (as in a civil case). While historical researchers naturally prefer the first standard, most of us accept that it is the second which often prevails in deciding what ultimately become the accepted *facts* of history.

And so it is with the Spalding enigma. If one employs the *beyond reasonable doubt* standard as a filter, and applies it equally to the historical evidence offered by *both* sides of the debate—pro-Mormon and pro-Spalding—all that emerges from the filter are names and places. Otherwise, *NOTHING* is beyond reasonable doubt—neither Joseph Smith’s religious claims, nor “*Hurlbut’s hurlings*,” nor anything else having to do with the *The Book of Mormon’s* origin. Either one reverts to *preponderance of evidence* in order to sort out what probably happened, or one adopts a purely faith-based standard and refuses to accept any evidence which is not faith-promoting, or one is faced with a hopeless conundrum—in other words, an *enigma*.

The issue here is not the writers, nor is it the many millions of good, industrious, and productive people for whom faith in Joseph Smith and his church is an ongoing way of life. We are dealing with history here, not religion. Our concern is not dogma, but rather about stitching together past events, and in so doing, making a scholarly effort to place them into a reasonable perspective so they may be better understood by those of us whose lives are several generations removed from the events themselves. Under the best circumstances, reconstructing history is not easy. It becomes vastly more difficult when those who played key roles in important events have actively conspired to conceal the truth from posterity.

To those who will say that *The Spalding Enigma* is nothing more than an effort to link a series of coincidences, we are moved to ask how many *coincidences* are required to make a *fact*? To critics who will argue that much of the evidence we present was gathered too long after the original events to be meaningful, we would point out that if one chooses a cut-off date of, say, the end of November 1834, which is when Eber Howe's book was published, it quickly becomes apparent that there is a far larger volume of evidence on record suggesting that Solomon Spalding was the real author of *The Book of Mormon*, and testifying to Joseph Smith's bad character, poor reputation and disgraceful conduct with women, than anything pro-Mormon writers have thus far been able to produce from the same time frame in support of their own version of history. Moreover, in our opinion, much of this early material is of better quality, because most of the statements gathered by Hurlbut and other investigators of early Mormonism were published shortly after they were obtained, and in a number of cases these were the sworn and notarized affidavits of living witnesses, available for cross-examination. As for anything pro-Mormon historians might offer, even the most loyal and gifted of them must admit that much of what now passes for early Mormon history not only came from the pens of Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith themselves, but was largely created by them in measured response to the devastating material published in Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled*, and in any case was not published until 1835 or later.

Although the methods of collecting information and the standards for reporting it were considerably more primitive in Hurlbut's day, placing words in people's mouths and getting away with it was still something to be done with considerable caution. Nineteenth century editors even had a word for it—*animadvert*—which meant to publish deliberate falsehoods about or against someone. The principal problem facing the old Mormon argument that "*Hurlbut put thoughts into the minds of his respondents, and words into their mouths*" is the same as it has always been; which is to say that although the people of northwestern Pennsylvania and northeastern Ohio had ready access to a variety of newspapers from 1830 onwards, not one single individual of the upwards of 200 who were interviewed by Hurlbut, or later by Turner, or Deming, or Dickinson, or Braden—either on the subject of Solomon Spalding's writings or about Joseph Smith's character—not one of them is known to have ever come forward to publicly claim they were misquoted or misrepresented in any way. Not one! Nor has any relative, friend or neighbor of any of these people ever come forward to claim that so-and-so had told them privately that Hurlbut or one of the others had misrepresented their testimony. Nor was any documented evidence against these old witnesses ever brought forth against them while they yet lived. That is a remarkable record, and clearly it speaks for itself. The best that Smith and Rigdon were able to come-up with, after tracing Hurlbut's steps at least as far as Buffalo, and interviewing Mormons along the way, was the allegation that D.P. Hurlbut had a womanizing problem. Of course, one could seek to explain all of this by imagining some vast anti-Mormon conspiracy at work here—one such as Mr. Roper deftly hints at when he suggests that Hurlbut's witnesses stood to "*gain a certain amount of notoriety by having their statements and opinions published in a book exposing what they already considered to be a delusion*"—but in the end it is far more reasonable to accept the likelihood that these people were simply telling the truth as they knew it to be,

and, for lack of evidence to the contrary, that they and those who knew them best must have considered Hurlbut's reporting of their testimony to have been reasonably accurate.

As to Roper's stated conclusion that "*The evidence... suggests that Philastus Hurlbut, a man of dubious character, whose passionate hostility to Joseph Smith and Mormonism is beyond dispute, was intimately involved with both the selection of the Spalding testimonials that we have today and the language in which they were formulated,*" once again his double standard is showing. If Hurlbut, a man of admittedly dubious character, cannot be relied upon to produce credible evidence in a matter of such paramount importance as the origin of a major religious movement, then how credible can any religious movement be which must trace its origins back to a man of equally dubious character?

The matter does not rest with the purported bad character of Smith or Hurlbut. As we've said, it is not our purpose to defame Smith nor to discredit his religion. What we do wish to establish is the general credibility of the Conneaut witnesses. Therefore, if anyone can show us a single falsehood in their published statements, or a single contemporary instance of any accusations of their being false or misled witnesses, we wish to see and study such evidence. Unfortunately, Mr. Roper has not supplied us with any such thing.

## **XI. How Many Manuscripts?**

*"I was soon introduced to the manuscripts of Spalding and perused them as often as I had leisure. He had written two or three books or pamphlets on different subjects; but that which more particularly drew my attention was one which he called the Manuscript Found..." John N. Miller to D.P. Hurlbut, September 1833.*

Although Mormons have circulated a variety of arguments in their effort to dismiss the Spalding enigma, the one which seems to be the current favorite holds that it is utterly impossible for Solomon Spalding to have written more than one fictional story—that one being the holograph which bore the title *Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek* on its wrapper when it was rediscovered in 1884. Therefore, since the text of this manuscript bears only occasional and limited resemblance to *The Book of Mormon*, it naturally must follow that the events of Solomon Spalding's life, and the various statements about him made by family, friends, and neighbors after his death, have no relevance whatsoever to the origin of the literary production now known as *The Book of Mormon*. As Roper points out, even some "*secular critics*" of Mormonism such as Dan Vogel favor this Spalding-only-ever-wrote-one-story view.

As authors of *The Spalding Enigma*, we believe this particular argument to be seriously flawed. Moreover, after reading Roper's review of our book, we find ourselves wondering whether those who attempt to defend such a position aren't more interested in promoting convenient fantasy than they are in promoting meaningful debate. Rather than seeking to impose our views upon the reader however, we ask only that our evidence be given a fair hearing.

In support of his assertion that Spalding produced only one fictional manuscript, Roper tells us that after Hurlbut had collected the statements of the Conneaut witnesses,

*“...an attempt was made to locate the ‘Manuscript Found.’ According to Howe, ‘a messenger’ (Hurlbut) was sent to Massachusetts, where Spalding’s widow then lived. Although she reportedly had ‘no distinct knowledge’ of the contents of ‘Manuscript Found,’ she gave permission for this messenger to retrieve the manuscript from a trunk at her former place of residence in New York.”*

He then proceeds to quote Howe’s account of the circumstances which followed:

*“The trunk referred to by the widow, was subsequently examined, and found to contain only a single M.S. book, in Spalding’s hand-writing, containing about one quire of paper. This is a romance, purporting to have been translated from the Latin, found on 24 rolls of parchment in a cave, on the banks of Conneaut Creek, but written in a modern style, and giving a fabulous account of a ship’s being driven upon the American coast, while proceeding from Rome to Britain, a short time previous to the Christian era, this country then being inhabited by the Indians. This old M.S. has been shown to several of the foregoing witnesses, who recognise it as Spalding’s, he having told them that he had altered his first plan of writing, by going farther back with dates, and writing in the old scripture style, in order that it might appear more ancient. They say that it bears no resemblance to the ‘Manuscript Found.’” (Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, 287–88.)*

Having cited Howe, Roper then continues with his own assessment:

*“It is now generally acknowledged that, in the passage above, E.D. Howe described the document recovered by Lewis L. Rice in Hawaii in 1884 and now known as ‘Manuscript Story.’ Faced with the facts..., Howe was forced to insist that the Book of Mormon’s historical narrative was derived from a supposed second Spalding manuscript on ancient America known as ‘Manuscript Found.’ It was this second document, he claimed, rather than the one retrieved by Hurlbut, that his witnesses had described in their statements. However, critics of the Spalding theory... have been understandably suspicious of this claim, suspecting that either Howe, Hurlbut, or former Spalding neighbors simply invented the theory of a second manuscript after finding that the actual Spalding manuscript did not match the neighbors’ descriptions.”*

Unfortunately, Roper’s argument is supported by little more than hollow conjecture, for there are no known sources which unequivocally attest to that supposition. On the other hand, in *The Spalding Enigma* we present nearly seventy pages (pp.29-98) of evidence which strongly suggests that precisely the opposite has to be true—i.e. that Solomon

Spalding must have written at least two fictional manuscripts, and that one of them was evidently called *Manuscript Found*. So that the reader may be fully informed, we recite the most significant of this evidence in the remainder of this section:

- Aron Wright to Hurlbut, August, 1833: "*Spalding had many other manuscripts*" [Howe, 284]; and Aron Wright again on December 31, 1833: "*Hurlbut is now at my store. I have examined the writings which he has obtained from [said] Spalding's widow[.] I recognize them to be the ~~writings~~ handwriting of [said] Spalding but not the Manuscript I had reference to in my statement before alluded to as he informed me he wrote in the first place ~~he wrote~~ for his own amusement and then altered his plan and commenced writing a history of the first Settlement of America the particulars you will find in my testimony dated ~~Sept 18~~ August 1833....*"

We shall have more to say about Aron Wright's testimony later in this section.

- John N. Miller to Hurlbut, September 1833: "*I was soon introduced to the manuscripts of Spalding and perused them as often as I had leisure. He had written two or three books or pamphlets on different subjects; but that which more particularly drew my attention was one which he called the *Manuscript Found*..." [Howe, 282-3].*

Note here that Miller not only says Spalding had written "two or three books," but he specifically identifies the one in question as *Manuscript Found*, and not *Manuscript Story*. Should there be any doubt however, Miller's description of the contents of the work he refers to as *Manuscript Found* makes it eminently clear that he is recalling something distinctly different from *Manuscript Story*. Yet Roper persists with his argument that there can only have been one Spalding manuscript, and then attempts to convince us that Miller and his neighbors, in conspiracy with Hurlbut and Howe, and out of dislike for Mormon missionary activity in the area, could have "simply invented the theory of a second manuscript after finding that the actual Spalding manuscript did not match the neighbors' descriptions." Having fielded that one, Roper himself then proceeds to admit, in what may be an inadvertent contradiction, that when "Miller mentions several 'books or pamphlets on different subjects,' he seems to draw a distinction in his statement between '*Manuscript Found*' and Spalding's other writings." This, of course, is precisely our point; even though Roper's unintentional confirmation comes during the course of trying to place words in Miller's mouth which would limit Spalding's other writings to sermons, similar papers, and a humorous poem called *The Frogs of Wyndham*. All things considered, surely it is more reasonable to accept that Miller was making a sincere effort to be truthful in his recollection, than to cast aspersions upon this man's character and attempt to force words into his mouth as Brother Roper seeks to do. But let us continue:

- Mrs. Matilda Spalding-Davison, November, 1833: According to Howe's report, the widow Spalding informed Hurlbut that her late husband "*had a great variety of manuscripts*," and recalled "*that one was entitled the Manuscript Found....*" [Howe, 287-8]

Are we to presume here, as Roper does, that Hurlbut/Howe successfully placed words in this stern old widow's mouth—words which, by the way, neither she nor her daughter

ever repudiated although they had plenty of opportunity—or is it again more reasonable to accept that she was speaking truth to the best of her knowledge and belief?

One of the opportunities where Mrs. Spalding-Davison could have repudiated what Hurlbut/Howe had written about her came after a more detailed statement relating her memories was published in 1839. Shortly after that statement appeared in various newspapers, she received a visit from a Mormon named Jesse Haven, who seems to have asked her point-blank whether the information given in her published statement was true—to which she replied without hesitation, “*In the main, it is.*” (Quincy [IL] Whig, 16 November 1839; and Times & Seasons I:3 [Jan.1840], 46-47. Note: Due to a typographical error, The Spalding Enigma, p.467,n.64, incorrectly gives the date of the Whig as 1849 and the pages for Times & Seasons as 45-46.) Roper cites the Haven interview in his review, but chooses to dwell upon less-important ambiguities rather than mention this part of it.

Moreover, it is not fair for Mr. Roper to hold against the widow Spalding the fact that she chose not to reveal all she knew about this matter the first time she was asked about it (by Hurlbut, in 1833). First of all, it is human nature that old memories often do not come back to mind all at once, but rather resurface in bits and pieces over a period of time. Secondly, Hurlbut was a complete stranger to the widow, and, according to the Spaldings’ adopted daughter who was present, the old lady was suspicious of the man and did not trust him. In her own words: “*My mother was careful to have me with her in all the conversations she had with Hurlburt (sic), who spent a day at my house. She did not like his appearance and mis-trusted his motives.*” (E.E. Dickinson, “The Book of Mormon,” Scribner’s Monthly, [August, 1880]: 616ff.) Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Hurlbut came away with more generalities than specifics. In addition, the fact that Howe reports only these generalities without attempting to embellish them tells us something about his reliability as a reporter.

- Robert Patterson, Sr., in a written, signed statement for Samuel Williams, dated April 2, 1842, stated that Silas Engles, the “*foreman printer and general superintendent of the printing business*” for the *R & J Patterson* establishment, had informed him “*that a gentleman, from the East originally, had put into his [Engles’] hands a manuscript of a singular work, chiefly in the style of our English translation of the Bible.*” According to Patterson, he, personally, had “*read only a few pages*” of this work, and having found nothing objectionable therein, told Engles he “*might publish it, if the author furnished the funds or good security.*” (Williams, Mormonism Exposed, Pittsburgh: 1842, p.16.)

While Patterson’s statement is, unfortunately, sparse on details, his recollection that the manuscript he had seen was written in Biblical style, would seem to negate any argument that the work in question was the one we now know as *Manuscript Story*. In addition, the fact that Robert Patterson had such limited knowledge of either Spalding or his manuscript, reinforces our assertion, as set forth in *The Spalding Enigma*, that the Patterson brother with whom Spalding was dealing was in fact Joseph and not Robert. (See later in this paper for additional discussion.)

- Samuel Williams, for whom Robert Patterson had written and signed the above statement, introduces it in his 1842 booklet with the remark that “*Mr. Patterson firmly believes also, from what he has heard of the Mormon Bible, that it is the same thing he examined at that time.*”

Although Robert Patterson was alive and doing business in Pittsburgh at the time Williams published his statement, there is no record of him ever having complained about being misquoted.

- Matilda Spalding McKinstry, April 3, 1880: “*My father was in business there [at Conneaut], 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.... In 1816 my father died at Amity, Pennsylvania, and directly after his death my mother and myself went to... Onondaga County, New York.... We carried all our personal 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.” [Statement given at Washington, DC, April 3, 1880]. Also, Matilda Spalding McKinstry again, this time to A.B. Deming on November 2, 1886: “*I have read much of the Manuscript Story Conneaut Creek which you sent me. I know that it is not the Manuscript Found which contained the words ‘Nephi, Mormon, Maroni, and Laminites.’ Do the Mormons expect to deceive the public by leaving off the title page—Conneaut Creek and calling it Manuscript Found and Manuscript Story[?]*”*

Although only a young girl at the time her step-father died, Mrs. McKinstry seems very positive about her childhood memories.

- Rachel Derby, daughter of John N. Miller, December 9, 1884: “*Father told him [Hurlbut] that the Manuscript Found was not near all of Spalding’s writings....” (Deming, Naked Truths I:1, col.7)*

The fact that Miller’s daughter makes this statement strongly suggests that Miller went to his grave without disputing what Hurlbut and Howe had originally reported him to have said on this subject back in 1834.

- L.L. Rice, May 30, 1885: “*there is no outcome of the quarrel, as the story is evidently unfinished, and stops abruptly.*” (Rice to James Fairchild, May 30, 1885)

This in itself indicates the manuscript Hurlbut found in the widow’s trunk cannot have been a copy of the manuscript that Spalding had prepared for the Pattersons, because that work was said to have been complete except for a preface and title page.

- E. D. Howe to Elder T. W. Smith, July 26, 1881: “*The manuscript you refer to was not marked on the outside or inside Manuscript Found . . . it was not the original Manuscript Found.*” (C. Shook, The Real Origin of the Book of Mormon [Cincinnati: Standard, 1914], 75-76).

Although Howe made this statement three years before L.L. Rice’s rediscovery of Manuscript Found, his recollection proved correct. The manuscript which Rice recovered was marked *Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek*, not *Manuscript Found*.

Discerning readers will note that three of the statements quoted above precede Hurlbut's retrieval of *Manuscript Story* from the widow's trunk, thus negating Roper's assertion that "either Howe, Hurlbut, or former Spalding neighbors simply invented the theory of a second manuscript after finding that the actual Spalding manuscript did not match the neighbors' descriptions."

In addition to the case presented by these witnesses, there is some supporting evidence which can be deduced from the physical appearance of the holograph entitled *Manuscript Story* presently housed at Oberlin College.

An example of this appears on page 132 of that manuscript in the form of an unfinished personal letter which some unknown individual began to compose and then abruptly broke-off in mid page. What is important here is that the text of this letter begins with the words, "I have received 2 letters this jan 1812," thus fixing that particular page, at least, in time. Since this item turns up on page 132 in a manuscript of only 171 pages, we are left to conclude that Spalding added fewer than 40 new pages to this work between the time our unknown writer penned this fragment, and Spalding's death at Amity, PA more than four and one-half years later. (See *The Spalding Enigma*, pp.92-96 for a more complete discussion.) Faced with this, we must either believe Roper's thesis that this poorly constructed and incomplete text, including the interpolated "letter" on page 132, is the same manuscript which Spalding submitted to the Pattersons in Pittsburgh—or we must accept that after writing less than 40 new pages, Spalding laid *Manuscript Story* aside and began work on an entirely different piece of pseudo-historical fiction. For those of us who prefer the second premise over the first, and based upon what the various witnesses tell us about Spalding's manuscript-writing activities both at Conneaut and later at Pittsburgh and Amity, it is entirely reasonable to presume that Spalding laid *Manuscript Story* aside soon after January of 1812, probably during the spring or early summer.

With respect to the time frame, we know that Solomon Spalding's brother Josiah visited him in Ohio in the summer of 1812, and from his testimony we can deduce that he saw either this draft of the unfinished story, or a predecessor. Moreover, it seems reasonable to conclude that there was a predecessor draft based upon the orthographic artifacts visible on the pages of the *Manuscript Story* holograph now at Oberlin—dittography, text crossed-out on pages not in proper sequence, combinations of a "calm" legible copyist's hand interspersed with hurried, imperfect insertions, etc. In addition, there is evidence that Spalding had a long-standing fascination with the notion that the American Indians were descended from ancient Israelites, and that he had already made considerable progress on a second manuscript devoted to this special theme prior to his leaving Conneaut for Pittsburgh during the late summer or early autumn of that same year. (See Matilda Spalding-Davison's 1839 statement as printed in *The Spalding Enigma*, pp.106-09.)

Unable to digest all of this, however, Roper seeks to chip away at it in small ways by which he obviously hopes to magnify his readers' distrust of the old evidence. This he

does by attempting to divert their attention to unsupported quibbles and outright misrepresentations. For example, he writes that according to *The Spalding Enigma*,

*“A considerable body of evidence exists, indicating that Solomon Spalding wrote a second novel entitled A Manuscript Found, which disappeared prior to 1833.” Unfortunately for their position, much of that evidence comes from very late testimony solicited long after the fact, in which “witnesses” recalled, with ever-increasing detail, what Spalding had reportedly done or said through the years.”*

Apparently this is a only a problem when someone other than Roper himself cites such “late testimony.” Consider the following quote from Roper’s review of *The Spalding Enigma* in which he attempts to argue that certain statements made by Spalding’s widow and daughter should be taken as evidence that the manuscript Solomon Spalding submitted to the Pattersons was the same document which is now at Oberlin College. According to Roper,

*“Spalding’s widow related that, in an attempt to get his manuscript published, Spalding submitted it to Patterson for evaluation. Patterson ‘informed Mr. S. that if he would make out a title page and preface, he would publish it and it might be a source of profit....’ According to Spalding’s daughter, ‘when he [Patterson] returned it to my father, he said: “Polish it up, finish it, and you will make money out of it.”’ ...[T]his statement indicates that the manuscript in question was incomplete, not ready for publication... a description consistent with the state of the document recovered in 1884 known as Manuscript Story.”*

In analyzing Roper’s position, it is important to note that he quotes two statements given by two different people and separated by more than forty years. In the first, made by Spalding’s widow in 1839, we are told that the manuscript needed only a title page and preface to be complete and ready for publication. In the second, made by Spalding’s daughter in 1880, we are told it needed to be polished and finished. The first statement was given by Spalding’s widow directly from her memory; the second is Spalding’s daughter recalling second-hand what her mother had told her many years earlier. (“*My mother... said that my father loaned this ‘Manuscript Found’ to Mr. Patterson, of Pittsburgh, and that when he returned it to my father, he said: ‘Polish it up, finish it, and you will make money out of it.’*”) Under normal circumstances, most objective historians would be moved to accept the widow’s first-hand statement made in 1839 as more likely to be accurate than the daughter’s second-hand recollection made forty-one years later, yet Roper somehow sees fit to argue that the less-specific language of the second must describe the circumstances more reliably than the first. Once again, Roper seems content to accept that which is more convenient to his point of view over something which is more likely to be historically correct—hardly the sort of behavior one would expect from a truly objective historian.

As authors of *The Spalding Enigma*, we find it extremely interesting that Mr. Roper takes us to task for citing “*very late testimony solicited long after the fact*,” and then attempts to use words uttered by Matilda McKinstry in 1880 to expand upon something her mother had said in 1839.

Obviously, the point which Roper is trying to dilute here is that if the manuscript Spalding submitted to the Pattersons needed only a preface and a title page to be complete, it obviously cannot have been identical with the Spalding holograph now at Oberlin. That document would have required a total rewrite before its story would have made any sense, which is to say that the plot could not have been brought to a conclusion which harmonized with its beginning chapters, simply by adding a few more pages of narrative.

## **XII. Belated Evidence and Other Trivialities:**

*“Aron Wright’s testimony actually provides us with a very strong hint about the subject matter of Spalding’s other manuscripts.”*

Since his admitted prejudices will not permit him to accept *any* evidence adverse to his point of view, Roper attempts to marginalize it by complaining that much of it was recorded at a late date. However, if evidence derived from “*very late testimony solicited long after the fact*” is unacceptable to Brother Roper, then surely he is prepared to apply this same standard to the many sources that he and other pro-Mormon writers are often quick to cite when defending their cause but which also fall into this same category. For example, Lucy Mack Smith’s often quoted work *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* was not dictated until 1844-45, more than twenty years after Joseph’s alleged first encounter with an angel, and was not finally published until 1853—and then only after it had been heavily edited. In addition, the LDS scriptural account of Joseph Smith seeing God the Father and God the Son in the flesh dates to nearly two decades after the purported encounter. If Roper and his co-religionists are inclined to give this sort of late evidence credibility, we suggest that they offer the same courtesy to alternative evidence.

In another, equally transparent, objection, Roper suggests that since six of the Conneaut witnesses mention only one Spalding manuscript, there must have been only one. “*Out of eight statements about Spalding collected by Hurlbut... six mention only one work.*” Needless to say, if he truly believes this is sufficient reason to conclude there had to have been only one Spalding manuscript, then, as a scholar, he is certainly in rare, if not unique, company. Since it is doubtful that Hurlbut had any reason to ask his witnesses whether they were aware of more than one Spalding manuscript, the fact that some of them volunteered this information on their own should be regarded as significant. In this instance, however, Roper seems more interested in what the witnesses did not say than in what they did; even though he is surely aware of the long-established principle that an absence of evidence cannot be construed as proof that no evidence exists. In such light, the fact that three witnesses (Wright, Miller, and the widow Spalding) stated Solomon Spalding had more than one manuscript is significant, and the fact that others failed to mention the matter at all is irrelevant.

Although Roper admits that these three statements do pre-date Hurlbut's retrieval of *Manuscript Story* from the widow's trunk, he attempts to circumvent the issue by arguing that none of these witnesses said anything about the *content* of the multiple manuscripts. Yet it is not the *content* which is at question, Mr. Roper, but the *quantity*. Here we have multiple witnesses who clearly state Spalding wrote more than one manuscript. We ask Mr. Roper if he has ever written a story, or a professional paper, or even his review of our book, in a single draft? People writing for anticipated publication typically produce several drafts of their text before the content is finalized. The Spalding holograph now on file at Oberlin itself shows the orthographic artifacts of having been copied in part from an earlier draft. Even if Spalding only ever wrote one fictional tale in his life, chances are greater that he wrote several drafts, than that he wrote only a single manuscript. The compiled testimony of the witnesses indicates that Spalding wrote more than a single manuscript, no matter the content or the quality of those writings. To reject their statements about quantity because they fail to mention content is not good scholarship, it is apologetic nonsense!

As to content, however, Aron Wright's testimony actually provides us with a very strong hint about the subject matter of Spalding's other manuscripts. Consider for a moment what Judge Wright must have had in mind when he told Hurlbut, not once, but twice, that he fully expected to see Spalding's other writings if Joseph Smith later came forth with translations from additional plates. Surely Wright would not have told Hurlbut such a thing if at least one of the other Spalding manuscripts he knew of—such as one called *Manuscript Story*, perhaps—did not contain stories which Wright felt also bore similarities to those found in *The Book of Mormon*.

We might also ponder the fact that Judge Wright made this prediction before Rigdon and Smith produced their *Book of Moses* and their *Book of Enoch*, both of which have literary and chronological links with the earlier *Book of Ether*. Had Wright been able to inspect these later Mormon productions, or even the Smith story of how he used a lever to pry up a stone atop a hill in order to retrieve his ancient record, what would the Conneaut witness have then said? We cannot know, but we can study these subsequent Mormon texts to see whether Wright's prediction might have "*come to pass*."

Roper must find Aron Wright's credibility as a witness very troubling. Here is a man who was clearly trusted and well respected in his community, yet he had never shown a preference for any particular church, and indeed appears to have been very open-minded on the subject of religion (see "Death of Aaron [sic] Wright," Conneaut Reporter, 17 Nov. 1853). Unable to argue that Wright's testimony could have been motivated by an anti-Mormon religious bias, Roper is left to find what comfort he can by complaining that Wright's unsigned letter of 31 December 1833 might not be authentic (a matter beyond question), and suggesting that Wright's failure to "*produce so much as one Book of Mormon name from his remarkable memory*" is a flaw which "*raises questions about the reliability of his memory or about his probity*" (a matter beyond comment). Indeed, Roper goes to a lot of trouble to complain about what Wright does not say, while largely ignoring what he does. He also seeks, once again, to raise the question of Howe's

integrity by finding it suspicious that this letter does not appear in *Mormonism Unveiled*. Unfortunately, he offers nothing to demonstrate that Howe had ever seen the letter—an event which seems unlikely since the formal copy probably went to the Citizens' Committee which had employed Hurlbut (hence the letter's greeting "Dear Sir:") and not to Howe. In fact, if the document now in the New York Public Library is a copy of Wright's original which Hurlbut intended to keep for his own records and then inadvertently left behind, it clearly would not have been among Hurlbut's papers when he turned them over to Howe, thus explaining why Howe seems to have had no awareness of it. It also explains why the handwriting is Hurlbut's and not Wright's.

In order to argue that the letter is not authentic, one would have to explain why Hurlbut copied it out and then left it in Conneaut where it ended up in the hands of the Lake family, who did nothing with it for eighty-one years until they donated it to the New York Public Library in 1914.

Mr. Roper at least contributes something new to the discussion, however, when he attempts to use Conneaut witness John Miller's statement about "humorous passages" in Spalding's manuscript as evidence that *The Book of Mormon* cannot have been derived from that work. "Any reference to 'humorous passages' in the *Book of Mormon* is untenable," Roper informs us, "as anyone who has read it can attest." Untenable? We beg to differ. Some of us find the nearly ten pages of rambling verbiage in *The Book of Mormon* (1830 ed., pp.131-140) about the lord of the vineyard and the olive tree to be extremely humorous. In addition, lest he find our opinion overly biased, we should like to cite 1988 Sunstone Foundation lecturer Stephen Walker, who wrote these words in summarizing his featured presentation which he called "How to Read the Book of Mormon and Stay Awake": "Literary identification can 'liken' the *Book of Mormon* to us, can bring its people alive as we read ourselves into the book's human situations, its tragedies and its triumphs--even its humor. A literary eye open to such unlikely aspects of the *Book of Mormon* as humor can penetrate deep enough between *Book of Mormon* lines that we begin to catch glimpses not only of the book's profoundest dimensions, but of our own." (Ref. Sunstone XIII [Feb 89]:1,54.) Fawn Brodie went over this same observation in her 1945 Smith biography. It is not our fault that people like Brodie and Roper do not see the humor evident in certain parts of *The Book of Mormon*. If we can imagine ourselves sitting by Solomon Spalding's fireside on some cold winter night in 1811, we might there hear him give the verbal accentuation by which the stories of Ammon's hacking off innumerable clubsmen's arms, or Shiz's gasping for breath after his head had been cut off are rendered laughable. We say that it is difficult for the perceptive reader to browse through either the Oberlin manuscript or the more Spaldingish sections of *The Book of Mormon*, while keeping a straight face. And finally, one cannot pass this point without noting that even Jesus himself smiles, not once but twice, in *The Book of Mormon*, see 3 Nephi XIX:25,30.

### **XIII. If not *this* Manuscript, then *which* Manuscript?**

"Since no one seriously disputes that Spalding did submit a manuscript to the Pattersons,

*and if [Manuscript Story] cannot be the manuscript which he submitted, then perhaps Mr. Roper will be kind enough to inform us which manuscript he did submit?*

As already noted, when Hurlbut returned to Conneaut in December of 1833 with Spalding's *Manuscript Story* in hand and proceeded to show it to several of Spalding's former neighbors, these people verified that it was *not* the manuscript to which they had referred in their earlier statements (Howe, 288; Aron Wright's unsigned letter of 31 Dec. 1833). In order to refute this, one must first sustain the claim that Hurlbut initially manipulated his witnesses, and then argue that the deception stuck even after they were shown the original manuscript containing the very same story about which their memories had allegedly been manipulated in the first place. Isn't it odd that, upon being confronted with Spalding's original, not one of them ever said, "*Why yes, this is the story you were trying to get me to recall, and it's nothing like you coached me into saying it was*"?

Concerning the existence of more than one Spalding manuscript, the words of Rev. Robert Patterson, Jr. are worth repeating:

*"When so many hearers of the story in different places concur in their recollections of names constantly recurring in the story, and when some of them heard it read again and again, it seems impossible that, after twenty years, they should confound it with a story [i.e. Manuscript Story]... in which not one of these familiar and unique names of persons and places did once occur. The memory of people who, at that period, read or heard very few romances, would be all the more tenacious of the few (it might be the only one) they did hear.... Moreover, it is unitedly testified by these witnesses that before Spalding became a bankrupt, and when he wrote only to while away the hours of his illness, without any thought of making money by publishing his book, his purpose in the story they heard him read was to show (seemingly) that our Indians were descended from the ten lost tribes. He therefore started the colonists from Jerusalem. This was the *raison d'être*-- the very foundation-- of the whole fiction. How is it possible that such a story in 20 years became confused in the memory of those who heard it with a story which left the Jews out altogether?"* (Patterson Jr. to J.H. Fairchild, Sept. 22, 1885.)

According to Mormon sources, after the death of her husband, Spalding's widow re-submitted the manuscript intended for publication to the Rev. Robert Patterson, Sr. While we cannot fault Patterson for refusing to finance the printing of any questionable text during the hard times following the War of 1812, we would think both Patterson and Mrs. Spalding exceptional fools to have even discussed the publication of the unfinished Roman/Mound-builder tale as a money-making proposition. Furthermore, the Oberlin manuscript's story begins as a first-person narrative told by its hero Fabius, and remains thus through chapter four. In chapters five through eight however, only a few passages are in the first person; and in all the remaining text (which comprises more than half the manuscript) everything is written in the third-person. These chapters contain lengthy and

often intimate conversations, but provide the reader with no explanation as to how Fabius could have obtained such information. As Spalding continued to compose his tale, he must have realized that he had no plausible way to return to his first-person account, and that radical changes to his manuscript would be necessary in order to reconcile this difficulty. Aside from the fact that the manuscript itself is incomplete, can anyone imagine that Spalding actually submitted such a work to the Pattersons for their erudite consideration? Since no one seriously disputes that Spalding did submit a manuscript to the Pattersons, and if this cannot be the manuscript which he submitted, then perhaps Mr. Roper will be kind enough to inform us which manuscript he did submit?

#### **XIV. The Paper Chase:**

*“[T]he term “foolscap,” as used at the time, applied to a special kind of paper with particularly distinguishing and readily identifiable characteristics, especially with respect to size.”*

According to Roper, in a section which he calls *Paper Dreams*:

*“In what the authors call their ‘strongest piece of evidence’ that ‘Manuscript Story’ and ‘Manuscript Found’ were separate works, they cite testimony from two of Spalding’s neighbors in Amity, Pennsylvania... who claim to have seen Spalding’s manuscript, which they described as having been written on foolscap paper (pp. 90–91). From this, Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick conclude, based on the testimony of Miller and McKee, that ‘Manuscript Found’ and ‘Manuscript Story’ cannot have been identical but must have been different documents since one (the supposed ‘Manuscript Found’) was written on foolscap and the other (the extant ‘Manuscript Story’) was not (p. 92). They note that the paper for ‘Manuscript Story’ measures approximately 7 3/4 x 6 inches for the first twelve pages and 8 x 6 3/8 inches for the remaining leaves (p. 455 n. 38). ‘This suggests Spalding’s pages were created by cutting a full-sized sheet both vertically and horizontally into four sections, one sheet of 16 x 12 3/4 making four sheets of 8 x 6 3/8’ (p.456 n.38). Unfortunately for this theory, though, the term foolscap in the nineteenth century had a much broader meaning than it did originally. Foolscap paper originally referred to a watermark showing a fool’s cap, but by the 1700s this term was universally used to refer to a paper size. Published accounts (given in the Oxford English Dictionary under fool’s-cap) indicate that foolscap paper varied from 12 to 13.5 inches in width and from 15 to 17 inches in length (that is, from 30 to 34 cm in width and 38 to 43 cm in length).” [77] This would be consistent with the above description of the pages for ‘Manuscript Story,’ indicating that Miller and McKee were merely describing the known Spalding manuscript and not a hypothetical second document.”*

Redick McKee and Joseph Miller, Sr. of Amity, PA, befriended the Spaldings when they

had lived in that town between 1814-16, and later recorded statements providing many details about Solomon, his family, and his manuscript. What is important here is the fact that both individuals recalled a certain specific detail about Spalding's *Manuscript Found* which seems to have escaped prior notice.

According to Miller: "...When Mr. Spalding lived in Amity, Pa., I was well acquainted with him.... He had in his possession some papers which he said he had written. He used to read select portions of these papers to amuse us of evenings. These papers were detached sheets of foolscap. He said he wrote the papers as a novel. He called it the *Manuscript Found*, or *The Lost Manuscript Found*. He said he wrote it to pass away the time when he was unwell; and after it was written he thought he would publish it as a novel, as a means to support his family." (Washington (PA) Reporter, April 8, 1869; Creigh, [1870], 89-93) And, "...Mr. S. was poor but honest. I endorsed for him twice to borrow money. His house was a place of common resort especially in the evening. I was presenting my trade as a carpenter, in the village and frequented his house. Mr. S. seemed to take delight in reading from his manuscript written on foolscap for the entertainment of his frequent visitors, heard him read most if not all of it, and had frequent conversations with him about it." (Pittsburgh Telegraph, Feb. 6, 1879.)

According to Redick McKee: "One day when I called he [Spalding] was writing upon foolscap paper, taken from some old account book. My curiosity was excited, and I said to him, that if he was writing letters I could furnish him with more suitable paper. He replied that he was not writing letters, but... [a] story he called *The Manuscript Found*. It purported to give a history of the ten tribes, their disputes and dissensions... etc." (McKee to Deming, Jan. 25, 1886.)

These memories constitute an extremely important detail because the term "*foolscap*," as used at the time, applied to a special kind of paper with particularly distinguishing and readily identifiable characteristics, especially with respect to size. (Unfortunately *The Spalding Enigma* went to press before we were able to develop this argument more fully in its text, hence the treatment at-length which follows.)

Note that both Miller and McKee clearly say that they witnessed Spalding writing *Manuscript Found* on foolscap paper. Miller at one point elaborates by specifying "*detached sheets of foolscap*," indicating sheets torn from some bound volume, which McKee identifies in his statement as "*an old account book*." Roper, in citing *Oxford English Dictionary*, correctly states that "*by the 1700s this term was universally used to refer to a paper size*" but conveniently omits the fact that the paper-size referred to in the "*published accounts*" he speaks of (as quoted in *Oxford*) all clearly refer to sheets of paper measuring between 12"x16" and 13½"x17," and that smaller-sized pages created by folding full-sized sheets were known as "*folio*" (folded to half-size), "*quarto*" (quarter-size), and "*octavo*" (eighth-size). Had Miller and McKee been referring to Spalding's *Manuscript Story*, as Mr. Roper asserts, one would expect at least one of them to have said "*written on quarto*," which would have been the term then in common use for the smaller-sized sheets found in the Spalding manuscript now at Oberlin. Since Mr. Roper seems happy to accept *Oxford* as the final authority on this matter, and having now

exposed his error of omission (or is it intellectual prevarication again?), this should effectively quiet his objection.

Folio is folded once down the middle, hence making two leaves (four sides) of about 12"x8" (height over width) each. Quarto is folded twice, making four leaves (eight sides) of about 8"x6" each, which compares favorably with the size of the pages in the Oberlin manuscript. Octavo is folded yet again, making eight leaves (16 sides) of about 6"x4" (pocket size). The Latin refers to the number of leaves, not the number of folds or the total of sides. Quarto=4; octa=8. One encounters these descriptive terms *over and over again* in the literature of the early 19th century, and it is clear the people of that time visualized paper-sizes in such terms. In other words, if one said simply "*foolscap*," the hearer would visualize a full-sized sheet. If something smaller was intended, the appropriate term was employed. Technically, the correct designation would be "*foolscap quarto*" (etc.), but more often than not this was shortened to the size-descriptor leaving the term "*foolscap*," when used alone, to refer only to the full-sized sheet. Phrases like "*a letter written in quarto*," or "*published in octavo*," or "*document in folio*" were de-rigueur at the time. These terms died out in the late 19th century as paper became available in pre-cut, standardized sizes bound in tablets, notebooks, etc. and sold as letter-paper.

The final word here is that since Miller and McKee both said "*sheets of foolscap*," it is difficult to imagine that they really meant "*quarto*."

Because we have referred to this matter as our strongest piece of evidence that Spalding must have written more than one manuscript, we recognize our obligation to illustrate the point at length. Here, therefore, are four different examples. (For those skeptics who might wish additional depth on this matter, fifteen more are provided in Appendix I.) Perhaps the most illustrative of these is Oberlin College President James H. Fairchild's own description of the holograph known as *Manuscript Story*:

(1) Extract from James H. Fairchild's 1885 letter describing the discovery of the Spalding manuscript now at Oberlin College:

*"...Mr. L. L. Rice, of Honolulu... [was] formerly 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 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...."*

(2) Joseph Smith, History of the Church, II:167n.

*“The Evening and Morning Star as first published was a quarto, but the Messenger and Advocate was to be published in octavo form for greater convenience in binding and preserving. It was also announced that the two volumes of the Star would be reprinted in octavo form; which, by the way, was done.”*

(3) Brigham Young, History of the Church, VII:558.

*“CHURCH PUBLICATIONS FOR THE PERIOD*

*“During the year 1845 there was published the Times and Seasons, fortnightly, octavo, edited by John Taylor, Nauvoo, Illinois.*

*“The Nauvoo Neighbor, weekly, folio, edited by John Taylor, Nauvoo, Illinois.*

*“The Millennial Star, fortnightly, octavo, edited by Wilford Woodruff and Thomas Ward, Liverpool.*

*“The Prophet, weekly, folio, edited by Samuel Brannan, New York, which ended May 24th and was succeeded by*

*“The New York Messenger, July 25th, quarto, edited by Parley P. and Orson Pratt.”*

(4) “Wilford Woodruff’s Journal,” III (1849): 478 & 484.

*p.478: “[August] 22d I wrot [sic] A full letter of foolscap to Elder Allexander [sic] Badlam....”*

*p.484: “[September] 28th I wrote A foolscap sheet full to John Benbow....”*

To summarize the situation:

Roper argues that by 1812 “*foolscap*” was a general term for paper, like “*Clorox*” is for bleach today. In this he is correct. Paper did not have to bear the cap and bells watermark to be called “*foolscap*.” However, at the time, the word “*foolscap*” meant *only* a full-sized sheet measuring about 16”x12”. Before about 1880, there were several words in common use which meant “*paper*” in the sense we use that word today. As Oberlin College president J.H. Fairchild correctly stated in his 1885 letter (above), the leaves, or pages, upon which *Manuscript Story* is written, are all cut to QUARTO size, which is to say about 8”x6”.

If Miller and McKee had seen Spalding writing *Manuscript Story*, they would have naturally chosen to describe the paper he was using as “*sheets of quarto*,” or alternatively, “*quarto-sheets of foolscap*,” not just “*sheets of foolscap*.” When Miller said Spalding was writing on “*detached sheets of foolscap*,” he meant full-sized pages which had originally been bound into a book or ledger. McKee clarifies and says this paper had come from an old account book. Account books and ledgers in those days were commonly foolscap-size (16”x12”) pages. We have browsed though quite a lot of these volumes during the course of our research. The account books of the Denny & O’Hara firm of Pittsburgh, for example, were of this size. Moreover, due to the cost of printing lined pages, these pages were commonly bound blank making it necessary to hand-rule

each page before use—a process which must have driven the clerks to distraction, but kept the cost of the ledgers down. Spalding had no doubt obtained some old discarded account books and torn the unused pages out of them to use as writing paper. Perhaps the Pattersons specified that manuscripts must be submitted in foolscap size, who knows.

The fact that different words were used to designate different sizes of paper provides strong support for our argument that Solomon Spalding must have written two different manuscripts, one called *Manuscript Story* on quarto paper, and another, which Miller and McKee said was called *Manuscript Found*, and which they described as having been written on full-sized foolscap sheets torn from some old ledger.

All of the above is supported by the entry for “*foolscap*” in the *Oxford* dictionary. Roper cites this entry, but either mistakenly interprets it or purposely misrepresents it. He is correct that “*foolscap*” meant “*paper*,” but he neglects to mention that the term also had to do with the *size* of the paper. This is where his argument founders. *Manuscript Story* at Oberlin is not on foolscap sheets, it is on quarto sheets; therefore it cannot be the same manuscript which Miller and McKee witnessed Spalding writing at Amity. If Mr. Roper chooses to contend that Miller and McKee intended otherwise, the burden now rests with him to prove it.

#### **XV. Oliver Cowdery, The Elusive Printer:**

“On reading the name of Oliver COWDERY... whatever faith we might have been inspired with... was banished, for we had known Cowdery some seven or eight years ago [i.e. 1822-23], when he was a dabbler in the art of Printing, and principally occupied in writing and printing pamphlets, with which, as a pedestrian pedlar, he visited the towns and villages of western N. York, and Canada.” John Ransom St. John, 1830.

According to Roper,

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

First of all, Benjamin Franklin Cowdery was not Oliver’s uncle, he was Oliver’s first-cousin once-removed; which is to say that Franklin’s father and Oliver’s grandfather were brothers.

As to credible, first-hand testimony that Oliver Cowdery was involved in printing prior to 1829, and that he had obtained his experience in western New York, we need only look to

the contemporary statements of not one, but *three*, of the prominent newspaper editors who had personal knowledge of that experience. Although two of these statements were published in *The Spalding Enigma*, Mr. Roper attempts to dismiss them on the grounds that they lack “*supporting evidence.*” Obviously what he means is that, prior to the discovery of these two statements, there was *no evidence* that Oliver was involved in printing before December of 1829. Now, forced to acknowledge the existence of this important material, he is reduced to arguing that “*there is no supporting evidence*” for it. As to the third recently discovered editorial comment, we offer it below, fully expecting that Mr. Roper will next try to argue that there is no supporting evidence for the supporting evidence.

The earliest of these three statements comes from John Ransom St. John who made the following editorial comments about Cowdery in an article which he published in the November 26, 1830 edition of his *Cleveland [sic] Herald*:

*“The Golden Bible. -- Yes, reader strange as it may appear, there is a new Bible just published, entitled The Book of Mormon, and better known to some as the Golden Bible.... This Bible is closed by two certificates commending the work; to the first is attached the name of Oliver Cowdery and two other persons, and to the last are 8 names, among which are those of the father and two brothers of the reputed author. On reading the name of Oliver COWDERY, in support of the divine authenticity of the work, whatever faith we might have been inspired with on reading the certificate, was banished, for we had known Cowdery some seven or eight years ago [i.e. 1822-23], when he was a dabbler in the art of Printing, and principally occupied in writing and printing pamphlets, with which, as a pedestrian pedlar, he visited the towns and villages of western N. York, and Canada....”*

John R. St. John was raised in Buffalo, NY, and almost certainly served his apprenticeship in the pioneer Canandaigua, NY printing establishment of James D. Bemis, who was a cousin of one of St. John’s brothers-in-law. Needless to say, the Bemis print shop at Canandaigua was within walking distance of the Smith farm at Manchester, and the fact that St. John readily recalled having known Cowdery during this period and had such a low impression of him is surely significant.

St. John’s testimony is corroborated by Orsamus Turner, one of the most prominent and widely respected editors and historians of western New York. Turner, whose writings make it clear that he had known both Oliver Cowdery and the Smiths since 1822, published these words in the May 31, 1831 issue of his *Lockport Balance*:

*“[T]he founder of Mormonism is Jo. Smith, an ignorant and nearly unlettered man, living near the village of Palmyra, Wayne county; the second, an itinerant pamphlet pedlar, and occasionally a journeyman printer, named Oliver Cowdry; the third, Martin Harris, a respectable farmer at Palmyra....”*

In addition, Turner had this to say in his *Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York*, (Buffalo: G.H. Derby, Inc., 1849), 658:

*“In 1823... [Albion, NY] had sufficiently advanced to indicate the necessity of a press and newspaper, and Oliver Cowdery, (who has been the pioneer printer in at least a half dozen localities,) took a part of the old battered ‘small pica’ that had been used in printing the Lockport Observatory, and adding it to indifferent materials from other sources, commenced the publication of the Newport Patriot.”*

Although the description of pioneer printer in many locations may, at first glance, seem more applicable to Oliver’s cousin Franklin, it could just as easily represent Turner’s later perception of Oliver in light of his many printing enterprises both among the Mormons at Kirtland, in Missouri, and subsequently at Tiffin, Ohio, and Walworth County, Wisconsin. Moreover, the argument that Turner may have mistakenly confused Oliver with Franklin can be dismissed because Turner clearly knew both individuals well and was certainly aware of the difference between them. Therefore, if he indeed did write “*Oliver*” when he meant “*Franklin*,” it can only have been because he closely associated both names with the beginnings of the *Newport Patriot* enterprise at Albion. Further evidence that Turner must have known what he was talking about can be found in the fact that, as owner of the *Lockport Observatory*, he would have been the very person who provided Oliver with the “old battered ‘small pica’” type referred to. (Souvenir History of Niagara County New York, [1902],15.)

Although Roper (in his n.302 & n.304) cites Milton W. Hamilton’s 1936 volume, *The Country Printer: New York State, 1785–1830* as his authority for claiming that the *Newport Patriot* was started in 1824, and then argues that Turner’s 1849 recollection that the undertaking began in 1823 “*seems to have been off by a year,*” Turner’s account is in fact correct. According to Franklin Cowdery’s autobiography (“Forty Years a Typo,” Genesee Olio, 13 February 1847, 41-2; 2 October 1847, 249), the prospectus for the *Newport Patriot* was printed in the fall of 1823 and he moved to that town in December of that year. Due to difficulties in obtaining type and equipment however, the first issue of the *Patriot* wasn’t published until February 9, 1824. (See also Frederick Follett, History of the Press in Western New York From the Beginning to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century, [Batavia: 1847], pp.36-37, which says: “*In 1823, Franklin Cowdery commenced the publication, at Newport, (now Albion,) of the ‘Newport Patriot.’ He continued it for nearly two years.*”)

Franklin’s one full-time apprentice at Newport, to whom he gave his “*first two years instructions in printing*” during 1824-25, was his young brother-in-law, Daniel Munger, with whom he would later (in 1836) enter into a brief partnership in Constantine, Michigan. A compelling suggestion that he had another part-time or occasional assistant during this period can be found in the wording of a notice to subscribers with overdue accounts that appears in the *Patriot* of November 26, 1824. In this, he reminds them that “*there are, belonging to this concern, four or five mouths to be filled at three stated times*

*every day -- and does it cost nothing to fill them? This is not a beggarly plea, asking charity, but merely a justification to -- you-and-you-and-you -- who, through inattention, may get sued for neglecting to 'pay the printer.'*” Although four of these individuals are easily identified (Franklin, his wife, Amanda, their daughter Sarah, and his acknowledged apprentice and brother-in-law Daniel Munger), all that can be said about the apparently occasional fifth mouth in question is that it could well have been Oliver—Franklin and Amanda’s daughter Lucy not having been born until April 8, 1825. (Mehling, Cowdery Genealogy, 194)

In *The Spalding Enigma*, we maintain that Franklin Cowdery agreed to start publication of a new paper at Newport only if his then assistant, Oliver, could come up with the necessary press and type with which the operation could be begun. That is why Orsamus Turner associates him with the beginning of the operation. It might also be worth mentioning that, in 1824, two of Oliver’s first cousins, Obadiah and William Fuller, purchased farms just six miles north of Newport.

As for Turner’s own pedigree, it can be established that he was apprenticed in Palmyra in 1818, that he was still there in 1820 when he wrote a patriotic article, that he was receiving mail there in the summer of 1821, that he first knew the Smiths in 1819-20, that he was in Palmyra prior to going to Lockport in late August of 1822, that he knew Oliver Cowdery during this period, and that he boldly asserts Cowdery and the Smiths were closely associated. Furthermore, Turner clearly associates Oliver with both Alvin and Mother Smith during this time, and dismisses the elder Smith (Joseph, Sr.) as little more than a hapless tool who did his wife’s bidding. Added to this, Turner’s first-hand knowledge of events after August of 1822 can be attributed to his regular contact with Franklin and Oliver Cowdery at Lockport throughout 1823, and occasional contact thereafter.

Another thing which tends to verify the accuracy of Turner’s recollections concerning Oliver and the Smiths is that prior to the publication of Turner’s *History of the Phelps and Gorham Purchases of Western New York* in 1852, the *Rochester Daily American* excerpted his section on “Mormonism” and ran it as part of the publicity surrounding the forthcoming work. The resulting news article, entitled “*Origin of the Mormon Imposture*” and prefaced by an editorial comment that the facts therein were derived from “*the author’s personal knowledge*,” was subsequently copied by a number of other newspapers and at least one important weekly magazine, as was common practice at the time. (Rochester Daily American, clipping not dated, but c. July, 1851; Littell’s Living Age [Boston], XXX, 380, [30 August 1851], pp.429-31.) The all-important point to be made here is that at the very time this article was printed, Benjamin Franklin Cowdery himself was associate editor and printer of the *Rochester Daily American*. (Rochester, NY, City Directory for 1851-52, which lists “*Cowdery, Franklin, Editor, printer, American office, home 14 1/2 Main.*”) Since there is ample evidence to indicate that Orsamus Turner and Franklin Cowdery were long-time friends, surely if what Turner had to say about Oliver was erroneous or exaggerated in any way, Franklin could have sought and been accorded the opportunity to correct the text prior to publication. This provides strong reason to presume that what Turner had to say about Oliver Cowdery and the Smith family was entirely accurate as far as Franklin Cowdery was concerned.

In addition, it is important to notice that while J.R. St. John describes the Oliver he knew in 1822-23 as a mere dabbler in printing, Turner, writing in 1831, refers to him as a journeyman. Clearly Oliver did not have such training in the art of printing when he first arrived at Palmyra in 1822 because he was only a fifteen year-old schoolboy from Vermont. As he clearly cannot have received such training during his admitted association with the Smiths from 1828-30, his experience could only have been acquired during the six years between 1822 and 1828. Furthermore, it must have been reasonably intensive because journeyman is hardly the sort of characterization a proud member of the profession who had come up through the ranks himself would bestow lightly upon someone who did not deserve it.

The third bit of evidence that Oliver had been associated with the printer's trade before he became involved with Mormonism, is this brief, but telling remark from the editor of the Springfield *Illinois Journal* which appeared in the issue for June 1, 1848:

*“OLIVER COWDERY, who forsook the type and took to Mormonism in New York—there testified to the genuineness of Joe Smith’s golden plates—has abandoned Mormonism, and identified himself with Locofocoism\* and is now a candidate for office in Wisconsin.”*

\*The Locofocos were a radical wing of the Democratic Party organized in New York in 1835. Oliver’s candidacy was not successful.

The editor of the *Illinois Journal* at the time was Simeon Francis (1796-1872). Prior to his moving westward about 1829, possibly a result of his having been physically attacked by anti-Masons in 1827 during the height of the William Morgan excitement, Simeon Francis had filled the editorial chair of the weekly *Buffalo [NY] Emporium* between 1824-26, and then, from 1826-28, of its successor, the semi-weekly *Buffalo Emporium & Commercial Advertiser*. By all appearances, Mr. Francis made his extemporaneous comment out of personal knowledge, and was prompted to do so after seeing some notice in a competing newspaper about Oliver Cowdery’s running for public office in Wisconsin, where he (Oliver) was then serving as editor of the *Walworth Democrat*. (Frederick Follett, History of the Press in Western New York, [1847], 23; Milton Hamilton, The Country Printer: New York State, 1785-1830, [Port Washington, NY: I.J. Friedman, 1936], 193, 273; 1830 U.S. Census for St. Louis, MO.) How else to explain why the editor of a Springfield, Illinois newspaper would trouble to print a personal observation like this about someone running for local office more than 200 miles away in another state?

Thus, it would seem that Mr. Francis, along with David C. Miller, Orsamus Turner, and Oliver’s cousin, B. F. Cowdery, was one of the fraternity of pre-Morgan-Affair Masonic editors in the far western counties of New York. When Francis says that Oliver Cowdery “forsook the type and took to Mormonism,” he was evidently speaking of a period before the actual founding of the Church of Christ on April 6, 1830. In fact, Francis makes the transition sound rather abrupt—as though Oliver had been working in a print shop one day, and was working for Joe Smith the next. All of this is reminiscent of Masonic

historian Robert Morris' claim that William Morgan became a half-way convert to Smith's visionary activities *before* Mormonism actually was made public.

In the 1820s, "*journeyman printer*" was not just a skill, it was a credential. No "*mere mortal*" picked up a type-stick and began to set type, any more than a non-union teamster drives a Coors beer shipment cross-country in the present day. Cowdery must first have been an apprentice before he could be a journeyman—and he must have first been a journeyman before he could be a printer. No wonder he wrote to his cousin Joseph Smith on December 28, 1829, "[I]t may look rather strange to you to find that I have so soon become a printer." (Joseph Smith Collection, box 2, folder 1, LDS Archives) The expression seems to reflect a modest boast on Oliver's part that he had found some acceptance at Grandin's firm and that they had generously accorded him the privilege of setting a few sticks of type from time to time. Perhaps Oliver H. P. Cowdery's "*lewis*" Masonic membership was enough of a "*credential*" with Freemason Grandin to allow Oliver the journeyman to act for a few minutes as a "*printer*." Or maybe Oliver carried a journeyman's certificate, bearing his cousin Franklin's signature, in his back pocket. Who knows? The telling factor here would seem to be Oliver's use of the phrase "*so soon become a printer*." Why "*so soon*"? Why not merely say, "*It may look rather strange to you to find that I have become a printer*"? His use of the phrase "*so soon*" seems to imply that, to him, becoming a printer was something which did not happen "*soon*" in the printing profession, but rather constituted a distinction which took a considerable amount of time to achieve. Such a perception would be expected of one who was already a journeyman in the profession. On the other hand, if Oliver was a stranger to printers and printing, it does not seem likely he would have included any consideration of a time factor in his phraseology, and is thus more likely to have composed his thought in its simplest form, which would have been "*It may look rather strange to you to find that I have become a printer*."

In 1879, John H. Gilbert, a typesetter (or "*typo*") in Grandin's office when *The Book of Mormon* was being printed, confirmed in a letter to James T. Cobb that although Oliver was not formally employed as a compositor or printer by the Grandin firm, "*He was a frequent visitor to the office, and did several times take up a 'stick' and set a part of a page -- He may have set 10 or 12 pages, all told -- He also looked over the manuscript a few times when proof was being read.*" (Gilbert to Cobb, February 10, 1879, New York Public Library Collection)

In any case, most of the above evidence, and considerably more, is discussed at length in *The Spalding Enigma* (pp.237ff), and since Roper is surely aware of it, perhaps what he meant to say was that "*there is no supporting evidence for the claim that Oliver was involved in printing before December 1829*" that he cares to acknowledge.

Since Cowdery's preeminent position in Mormon printing can be traced in existing records to the very earliest days of the Kirtland community, it follows that he must have already been well versed in that trade before going there in 1831. Yet the events of Cowdery's "*Mormon years*" in New York from 1829-31 are reasonably well known, and because they do not include his having been employed in any print shops, whatever

experience he had in that trade can only have been obtained before 1828. Needless to say, this squares with John R. St. John's, and Orsamus Turner's, and Simeon Francis' aforementioned characterizations of him.

Will Mr. Roper now argue that there is “*no supporting evidence*” for the *supporting evidence*, we wonder? Or will he complain that editor Francis' brief comment is not as specific as he would like? Is not Mr. Francis' statement that Oliver Cowdery “*forsook [sic] the type [i.e. printing]—and took to Mormonism in New York,*” specific enough to demonstrate what we have argued all along—that Oliver was involved in the printing trade in western New York before he became a Mormon? We think it is.

Roper, however, remains unconvinced. “*It is true,*” he writes, “*that, during the Kirtland period and after his excommunication in 1838, Oliver engaged in a few printing ventures, but there is no support for this kind of activity before 1829.*”

In order to sustain such a statement, one must ignore the virtually contemporary testimony of St. John (1830), and Turner (1831, 1849), and that of Francis (1848), which we have already given. In addition, one must also ignore Orsamus Turner's personal reminiscence, published in 1852, in which Turner specifically places Oliver Cowdery at the Smith's farm prior to the death of Joseph's elder brother Alvin, an event which occurred on November 19, 1823 (Turner, History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase and Morris' Reserve [Rochester, N. Y.: William Alling, 1852], 213). And finally, one must ignore the 1869 recollection of Wells, Vermont historian Robert Parks, who stated that Oliver “*attended school in the District where we reside in 1821 and 1822*” and that “[*h*]e then went to Palmyra.” Rather than accept this straightforward recollection at face-value, Roper seeks to diminish its import by arguing that “*there is no reason to interpret Parks's statement so narrowly,*” and that “*then*” could mean “*anything between 1823 and 1829.*” Yet Robert Parks was surely sufficiently educated and well-enough versed in the English language to have qualified his statement if it needed qualifying. The fact that he did not qualify it strongly suggests he intended it to be interpreted exactly as written. Parks was a school teacher in Wells for many years, and was about the same age as Oliver. Moreover, after the Cowderys had departed for New York, Robert Parks's family moved onto the farm where they had lived. (Hiland Paul and Robert Parks, History of Wells, Vermont [Wells: Wells Historical Society, 1869], 79.)

Seeking to discredit St. John's and Turner's recollection of Oliver Cowdery as an itinerant pamphlet peddler who traveled throughout western New York and Canada, Roper seizes upon what he says is our physical description of Cowdery. According to Roper, it “*seems unlikely*” that someone described as “*weak, not very intelligent, and a poor, consumptive, wheezing “little man” with an often fragile constitution,*’ could have ‘*traveled on foot across the length and breadth of western New York and Canada.*’”

The characterization of Oliver Cowdery as a “*little man*” comes not from us, but from Sidney Rigdon (“*that little man who bro't me the Book of Mormon,*” [Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, 217] ). No one seems to dispute that he was a poor man of small

stature and that he suffered from consumption, which he had probably contracted from his mother. Our description of him as weak was not directed at his physical strength, but rather his inability to resist being manipulated by Smith and others. Our exact words were: “*this poor, consumptive, wheezing ‘little man’ (as Rigdon once described Cowdery), was simply too credulous for his own good as far as the scheming, fanatical Rigdon was concerned, and at the same time too weak to resist the sly manipulations of Joseph Smith’s overpowering personality.*” We have been unable to locate any passage in *The Spalding Enigma* which specifically describes Cowdery as “*not very intelligent.*” Perhaps Mr. Roper has confused *credulous* with *unintelligent*, but if so, he is mistaken.

As to the unlikelihood of Oliver’s having “*traveled on foot across the length and breadth of western New York and Canada,*” unlikely as it may seem, this is the same Oliver Cowdery who also tramped more than 1,000 miles on foot all the way from New York to western Missouri in 1830-31 on a mission to convert the Lamanite Indians as commanded in one of Joseph Smith’s alleged revelations. (Revelation to Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson, given October, 1830 in Smith’s History of the Church, I:118; also in Doctrine & Covenants [1835], 54:1. For confirmation that the journey was accomplished “*on foot,*” see B. H. Roberts, New Witnesses for God, II:285-86.) ]

#### **XVI. Those Missing 116 Pages:**

“Another probability which emerged from our time-line research involves Oliver Cowdery’s involvement with the strange episode of the missing 116 pages during the summer of 1828. Mormons claim he wasn’t there; but we are equally certain that he was.”

In *The Spalding Enigma*, we have gone to considerable effort to reconstruct the proper sequence of events between Oliver Cowdery’s arrival at Palmyra in 1822 and the publication of *The Book of Mormon* in 1830. Something which both interested and surprised us during this painstaking work was the way so many things fit together so well. We had expected many incongruities when actually there were few. However, it was only after we had completed this process, aided by new discoveries along the way, that we were finally able to examine various hypotheses in their proper perspective and thus to draw rational, coherent conclusions. It was through this process that we were able to shed considerable illumination upon Oliver Cowdery’s experiences as a teacher in the Manchester area, not for *one* year, as the Mormons have claimed, but for *two*, and possibly even *three*, if certain belated testimony is credited. (See *The Spalding Enigma*, pp.288-94, and later in this paper.) This same process also enabled us to demonstrate that Smith, Cowdery and Rigdon must have been together in Bainbridge, Chenango county, NY, during the summer of 1830, three months before Mormons claim Rigdon had any association with the other two (ibid. 327-33). A similar detailed reconstruction of the events of Sidney Rigdon’s life between 1822 and 1830, revealed a number of curious gaps in his known whereabouts. A comparison of these gaps with the recollections of various witnesses who claimed to have seen Rigdon at the Smith’s farm in New York before the fall of 1830, produced a remarkable coordination between

Rigdon's apparent absence from Ohio and the various occasions when he was allegedly seen in New York (ibid. Ch.11).

Another probability which emerged from our time-line research involves Oliver Cowdery's involvement with the strange episode of the missing 116 pages during the summer of 1828. Mormons claim he wasn't there; but we are equally certain that he was.

According to Roper:

*"The Book of Mormon text as we have it was essentially dictated after the arrival of Oliver Cowdery in early April 1829. When the translation recommenced after the loss of the 116 pages, Joseph and Oliver continued... the later phase being completed after the 1829 move to the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York.... Readers may also be misled by the... statement [in The Spalding Enigma] that the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon took about two and one-half years."*

The passage from *The Spalding Enigma* which Roper quotes out of context reads as follows: *"Finally the angel's promise was fulfilled on September 22, 1827, and Smith began 'translating' The Book of Mormon. The process of translation and publication took about two and a half years."* The meaning is straight-forward and, since the period from September, 1827 thru March, 1830 is almost exactly two and one-half years, the subject is beyond dispute.

Concerning the matter of the lost 116 pages, Mormons have never satisfactorily explained why, if Joseph's original *"translation"* was indeed *"of God,"* it could not simply be reproduced verbatim. Most, at a loss for any other answer, simply parrot Joseph's own highly suspicious excuse that *"wicked men"* who had gained possession of the original, planned to alter the words so they would not agree with any retranslation. (See *"To the Reader,"* in The Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., iii-iv.) Needless to say, to those of us who are not Mormons, such an explanation gives every appearance of being something Smith must have contrived out of desperation. Some of us detect Cowdery's and Rigdon's hands in it as well. In any case, it is clear that Mrs. Martin Harris' *"theft"* of the first 116 pages of Smith's *"translation,"* and her stubborn refusal to return them, was a matter of serious concern to Smith and his associates, and this was their response to it.

For the sake of discussion, let us presume for a moment that Joseph Smith had been able to produce a second translation of the 116 pages which was identical in every respect to the first, and that the *"wicked men"* who allegedly had the original in their possession then undertook to change some of the words and phrases on the pages they had stolen so they would not agree with the retranslation. The moment these men came forth with their fabrication to challenge Smith's second version, could not any text-alterations or page-substitutions be easily exposed by simply examining the handwriting, the paper, and the ink? Remember, we are dealing with original holographic material here, not typed pages,

the content of which might be easily altered by retyping them on a similar typewriter using similar paper, or by simple means of paste-up and Xerox.

A better explanation, of course, is that Smith had created this part of the “*translation*” by paraphrasing *something else*, hence his need to be concealed behind a curtain when Harris was present. (Mr. Roper will kindly remember that David Whitmer was not yet involved with Smith and Cowdery, and so his testimony that there was no curtain is irrelevant.) Unfortunately, the extemporaneous nature of the first “*translation*,” made the production of a verbatim copy of the original completely impossible due to the natural failings of human, as opposed to Divine, memory. As to the *something else* that Smith had paraphrased to Harris in order to produce the first 116 pages, it is our position that he was reading from Solomon Spalding’s *Manuscript Found*, either from the original manuscript, or more likely, from an edited version which Rigdon and Cowdery had created from the original, and to which they had added considerable Biblical material.

Although all sources agree that the 116-pages incident took place in the late spring (probably early June) of 1828, several months before Oliver Cowdery’s admitted first appearance on the stage of Mormon history, Orsamus Turner positively identifies him as having been one of those involved. “*It was agreed by the Smiths Cowdery and Harris, not to transcribe these again...*,” Turner recalled. (Turner, Phelps and Gorham, 214)

Martin Harris acted as Joseph Smith’s scribe for about two months, from mid-April through mid-June 1828. On June 15, Emma Smith gave birth to a son, Alvin (or Alvah), who was badly deformed and died either at birth or shortly thereafter. Harris obtained the 116 pages shortly before this, and it was only after Emma had sufficiently recovered and was out of danger that Joseph was able to go to Palmyra to discover what had gone wrong. Thus it is possible to date the occurrence.

As for Orsamus Turner’s assertion that Oliver was involved in the 116-page crisis, it is important to note that, between May 1827 and the end of August 1828, Turner must have made a number of extended trips from Lockport to Palmyra via the Erie Canal, and then by stage to Canandaigua. These would have had to do with the fact that Turner had been indicted in connection with the Morgan Affair in May 1827, indicted again in November, and finally tried (with two other defendants) in a spectacular, trial that began on August 20, 1828, and lasted several days. Given his interest in law, it seems likely that Oliver (and possibly his brother Lyman) attended this trial (at which Turner was acquitted), and equally likely that Turner occasionally encountered Oliver in Palmyra during his comings and goings. Once again, there is every reason to accept that Turner speaks from firsthand knowledge, and that he had been personally acquainted with Cowdery since 1822.

Of course, according to the official Mormon version of events, Oliver Cowdery could not possibly have been involved with the 116-page episode because he and Joseph Smith had not yet met. And here we have part of the explanation as to why Oliver and Joseph had to carefully conceal the fact that they had already known each other for many years.

Based upon Lucy Smith's account, (Lucy Mack Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," (1845), LDS Archives, 90) the last day of the 1828-29 school term was probably Friday, March 27. Allowing a few days for preparations, and taking into account Lucy's recollection that the weather was bad, Samuel H. Smith and Oliver Cowdery probably left Manchester on April 1, arriving at the Whitmer farm that same evening. After a cold trip, during which Oliver's feet suffered considerably, they arrived at Harmony. (Phillip R. Legg, Oliver Cowdery, the Elusive Second Elder of the Restoration, (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1989), 13-32; also David Persuitte, Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon, (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland, 1985), 57.)

In Smith's words: "*On the 5th day of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery came to my house, until which time I had never seen him.*" (Smith, History, of the Church, 1:32.) Cowdery wrote: "*Near the time of the setting of the Sun, Sabbath evening, April 5th, 1829, my natural eyes, for the first time beheld this brother. He then resided in Harmony ....*" (Cowdery to Phelps, Messenger and Advocate I:1 (October 1834),14.) However, earlier in this same letter, Oliver recalled: "*Many have been the fatigues and privations which have fallen to my lot to endure, for the gospel's sake, since 1828, with this brother [i.e., Joseph Smith]. Our road has frequently been spread with the 'fowler's snare,... etc.'*" (ibid.) No explanation has ever been offered for how Oliver can have been traveling "*with this brother... for the gospel's sake, since 1828,*" when both claim they didn't meet each other until 1829.

In any case, on April 7, 1829, just two days after their alleged first meeting, Oliver replaced Martin Harris as scribe, thus breathing new life into the nearly moribund translation process. As for Harris, a careful examination of the known facts makes it appear likely that Smith was only "*using*" Harris temporarily in order to keep him (and his money) in the fold, and that it had been the plan all along to replace Harris with Cowdery at some convenient point. Meanwhile, Cowdery was quietly ensconced elsewhere, busily copying out the rest of Spalding's manuscript (with appropriate alterations by both himself and Rigdon to further disguise it) while Smith, with Harris' assistance, worked over the first 116 pages at a much slower rate. This would explain why it took Smith and Harris two months (mid-April to mid-June 1828) to complete only 116 pages, while, after Cowdery's arrival at Harmony a year later, the two managed to finish nearly 600 pages in only 75 days. (Francis W. Kirkham, "The writing of The Book of Mormon," Improvement Era [June 1941]: 341ff.) The "*75 days*" encompassed the period from roughly April 7, 1829, through the first week of July, with interruptions. Legg's assertion that Cowdery had finished copying the printer's manuscript by August 1 is patently absurd in light of Oliver's own comments regarding the matter in a letter written to Joseph from Manchester (apparently from Hyrum Smith's cabin) on November 6, 1829 (Joseph Smith Papers, Kirtland Letter Book 1829-1835, LDS Archives, 6-8):

*"... received Joseph letter bearing date Oct 22d... (\*) ... Hyrum and Martin went out to Fayette last week Martin thinks of coming to the South in the course of two to three weeks.... the printing goes rather slow yet as the type founder has been sick but we expect that the type will be in and Mr. Grandin still think[s] we he will finish printing by the first of*

*february.... PS I have just got to alma commandment to his son in copying the manuscrip.... (\*\*)*

(\*) Joseph's letter to Oliver of October 22 contains a rare and candid admission that should not to be passed over lightly. *"I arrived at home on Sun morn. the 4th [of October] after a prosperous journey... two of our most formidable persecutors are now under censure and are cited to a trial in the church for crimes which if true are worse than all the Gold Book business."* [emphasis added]

(\*\*) "The Commandments of Alma to His Son"(now designated Alma:38-42) begins Chapter XVIII on page 330 of the 588-page 1830 edition, and thus represents a point that is only 56 percent, through the volume. This gives rise to an interesting question: How can it have been possible for Oliver and Joseph to have "translated" (presumably at the ponderous rate of one phrase at a time) the entire 588 pages in only 75 days, when, in the nearly 100 days from August 1<sup>st</sup> to November 6<sup>th</sup>, Oliver had only managed to recopy 56 percent of that total? Moreover, if the original was accomplished in such haste by means of divine intervention, why was the faithful Oliver seemingly abandoned to his own devices when it came to producing the all-important printer's manuscript?

All of this would explain an alleged revelation which Joseph sought and received in March, 1829, *"at the request of Martin Harris,"* wherein the Lord complained that his *"servant Martin"* was demanding to be a witness (to the plates) instead of exercising his faith, and that if this should continue, *"behold, I say unto thee Joseph, when thou hast translated a few more pages thou shalt stop for a season, even until I command thee again; then thou mayest translate again... Stop and stand still until I command thee, and I will provide means whereby thou mayest accomplish the thing which I have commanded thee."* (For the complete text of this revelation, see History of the Church, I:30-31. Confirmation that Harris was making demands for a *"greater witness"* to the plates can be found in the March 24, 1834 statement of Isaac Hale as found in Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, 264-65.) If Joseph was preparing to move Harris out of the way in anticipation of Cowdery's arrival, what better way to lay the ground-work for doing so? To Martin Harris, who had probably never laid eyes on Cowdery up to that moment, his appearance could be made to seem as if it were God's will—providing, of course, that Joseph and Oliver pretended they were meeting for the first time.

One factor frequently overlooked in this highly transitional event is that Cowdery arrived in company with Joseph's younger brother Samuel, who had made the trip specifically to inform Joseph that their father and mother had just been evicted from their farm in Manchester, and had been forced to move in with Hyrum. (Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 60.) The fact that Cowdery had been *"boarding"* with them and was now homeless (Hyrum's place being *"small"*) provides a completely understandable and totally human motivation for him to have gone to his partner Joseph at just such a moment in order to secure shelter for himself and to try to get things moving at a faster pace.

Even more likely, however, is that Joseph Smith knew the eviction was coming all along, and thus could have easily included this circumstance in any plan he made with Cowdery. Indeed, one of the objects of Joseph's intense money-digging activity several years earlier in 1825, was to secure enough capital to pay off the mortgage on his family's

farm, upon which they were delinquent. Unfortunately, the effort failed, and on December 20, 1825, a Quaker named Lemuel Durfee assumed ownership. Mostly in exchange for labor, he generously permitted the Smiths to remain as renters for another three years. (Donna Hill, Joseph Smith, the First Mormon [Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1977], 64, who in turn cites Carter E. Grant, “The Joseph Smith Home,” Era [December 1959]: 978. Note, however, that this account varies slightly with that of Joseph’s brother William, who published his own version of events in Lamoni, Iowa, in 1883. See William Smith on Mormonism [Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Steam Book & Job Office, 1883], 13-14. Although he confirms that his family was served with a “*writ of ejectment*,” his unfortunate instability, probably due to chronic alcoholism, renders him a difficult witness.) The expiration of this time period on December 20, 1828, plus the normally requisite 90 days to obtain a legal eviction, brings us to March 19, 1829, a mere 17 days before Cowdery’s arrival at Harmony. (If we allow for the likelihood that Durfee would not have commenced procedures until after the Christmas holiday, the gap narrows even further.) Given this set of circumstances, it is possible to argue that Smith was anticipating Cowdery’s arrival all along, and that the revelations he allegedly received about Harris in March were part of the plan. As far as Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery themselves were concerned, convincing gullible Martin Harris that this was the first time they had ever laid eyes on each other was an easy ruse.

Unfortunately, in working their little game upon Harris, Smith and Cowdery seem to have painted themselves into a difficult corner by failing to take into account the serious impact such a trick could have upon future efforts to compose a history of the events surrounding the forthcoming of *The Book of Mormon*. In order to conceal this little secret from Harris it would be necessary to conceal it from the rest of the world as well; which meant that all of Oliver’s dealings with the Smiths prior to April 1829 would have to be kept strictly off-the-record as far as any accounts of early Mormonism were concerned. To do otherwise would be tantamount to admitting that Harris had been duped and that it was not God’s will, but Joseph’s chicanery that had brought Oliver to his door to replace Harris as scribe—which in turn meant that God’s subsequent *commandment* to Harris (via Smith) directing him to finish paying off the cost of printing *The Book of Mormon* was also a part of the same scheme, as was a later *revelation* commanding Harris to set a good example by laying out still more cash. (See Doctrine and Covenants [1835], 44:3, and History of the Church, I:74, v.76, which reads: “*And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of God....*” Evidence that Harris continued to be a source of cash for Smith and his church for some time to come can be found in “Revelation Given in Zion, August 1831” which reads: “*It is wisdom in me that my servant Martin Harris should be an example unto the church, in laying his monies before the bishop....*” (Doctrine and Covenants [1835], 18:7; History of the Church, I:191, v.35; and “Revelation Given November, 1831”, Doctrine and Covenants [1835], 26:2-3.)

In any case, Oliver’s arrival at Harmony essentially marks a turning point in Mormon history because the events of his life from that point onward are reasonably well recorded.

## XVII. Divine Inspiration or Translation Trickery?

*“[E]ither Joseph Smith really was ‘translating’ under divine inspiration, as faithful Mormons believe, or he was employing some kind of trickery to deceive those not in on the secret.... As far as we are aware, there is no record of anyone ever having verified that the words spoken by Smith when he was ‘translating’ were actually the same words which ended up in The Book of Mormon. Mormons simply seem to presume that they were.”*

Was The Book of Mormon text translated by divine inspiration, or was some other process perhaps at work? According to Roper:

*“[T]he Book of Mormon text, as we know it today, was—according to those who witnessed its dictation—dictated by Joseph Smith by placing the seer stone in a hat, covering his face or eyes with the hat, and dictating hour after hour without the apparent aid of papers or manuscript of any kind.... It seems to me that this is a key problem for theories of Book of Mormon origins that suggest that Joseph Smith was reading something from notes or a prepared manuscript. In order to support such an explanation, one has to dismiss the firsthand testimony of those who were there as well as evidence in the original manuscript.”*

Roper then quotes David Whitmer, who recalled that he had *“often sat by and saw and heard them translate and write for hours together.”*

Mr. Roper is entirely correct when he describes the circumstances surrounding Smith’s *“translation”* of *The Book of Mormon* as a *“key problem.”* Indeed, the difficulty here is obvious and the lines are clearly drawn—either Joseph Smith really was *“translating”* under divine inspiration, as faithful Mormons believe, or he was employing some kind of trickery to deceive those not in on the secret. From what we know of Smith’s penchant for money-digging and con-artistry as found in the statements of many of those who knew him, as well as in accounts of his 1826 conviction for *“glass-looking”* (i.e. *fortune-telling*), and in several contemporary newspaper articles, it would seem to us that the question of chicanery is the real *“key”* problem here.

This leads us to an important observation. As far as we are aware, there is no record of anyone ever having verified that the words spoken by Smith when he was *“translating”* were actually the same words which ended up in *The Book of Mormon*. Mormons simply seem to presume that they were. But what if *The Book of Mormon* manuscript had already been prepared by Rigdon and Cowdery, and the rest was just for show. Perhaps that famous curtain placed between Smith and Martin Harris during the early *“translation”* process was part of an effort to get everything into the handwriting of Martin Harris, but after he lost the 116 pages, circumstances forced Cowdery to step-in and finish the process. This may explain the rapid production of the rest of the manuscript in only 75 days from the time Cowdery took over as Smith’s scribe as well as Cowdery’s

considerably slower pace in copying out the printer's manuscript. We are aware of the argument offered by some *Book of Mormon* defenders, saying that the orthography of the preserved parts of the "original" or "dictated" manuscript shows numerous evidences of its having been transcribed into Cowdery's handwriting by way of a scribe's listening to and duplicating an oral rendition of the narrative. This may indeed have been the method by which certain sections of that first manuscript were set down in Oliver's hand, but it does not eliminate the possibility that the final manuscript had already been largely prepared by Cowdery, Smith and Rigdon beforehand, and that the "translation" process was only an act staged to impress those who were not in on the secret. In the final analysis, the actual authorship of *The Book of Mormon* does not depend upon any "miraculous" dictation of its final draft—the actual authorship depends upon the events transpiring prior to Oliver's 1829 scribal activities, and only two men knew for certain what *all* those obscure events entailed: Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith.

### **XVIII. How Cowdery Met Whitmer:**

*"Oliver Cowdery, a school teacher, came to Fayette and taught a district school in the Yost district before 1830, and he with David Whitmer and Martin Harris, constituted the three witnesses certifying to the Book of Mormon."*

As to David Whitmer, one question which seems never to have been asked is how Whitmer (1805-88), one of the privileged Three Witnesses to *The Book of Mormon*, first came to meet Oliver Cowdery. Perhaps the presence of Oliver's cousin Benjamin Franklin Cowdery in nearby Geneva is the answer, Franklin having commenced publication of the *Ontario Chronicle* on February 13, 1828. (Genesee Olio [October 2, 1847]: 248; Geneva Gazette & Advertiser, issues of February 6 and 13, 1828.) Franklin Cowdery published the *Chronicle* until "the sixth month of the third year" (i.e., August 1830), and then suspended it. (Olio, 248.) Geneva was within walking distance of the Whitmer farm and it is not out of the question that they were among the *Chronicle's* subscribers. (By David Whitmer's own description, the Whitmer farm was located "at a point mid-way between the northern extremities of Lake Cayuga and Seneca, two miles from Waterloo, seven miles from Geneva, and twenty-seven miles from Palmyra." ("Interview with David Whitmer," Kansas City Journal, 5 June 1881.) All that can be said for sure is that Whitmer and Cowdery must have met before early autumn, because by then they already knew each other well enough for Whitmer to be sojourning with his friend Oliver during a business trip to Palmyra. As Whitmer later explained:

*"I first heard of what is now termed Mormonism in the year 1828. I made a business trip to Palmyra, New York, and while there stopped with one Oliver Cowdery. A great many people in the neighborhood were talking about the finding of certain golden plates by one Joseph Smith, jr., a young man of the neighborhood. Cowdery and I, as well as many others, talked about the matter, but at that time I paid but little attention to it, supposing it to be only the idle gossip of the neighborhood. Cowdery said he was acquainted with the Smith family, and believing there must be some truth in the story of the plates, he*

*intended to investigate the matter.... I had never seen any of the Smith family up to that time, and I began to inquire of the people in regard to them. I learned that one night during the year 1827, Joseph Smith, Jr., had a vision, and an angel of God appeared to him and told him where certain plates were to be found, pointing out the spot to him, and shortly afterward he went to that place and found the plates, which were still in his possession. After thinking the matter over a long time, and talking with Cowdery, who also gave me a history of the finding of the plates, I went home.*

*“After several months Cowdery told me he was going to Harmony, Pennsylvania, whither Joseph Smith had gone with the plates on account of the persecutions of his neighbors, and see him about the matter. He did so, and on his way he stopped at my father’s house and told me that as soon as he found out anything, either truth or untruth, he would let me know. After he got there he became acquainted with Joseph Smith, and shortly after wrote to me telling me that he was convinced that Smith had the records and that he (Smith) had told him that it was the will of heaven that he (Cowdery) should be his scribe to assist in the translation of the plates.” (“Interview with David Whitmer,” Kansas City Journal, 5 June 1881.)*

Whitmer’s choice of words is extremely important here. He says he “*stopped with one Oliver Cowdery*” during a business trip to Palmyra in 1828. The language here is critical because in the parlance of the day, “*to stop with*” meant “*to stay with*,” or, as defined by the scholarly and authoritative *Oxford English Dictionary*, “*to sojourn as a visitor, resident or guest.*” (The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989], XVI:781,36a,36c.) “*Sojourn*” is defined as “*to stay temporarily*” or “*to reside for a time.*” By choosing these words, instead of simply saying “*I met*” or “*I happened to encounter*” or even “*I had a conversation with*,” Whitmer seems to be communicating the fact that he had known Cowdery previously. One hardly “*stops with*” a stranger.

Furthermore, though Whitmer says only that this occurred in 1828, it must have been before the beginning of that year’s school term in late October, because after that point all sources agree that Cowdery was boarding at the Smiths’ home. Cowdery’s telling Whitmer that “*he was acquainted with the Smith family*” becomes ridiculous if in fact he was already living with them. Clearly Oliver was then staying (and probably working) at Palmyra, and Whitmer “*stopped with*” him, which is to say “*stayed with him*” while in that town on business—apparently for more than a single day because the two seem to have had rather extensive conversations about Joseph’s “*golden plates*,” and Whitmer states he thought the matter over for “*a long time*” and spoke to others about it as well before returning home.

Whitmer’s trip to Palmyra must have taken place late in 1828 because he says that several months after this event, Cowdery told him he was planning to go to Harmony, “*whither Joseph Smith had gone with the plates.*” Based upon Lucy Smith’s 1845 account (L.M. Smith, “preliminary manuscript,” 90), Oliver must have told this to

Whitmer early in 1829. If so, then Whitmer's trip to Palmyra must have occurred in the autumn of 1828, just prior to Oliver's acceptance of a teaching position at the Armington school and his arranging to board at the Smith's home, both of which took place shortly before the beginning of the school year that October. Prior to that, Oliver was evidently living in Palmyra.

Moreover, the fact that Whitmer sought additional conversation with Oliver after he had asked around town concerning Smith and his plates suggests an on-going and reasonably close relationship of some kind, thus further implying that the two were already on friendly terms. If so, then the presence of Franklin Cowdery's print shop in Geneva once again suggests how these two could have first met, especially given that Franklin edited the *Chronicle* from February of 1828 through August of 1830.

Certainly from the evidence given above, it seems clear that the Whitmers knew nothing of the Smiths until after David's Palmyra conversation with Oliver in the fall of 1828. Therefore, one might conclude that it was Oliver's careful maneuverings that brought the Whitmers into the fold, rather than anything the Smiths themselves did. And indeed, even though David Whitmer eventually became disillusioned with the Smiths, he and Oliver remained fast friends right up to the time of Oliver's death.

David Whitmer's credulity is poignantly illustrated in a letter written to him by Oliver Cowdery from Kirtland on January 1, 1834 (Huntington Library Collection, San Marino, CA), wherein Oliver laid this bit of recent spiritual intelligence on him: "*Since I came down I have been informed from a proper source that the angel Michael is no less than our father Adam and Gabriel is Noah. I just drop this because I supposed that you would be pleased to know.*"

As for the Whitmer family in general, the Rev. Diedrich Willers, Sr., who knew them personally, penned the following description in 1830:

*"I am acquainted with the Whitmers. During the past nine years, they were followers of the Methodists, Reformers, Presbyterians, Mennonites, and Baptists, and are unstable, spineless men; moreover, they are gullible to the highest degree and even believe in witches."* (D. Michael Quinn, [trans. & ed.], "The First Months of Mormonism: A Contemporary View by Rev. Diedrich Willers," New York History 54 [July 1973]: 317-33. The original was written in German in 1830; month and day not given.)

Although the likely presence of Oliver Cowdery, perhaps as a journeyman printer, at his cousin Franklin's newspaper office in Geneva is one possible explanation for how Oliver and David Whitmer had come to know each other prior to the fall of 1828, the authors have recently discovered another more intriguing piece of information which, although admittedly a late source, seems to offer an even better answer. The following account is from Diedrich Willers, Jr.'s Centennial Historical Sketch of the Town of Fayette, Seneca County, N.Y., (Geneva, NY: Press of W.F. Humphrey, 1899/1900), 51):

*“The Mormon church which has arisen to prominence at the present time, was first organized at the house of Peter Whitmer, a Pennsylvania German farmer (residing upon a farm in the southeast corner of Military Lot No. 13, in Fayette), April 6, 1830....*

*“John Whitmer became the first historian of the Mormon Church. He died at Far West, near Kingston, Caldwell County, Missouri, a few years ago....*

*“Oliver Cowdery, a school teacher, came to Fayette and taught a district school in the Yost district before 1830, and he with David Whitmer and Martin Harris, constituted the three witnesses certifying to the Book of Mormon. (Mr. Lee Yost, now of Lenawee County, Michigan, aged eighty-five years, attended this term of school.)”*

The 1820 U.S. census for Seneca, Fayette/Varick, lists Yosts on pages 86 and 93, and the Peter Whitmer (given as “Whitmore”) family on page 88. Clearly they were all living in close proximity. The 1870 U.S. census for Michigan lists Lee Yost, age 56, married, born NY, living in Ypsilanti, 3rd ward.

Since it is reasonably certain that Oliver Cowdery was teaching at the Stafford school near the Smiths’ farm during the 1826-27 school term (see The Spalding Enigma, p.289ff) and since we know he was teaching at the nearby Armington school during the 1828-29 term, we are left to conclude that Oliver’s teaching experience in the Yost district took place either during 1825-26 or 1827-28. Moreover, since the testimony of Lorenzo Saunders (see following section) would seem to rule-out the latter, we are left with 1825-26, a time when almost nothing is known of Oliver’s activities. School terms in those days ran October through March. If this is where he first met David Whitmer, it explains why they were already well acquainted by the time of David’s visit to Palmyra in the late summer of 1828 when David says he “stopped” with Oliver for several days and first learned about Joseph Smith and the Golden Bible. During these years, Lee Yost (b.1814) would have been between eleven and thirteen years-old, and thus of proper age to have been attending a local school and old enough to have formed and retained a memory of the experience. Moreover, he would have had no visible reason to invent such a fact.

In 1899, while preparing his history of Fayette Township, Willers seems to have sent out a number of letters to people who had been former residents of Fayette, asking them to correspond with him regarding their early recollections of that place. Lee Yost was one of these people, and the information recounted by Willers, above, came from one such letter.

Diedrich Willers Jr. (1833-1908) was secretary of New York State in 1874-75, was deputy secretary of state for eight years, private secretary to Governor Seymore in 1864, member of assembly for Seneca county in 1878 and was supervisor from his town and chairman of the town board in 1865 and 1866. Lee Yost, son of Caspar and Rachel Yost,

was born in Fayette in 1814. At the time of his correspondence with Willers, he was living in Hudson, MI.

### **XIX. Maybe Oliver Wrote it?**

*“All that is necessary to apprise one’s self of the extreme depth and breadth of Oliver Cowdery’s abilities is to peruse the extensive examples of his writings that can be found in the early editions of the LDS Messenger and Advocate, of which he was editor during the mid-1830s.”*

Roper expends considerable effort arguing that neither Joseph Smith nor Solomon Spalding was sufficiently talented to produce a literary work of such magnitude and complexity as *The Book of Mormon*. This leads him to conclude, quite predictably, that it can only have had a divine origin as still claimed by most Latter-day Saints today.

First of all, in spite of a few assertions to the contrary, *The Book of Mormon* is hardly an exemplary work of literature, especially as we find its problematic text in the 1830 edition. Indeed, most non-Mormons who attempt to wade through its more than 500 pages find it turgid, confusing, boring, and generally uninspiring.

With respect to the question of authorship, those who do not accept the book’s self-proclaimed Nephite origin have advanced several different theories. Fawn Brodie, Joseph Smith’s best-known biographer, for example, has asserted that Smith, relying on his obviously vivid imagination, could indeed have produced such a work—an idea which many non-Mormons have since found a comfortable explanation of things. Others are of the opinion that a writer such as Solomon Spalding was sufficiently educated and talented to have created the basic narrative and its unique characters entirely on his own, and that his abilities as a writer should not be predicated upon the obviously poor quality of *Manuscript Story*, which was nothing more than a very rough draft of a tale never intended for publication. Still others hold that Sidney Rigdon, having surreptitiously obtained Spalding’s manuscript, spent several years rewriting it during the 1820s in Pennsylvania and Ohio, and that Smith then merely parroted, paraphrased, or slightly expanded the result to create *The Book of Mormon*.

There is, however, one extremely intriguing possibility which seems to have been largely overlooked up to now—that being whether Smith’s cousin Oliver Cowdery, the shadowy third hand in what we believe to have been the Book of Mormon conspiracy, possessed the talent, interest, and ability to recast either Spalding’s original *Manuscript Found*, or Rigdon’s presumed rewrite of it, into what is now known as *The Book of Mormon*.

In that light, presuming Mr. Roper’s introduction of late evidence when it benefits his cause accords us the same privilege, there is the testimony of Lorenzo Saunders (b. Palmyra, NY, 1811), who stated unequivocally that he personally witnessed Oliver in the process of doing just that.

*“As respecting Oliver Cowdery, he came from Kirtland in the summer of*

1826 and was about there [i.e. the Smith's farm] until fall and took a school in the district where the Smiths lived and the next summer he was missing and I didn't see him until fall and he came back and took our school in the district where we lived and taught about a week and went to the schoolboard and wanted the board to let him off and they did and he went to Smith and went to writing the Book of Mormon and wrote all winter. The Mormons say it wasn't wrote there but I say it was because I was there. I saw Sidney Rigdon in the spring of 1827, about the middle of March. I went to Smiths to eat maple sugar, and I saw five or six men standing in a group and there was one among them better dressed than the rest and I asked Harrison Smith who he was and he said his name was Sidney Rigdon, a friend of Joseph's from Pennsylvania. I saw him in the Fall of 1827 on the road between where I lived and Palmyra, with Joseph. I was with a man by the name of Ingersol. They talked together and when he went on I asked Ingersol who he was and he said it was Rigdon. Then in the summer of 1828 I saw him at Samuel Lawrence's just before harvest. I was cutting corn for Lawrence and went to dinner and he took dinner with us and when dinner was over they went into another room and I didn't see him again till he came to Palmyra to preach. You wanted to know how Smith acted about it. The next morning after he claimed to have got plates he came to our house and said he had got the plates and what a struggle he had in getting home with them. Two men tackled him and he fought and knocked them both down and made his escape and secured the plates and had them safe and secure. He showed his thumb where he bruised it in fighting those men. After [he] went from the house, my mother says 'What a liar Joseph Smith is; he lies every word he says; I know he lies because he looks so guilty; he can't see out of his eyes; how dare [he] tell such a lie as that.' The time he claimed to have taken the plates from the hill was on the 22 day of September, in 1827, and I went on the next Sunday following with five or six other ones and we hunted the side hill by course [i.e. "in a search pattern"] and could not find no place where the ground had been broke. There was a large hole where the money diggers had dug a year or two before, but no fresh dirt. There never was such a hole; there never was any plates taken out of that hill nor any other hill in country, was in Wayne county. It is all a lie. No, sir, I never saw the plates nor no one else. He had an old glass box [i.e. a box used for holding plates or panes of glass] with a tile in it, about 7x8 inches, and that was the gold plates[;] and Martin Harris didn't know a gold plate from a brick at this time. Smith and Rigdon had an intimacy but it was very secret and still and there was a mediator between them and that was Cowdery. The manuscript was stolen by Rigdon and modelled over by him and then handed over to Cowdery and he copied them and Smith sat behind the curtain and handed them out to Cowdery and as fast as Cowdery copied them, they was handed over to Martin Harris and he took them to Egbert Granden [sic], the one who printed them, and Gilbert set the type."

(Letter of Lorenzo Saunders to Thomas Gregg, 28 January 1885, in Charles Shook, True Origin of the Book of Mormon [Cincinnati: 1914], 132-33.)

Aside from placing Smith, Rigdon and Cowdery together well before 1829, this letter is interesting in a number of respects. For example, there are Saunder's assertions that "*Smith and Rigdon had an intimacy but it was very secret,*" that "*there was a mediator between them and that was Cowdery,*" and that the "*manuscript was stolen by Rigdon and modelled over by him and then handed over to Cowdery.*" Then there is his unique mention of Cowdery having come "*from Kirtland in the summer of 1826.*" Up to the publication of *The Spalding Enigma*, everyone had presumed this to be a serious flaw because there would have been no reason for Cowdery to have been in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1826, that town not being associated with Mormon activity until 1831. As it turns out, however, up until about 1835, there were *three* places in Ohio called Kirtland, the first lesser-known of which was located in Trumbull county within walking distance of several farms which were owned by cousins of Oliver Cowdery, and within less than a day's travel from the farm owned by Oliver's brother Erastus just north of Youngstown, which was then also in Trumbull county. (See The Spalding Enigma, 288-291; and "Henshaw's Map of Trumbull County Ohio," drawn c.1830.) The other lesser known "Kirtland, Ohio," was a hamlet or tract of land in Auburn township, Geauga county, adjacent to Sidney Rigdon's 1826-27 residence in neighboring Bainbridge township. This last Kirtland may be of special interest because its environs were largely settled by pioneers from the region surrounding Palmyra, New York, among whom were the Stafford family, whom Richard L. Bushman identifies as money-diggers. This is the same Stafford family that Joseph Smith's early companion Orrin P. Rockwell married into. Orrin is known to have visited his sister in Auburn township after Sidney Rigdon had moved away from Ohio, but there is reason to suspect that he and his friend may have visited the Auburn "Kirtland" as early as 1825-26, when Sidney Rigdon was living only six miles to the west of the Stafford family's homestead. In fact, one early Auburn resident placed Joseph Smith in the company of Sidney Rigdon, in that same very small patch of frontier wilderness, during the winter of 1825-26. (More of this in an upcoming paper which is still in process.)

All that is necessary to apprise one's self of the prodigious depth and breadth of Oliver Cowdery's literary abilities is to peruse the extensive examples of his writings that can be found in the early editions of the *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, of which he was editor during the mid-1830s. Moreover, a comparison of some of these with passages from *The Book of Mormon* proves instantly illuminating. Here, for example, are selections of Oliver's writing excerpted from two 1835 issues of the *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, followed by a selection taken from the 1830 edition of *The Book of Mormon*:

(1) Cowdery writing in *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, I:6, 86-87 (Mar. 1835)

*"Who cannot easily discover, that the order of things set forth... from the prophets, has never yet been on the earth, neither indeed can be, until the Lord comes? For it is at that time that Jerusalem is to be built*

*and never to be thrown down, and it is at that time that the earth is to bring forth in her strength, and when the mountains are to drop down new wine, and all nature to rejoice before the Lord; for he comes to judge the earth in righteousness. It is also at that time, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed. And it is at that time, that the tabernacle of David shall be built, and Israel become the praise and glory of the whole earth.*

*“...I noticed the change which was to be wrought upon the beast at that day, or thousand years; but not only the beast but the vegetable kingdom is also to be greatly changed the trees and the vines -- the one is to bring forth their fruit in abundance, the other to load itself to such a degree that the mountains will literally drop down new wine. So that a great change is to be wrought on all the lower creation -- the very earth is to become more fruitful than ever it has been since it was cursed; and the Spirit of God is to be poured out on all flesh, and his power to be exalted in changing all things, so as to make them conduce to the happiness of men in the highest degree their nature is capable of. This is the Millennium, and this only. If the power of God is not exerted on both man and beast, as well as on all other parts of the lower creation, the idea of Millennium is worse than folly. ...the prophets, must be fulfilled.... The fulfillment of these prophecies will make a Millennium, and nothing else will; for these are the things which God has promised to do for the world, and which he has said will take place. -- Whatever power therefore is necessary to change the nature of the lion, the leopard, the bear, the ass, the cockatrice, together with all other animals, which hurt and destroy, is necessary to be exerted to bring about the Millennium, and nothing else will do it. And not only the power necessary to effect this, but also to change the earth so as to make it more fruitful, and the seasons so that the ploughman can overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; for our present seasons will not admit such a thing -- so that a great change must be wrought on all things, miracle or no miracle. If all this can be done without miracle, so be it, and if not, the days of miracles are not past, or else the idea of the Millennium is worse than folly.”*

(2) Cowdery writing in *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, I:8, 116-18 (May, 1835)

*“[B]ehold the dealings of God among men in connection with the series of events relating to the Savior. -- Behold all the spiritual gifts bestowed in the world at one time and another, with all the powers and blessings ever enjoyed at any period of the world among men, while those possessing them were persecuted, reviled, hated, scourged, buffeted, smitten, put to death, chased from place to place, to caves and dens of the earth; being afflicted and tormented, without any clothing but sheep skins and goat skins, until they were wasted and destroyed, and the whole church disappeared; and all the spiritual gifts ceased, and*

*revelations were obtained no longer among men. And they looked until darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people; and until the vision of all had become as the words of a book which was sealed; and the people groped their way in darkness having no light; and party arose after party; sect after sect multiplied until the earth become a scene of confusion; sentiment warring with sentiment, and opinion lashing against opinion; and the true light of heaven was lost. But in the midst of this confusion the prophets beheld the God of heaven setting his hand the second time to recover his people, and to restore to the world what they had lost. Beginning as a grain of mustard planted in the earth; and from this small beginning the work began to roll; the spiritual gifts began to return one after one, until the blind began to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, and all manner of diseases and sicknesses pass away from among the people of God. And the power become so great that the waters were again smitten and the foundations of rivers and seas were discovered; and people went over dry shod, as they did in the day when the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt. The very heavens themselves were shaken, and all things were rebuked by their Creator. The spirit of God began to be poured out as in days of old, until it fell upon all flesh. The lion become peaceable; the leopard and the bear ceased to devour the asp; and the cockatrices lost their venom; & all the spiritual gifts that were ever enjoyed on earth among men at any period of the world returned and was possessed by men again: even all that were numbered among the living. And revelation followed revelation; vision came after vision; men and women became prophets and prophetesses, until the knowledge of God covered the earth as the waters covered the sea. The earth put on a new aspect; the curse was taken away, and it yielded in its strength, and all creation smiled. The trees clapped their hands, while animal and vegetable life united together to praise their Maker, with the mountains, the floods, and the flames. The Savior also come down from heaven and all the saints with him, who received their bodies glorified like his glorious body. The people of God they beheld gathered from all nations, tongues, languages and kindreds under heaven, unto the mountain of the Lord to rejoice before him. And when they beheld all this glory returning to the earth they sang of the latter day glory, and of that which was to come. -- And from these visions came our ideas of a Millennium.”*

(3) Excerpt from *The Book of Mormon*, 1830 edition, Chs.IX-X: 499-502 (Set forth as 3 Nephi, Ch.XXI in current editions)

*“And verily, I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place, that I shall gather in from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion. And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign: for verily, I say unto you, That when these*

*things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles, that they may know concerning this people which are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people which shall be scattered by them; verily, verily, I say unto you, When these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father from them unto you: for it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel; therefore, when these works, and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter, shall come forth from the Gentiles unto your seed, which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity: for thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may shew forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause, that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel; and when these things come to pass, that thy seed shall begin to know these things, it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people which are of the house of Israel. And when that day shall come, it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvellous work among them; and there shall be among them which will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them. But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will shew unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the Devil.”*

Having read and compared the above, is anyone prepared to say that Oliver Cowdery did not possess the necessary literary talent to have written both? Clearly he did, yet up to now, no one has attempted to seriously examine this question. Could Cowdery have been the eminence-grise responsible for having recast a mediocre Spalding manuscript into the present *Book of Mormon*? At the very least, this is clearly a subject worthy of further consideration.

Did Oliver Cowdery arrive in Manchester, New York with a manuscript written by Sidney Rigdon in his peddler’s pack? Did he come from one of the lesser known Kirtlands, following consultations in Ohio with Sidney Rigdon? Was Oliver entrusted with the final revision of the Rigdon-Spalding composition—being charged to work out in his own mind any final changes, and then to seek conformation via his divining rod, as

to whether those alterations were in accord with a divine oversight of an especially pious “*pious fraud?*” If so, then there may have been complexities within complexities in the founding of Mormonism, and no simple one-sentence answer will ever suffice for our attempts to explain to the modern public what went on out of the public eye so many years ago.

While all of this may not be sufficient to prove that Oliver Cowdery was one of those responsible for creating *The Book of Mormon*, it clearly demonstrates that he possessed the necessary talents and religious motivation for doing so, even if Smith and Spalding, and perhaps even Rigdon, may not have.

## **XX. Sidney Rigdon:**

*“The widow’s daughter, Matilda Spalding McKinstry, correctly recalled the different appearances of the two Patterson brothers, and that one had a nice library. Robert Patterson, Jr. agreed that she was describing his uncle Joseph and not his father, Robert, Sr. The fact that Joseph Patterson was more slender and considerably younger than his brother Robert is not something Mrs. McKinstry can be expected to have known or discovered on her own.”*

Since a significant portion of *The Spalding Enigma* is devoted to demonstrating how Sidney Rigdon could have obtained Spalding’s *Manuscript Found*, and how Oliver Cowdery was probably the intermediary responsible for having brought both it and Rigdon to the attention of Joseph Smith, we shall limit our comments here to those necessary for specific rebuttal.

First of all, in making reference to what seems to have been the earliest published account which links Sidney Rigdon to Joseph Smith and *The Book of Mormon*, Mr. Roper writes, “*In what appears to have been a mixture of fact, rumor, and speculation, James Gordon Bennett proposed that a preacher named ‘Henry Rangdon’ may have been the chief conspirator in the Book of Mormon enterprise. ‘Henry Rangdon’ might have been a badly garbled reference to Sidney Rigdon.*” (emphasis added)

Might have been, Mr. Roper? Bennett specifically identifies “*Ringdon*” or “*Rangdon*” as an ex-preacher from “*near Painesville,*” Ohio, on *no less than six different occasions* in his *New York Morning Courier and Enquirer* articles of Aug.31-Sept.1, 1831. There surely can be NO mistake about the intended reference here.

Next, concerning the question of Rigdon’s presence in Pittsburgh prior to 1822, Roper tries to sidestep the issue by arguing that, “*the question was not whether Rigdon had ever lived in the city, but whether he frequented it on a regular basis. But since Rigdon [in an 1839 letter] only denied residence during that time, not visits, there is no evidence of deception.*”

No evidence of deception? Why mince words like “*frequented... on a regular basis,*” and “*resided*”? Let us recall that the Sidney Rigdon writing this letter is the same Sidney

Rigdon who, as a young man, had a self-avowed thirst for reading, and who, according to those who knew him then, borrowed all the books he could get and regarded reading as his greatest pleasure. Yet this same man claims he knew nothing of what went on with respect to the book business in Pittsburgh prior to his having moved there at the close of 1821? Where then did he go to fulfill his insatiable desire for books—a desire which, by the way, his father opposed and which would thus have been better taken up away from home? Given that he grew up in a rural area only two hours by horse from Pittsburgh, a busy town of about 4,000 inhabitants which boasted several booksellers and at least three libraries during the years 1812-16, there can be only one answer: In spite of Mr. Roper's claim that Rigdon might have borrowed books from his neighbors, it seems certain that Sidney Rigdon went to Pittsburgh to get his books—just as we now know he went there to collect his mail during the same years Solomon Spalding was also collecting his mail at the same post office. (See The Spalding Enigma, pp.134-40.)

Rev. Robert Patterson, Sr. (1773-1854) was involved in both book selling and printing in Pittsburgh for nearly forty years under a variety of different ventures. The earliest of these was the partnership of *Patterson & Hopkins* which was formed on June 14, 1810 for the purpose of publishing and marketing books. This was dissolved on October 31, 1812, at which time Robert's younger brother Joseph (1783-1868) joined him in the firm of *R & J Patterson*, a venture which was in turn overtaken by the partnership of *R. Patterson & Lambdin* on January 1, 1818. According to legal records, this enterprise survived until February of 1823, fully thirteen months after Rigdon's move to Pittsburgh and during the very time he was serving as pastor of the First Baptist Church only a short distance away. (The church was at 3rd and Grant; Patterson's shop was three short blocks north on Wood St. between 3rd and 4th.) Indeed, the firm of *R. Patterson & Lambdin* published *The Pittsburgh Almanac for 1822*. In addition, Patterson remained a partner in the *R & J Patterson Steam Paper Mill* until its dissolution in September, 1823, more than a year-and-a-half after Rigdon's move to the city. And finally, following the financial collapse of *Patterson & Lambdin*, Rev. Patterson continued in the business of bookseller for another thirteen years until 1836. How can Rigdon, with his self-confessed passion for books, credibly claim not to have known this? Is it not reasonable to accept that Rigdon did in fact frequent the offices of *R & J Patterson*, publishers and booksellers, during those very crucial years of the Spalding enigma from 1812 to 1816? And in so doing, is it not likely that he would have come to know Mr. Patterson during the very years Solomon Spalding would have been calling on the Pattersons in connection with his project?

Moreover, if, as we assert in *The Spalding Enigma*, the Patterson brother with whom Solomon Spalding had most of his dealings was Joseph and not Robert, then much would be explained.

The widow's daughter, Matilda Spalding McKinstry, correctly recalled the different appearances of the two Patterson brothers, and that one had a nice library (The Spalding Enigma, pp.150-51, 163-64). Robert Patterson, Jr. agreed that she was describing his uncle Joseph and not his father, Robert, Sr. The fact that Joseph Patterson was more slender and considerably younger than his brother Robert is not something Mrs.

McKinstry can be expected to have known or discovered on her own. Also, Joseph was the rich brother, who could afford luxuries like a nice library, even if business was bad.

Roper next points to an editorial comment published by Walter Scott in the July, 1839 issue of his periodical, *The Evangelist*, in which Scott expressed doubt about the claimed connection between Rigdon, the Pattersons, and the Spalding manuscript.

Yet, by the very nature of what he writes, it seems obvious that Scott had no pertinent information he could share. As to Joseph Patterson, Jr. (the “J” of the *R & J Patterson* firm), by the time Walter Scott arrived in Pittsburgh, the only business that Joseph was running was the steam paper mill, and he may have operated that by way of local proxies, while he spent time in Philadelphia, etc.

Scott has no knowledge of Robert Patterson operating a printing office—which is true. The Pattersons were part-time publishers and full-time stationers and it was Robert, not Joseph, who was out in front, managing the bookshop. Engles or others ran the printing end of the business—either on contract or possibly with the Pattersons as silent partners, who never got ink on their hands.

Mrs. Hurlbut said that Robert Patterson, Jr. came to visit her husband in later years and admitted a family relationship with Sidney Rigdon. If such a connection did exist (and it may have via the Spear family), perhaps the older generation did not want it mentioned and that is why the elder Pattersons never undertook to clear up the story, leaving it to Robert, Jr. to try and sort out the pieces many years later. It may well be that “*Mr. Patterson’s testimony*” was not often “*adduced*” because he was not in the habit of offering it.

“*If Walter Scott could live in Pittsburgh for several years and not know whether or not Robert Patterson had a printing office,*” Roper asks, “*why must we assume that Rigdon must have known and hence that he was being dishonest?*” The answer is because the Pattersons were publishers and booksellers, not printers—and because Scott arrived on the scene rather late in the game and would have been viewed as a distasteful apostate, not welcome in the Pattersons’ Presbyterian social circle. Rigdon, on the other hand, had been in Pittsburgh at an earlier date and was clearly on friendly terms with Robert Patterson’s young ward, Jonathan H. Lambdin, who was also clerk for the *R & J Patterson* enterprise—thus Rigdon could have mentioned Joseph, had he wished to. The fact that he mentions neither Joseph Patterson, Silas Engles, nor young Lambdin shows he was holding back information. Had Rigdon really wished to “*clear the air*” in 1839, he could have done a far better job of it. Instead, he leaves all of his Pittsburgh connections unmentioned and points his finger at Rev. Robert Patterson, Sr., (who probably never wanted to talk about these matters).

Roper makes a point of noting that Walter Scott, like Rigdon, suggests that someone should obtain testimony from Robert Patterson, and observes that since Scott seems to have made his suggestion in good faith, it is only fair to conclude that Rigdon did the same. Yet he fails to note that while Rigdon, in his 1839 reply to the widow Spalding’s

statement, says he had only “*a very slight acquaintance*” with Robert Patterson, Walter Scott avers that he personally knew Rigdon “*to be perfectly known to Robert Patterson.*” Clearly one of these two men is not being entirely truthful. If Roper favors Walter Scott on this matter, then in all fairness, we agree, at least on this point.

As to whether Sidney Rigdon could have known Solomon Spalding, Mr. Roper conveniently neglects to mention that for the entire time of Spalding’s residence in Amity, PA (1814-16)—during which time he was known to everyone in town since he operated the local roadhouse—Rigdon’s cousin, George, was living a short distance north of that place on a farm in Buffaloe township, while George’s mother, Mary, along with his younger sister and brother, were occupying a house on Amity’s main street a mere stone’s throw from Spalding’s tavern. Since this family of Rigdons had immigrated to Pennsylvania from Maryland with Sidney’s father, it seems likely Sidney would have visited them once in a while after his own father’s death in 1810—especially since both George’s farm and Mary’s home at Amity lay within twenty miles of Sidney’s home in St. Clair township along the main coach route from Pittsburgh to Waynesburg. And where, in Amity, would Rigdon likely stay, or at least go to refresh himself, while visiting the widowed Mary Rigden? Of course there is no evidence to indicate that Sidney did visit his cousins; but given the circumstances, it does seem likely. At the very least, it would explain Matilda Spalding-Davison’s strange recollection that “*Sidney Rigdon... was connected with the printing office of Mr. Patterson... as Rigdon himself has frequently stated.*” The question here is how Mrs. Davison, as early as 1833, could possibly have known of Sidney Rigdon’s very existence, not to mention anything he might have said—indeed, *frequently* said—regarding his supposed connections with the Pattersons’ publishing establishment.

Next there is the matter of what Sidney Rigdon’s grandson, Walter, had to say about him in an 1888 interview published by J.H. Beadle. In this interview, Walter Rigdon makes it clear that his father and other members of the family knew that *The Book of Mormon* was derived from Spalding’s manuscript, but refused to talk about it while their father was alive. However, rather than consider the possibility that Walter may have been the only member of the Rigdon family who dared to break ranks, Roper merely dismisses his testimony as “*inconsistent.*” Of course it’s inconsistent, but it also demonstrates that not all of the members of Rigdon’s family accepted that old Sidney was innocent, and that’s why it’s important.

Finally, Roper points to our assertion in *The Spalding Enigma* that Rigdon made no significant attempt to respond to the Hurlbut/Howe allegations in print until 1839, and takes issue with our suggestion that perhaps this was because he may have had something to hide. According to Roper, “*although there may not be any printed accounts of such a response, some who lived in Kirtland remembered public rebuttals to claims linking him with the origin of the Book of Mormon.*” He then quotes a recollection which Phineas, Hiel, and Mary D. Bronson recorded in the 1890s:

*“In the spring of 1833 or 1834, at the house of Samuel Baker, near New Portage, Medina county, Ohio, we... did hear Elder Sidney Rigdon, in the presence of a large congregation, say he had been informed that*

*some in the neighborhood had accused him of being the instigator of the Book of Mormon. Standing in the door-way, there being many standing in the door-yard, he, holding up the Book of Mormon, said, 'I testify in the presence of this congregation, and before God and all the Holy Angels up yonder, (pointing towards heaven), before whom I expect to give an account at the judgment day, that I never saw a sentence of the Book of Mormon, I never penned a sentence of the Book of Mormon, I never knew that there was such a book in existence as the Book of Mormon, until it was presented to me by Parley P. Pratt, in the form that it now is.'"*

However, even if this belated recollection is true, it is worthless as evidence of Rigdon's innocence, for surely no one seriously believes that Rigdon, in 1833 or '34, would have dared to face such a crowd and admit that *The Book of Mormon* was a fraud. Of course, had the idea to call Spalding's reworked manuscript "*The Book of Mormon*" not originated with Rigdon, then he might well have felt comfortable in asserting that he had never seen or written any book by that title.

If Rigdon was so truthful and reliable, perhaps he should have been made the LDS President in 1844 instead of that role having been usurped by Brigham Young. When it comes to this delicate matter however, Mr. Roper carefully avoids mentioning the details of why Rigdon was thrown out of the Church by his one-time followers and lieutenants from northern Ohio for being such a religious liar and schemer who willingly crafted false revelations to fool the common members, and fostered secret conspiracies to gain ecclesiastical power.

### **XXI. The Unseeing Eye of Faith:**

*"[S]ince there is considerable reason to doubt Smith's claims about the origin of The Book of Mormon, is there not equal reason to doubt the claims of his so-called witnesses?"*

One can hardly discuss Joseph Smith's claims about the origin of *The Book of Mormon* without also saying something about the men who signed their names to statements saying they had personally witnessed Smith's miraculous plates of gold. What about these eleven loyal witnesses? Clearly this is a sensitive subject as far as faithful Mormons are concerned, because it lies at the heart of their very belief-system. Yet not all of us are blinded by the eye of faith in this matter, and for those of us who aren't, there are some issues here which suggest that not everything is as Mormon-friendly writers would have us believe.

As to the Three Witnesses (Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris and David Whitmer), we have already discussed Cowdery's complicity with Smith in duping Harris, and we have already demonstrated that Cowdery must have known Whitmer well before 1828, and that it was Cowdery who brought him into the Church. What, then, is there about any of these three that would make them impartial, or even credible witnesses to anything Smith

(or rather, Smith and Cowdery) said or did? Should we just take their word for it, as Roper and other faithful Mormons do; or, since there is considerable reason to doubt Smith's claims about the origin of *The Book of Mormon*, is there not equal reason to doubt the claims of his so-called witnesses?

Clearly Smith did not choose these Three Witnesses at random, for all three had already accepted the reality of angels and visions before they had ever heard of *The Book of Mormon*, and all three firmly believed that revelations received in visions and dreams were essential to true faith. In spite of the confident language found in their printed testimony, none of these three ever subsequently admitted to having seen the plates without some form of ambiguity associated with the experience. Indeed, even before they viewed the plates, Joseph Smith claimed to have received a "*revelation*" which informed them, "*It is by your faith that you shall view them,*" and "*ye shall testify that you have seen them, even as my servant Joseph Smith Jr. has seen them, for it is by my power that he has seen them.*" (Doctrine and Covenants 17:2,5). John H. Gilbert, Anthony Metcalf and the Rev. Jesse Townsend, among others, all stated that these three witnesses viewed the plates only with their "*spiritual eyes.*" ("Joe Smith," Detroit Post & Tribune, [3 Dec. 1877]:3; Letter from David Whitmer dated April 2, 1877, in Anthony Metcalf, Ten Years Before the Mast, [Malad, ID: 1888], 73-74; and Letter of Jesse Townsend dated Dec. 24, 1833 in Pomeroy Tucker, The Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism, [NY: Appleton, 1869), 290.] )

Although David Whitmer is on record a number of times concerning his experiences, his statements are unfortunately inconsistent. In an article which appeared in the *Saints Herald* in 1882, for example, Whitmer says "*these [hands] handled the plates, these eyes saw the angel,*" but when Zenon Gurley asked him in an interview "*Did you touch them?*" Whitmer replied, "*We did not touch nor handle the plates.*" (E.E. Dickinson, New Light on Mormonism, [NY: Funk & Wagnells, 1885], 217; Z.H. Gurley, "Questions asked of David Whitmer at his home... Jan. 14, 1885." Manuscript, 1885. LDS Archives.)

Martin Harris, for his part, seems to have caused quite a stir when he publicly told a room full of Saints in Kirtland that the Three Witnesses had seen the plates only in a vision and not with their natural eyes, adding that he personally had only hefted the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or handkerchief over them, but he "*never saw them only [i.e. except] as he saw a city through a mountain.*" According to one shocked witness, he also said that "*the eight witnesses never saw them [the plates] & hesitated to sign that instrument [i.e. the Testimony of the Eight Witnesses as published in The Book of Mormon] for that reason, but were persuaded to do it.*" Then, apparently realizing he had let slip too much, Harris hastened to add that perhaps "*he never should have told that the testimony of the eight was false,*" and, "*if it had not been picked out of [him, he] should have let it passed [sic] as it was.*" He then reaffirmed that he knew *The Book of Mormon* was true, in spite of it all. (Letter of S. Burnett dated April 25, 1838, in Joseph Smith Letter Book 2, LDS Archives.)

The timing of this outburst is particularly interesting in that it coincides with the uproar among the Kirtland Saints created by the scandalous failure of the Kirtland Safety

Society Bank, which caused considerable losses to many people, Mormon and non-Mormon alike. Although it had effectively gone under some months earlier, Joseph Smith's bank finally closed its doors for good in November, 1837. Historian Richard S. van Wagoner summarizes the situation very nicely (Sidney Rigdon, 187):

*“Financial reverses sustained by church members were not the only cause for the anger and victimization many felt. The prophet and his spokesman had said that the bank, established by divine mandate, could not fail. Where now was the guarantee? Between November 1837 and June 1838 approximately 300 Kirtland members, representing perhaps 15 percent of all Mormons, withdrew or were excommunicated from the church. Included were nearly one-third of the church's leading officers, the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, four members of the Quorum of the Twelve, three original presidents and three current presidents of Seventy, as well as Frederick G. Williams, a member of the First Presidency.”*

In short, a lot of people were angry, including Martin Harris, always a temperamental man in any case, and one who liked to gather attention to himself by speaking out in a crowd. Anger often brings truths to the surface which would otherwise remain buried. Did Martin Harris' anger cause him to speak truth in a public moment? At the very least, this sort of thing hardly inspires faith in him as a credible witness to anything.

Then there is the testimony of Renssalaer W. Alderman of Windsor, Ohio, who told A.B. Deming that he had been snowbound with Martin Harris in a Mentor, Ohio hotel in 1852, during which time Harris confided that *“Rigdon had stolen a manuscript from a printing office in Pittsburgh, Pa., which Spalding, who had written it in the early part of the century, had left to be printed, but the printer refused to print it, but Jo [Smith] and Rigdon did, as The Book of Mormon.”* (Deming, Naked Truths, 1:3, col. 1.) After the assassination of Joseph Smith in 1844, Harris drifted away from the mainstream Saints and affiliated with several different schismatic movements, including that of James J. “King” Strang. By the early 1850s, he had become disaffected with Strang as well, and spent the rest of the decade living in near-poverty and drifting from one dissident group to another. If there was any time in his life when a disgruntled Martin Harris might have been inclined to reveal any misgivings he might have had about the origins of *The Book of Mormon*, it would likely have been during these years.

With respect to the Eight Witnesses, let us first notice that four of them were Smiths, three of them were Whitmers, and the remaining one, Hiram Page, was a Whitmer in-law, his wife having been Catherine Whitmer. Once again, this is hardly an impartial group.

As far as these Eight Witnesses go, their written testimony differs markedly from that of the Three Witnesses, for no voice of revelation declared to them that the work was true or called upon them to testify to what they saw, no angel of the Lord laid the plates before them and no power of God showed the plates to them—only Joseph Smith himself. William Smith once said that he, *“did not see them [the plates] uncovered but I handled them and hefted them while [they were] wrapped in a tow frock.... Father and my brother*

*Samuel saw them as I did while in the frock. So did Hyrum and others of the family.*” If nothing else, such statements certainly don’t inspire confidence in these “witnesses” either.

The fact that none of these individuals ever repudiated their testimony tells us only that they sincerely believed that their experience with Smith and the plates was of a spiritual nature—or that Smith and Cowdery had planned their deception well. For an eyewitness description of similar Mormon “*miracles*” and apparitions of glowing angels at Kirtland in 1831-32, and a very revealing explanation of how these deceptions were accomplished, see “How to Make an Angel and Other Miracles: Two Letters of Jesse J. Moss” in *The Spalding Enigma*, Appendix III, pp.389-394. If faithful Mormons at Kirtland could be fooled into believing such experiences as these were real events, why not equally faithful Mormons at Manchester, NY?

All of this is, of course, more than sufficient to call the entire matter into question. The credibility of these *Book of Mormon* witnesses is not nearly so cut-and-dried as Roper would have us believe.

## **XXII. The “Wood Scrape”**

*“Surely something must have inspired certain elderly citizens of Middletown to tell Barnes Frisby during the late 1860s, that William Cowdery, Jr. and Joseph Smith, Sr. were two people whose names had been mentioned locally as having been connected with this strange incident.”*

In the closing lines of his review of *The Spalding Enigma*, Roper, always the erudite Mormon scholar, lets slip what he really thinks of our book. According to him, we have failed “*to engage in serious scholarship on Cowdery.*” By way of example, he points to our very brief discussion of a bizarre episode known as the Wood Scrape, which took place in Middletown, Vermont around 1801-02. Apparently, we demonstrated our lack-of-serious-scholarship when we ventured to mention there was some reason to believe that the fathers of both Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith *might* have been involved in this affair. Roper seems to feel that the case is already closed. “[*T*]here is little historical foundation for attempts to link the Cowderys and the Smiths to the event,” he informs us.

Perhaps the problem here is one of simple human curiosity. Since most historians are educated people who are curious about the past—we are led to wonder why Mr. Roper’s curiosity seems to have escaped him with respect to the Wood Scrape. Surely *something* must have inspired certain elderly citizens of Middletown to tell Barnes Frisby during the late 1860s, that William Cowdery, Jr. and Joseph Smith, Sr. were two people whose names had been mentioned locally as having been connected with this strange incident. The fact that at least one notorious counterfeiter, some colorful religious con-artistry, predictions of the Millennium, and a local riot all figure into the story only makes it more inviting. How can it be that Mr. Roper is not curious about all of this—that he considers the case closed—that Oliver’s and Joseph’s fathers cannot have been part of it? Could it possibly be that he knows something we don’t?

As to serious scholarship, we can only wonder why Roper fails to report our discovery of new information about the Wood Scrape, (an 1855 unpublished manuscript of Laban Clark housed at Drew University, which pre-dates Barnes Frisbee's 1867 account), and why he also fails to note our favorable mention (*The Spalding Enigma*, 494,n.17) of Larry E. Morris' "Oliver Cowdery's Vermont Years" (*BYU Studies* XXXIX:1,106) as being "*a well-reasoned counterpoint from a pro-Mormon point of view.*" Perhaps when sufficient time and effort are devoted to a more thorough investigation of this strange episode in American history, additional evidence will be uncovered which will serve to clarify the situation. Meanwhile, the fact that the fathers of both Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery have been connected with it must seem somewhat disconcerting to those who would prefer more sterling reputations for the fathers of their heroes.

In an Appendix to his work, Roper goes to great length to offer what he considers to be "*a more complete bibliography on Cowdery,*" and in so doing illustrates the very two points we make in *The Spalding Enigma*. First, there are not a lot of writers who have sought to deal with the subject of Oliver Cowdery's life, and up to now, *all* of them have been sympathetic to Mormonism. Indeed, of the *nineteen* works listed by Roper, *thirteen* are by one man, the prominent Mormon historian R.L. Anderson; and the other six are scattered among only four authors, Faulring (2), Morris (2), and Carlson and Welch, one each. And second, none of these works offers much in the way of useful information about Oliver's early life prior to 1828. *The Spalding Enigma* seeks to correct this problem by offering scholars and laypeople alike new thoughts and new information on this subject from a fresh, non-Mormon point of view which is completely unrestrained by the necessity of having to publish only information and conclusions favorable to the Mormon cause. We regret that our work does not measure up to Mr. Roper's standards of scholarship, whatever those standards might be, but we stand by it nonetheless.

### **XXIII. In Conclusion:**

*"[W]e have sought to place on the record an alternative interpretation of the facts which is every bit as credible, and in many cases more so, than that which currently passes as the official history of the LDS church."*

In the closing comment of his review, Roper observes that, "*Whether one accepts the Spalding explanation or some other theory, one still has to explain not only if, but how Joseph Smith or any other candidate could write such a book, a point upon which critics have never agreed and probably never will agree.*" In reply, let us first say that we *have* offered a historically viable explanation for how *The Book of Mormon* came to be written—every bit as historically viable as that offered by the LDS. As to whether "*critics have never agreed and probably never will agree,*" surely Mr. Roper can appreciate that when he makes such a statement, he is at the same time tacitly admitting that the LDS' official response to the Spalding enigma is neither inspiring nor particularly convincing.

Consider the thoughts of Edward H. Ashment:

*“...Unfortunately there is no direct evidence to support the historical claims of the Book of Mormon—nothing archaeological, nothing philological. As a result, those for whom Truth is the product of spiritual witness, not empirical inquiry, resort to developing analogies and parallels to defend the book’s historical claims. That is the apologetic historical methodology.... When challenged, some Mormon apologists do not deal with the evidence adduced. Rather they dismiss it out-of-hand and denounce with ad hominem anyone who arrives at a conclusion unacceptable to them, accusing them of already having made up their minds according to a faith-position; of arriving at false and misperceived conclusions; of being enemies; of being anti-Mormons.”* (“A Record in the Language of My Father: Evidence of Ancient Egyptian and Hebrew in the Book of Mormon,” in Brent Metcalfe, ed., New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, ch.IX: 373-374, and n.54).

It is truly unfortunate that one so erudite as Mr. Roper has allowed himself to fall in with such company.

Perhaps Mr. Roper reveals more of himself than he intends, when he writes, “*The Book of Mormon will always be an enigma for the unbeliever. The Latter-day Saint, of course, already has an explanation that nicely circumvents that puzzle.*” In two short sentences, he admits, first, that *The Book of Mormon* is a “puzzle,” and second, that the only way to solve the puzzle is to be a “believer.” As non-Mormons, and hence, in Mr. Roper’s eyes, as non-believers, we respectfully beg to differ. In our opinion, the *enigma* surrounding the origin of *The Book of Mormon* has been largely exposed, the solution to the *puzzle* is clearer than it ever was, and it is only the *believers*, in their constant efforts to *circumvent the puzzle*, who cannot see which way the preponderance of evidence is pointing. We have nothing to defend, Mr. Roper. ALL of our evidence is on the table. More will no doubt be uncovered as time passes.

It is our belief that an authorship theory of this type will prove predictive—in other words, that the accumulated evidence gathered thus far in its support will help us predict the content of future finds of hitherto unknown evidence. As additional historical testimony, documents, public records, and circumstantial connections are uncovered, we believe that most of the “new” information will dovetail with what we have already compiled. We are thus willing to challenge Dr. Peterson, Mr. Roper, and the people at FARMS to a prediction: We predict that more future evidence will be uncovered, and published, in support of the Spalding-Rigdon explanation (such as a certain 1829 letter from Oliver Cowdery, perhaps), than will be uncovered for a Nephite civilization in ancient America, or examples of Reformed Egyptian on golden (or any other) plates, or seer’s stones set in silver bows and attached to ancient breastplates. If *The Book of Mormon’s* city of Zarahemla is excavated before the pages of *Manuscript Found* turn-up, then of course we will be proven wrong. It is a challenge we are willing to revisit in ten or twenty years, in order to see which theory in the enigma has gained the most ground.

Meanwhile, we have advanced our hypothesis—we have provided a viable alternative explanation for the origin of *The Book of Mormon*, an explanation supported by a considerable volume of historical evidence. Mr. Roper, and his esteemed editor, Dr. Peterson, on the other hand, bring nothing new to the table, but only seek to defend that which cannot be defended except on a belief-through-faith level. We readily admit they could be right. They refuse to acknowledge they could be wrong. For those who have patience, we are confident the truth will eventually prevail.

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## APPENDIX I.

### EXAMPLES OF TERMS COMMONLY USED IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO DESIGNATE THE VARIOUS SIZES OF SHEETS OF PAPER:

(1) Extract from James H. Fairchild’s 1885 letter describing the discovery of the Spalding manuscript now at Oberlin College:

*“...Mr. L. L. Rice, of Honolulu... [was] formerly 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 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....”*

(2) Anti-Masonic Almanac for the year 1829 (Giddins, Rochester, NY), pg.9. An entry entitled “Rate of Postage” goes into some detail about single “sheets” and “pieces” of paper and makes clear distinction between folio, quarto, octavo, etc. A similar article in the 1830 edition adds a few lines about magazines and pamphlets and says that those “containing a half-sheet or less are charged with half the postage for a sheet.” In all cases, the implication is that a “sheet” or “piece” of paper means a full-sized sheet of foolscap. (Paper copy of 1829 article on file along w/transcription of 1830 addition.)

(3) The [LDS] Evening and the Morning Star, II,14: 106.

*“It is announced that Dr. Noah Webster, the lexicographer, is engaged in preparing for publication an edition of the Bible.... yea, with all the euphemisms he could collect from his Quarto dictionary, he could not destroy the sublimity of the scripture faster, than Dr. Dickinson has.”*

(4) Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate, I,7: 112 (April 1835).

*“And if the fact was known, it would be found, that of all the heavenly communications to the ancients, we have no more in comparison than the alphabet to a quarto vocabulary.”* [i.e. a vocabulary, such as a Latin or Greek vocabulary, printed on quarto-sized pages].”

(5) LDS Times and Seasons, V,15: 611.

*“The Star will be issued monthly on a royal sheet quarto....”* [Note: Royal quarto was about ½” larger than ordinary quarto.]

(6) John Phillip Walker, Dale Morgan and Early Mormonism, 152.

*“Burgess also had Peter Whitmer's copy of the original quarto edition of The Evening and Morning Star, the first I have located.”*

(7) LDS Times and Seasons, II,5: 257.

*“THE TIMES AND SEASONS will be published on the 1st and 15th of every month... and will contain 16 pages octavo.”*

(8) Extract from a letter to the editor published in the Painesville [Ohio] Telegraph, 22 March 1831:

*“A quarto Bible now in this village, was borrowed....”*

(9) Joseph Smith, History of the Church, II:167n.

*“The Evening and Morning Star as first published was a quarto, but the Messenger and Advocate was to be published in octavo form for greater convenience in binding and preserving. It was also announced that the two volumes of the Star would be reprinted in octavo form; which, by the way, was done.”*

(10) Brigham Young, History of the Church, VII:558.

*“CHURCH PUBLICATIONS FOR THE PERIOD*

*“During the year 1845 there was published the Times and Seasons, fortnightly, octavo, edited by John Taylor, Nauvoo, Illinois.*

*“The Nauvoo Neighbor, weekly, folio, edited by John Taylor, Nauvoo, Illinois.*

*“The Millennial Star, fortnightly, octavo, edited by Wilford Woodruff and Thomas Ward, Liverpool.*

*“The Prophet, weekly, folio, edited by Samuel Brannan, New York, which ended May 24th and was succeeded by*

*“The New York Messenger, July 25th, quarto, edited by Parley P. and Orson Pratt.”*

- (11) “History of Joseph Smith” in LDS Times and Seasons, III,14: 785.

*“Mr. Harris... returned again to my house about the twelfth of April... and so we continued until the fourteenth of June..., by which times he had written one hundred and sixteen pages of manuscript on foolscap paper.”*

- (12) “Diary of Joseph Smith, III,” entry for April 20, 1885:

*“Visited James Whitehead had chat with him. He says he saw the Rev[elation].--about 1 page of foolscap paper.”*

- (13) R.S. and M.C. van Wagoner essay on Orson Pratt, Jr. in Dialogue, XXI, 1: 89.

*“[The] principals of the “Literary Mutual Improvement,” published the first issue of a semi-monthly manuscript newspaper, the Vepracula. Each of the men contributed a foolscap page of matter in each issue...”*

- (14) LDS Times and Seasons, II, 21: 534.

*“THE subscriber would respectfully announce to the citizens of this county, and vicinity, that he has just received and will keep constantly on hand, a general assortment of STATIONERY Such as... Ruled and plain foolscap; Ruled and fancy colored Letter paper...”*

- (15) History of Wilford Woodruff, 296.

*“April 4 [1838].--Mr. Kent, the postmaster, showed me a letter containing two sheets of foolscap...”*

- (16) “Wilford Woodruff’s Journal,” III: 478 & 484.

*p.478:*

*“[August] 22d [1849] I wrote A full letter of foolscap to Elder Allexander Badlam...”*

*p.484:*

*“[September] 28th [1849] I wrote A foolscap sheet full to John Benbow...”*

- (17) LDS Evening and the Morning Star, I,5: 36 (October, 1832).

*“Mr. Ross Cox in his six years pegrinations, and singular adventures... among various tribes of Indians... hitherto unknown; all of which have*

*been thrown before the public in the shape of a goodly octavo, by the Messrs. Harpers.”*

(18) The Seer, II,8: 306 (August, 1854).

*“All the multiplied and varied duties of one year might possibly be printed on one hundred octavo pages....”*

(19) LDS Times and Seasons, III,3: 615.

*“ ‘Prairie Flower’... is a neat literary work of 24 octavo pages”*

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## **APPENDIX II.**

### **BOOK OF MORMON WORDPRINT ANALYSIS**

In his review of *The Spalding Enigma*, Roper cites Ernest Taves (Trouble Enough, 1984) as saying:

*“It has been suggested that there was another Spaulding work, that the manuscript Hurlbut unearthed was not what everyone was referring to as Manuscript Found.... If there was another Spaulding manuscript would it not be stylistically similar to the one Hurlbut found, and thus have little in common with the Book of Mormon? Only a skillful writer... can significantly alter his way of writing. Whatever else can be said of Joseph Smith and Solomon Spaulding, neither was a skillful writer. It suffices to read a page or two of Joseph Smith and of Spaulding to understand that those pages were written by different writers.”*

He then suggests that empirical support for this view can be found in wordprint studies of *The Book of Mormon*, citing Wayne Larsen, Alvin Rencher and Tim Layton’s, “Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? An Analysis of Wordprints,” BYU Studies XX:3 (1980), 225–51, a “careful and important critique of this article” by D. James Croft, “Book of Mormon ‘Wordprints’ Re-examined,” Sunstone, (March–April 1981): 15–21, and finally John L. Hilton’s “more reliable study,” “On Verifying Wordprint Studies: Book of Mormon Authorship,” in Reynolds, ed. Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited, 241. Roper does not mention, however, that Croft’s skepticism is supported by H.V. Hong’s studies on the works of Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who wrote his early work under a variety of pseudonyms so he could present distinctive viewpoints in a complex dialogue. According to Hong, who is a recognized authority on the writings of Kierkegaard and apparently something of a computer expert as well, studies show that the Danish existentialist was capable of adjusting his wordprint according to the various pseudonyms he used when writing.

It might also be recalled that some authors can alter their writing style to a great extent. Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* contains the same wry humor as *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*, but it reads very differently from the Mississippi River tales. Twain incorporated a lot of Mallory's *The Daeth of Arthur* into his manuscript, and he mimicked Mallory's narrative style to a certain extent. If that same book had been edited by another writer, and then perhaps had been re-written with the help of yet another writer, the final results might read so little like *Huckleberry Finn* as to have no seeming relationship to the latter volume.

Blake T. Ostler, in his review of Noel B. Reynolds, *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, (1982) in *Dialogue*, XVI:4, 142, adds this comment:

*“To assume that Nephi had access to a King James Bible or that he was acquainted with nineteenth-century Arminian theology in the sixth century B.C. is beyond the bounds of competent scholarship. Yet this is precisely what must be assumed if the wordprint is to be taken seriously. Even given this criticism, however, the results of the wordprint study must be explained. Perhaps the wordprint analysis tells us more about computers than about the Book of Mormon.”*

While wordprint analysis may be a valuable tool in cases of disputed authorship, it can only produce meaningful results in instances where a specific text is purported to have been written by a specific author. In other words, if *only* Spalding, *or* Smith, *or* Cowdery, *or* Rigdon was *individually* responsible for creating *The Book of Mormon*, wordprint comparison with their known writings might (and we reiterate *might*) produce interesting results. Contaminate the sample, however, and the odds of producing a useful result diminish with the degree of contamination. In the case at hand, the contamination is considerable.

If our hypothesis is correct, we are dealing with a manuscript here that was originally authored by Spalding, revised and reworked by Rigdon, further revised and recast by Cowdery, and then ultimately paraphrased by Smith to several different “*scribes*,” the last of whom was Cowdery himself, before taking its final form as *The Book of Mormon*, 1830 edition (which text has since undergone a number of official revisions at the hands of the LDS). Can wordprint produce valid results under such circumstances? We think not.

It should also be recognized that much of *The Book of Mormon* was composed in a highly repetitive and limited vocabulary. Take anybody's known writings, and edit the text to include hundreds of “*Yea, and behold,*” “*wherefores,*” and “*Then it came to passes,*” and it is possible to so distort the word-print, that the original author's “*voice*” is lost among all the repetitive verbiage.

Moreover, since the degree of contamination would hardly be uniform throughout, one might well expect wordprint analysis to produce results which would suggest multiple authors for *The Book of Mormon* while at the same time rejecting the likelihood of

specific authorship of any of the four candidates above. (Note that Hilton’s study only focused on three of these four; Rigdon not having been considered. Moreover, Hilton’s unabashed declaration that the purpose of his study was to “*bolster the establishment of faith*” does little for his credibility outside of that faith. Ref. Hilton, “On Verifying Wordprint Studies: Book of Mormon Authorship,” BYU Studies XXX [Summer 1990]: 101. Hilton is, by his own acknowledgement, a faithful Latter-day Saint. Sunstone 7:3 [May 82], 2.)

Composite texts, written in affected and repetitious King James-style biblical English will naturally be very difficult to word-print. Rather than investigators searching for the most likely and least likely author, they would be better advised to first of all sort out the internal structure of the text, and determine its degree of literary diversity. Only after the book has been “*de-constructed*” in this manner, can we expect to match its various internal divisions to any one of a number of suspected authors—one section may better match a certain suspected author than does another section. And, if there indeed were multiple authors, some sections of the book may be so intermixed with different “*voices*,” as to defy all word-printing.

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### APPENDIX III.

#### RELIGIOUS MATERIAL IN THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE THE KING JAMES BIBLE CONUNDRUM:

According to Roper:

*“In their statements published by E. D. Howe, former Spalding neighbors claimed that Spalding’s manuscript was identical or nearly identical to the historical parts of the Book of Mormon but that the Book of Mormon contained religious material that was not found in Spalding’s novel.... For those familiar with the Book of Mormon, however, such descriptions are extremely problematic.... Both Latter-day Saint and non-Latter-day Saint critics of the Spalding theory have discussed the problematic nature of this claim.”*

Roper then quotes an 1883 rebuttal to the Spalding theory by LDS writer George Reynolds, which he says, “*sets out the nature of the problem:*”

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

This, however, is not necessarily true. Once all sides of the question have been carefully

considered, some of us who have read *The Book of Mormon* find this hypothesis to be more realistic than ridiculous. In the end, it's really all a matter of perspective.

In a rare, candid admission by Mormon historian Hugh Nibley which he appears to have later retracted, perhaps due to editorial pressure,

*"We can never prove absolutely that the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be; but any serious proven fault in the work would at once condemn it. If I assume the Book of Mormon to be fraudulent, then whatever is correct in it is merely a lucky coincidence, devoid of any real significance. But if I assume that it is true, then any suspicious passage is highly significant and casts suspicion on the whole thing, no matter how much of it is right." (Ref. Nibley, "New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study: Part I, Some Standard Tests." Improvement Era, LVI [Nov. 1953]:831. Curiously, everything except the first clause was deleted from a 1989 reprint of this article, ref. J.W. Welch, ed., "The Prophetic Book of Mormon," in Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol.VIII [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co./FARMS, 1989],56.)*

One thing about the Biblical passages found in *The Book of Mormon* which LDS scholarship has never satisfactorily explained is why, if these Bible passages derive from a 5<sup>th</sup> century text written in "reformed Egyptian" on plates of gold, as claimed by Joseph Smith, they happen to contain a number of contextual errors peculiar to the 1611 King James (or Authorized) translation of the *Holy Bible*. Surely in any divinely authentic translation of Holy Scripture, God would have at least inspired Joseph Smith to correct the mistakes made by the 1611 translators. And surely Biblical passages found on metal plates allegedly dating from around the 5th century C.E., regardless of which language they may have been written in, would hardly contain errors which managed to creep into the 1611 King James translation but which are not found in manuscripts produced many hundreds of years, and in some cases more than a millennium earlier. An excellent and highly scholarly treatment of this question can be found in Stan Larson's well-researched essay, "*The Historicity of the Matthean Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi*," published in Brent Metcalfe, ed. New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1993), ch.5, pp.115ff.

Mormon arguments that Joseph Smith later revised the translation he received so that it would compare favorably to that of the 1611 Bible are largely apologetic in nature and simply don't wash. (See for example B.H. Roberts, "Bible Quotations in the Book of Mormon; and Reasonableness of Nephi's Prophecies," Improvement Era VII [Jan. 1904]: 184; S.B. Sperry, Our Book of Mormon, [Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1947], 190, and Answers to Book of Mormon Questions, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967], 112; B.T. Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source." Dialogue XX [Spring 1987]: 78; and Hugh Nibley, "Literary Style Used in Book of Mormon Insured Accurate Translation." Church News section, Deseret Evening News, 29 July 1961.) Some Mormons even go so far as to claim that God speaks in Elizabethan English and thus deliberately chose to quote from the King James

Bible! (Ref. M.E. Petersen, *Those Gold Plates!* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 52-56; J.E. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/FARMS, 1990), 131-136; and R. Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* XXX (Winter 1990):55.

The religious parts of *The Book of Mormon* are indeed so interwoven with the plot as to make it difficult to believe that Spalding's original story did not contain a great deal of religious material, no matter what early witnesses may have said. However, after moving to Pittsburgh in 1812, it seems likely Spalding became aware of Thomas and Alexander Campbell's primitive Christian reforms, and the other innovations in religion going on in the diverse and progressive environment of southwestern Pennsylvania and western Virginia. Thus, it is entirely possible that he enlarged his original story, so as to include subtle parodies of Campbellism, revivalism, scriptural literalism, etc. If so, the final draft of his fictional tale could have been more overtly religious than what his old neighbors in the Conneaut area recalled reading and hearing read.

In his one known extant fictional story (*Manuscript Story*) Spalding includes a great deal of "religious" material, including divine revelation given to lost mariners, a providential passage of their ship to the New World, their organizing a religious society, choosing a minister, resolving to build a pre-Columbian Christian church in America, etc. Besides this, Spalding also gives details of an embellished and exaggerated American Indian religion, in the course of which he parodies the Christian theological arguments and viewpoints of his day. He also had a mysterious Quetzalcoatl-like holy man found a new religion for the ancient mound-builders, complete with ersatz holy scriptures, a religious hierarchy, seers, prophets, etc. Obviously Spalding was interested in religion as a human phenomenon, and it would be not at all unusual if he explored that interest in his other fictional writings. Thus, the final draft of his *Manuscript Found* may have been far more religious than what his Conneaut associates ever saw.

Secondly, it should be recalled that Robert Patterson, Sr. remembered Spalding's story as being written in biblical style, and John Winter remembered Rigdon calling the story a "romance of the Bible." Redick McKee, a neighbor of Spalding's in Washington Co., PA, remembered that some of Spalding's writings featured the ancient Canaanites—a people closely related to the Israelites, and a people whose religion was closely related to some of the earliest Israelite religion. If Solomon Spalding wrote about the lost tribes of Israel, he may have portrayed those people as apostates from the biblical religion—but still a religious people, rather like the Canaanites.

Thirdly, it is the view of many people that Sidney Rigdon re-worked the Spalding story into a more religious narrative—perhaps beginning his editing as a personal hobby, and later adapting the results to serve as a new divine revelation. If so, and if Spalding had already laid down the basis for some of the "lost tribes" coming to the Americas (a topic over which Rigdon was reportedly very enthusiastic), then Rigdon's re-vamping of Spalding's old story might have involved mainly his injection of "Reformed Baptist" views and expectations into an already "religious" narrative.

Rigdon is known to have evolved away from the rational limitations of Campbellite Christian primitivist restorationism, and to have advocated the return of divine miracles, visitations of angels, visions, prophecy, etc. If Rigdon had already re-worked Spalding's story to incorporate Campbellite religious ideas, he may have also injected his own "*Rigdonite*" views into the final draft of the manuscript. It is also possible that as early as 1826, Rigdon was working secretly with Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith to produce a prophetic "*revelation*" to modern Christians.

All of these influences could have worked together to create a "*Book of Mormon*" which was in many ways different from what Spalding's Conneaut associates were aware of. And, the incremental addition of new religious material, in "*layers*" over a period of two or three major re-writings, would be a logical method by which the book was composed—at least a far more logical explanation than saying that a non-religious story of lost tribes could be turned into the Mormon scriptures simply be the addition of pious-sounding passages here and there.

Elder Roper is correct in raising this objection—but he has not sought for its possible solution.

With respect to this problem, Robert J. Matthews, former dean of religious instruction at Brigham Young University, concedes:

*"The reader of the Book of Mormon is forced to decide: either Joseph Smith was a fraud who has now been exposed through his citing biblical passages that have been disproved by scientific investigation, or Joseph Smith was a prophet who translated an ancient historical, doctrinal, religious record—a new witness for Jesus Christ. There is no middle ground to this matter without compromise and a loss of truth."* (Ref. R.J. Matthews, "What the Book of Mormon Tells Us about the Bible," in Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top, eds., *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon: The 1991 Sperry Symposium*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1992], 107).

**END**