

ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

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It is somewhat astonishing that journalists, writers for the magazines, editors and publishers of country newspapers, and clergymen,—men usually supposed to be sane, sound, and clear-headed on all subjects worthy of their consideration, and the things of this life, should give such evidences of unsoundness whenever the subject of Mormonism and the Mormons, or Joseph Smith, is treated upon. His friends could not ask for a more specific fulfilment for any of his alleged prophecies, than is offered to them by this constant presentation of his name as a religious bugbear to the world. It was stated by him that the angel told him that "his name should be had for good and evil in all the world."

In a late issue of the *Argus* appeared an article on the "Origin of the Mormon Bible," in which is reaffirmed the Spaulding-ary-origin of the Book of Mormon, with many additions, as embellishments, that betray a singular ignorance on the part of the original writer of the article, or of later compilers, as the article may, or may not have been correctly copied.

The pith of this Spaulding story is perhaps as well given in an article in the last number of *Scribner's Monthly*, under the caption of "The Book of Mormon," and listed in the table of contents to have been

written by Ellen E. Dickinson, as in any other article of similar import now in print. It is fair to presume that the argument of this article in the *Argus* is but a reproduction of the one in *Scribner*, and subject to the same objections. The article in *Scribner*, referred to, contains a statement made on oath before Charles Walter, Notary Public, Washington, D. C.; which the author declares she was obliged to write and rewrite four times to get it into such shape that Mrs. McKinstry could make oath to it. The author further states that this is the only "attempt ever made by Mr. Spaulding's family to set this matter right."

To set this matter "fully before the readers" of *Scribner*, the author states that Solomon Spaulding was born in Ashford, Connecticut, in 1761, graduated in 1785, and gave up the ministry from ill health. That he resided in Conneaut, Ohio, in 1812. That he there wrote a romance purporting to give a history of the peopling of this country by the lost tribes of Israel; the tribes and their leaders having singular names, "among them, Mormon, Maroni, Lamenite, Nephi." This romance was called "Manuscript Found." That he finally carried the manuscript of this book to a Mr. Patterson, a printer at Pittsburgh, who declined to print it and returned it. That at this time there was a young man, Sidney Rigdon by name, in Patterson's office, who

twenty years later was a preacher among the Saints. That in 1825 a man claiming to be Joseph Smith, visited Mr. Thurlow Weed, then publishing a paper at Rochester, to get a book published. Mr. Weed refused to publish it, but directed the man to a friend in the book business; and that Martin Harris came with Mr. Smith the second time and offered to become security for the cost of publishing the book. Mr. Weed describes Mr. Smith thus: "He seemed about thirty years of age, was compactly built, about five feet eight inches in height; had regular features, and would impress one favorably in conversation."

Mrs. McKinstry states that she is the daughter of Solomon Spaulding, and was residing with her parents in Conneaut, in 1812, and says: "I was then in my sixth year." She further states that they removed to Pittsburgh when she "was still very young." That in 1816, her father, Solomon Spaulding, died at Amity, Pennsylvania; and that directly after his death, her mother and herself went to visit at the residence of her uncle, Wm. H. Sabine, at Onondaga Valley, Onondaga county, New York. She further states, "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. I perfectly remember the appearance of this trunk, and of looking at its contents. There were sermons and other papers, and I saw a manuscript about an inch thick, closely written, tied with some of the stories my father had written for me, one of which he called, 'The Frogs of Wyndham.'" On the outside of this manuscript were written the words, "Manuscript Found." After this, Mrs. McKinstry's

mother went to Pomfret, Connecticut, to her father's, leaving her daughter at her uncle's. In 1820, her mother married Mr. Davison, of Hartwicks, New York, and sent for the things she had left at Onondaga Valley, "and," says she, "I remember that the old trunk, with its contents reached her in safety." In 1828, Mrs. McKinstry was married to Dr. A. McKinstry, of Monson, Hampden county, Massachusetts, and went there to live. Her mother soon went to her, and was with her until her death in 1844. In 1834, a man by the name of Hurlbert, came to Mrs. Davison in her home at Monson, to procure of her the manuscript of the "Manuscript Found," with the avowed purpose of comparing the "Mormon Bible" with it. This man brought a letter from Mr. Sabine to his sister, requesting her to loan the manuscript to Hurlbert. Mrs. Davison complied by giving him an order to Mr. Jerome Clark, with whom she had placed the old trunk and its contents, to open it and deliver to him the "Manuscript Found." Mr. Clark so delivered it to Hurlbert, but he, contrary to his promise, never returned it, nor ever replied to Mrs. Davison's inquiries about it. Mrs. McKinstry says, "Two years ago I heard that he was still living in Ohio, and with my consent he was asked for the 'Manuscript Found.' He made no response, although we have evidence that he received the letter containing the request. So far I have stated facts within my own knowledge." Her mother had said to her 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.'" Near the close of the statement of Mrs.

McKinstry, she says: "We never either of us saw, or in any way communicated with the Mormons, save Hurlbert, as above described, and while we have no personal knowledge that the 'Mormon Bible' was taken from the 'Manuscript Found,' there were many evidences to us that it was, and that Hurlbert and others at the time thought so. A convincing proof to us of this belief was that my uncle, William H. Sabine, had undoubtedly read the manuscript while it was in his house, and his faith that its production would show to the world that the 'Mormon Bible' had been taken from it, or was the same with slight alterations." The author, Ellen E. Dickinson, closes her article in these words: "The question now remains; how did Smith become possessed of the 'Manuscript Found?' Rigdon, who was in Patterson's office while the manuscript was lying there, had ample opportunity of copying it, and as he was afterwards a prominent Mormon preacher and adviser of Smith, this is not improbable. Smith, however, could easily have possessed himself of the manuscript if he had fancied it suitable to his purposes, for it is understood that he was a servant on the farm, or teamster for Mr. Sabine, in whose house the package of manuscript lay exposed in an unlocked trunk for several years. At all events, it is evident that Smith had access to the manuscript, since both stories are alike,—the peculiar names occur no where else but in these two books,—and that Mr. Spaulding's romance had been read by a number of people in 1812, while the Mormon Bible was not published till 1830, and not heard of earlier than 1823. Out of the curious old romance of Solomon Spaulding, and the ridiculous 'Seer Stone' of Joseph

Smith, has grown this monstrous Mormon State, which presents a problem that the wisest politician has failed to solve, and whose outcome lies in the mystery of the future."

The religious creed, tenets, faith and doctrine of any sect that ever existed since Christ, has never been set aside in so careless and cavalier a manner as the foregoing statement disposes of Mormonism. I have given all the vital points recited by Mrs. McKinstry, for herself, and by her for her mother; the one the wife, the other the daughter of Rev. Solomon Spaulding; many of them verbatim, copied from the article referred to. And now, let the statement be examined in a common sense fashion.

The "Manuscript Found," the alleged, and possible embryo of the Mormon Bible, is the object of inquiry in this narrative; and it is kept prominently before the reader from the time of its production by Rev. Spaulding until 1844. No matter about its whereabouts after that, so far as connection with the alleged huge plagiarism that gave it to the world as the "Mormon Bible" is concerned. The business of the public with that "curious old romance" lies between 1812 and 1816. During that time the manuscript was out of the possession of Rev. Spaulding, only while it was in the possession of Mr. Patterson, either with a view to its publication, or as a loan, for both are stated. It could not have been in the office of Patterson long, for it is stated that Rev. Spaulding occasionally read from it to his neighbors, during that time; and that Mr. Patterson, after "keeping it awhile," returned it, with the advice to "finish it, and you will make money out of it." All the rest of the time between 1812 and 1844, the

whereabouts and possession of the manuscript are directly and specifically accounted for by Mrs. McKinstry. From Amity, Pennsylvania, where Rev. Spaulding died in 1816, the family removed to Onondaga Valley, taking the manuscript with them; and here Mrs. McKinstry had frequent access to the trunk, and had the manuscript in her hands many times. How long Mrs. Spaulding remained at Mr. Sabine's, her brother, is not stated; except that it was "some time;" but in 1820 she married, and at her order, the "trunk and its contents reached her in safety," when she placed them in the care of Mr. Jerome Clark, for safe keeping; and here Mr. Hurlbert, a seceding Mormon, found them in 1834. This narrows the inquiry as to the time when Mr. Rigdon and Joseph Smith, one, both, or either of them, must have had access to them if at all, to the time they lay at Mr. Sabine's, or while they were at Patterson's office, during the possible interval that they were loaned to him, or were there pending their publication. In the latter case it would be Sidney Rigdon that was the plagiarist, and in the former Joseph Smith; as there is no pretense that Sidney Rigdon had access to the manuscript at Mr. Sabine's, or that Joseph Smith had at Patterson's office, thus farther simplifying the inquiry.

Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, in December, 1805, and therefore would be nearly the age of Mrs. McKinstry, in 1812, and she says that she was in her sixth year; and at Mr. Spaulding's death in 1816, he would be eleven years of age; and at the removal of the trunk and "Manuscript Found" in it from Onondaga Valley to Monson, and the care of Mr. Clark, at

the marriage of Mrs. Spaulding to Mr. Davison, he would be fifteen. From this it must be clear, that the only chance afforded Joseph Smith to have access personally to this celebrated "Manuscript Found," was before he was fifteen; and as no date of his working on the farm of Mr. Sabine, as a servant, or teamster, is given, the presumption is against the employment of so young a boy for such work. Besides this, Mrs. McKinstry's statement that she had access to the trunk, and frequently saw the manuscript and had it in her hands, makes it apparent that if such a boy had "possessed himself" of it, it could only have been by stealth, and at short intervals, and always liable to detection; but, on no occasion, from first to last, when the daughter of Rev. Solomon Spaulding attempts to account for the papers, were they missing, but were always where her mother had placed them. Another thing, to believe that Joseph Smith should have conceived at so early a period of his life the idea of so "monstrous" a religious delusion as Mormonism is stated to be, and to have deliberately stolen Rev. Solomon Spaulding's romance as the literary base of it, is to give astonishing credit to the ability of a "shiftless," "idle," "dissolute," "ignorant," "shrewd," and "vicious" youth, as he has continually been described by these romance mongers to have been. This, together with the impossibility that Joseph Smith could have meddled with the "Manuscript Found" from 1812 to 1816, during the lifetime of Rev. Spaulding, he being only eleven years of age at the latter date; and the extreme improbability that he could have copied the same during a possible brief service as a servant at Mr. Sabine's before he was fifteen, without de-

tection and shameful dismissal, ought effectually to dispose of his alleged personal connection with the Rev. Spaulding's writings.

Mr. Thurlow Weed's affidavit describes Joseph Smith in 1825, as a man about thirty years of age. If Joseph Smith called on Mr. Weed in 1825, he was in his twentieth year only; but as this affidavit proves nothing against Joseph Smith, in view of the facts already cited, it is only stated by me to show how easily names make statements swallowed; the inference sought to be conveyed by the author of the article under examination being that Joseph Smith having called upon Mr. Weed to get a book published, which was to be a divine revelation, that, therefore, that book must have been the Rev. Spaulding's manuscript revamped.

This leaves the issue to the time when the romance lay at Mr. Patterson's office, in Pittsburgh, which Mrs. McKinstry fixes between 1812 and 1816. Statements heretofore made by Mrs. Davison; E. D. Howe, who was the publisher of D. Hurlbert's "Mormonism Unveiled;" Rev. John Storrs, of Holliston, Massachusetts, who wrote a similar account for the *Episcopal Recorder*, of Boston; Rev. Samuel Williams of Pittsburgh, who wrote a pamphlet on the subject in 1842, all made with the intent to fix the authorship of the Mormon Bible upon Sidney Rigdon, fix the time when this manuscript was left with Mr. Spaulding between 1812 and 1814, as it was in the latter year that Rev. Spaulding removed to Amity, leaving it closed to two years as the time when Rigdon is said to have made the copy; and it will be remembered that Mrs. Spaulding (Davison), states that Mr. Patterson returned it to her

husband; even relating words that Mr. Patterson used upon so returning it; and Mrs. McKinstry, states that the trunk and contents went with the family. Within this period of two years, 1812-1814, the manuscript was finished, was read at various times to different parties, was carried from Conneaut to Pittsburgh; was offered to Mr. Patterson, who kept it "a while," and "was returned by Silas Engle, a foreman printer in Patterson's office to the author, after it had been some weeks in possession;" (as is stated in one version of the story); and was thence taken by Rev. Spaulding to Amity in 1814, and was safely kept by his widow till 1834. It must then have been copied by Sidney Rigdon, if at all, during these "some weeks," a rather indefinite term of time. Give the most favorable time possible for such copying to have been done, possible from the statements, and it must have been in a few weeks during the close of 1814. In this connection it must be remembered that the Book of Mormon, which has always been called by these various writers the "Mormon Bible," is a large twelve mo, of nearly six hundred pages; and in the printed book is more than an inch thick; and as the manuscript described by Mrs. McKinstry was about that thickness it admits of a grave doubt as to identity on this ground, as the written work would be likely to contain a larger number of pages than the printed copy, if written upon both sides; and if written upon one side only, as was probable, if it was intended for publication, it undoubtedly would; and Rev. Spaulding being an educated and cultivated gentleman, must certainly have observed this simple printers' rule of writing only on one side of the paper for the press.

Sidney Rigdon was born in 1793, and would be twenty-one years of age in 1814. And if he copied the Rev. Spaulding's romance of "Manuscript Found," with a view to a religious imposture, with Joseph Smith as the central figure, himself the black pope behind the throne, the devilish animus of the whole plot, as is charged in this Spaulding-story origin for the Book of Mormon, he must have designed it, and prepared for it by this copying from the paper lying in Patterson's office during these "some weeks" within the time allotted to that work by these statements, a very limited time for such a work.

The simple story of Sidney Rigdon's life up to 1830, is about as follows. He lived and wrought with his father's family on a farm twelve miles west of Pittsburgh till the Winter of 1819, five years after the manuscript was returned to Mr. Spaulding. During the last three years of this time Mrs. McKinstry states that the manuscripts were at Mr. Sabine's in Onondaga Valley, New York. He professed religion in 1817, joining the Baptist Church at Piney Fork, Peter's Creek, Pennsylvania, and in 1818-19 studied divinity with a man named Clark, a Baptist preacher in Beaver county, was licenced to preach by the Conoquenessing Church, and went to Warren, Ohio, where he was ordained, and returned to Pittsburgh in the Winter of 1821-22. This account is taken from the family records of the Rigdon family, dated January, 1843, and signed by two of that family, Carvil Rigdon and Peter Boyer. It is not essential to follow him further, because this is past the date when he is charged with having done the mischief stated.

It is only necessary now to state two or

three facts in addition to what is here given, and Sidney Rigdon's possible connection with Rev. Spaulding's romance is discovered to be mythical and altogether a supposition.

Mr. Sidney Rigdon, in a letter written by him at Commerce, Illinois, May 27th, 1839, denies a connection with Mr. Patterson's printing office, thus: "It is only necessary to say in relation to the whole story of Spaulding's writings being in the hands of Mr. Patterson, and who is said to have kept a printing office, and my saying that I was connected in the said office, &c., &c., is the most base of lies, without even the shadow of truth. There was no man by the name of Patterson, during my residence at Pittsburgh, who had a printing office; what might have been before I lived there I know not."

Parley P. Pratt, in answer to L. R. Sunderland's "Mormonism Exposed," makes the following statement in regard to his connection with Sidney Rigdon, with whom he was associated as a Baptist. "Then, after finishing my visit to Columbia county, [August 1830,], I returned to the brethren in Ontario county, where, for the first time, I saw Mr. Joseph Smith, Jr., who had just returned from Pennsylvania to his father's house in Manchester. About the 15th of October, 1830, I took my journey in company with Elders O. Cowdery, and Peter Whitmer, to Ohio. We called on Elder S. Rigdon, and then, for the first time, his eyes beheld the Book of Mormon, (Mormon Bible.) I, myself, had the happiness to present it to him in person."—*Pratt's Reply to Sunderland.*

Mrs. Emma Bidamon, the widow of Joseph Smith, makes the following state-

ment respecting Sidney Rigdon and the Book of Mormon, (Mormon Bible.):

"I was residing at Father Whitmer's when I first saw Sidney Rigdon. I think he came there. The Book of Mormon had been published some time before. Parley P. Pratt had united with the Church before I knew Sidney Rigdon, or heard of him. At the time the Book of Mormon was translated there was no church organized, and Sidney Rigdon did not become acquainted with Joseph and me till after the Church was established in 1830."

We have now presented three statements from persons whose known connection with the facts stated enable them to speak with knowledge, that Sidney Rigdon's connection with the Book of Mormon, and association with Joseph Smith, must have begun subsequently to the publication of that book; and therefore, whatever coincidence in names, alleged from the memory of Mrs. Davison, Mrs. McKinstry or others there may have been between the "Manuscript Found," and the Book of Mormon, must be traced to

some other cause than the one conjectured by Ellen E. Dickinson, and all others who have written on the matter adversely to the claim made by Joseph Smith, that Sidney Rigdon plagiarized the latter from Rev. Spaulding.

The statement made in the various versions of the Spaulding story that the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, David Whitmer, O. Cowdery and Martin Harris, all apostatized and denied their testimony to that book is entirely untrue. David Whitmer reaffirmed the testimony given by him in the Book of Mormon, in the *Chicago Times*, in the Summer of 1875, and is still living, and may be inquired of. Martin Harris affirmed the truth of his statement until his death, and died in a condition of reconciliation with the Church in Utah. Oliver Cowdery died, also, some years since, near Council Bluffs, Iowa, as we are informed, also stating to his demise the truth of his averment in the Book of Mormon; all of which is of easy proof.

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