CHAPTER 13

Will the Real *Book of Mormon* Author Please Stand Up

Ever since the 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon* first left the Grandin press in Palmyra, New York, skeptics of Joseph Smith's story of gold plates and heavenly messengers have sought alternate explanations of its origin.

The possibilities include Smith as sole author, Smith as primary author with collaboration of others, or Smith acting as a charismatic front man for another author, living or dead.

Debate exists over how and when Joseph Smith may have received help in the endeavor. Many researchers suspect Sidney Rigdon, a Campbellite preacher and early associate of Smith, may have been the brain behind the operation. LDS researchers are adamant that Rigdon arrived on the scene only after the *Book of Mormon* was published, though significant evidence exists to counter the claim. (1)

Joseph Smith's primary scribe, Oliver Cowdery, was an educated schoolteacher and also had every opportunity to help polish the work.

And then there is Solomon Spaulding (1761-1816).

A considerable body of research exists concerning whether or not Spaulding may have been the actual author of the *Book of Mormon.* (2) A complete reiteration of the Spaulding theory would require an entire book and is not intended in this research.

Circumstantial evidence places Sidney Rigdon in proximity to the writings of Spaulding. The condensed version of the hypothesis involves Rigdon pirating a manuscript Spaulding left at a publishing house in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and then embellishing it to promote doctrines he favored. Spaulding died in 1816 clearing the way for Rigdon to have Smith reveal the work to the world as the *Book of Mormon.*

Numerous textual similarities can be identified between

Spaulding's known writings and the *Book of Mormon*. (3)

Solomon Spaulding was a veteran of the Revolutionary War. After the war he studied law, then religion and eventually became a Congregationalist minister.

He tried his hand at writing a fictional romance that has come to be known as the *Manuscript Found.* The story in the *Manuscript Found* involves a small party of seafaring Romans who shipwreck on the shores of America and tells of their subsequent interaction with the Native Americans found in the wilderness. The main body of the story dramatizes wars between two groups of light skinned and dark skinned natives.

Researchers assume Spaulding may have been attempting to fictionalize a history of the ancient mound builder culture of North America, which intrigued archeologists of the time.

A reading of *Manuscript Found*, in light of Spaulding's background as a veteran of the American Revolution, casts a different light on what may have been his motivation in writing the story. It would appear that an attempt to be historically accurate in regard to ancient Americans was secondary to his main theme.

His main theme was to create a fictional people who would act out issues that were important to him. When *Manuscript Found* is closely scrutinized, it not only contains textual and concept parallels to the *Book of Mormon,* but it also has material identical to Mercy Otis Warren's *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution,* and David Ramsay's *History of the American Revolution.*

Manuscript Found is the only known sample of Solomon Spaulding's story. Whether or not he had other versions of the story remains a matter of more debate. Certainly, if he had another version from which the *Book of Mormon* was created, it was no doubt destroyed by Rigdon and Smith to cover the fraud.

A casual read of *Manuscript Found* is rather disappointing to those looking for irrefutable evidence of plagiarism. The *Manuscript* is crude, contains far less pages, and lacks some of the more recognizable parts of the *Book of Mormon.* If Spaulding had a more refined work, it would have been the one lifted by Rigdon from the Pittsburgh printing house.

Yet, upon closer investigation, the veteran Spaulding seems to have been influenced by Mercy Otis Warren and David Ramsay, similar to the same influence seen in the *Book of Mormon*.

Spaulding's fictional Indians replay scenes of the Revolutionary conflict that were so important in his early life. Spaulding borrows Warren's prose and Ramsay's historical accounts in an attempt to buoy his issues.

Manuscript Found is another example of blatant borrowing by an author in favor of the message.

Mercy Otis Warren and David Ramsay's potential influence in *Manuscript Found* and the *Book of Mormon* raises new questions.

It is possible that two different authors borrowed from the same source, resulting in similarities that would be incorrectly assumed to have come from one author.

Or, one author produced both works, duplicating his reliance on the original source.

A comparison of Solomon Spaulding to Mercy Otis Warren will demonstrate his appropriation of her material. A further comparison of Spaulding, Warren, and Ramsay to the *Book of Mormon,* will place serious doubt on Joseph Smith's magic seer stones, gold plates, and his Reformed Egyptian language.

Samples of Mercy Otis Warren's usage can be seen in Spaulding's *Manuscript Found.* Underlined items in Spaulding represent text stricken out by Spaulding in the original hand written manuscript.

Warren	Spalding
humanity recoiled at the idea **humanity shudders** **Humanity recoils at the sufferings** **Humanity recoils at a view of the wretched** **the trembling heart has recoiled at**	**<u>humanity recoils at beholding</u>**

dropped a tear drop a tear	must drop a tear dropped a tear
inhabited only by savage men and beasts the savages, and the wild beasts beasts and savages	inhabited by savages & wild ferocious beasts
surrounded by hordes innumerable hordes hordes of savages	surrounded by innumerable hordes hordes of savages
tribes of copper-colored savages	copper colored tribe
Let imagination paint Imagination may easily paint	imagination can paint Imagination alone can paint
The success of the enterprise "I will recover this country, or perish in the attempt."	I will either triumph with you in the success of the enterprise or perish in the attempt
without distinction of age or sex	without distinction of age or sex
the blood of the aggressor	the Blood of the Transgressor
watery grave	watry tomb
to weep at the recollection of the ashes of the brave, scattered over the heights and plains of the American world	tread lightly on the ashes of the venerable dead scattered over an extensive Country
thirst for revenge thirst for glory	thirst for revenge thirst for glory
implements of war	warlike implements
military manoeuvres	military manoevers
maxims of war	a true maxim that to avoid war
a war enkindled by avarice	It was avarice, cursed avarice which induced me to engage in this horrid war
blood of the citizens	blood of our citizens
the crimson tide that threatened to deluge the land	to deluge our land with the blood of our citizens
effusion of human blood	effusion of human blood

the blood of the citizens had flowed in copious streams the weapons of war spread death over three fourths of the globe, without satiating the thirst that drinks up rivers of human gore	redoubled their efforts in spreading death and carnage thirsted for each other's blood satiated its thirst by copious draughts of human blood devastate the world and produce rivers of human blood
staining the sword with the blood	stained with the blood
prepared to conquer or die in defense of their country	determined either to die gloriously fighting or to obtain victory determined to conquer or die die, gloriously fighting in the cause of their country and their God
destruction and death slaughter and bloodshed	death & destruction blood & slaughter
astonishment and terror	amazement & terror
the gusts drove it in the faces of the army	with great velocity full in the faces of the Kentucks
enkindled the flames of civil war	blowing them into the flames of war
vigor of manhood vigor of youth	vigor of youth & manhood
some future day	in some future age
a smart skirmish ensued; several were killed, and a number wounded on both sides with great spirit and bravery on both sides with valor equally honorary to both parties displayed by both parties	Many bloody skirmishes ensued with various success, & many feats of heroism were displaid on both sides equal feats of valor were displayed by contending heroes
the brave men who fell	brave warriors fell on both sides
Most of his army was destroyed by the sword	warriors who had fallen by the sword was destroyed by the sword of Sambal
the blessings of peace	the blessings of peace

took a very affectionate leave

take an affectionate farewell	
solemn adieu bade adieu last adieu	final adieu bade an affectionate adieu
feelings of the human heart	feelings of the human heart
fraught with sentiments	fraught with sentiments
stratagem	statigem
race of beings	race of beings
pierced the souls	pierce my soul
on their bended knees, to implore	on my bended knees implore
It is now time to leave for the present	And here we will leave them for the present
He did not stop here, but	But not willing to stop here
customs, manners, religion and laws	customs, manners, religion & arts & sciences
The command of this little band had been given to colonel Arnold	The command of these bands were given to Elseon
"The carnage was great; we trampled thick on the dead bodies that were strewed in the way."	the ground which was strewed thick with the slain The field was widely strewed & in many places thickly covered with human bodies
glutted with the blood of innocent victims	carnage shall glut our indignant swords
wisdom and firmness of mind	wisdom & penetration of mind
with all possible expedition	with all possible expedition
vigorous exertions	vigorous exertions
pushed on through a narrow passage	forcing his march into the city through this narrow passage
effeminate effeminated by luxury luxurious	effeminate & luxurious court luxurious

beyond his own most sanguine expectations the most sanguine expectations having thus succeeded, even beyond his most sanguine expectations	sanguine in their expectations his success answered his most sanguine expectations how often are the most sanguine expectations disappointed having thus succeeded beyond our expectation
manly	manly
monster	monster
perfidious	perfidious
high birth	highborn
huzzaed	huzzas
with one general voice	with one voice
diffusing universal knowledge	diffuse a more accurate knowledge
laid his enemy dead at his feet	Prostrate he tumbled at the feet of Hamkoo
nearest friends and relations	dearest friends & relations
enriching themselves with the spoils	enriched himself by a prodigious mass of plunder
threw down their arms, and fled with great precipitation threw down their arms and fled he ordered them to lay down their arms and disperse immediately he offered pardon...to all who should lay down their arms laid down their arms and submitted either as prisoners of war laying down their arms at the feet of the victorious Washington	threw down their arms and surrendered agree to lay down their arms
In defense of our persons and properties	protected in their persons & properties
page of history	page of history
time immemorial	time immemorial
surrendered themselves prisoners of war	<u>surrendered themselves prisoners of war</u>
the cause of his country	the cause of their country

whole empire

whole empire	
innocent blood **rivers of human blood**	**innocent blood** **rivers of human blood**

Spaulding follows a pattern in his introduction to the *Manuscript Found* that can also be seen in Warren's introduction to her *History.*

Warren	Spalding
... she has endeavored, on all occasions, that the strictest veracity should govern her heart, and the most exact impartiality be the guide of her pen.	**<u>This is an evidence of the author's impartiality and veracity.</u>**
...that the following pages will be perused with kindness and candor...	**...to peruse this volume with a clear head and a pure heart and a candid mind.**
...the most interesting events...	**...the most interesting and important matters...**
If the work should be so far useful or entertaining...	**...a great fund of entertainment...**
The liberal-minded will peruse with candor...	**Apprehensive that skeptical illiberal or superstitious minds...**
A more particular narrative...is not comprehended in the design of the present work...the reader is referred to more voluminous, or more minute descriptions...	**...every particular circumstance...would produce a volume too expensive...a more minute publication.**

In her *History*, Warren describes George Washington as a "Fabius" in reference to the Roman general. It so happens that Spalding selects Fabius as the name of his main character in the *Manuscript* . Warren at other times mentions Rome and Romans. Spalding builds his story around Romans landing accidentally in America instead of their original destination of Britain.

Warren condemns the British for squandering an opportunity to spread Christianity. In the *Manuscript*, Chapter

VIII, a great teacher named Lobaska enlightens the people.

Warren	Spalding
...draw the inhabitants of the darker regions of the world, from their idolatry and superstition. Thus nations who had long been immersed in errors, might be led to embrace a religion, admirably adapted to the promotion of the happiness of mankind on earth...	**They forgot their old religion which was a confused <u>&</u> <u>absurd</u> medly of Idoltry & superstitious nonsense & embraced a religion more sublime & consistent, & more fraught with sentiments which would promote the happiness of mankind in this world. (Chap. VIII)**

Warren, in her "Introductory Observations," laments the causes of the war.

Warren	Spalding
...ambition and avarice are the leading springs which generally actuate the restless mind. From these primary sources of corruption have arisen all the rapine and confusion, the depredation and ruin, that have spread distress over the face of the earth...	**...ambition & avarice which devastate the world & produce rivers of human Blood ... (Chap. VIII)**

Warren gives an account of the London riots of 1780. She notes that religious intolerance by Protestants toward Catholics was demonstrated by their outward wearing of blue cockades in their hats. The Protestant Associators, in addition to wearing the badge, engaged in social protest and destruction of property. Spalding has a similar incident in his *Manuscript*, when two groups of Indians prepare for war over the wearing of a blue feather.

Warren	Spalding

Fifty or sixty thousand persons assembled in St. George's Fields, under the appellation of the *Protestant Associators*, distinguished by blue cockaides in their hats, a badge which they endeavored to affix to many well meaning persons...	**It had been the custom for several ages for the King and chiefs of the Kentucks to have the exclusive right to wear in their caps a bunch of blue feathers, which designated their preeminence over every nation. The Siotan princes envying them this distinguished honor & considering themselves as being at least their equals assumed the liberty to place bunches of Blue feathers upon their caps. This in the opinion of the Kentucks was an unpardonable offense... Thus saith Bombal, the king...Ye have insulted my our honor & dignity, in assuming blue feathers which was the badge of our preeminence... (Chap. VIII)**

The major war in the *Manuscript* involves a love triangle between an evil king, a princess and a prince. The prince and princess, Elseon and Lamesa, elope, causing two nations to go to war. At one point, the princess expresses her fear that her husband and her father may eventually become combatants. She has the prince promise not to kill her father or brother should they meet on the battlefield. The prince promises to spare their lives, if he encounters them.

Warren relates the story of Count Kosciusco, a Polish military officer, who joined the revolution on the side of the colonies. Prior to coming to America, Kosciusco experienced a situation similar to the story of Elseon and Lamesa. This scene in Warren's *History* appears to be the inspiration for the episode in Spalding's *Manuscript*.

Warren	Spalding

The lovers agreed on an elopment, and made an attempt to retire to France; pursued and overtaken by the father of the lady, a fierce rencounter ensued. When Kosciusco found he must either surrender the object of his affection, or take the life of her parent, humanity prevailed over his passion, he returned the sword to its scabbard, and generously relinquished the beautiful daughter to her distressed father, rather than become the murderer of the person who gave being to so much elegance and beauty, now plunged in terror and despair from the tumult of contending passions...	**...the astonishing tidings of Lamesas elopement... When these armies meet, should you not plunge your sword into the heart of my Father & my Brother... I conjure you if you have any regard for my happiness, not to take their lives if in your power. Rather than that my hands should be stained with the blood of your dearest friends I will present my bosom to their swords... (Chap. XII)**

Warren documents the activities of the colonists in response to British aggression prior to a declaration of war. Committees of safety were established by Americans and by Spalding's Indians.

Warren	Spalding
...to provide ammunition, provisions and warlike stores, and to deposite them in some place of safety...	**...Provide military implements, & to deposit them in a secure place.**
...improve themselves in the military art...	**...their improvements in the art of war.**
...to perfect themselves in the art of war...	**...in learning the military art... (Chap. X)**

Spalding was not original even when his main character Fabius delivers a racial slur. Fabius laments that he and his shipwrecked crew are doomed to remain among people that resemble “the Orang outang.” This term was evidently in circulation. In an essay on education, (4) Robert Coram

(1761-1796) postulates:

> "...if the present race of American Indians should shortly become extinct, it would be impossible for posterity to form any judgment of them, whether they were a species of orangutan or rational beings."
> Coram

As the *Manuscript* progresses, Fabius and his troop live for two years among these natives. Eventually, they decide to explore and must leave their new friends. The departure scene is reminiscent of the farewell George Washington gave to his group of officers after the British surrender, as documented by Warren and Ramsay. Additionally, Ramsay repeats the scene in his *Life of George Washington*.

Warren	Spalding
...the general took a very affectionate leave of his brave and faithful soldiers... **...and in the course of this solemn adieu, the big tear stole down the cheeks of men of courage and hardihood...**	**The King & his chiefs & many of his principal Subjects came forward to take an affectionate farewell. This was done on both sides <u>with</u> with mutual expressions of the most ardent & sincere friendship & the most earnest wishes & prayers for future prosperity & Happiness. Having taken our final adieu I observed Crito shedding tears very plentifully. (Chap. IV)**

Ramsay	
General Washington...addressed them, "with a Heart full of love and gratitude, I now take leave of you, I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy, as your former ones have been glorious and honorable." The officers came up successively, and he took an affectionate leave of each of them. **...and by waving his hat, he bid them a silent adieu. Some of them answered this last signal of respect and affection with tears...**	

In Chapter IX of the *Manuscript*, Lobaska also leaves the people, reminiscient of Washington's farewell.

> ...at the age of eighty he bade an affectionate adieu to two Empires & left them to lament in tears his exit.

Even though Spalding demonstrates a heavy reliance on Warren, it is reasonable to assume that his predisposition to borrow would not be limited to her work. Spalding's Indian chiefs argue the merits of going to war in forms that resemble Parliamentary debate in England and the Continental Congress in America. For instance, in Chapter XII of the *Manuscript*, "the venerable Boakim arose" in council to question the worth of going to war over the princess Lamesa's elopement. Compare his opening remarks to those of Patrick Henry in his *Liberty or Death* speech.

Henry	Spalding

...I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is not time for ceremony. The question before the house is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery...	**I must beg, says he, the indulgence of your majesty, & this honorable council for a few moments. Never did I rise with such impressions of the high importance of our deliberations, as what I now feel. The great question to be decided, is peace or war.**

Boakim does some preaching in the course of his speech. Compare his sentiments to those of the Muskingum tribe, documented by Mercy Warren in her *History*.

Warren	Spalding
"that the Great Spirit did not make men to destroy, but to assist and comfort each other."	**It was never designed by the great & good Being that his children should contend, & destroy that existence which he gave them.**

Spalding was at one time a minister, and it is not surprising to find religious content in his *Manuscript*. In Chapter IV, his character Fabius paraphrases Bible verse. In a fit of despair, Fabius laments his condition by quoting a portion of Jeremiah 9:1.

Jeremiah 9:1	Spalding
Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!	**O that my head were water, & my eyes a fountain of tears, Then my intolerable burthen <u>should</u> should be poured forth in a torrent & my soul set at liberty.**

To say Spalding borrowed from the Bible would be a true enough statement. However, something more subtle is occurring. Spalding is using a style common to preachers such as George Whitefield. In his sermon, *Marks of a True Conversion*, Whitefield bewails the condition of the sinners to

whom he preaches.

> "O that my head were waters, O that mine eyes
> were a fountain of tears, that I might weep over
> an unconverted, graceless, wicked,
> and adulterous generation."
> Whitefield

While this does not prove that Spalding borrowed from Whitefield, it does demonstrate that Spalding paraphrased Bible verse in the same style employed by famous preachers, such as George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. These ministers would incorporate Bible verse in their sermons, often without reference. Different verses were sometimes combined, as they would flow and weave among the preacher's dialogue. Most times, the preacher did not bother to identify verse, as if assuming the flock would recognize it, when heard or read.

Solomon Spalding was no more guilty of borrowing than any other writer of his time. Documentation or giving credit was at the whim of the author. Mercy Warren was an exception to the rule. Even though her documentation was not up to modern standards, it exceeded the norm. Spalding often crossed out passages in his handwritten manuscript, leaving the modern reader to wonder if he changed his mind or was panged by a guilty conscience.

There are various combinations of text that can be identified between *Manuscript Found*, the *Book of Mormon*, Mercy Otis Warren and David Ramsay. What Joseph Smith saw through his magical seer stones appears to have been the same terms that Spaulding, Warren and Ramsay were using. *Manuscript Found* and *Book of Mormon* references resourced from Dale Broadhurst and Ted Chandler's research. Page numbers in Ramsay and Warren are from modern reprint editions by Liberty Fund.

At the head of this army…. MF 75:11
…at the head of his army… Alma 49:10
…at the head of his army… Ramsay 385

…at their head… Warren
241

…his whole army… MF
156:13
…his whole army… Helaman
1:20
…his whole army… Ramsay
355
…his whole army… Warren
224

They began their march toward…. MF
138:15
…begun his march… Alma
52:15
…began their march… Ramsay
341
…began their march… Warren
269

…his little band of warriors… MF
170:21
…my little band of two thousand… Alma
57:6
…this little band of freemen… Ramsay
486
…this little band… Warren
143

…both in front and rear… MF
157
…both in their front and in their rear… 3 Nephi
4:25
…in the rear as well as in the front… Ramsay
426

…fell back in the rear… MF
145
…fall on the rear of the British… Warren
183
…bring them up in the rear… Alma
56:23

…die, fighting in the cause of their country and their God… MF 130:22
…died in the cause of their country and their God… Alma 56:11
…died in the cause of their country… Ramsay 460
…the cause of their country… Warren 34

Determined to conquer or die… MF 147:1
…determined to conquer in this place or die… Alma 56:17
…to conquer or to die… Ramsay/ Washington
…to conquer or die in defence of their country… Warren 202

It is impossible to describe the horror of the bloody scene…
…the blood and carnage… MF 162:01

…it is impossible for the tongue to describe
or for man to write a perfect description of the
horrible scene of the blood and carnage… Mormon 2:13

…neither the pen of the historian, or the imagination
of the poet can fully describe… Warren 385

…scene of carnage… Warren 316

…scene of horror… Ramsay 470

…surrendered themselves prisoners of war… MF 117:09
…surrendered themselves prisoners of war… Alma

57:14
…surrendered themselves prisoners of war… Warren
182
…surrendered themselves prisoners of war… Ramsay
269

…the narrow passage… MF
157:07
…the narrow passage… Mormon
2:29
…narrow passage… Warren
146
…the narrow passage…" Ramsay
272

Thus ended the great battle… MF
151:01
…thus ended the… Alma
63:17
Thus ended the… Ramsay
450

Notes to Chapter 13

Sidney Rigdon: Creating the Book of Mormon, Craig Criddle, HYPERLINK "http://www.mormonstudies.com" www.mormonstudies.com

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See www.mormonstudies.com , Ted Chandler and Dale Broadhurst

Political Inquiries, to which is Added A Plan for the Establishment of Schools Throughout the United States, Robert Coram, *American Political Writing during the Founding Era,* Liberty Fund, pg.760

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