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**Abstract** Roper discusses the regularly recurring Spaulding-Rigdon theory of the origins of the Book of Mormon and disputes, once again, the claims that Joseph Smith based the Book of Mormon text on a manuscript by Solomon Spaulding. Roper refutes the existence of two Spaulding manuscripts and shows possible influences of Jedediah Morse’s *Geography* on Spaulding’s existing “Manuscript Story.”

# MYTH, MEMORY, AND “MANUSCRIPT FOUND”

Matthew Roper

More than a century ago, the *American Historical Magazine* published a series of articles by a Salt Lake City attorney, Theodore Schroeder, in support of the Spalding-Rigdon theory of Book of Mormon origins.<sup>1</sup> In the introduction to a four-part rebuttal to those articles, Brigham H. Roberts confessed, “When one undertakes at this late day a serious discussion of the Spaulding<sup>2</sup> theory of the origin of The Book of Mormon, he instinctively feels inclined to begin with an apology to his readers.” Surprised that any serious critic of the Book of Mormon would undertake a defense of that moribund theory, Roberts wondered, “Is it not really about time to dismiss all that?”<sup>3</sup> While Roberts’s puzzlement may be shared by contemporary readers, his detailed response to Schroeder’s work underscores the need to occasionally review and revisit the arguments of the past. In 1977 Lester Bush predicted that we can reasonably expect that new variants of the Spalding theory will, “like the influenza, reemerge

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1. Theodore Schroeder, “The Origin of the Book of Mormon,” *American Historical Magazine* 1/5 (September 1906): 380–96; 1/6 (November 1906): 518–33; 2/1 (January 1907): 57–76; 2/3 (May 1907): 213–30.

2. Solomon Spalding’s name is sometimes spelled *Spaulding*.

3. Brigham H. Roberts, “The Origin of the Book of Mormon (A Reply to Mr. Theodore Schroeder),” *American Historical Magazine* 3/5 (September 1908): 441, 443; see also pp. 441–68; 3/6 (November 1908): 551–80; 4/1 (January 1909): 22–44; 4/2 (March 1909): 168–96.

every now and then.”<sup>4</sup> That this prediction has proved accurate can be seen in recent outbreaks spread by Dale Broadhurst,<sup>5</sup> Wayne Cowdrey, Howard Davis, Arthur Vanick,<sup>6</sup> and Craig Criddle,<sup>7</sup> to name just a few. The most recent manifestation of this malady can be seen in an attempt by several researchers at Stanford University to utilize word-print analysis in support of the theory.<sup>8</sup>

In a previous article, I discussed the early appeal of the Spalding-Rigdon theory and its rejection by most students of the Book of Mormon today.<sup>9</sup> A chief reason for that rejection was the 1884 rediscovery of the original Spalding manuscript, which was first recovered by Doctor Philastus Hurlbut in 1833 and entrusted to E. D. Howe in 1834. When interviewed, neighbors and acquaintances of Solomon Spalding in Conneaut, Ohio, remembered that the hapless former minister had written a story more than twenty years earlier that they claimed resembled the Book of Mormon narrative. In an effort to investigate this claim, Hurlbut traveled to New York, where he obtained a manuscript from a trunk belonging to Spalding’s widow. Hurlbut was disappointed to discover that the manuscript was inconsistent with the recollections of Spalding’s neighbors. Subsequently, some of Spalding’s neighbors claimed, and Spalding-theory advocates argued for, a hypothetical second Spalding story on ancient America called “Manuscript Found.” As for the document recovered

4. Lester E. Bush, “The Spalding Theory: Then and Now,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10 (Autumn 1977): 63.

5. See the voluminous collection of Spalding research materials made available by Dale Broadhurst at <http://solomonspalding.com/index3.htm> (accessed 4 November 2009).

6. Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis, and Arthur Vanick, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Spalding Enigma* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005). See my review of this book, “The Mythical ‘Manuscript Found,’” *FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005): 7–140.

7. Craig Criddle, “Sidney Rigdon: Creating the Book of Mormon,” <http://sidneyrigdon.com/criddle/rigdon1.htm> (accessed 4 November 2009).

8. Matthew L. Jockers, Daniela M. Witten, and Craig S. Criddle, “Reassessing authorship of the *Book of Mormon* using delta and nearest shrunken centroid classification,” *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 23/4 (2008): 465–91. A detailed treatment of the Stanford study will be forthcoming.

9. Matthew Roper, “Mythical ‘Manuscript Found,’” *FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005): 7–140.

by Hurlbut (known as “Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek,” now housed at Oberlin College), it was claimed to be an earlier, discarded version of “Manuscript Found.”<sup>10</sup> Although rejected by most scholars, variants of this theory persist today.

It was the rediscovery of an authentic Spalding manuscript, perhaps more than any other factor, that has led most students of Book of Mormon origins to reject the myth of “Manuscript Found.” I will explain why. My comments should be seen as an extension of my earlier discussion and will focus on the question of a second Spalding manuscript. I will explore this question in connection with the following issues: (1) the recollections of the story by Spalding’s former neighbors, (2) the suppression of that document by E. D. Howe, (3) the local Conneaut background of the Spalding tale itself, (4) the implications of the testimony from Spalding’s own family, (5) Spalding’s interest in the question of Israelite origins, (6) the idea of an Asiatic crossing to the Americas, (7) the influence of the writings of Jedediah Morse, (8) biblical style in Spalding’s writings, (9) confusion and contradiction in the later Conneaut testimony, (10) the influence of the classics on Spalding, and (11) the claimed similarity between the names in Spalding’s manuscript and those found in the Book of Mormon.

### Manuscript Remembered

Analysis of the statements provided to Hurlbut by former Spalding neighbors shows that they accurately recalled many genuine elements of “Manuscript Story.” They remembered a fictional history of a lost group of ancient people, some of whom were “officers” from the Old World who traveled by sea and settled in the Americas. After their arrival, they traveled by land to a region where they encountered a civilized group of Native Americans, some of them very large. The narrative purports to be a translation of an ancient manuscript buried in the ground that is an account of the Mound Builders who once lived in Spalding’s vicinity and left behind various antiquities. Interspersed

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10. Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Manuscript Found: The Complete Original “Spaulding Manuscript” by Solomon Spaulding* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1996).

with humorous passages, it relates the manners, customs, and something of the arts and sciences of the people. It gives an account of two main groups of people, describing contentions between their chiefs, their warlike nature, and bloody battles in which the ground was covered with the slain, who were then buried in large heaps or mounds. In terms of content, it is a story about a “manuscript found.” All of these elements are consistent with the document known today as “Manuscript Story—Conneaut Creek.”

When confronted with Spalding’s Conneaut manuscript, some former neighbors reportedly claimed that it bore “no resemblance” to the manuscript they had previously described.<sup>11</sup> However, if we compare the 1833 statements of Spalding’s neighbors to “Manuscript Story,” it is clear that those descriptions *do* in fact resemble genuine elements of that story, elements that those people later denied existed. That they would deny *any* resemblance between “Manuscript Story” and their earlier descriptions of Spalding’s tale casts doubt on those denials and supports the view that the claim of a second Spalding tale was a post hoc attempt to save face.<sup>12</sup>

### Manuscript Suppressed

In 1834 Howe argued that “Manuscript Found” was not the manuscript retrieved by Hurlbut in December 1833 but a second, now-missing Spalding story on ancient America. Howe insisted it was *this* hypothetical tale and not “Manuscript Story” that was remembered by Spalding’s Conneaut acquaintances and that resembled the Book of Mormon. In 1839, however, Spalding’s widow stated that “Manuscript Found” had been carefully preserved in a trunk until entrusted to the care of Hurlbut, who gave the manuscript to Howe. Although not a witness to the existence of a second Spalding manuscript, Howe had possession of “Manuscript Story” at the time he wrote *Mormonism Unveiled*. The fact that the manuscript first entrusted to Hurlbut and

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11. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: or, a faithful account of that singular imposition and delusion, from its rise to the present time . . .* (Painesville, OH: By the author, 1834), 288.

12. Roper, “Mythical ‘Manuscript Found,’” 35–42.

then Howe was never published or returned to Spalding's family, and subsequently went missing while in Howe's possession, suggests that this document was downplayed if not deliberately suppressed. In 1834, left with the problematic statements collected earlier by Hurlbut and unable to obtain the kind of document that might appear to have provided source material for the Book of Mormon, Howe was forced to either argue for a second Spalding tale or abandon the theory altogether.

Howe's published description of the manuscript in his possession was also inadequate and misleading. He omitted important details about the story that would have undermined his argument for a second Spalding story, such as the fact that the manuscript purported to give an account of the builders of the Ohio mounds; described the laws, arts, manners, and customs of the people in question; and recorded serious wars between rival groups—elements that would have recalled the 1833 statements collected by Hurlbut. After years as a local lightning rod of anti-Mormon opposition, Howe sold the *Painesville Telegraph* in 1835 in order to pursue other endeavors. In later years, however, the disappearance of the Spalding manuscript from Howe's possession became somewhat of a scandal. Subsequent Spalding investigators simply would not let the matter die. In a letter to Howe in 1879, Rev. Robert Patterson Jr. grilled Howe about the matter:

5. Did Mr. Hurlbut inform you that the manuscript was to be compared with the Mormon Bible and was then to be returned to Mrs. Davison? 6. Did you inform Mrs. Davison that this document was not the "Manuscript Found"? Or did Mr. Hurlbut so inform her? If neither, why was she not informed? And if informed, how long after the receipt of the manuscript was she written to? And what (if any) was her reply? 7. Why was not the manuscript returned, as promised by Hurlbut? Would not this have been the surest, speediest,

and almost the only way of enlisting her in an effort to secure for you the real “Manuscript Found”?<sup>13</sup>

In response to Patterson’s questions, Howe claimed that Hurlbut never told him anything about returning the manuscript and that since it obviously had nothing to do with the Book of Mormon, it was, in his view, of no further use.<sup>14</sup> Obviously irritated by a controversy that continued to haunt him decades after thinking he had left the matter behind, the aging Howe stated to another correspondent in 1881 that

I think there has been much mist thrown around the whole subject of the origin of the Mormon Bible and the “Manuscript Found,” by several statements that have been made by those who have been endeavoring to solve the problem after sleeping quietly for half a century. Every effort was made to unravel the mystery at the time, when nearly all the parties were on earth, and the result published at the time, and I think it all folly to try to dig out anything more.<sup>15</sup>

Patterson was puzzled and frustrated by Howe’s reluctance to pursue the matter. In a letter to a sympathetic James Cobb, Patterson vented:

One thing that is inexplicable in this whole history is Mr. E. D. Howe’s seeming indifference in so important a part of his case as the absolute proof of plagiarism. Why should he have rested satisfied with Hurlbut’s statement, without any attempt by correspondence with Mrs. Davison or Mr. Clarke to discover where the real “Manuscript Found” could be? At that early day its fate could have been traced with comparative ease. If any of the Clarke family had given the veritable MS.

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13. Robert Patterson Jr. to E. D. Howe, 12 September 1879, Theodore Albert Schroeder Papers, box 2, folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society Library, Madison, Wisconsin.

14. E. D. Howe to Robert Patterson Jr., 24 September 1879, Theodore Albert Schroeder Papers, box 2, folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society Library, Madison, Wisconsin.

15. E. D. Howe to T. W. Smith, Painesville, Ohio, 26 July 1881, in Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 1914), 76.

to Hurlbut this important fact could have been indisputably established in a few days’ time, whilst the first sheets of Howe’s book were passing through the slow hand-press of those early days. . . . As this plagiarism was the pivotal point on which Howe’s demonstration of fraud, even to the Mormons themselves, turned—why was he at the time so indifferent to it? And why has he ever since appeared so careless in regard to it—even on his own theory that Hurlbut told the truth? To me it is an insoluble conundrum.<sup>16</sup>

Howe’s reluctance to pursue the matter is understandable in light of his previous efforts to downplay the significance of “Manuscript Story,” necessary in order to bolster the theory of another manuscript. It seems never to have occurred to Patterson that the assumption of a second Spalding story on ancient America might be mistaken altogether.

### Local Background of the Spalding Tale

When did Spalding write his Conneaut tale? The statements of Spalding’s acquaintances yield clues. Aaron Wright spoke ambiguously of his introduction to Spalding’s story without specifying how long this was after Spalding’s first arrival in the neighborhood.<sup>17</sup> Oliver Smith noted Spalding’s land speculations in the region: “While engaged in this business, he boarded at my house, in all nearly six months. All his leisure hours were occupied in writing a historical novel.”<sup>18</sup> Smith, like Wright, failed to indicate if this was shortly after Smith’s own arrival at Conneaut or later. Other statements are more helpful on the timing. Henry Lake, who arrived in Conneaut, Ohio, near the first of January 1811, stated, “Soon after my arrival, I formed a co-partnership with Solomon Spalding, for the purpose of rebuilding a forge which he had commenced a year or two before. He very

16. Robert Patterson Jr. to James T. Cobb, 29 March 1881, in “James Thornton Cobb: The Don Quixote of Deseret,” <http://solomonspalding.com/SRP/saga/saga10a.htm> (accessed 29 October 2009).

17. Aaron Wright statement, August 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 284.

18. Oliver Smith statement, August 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 284–85.

frequently read to me from a manuscript which he was writing, which he entitled the ‘Manuscript Found,’ and which he represented as being found in this town.”<sup>19</sup> This statement and a contract between Spalding and Lake dated 8 March 1811 indicate that Lake became acquainted with Spalding’s story after arriving in the region and likely after the two formed their partnership.<sup>20</sup> John Miller dated his first recollection of Spalding’s manuscript to an unspecified period of several months in 1811, when he was employed by Lake and Spalding in the rebuilding of the forge and boarded at Spalding’s house.<sup>21</sup> That would be no earlier than March of that year. Nahum Howard dated his first acquaintance with Spalding to December 1810 and claimed that after that date he saw Spalding frequently and was introduced to his writings.<sup>22</sup> Artemus Cunningham stated that he visited Spalding in October 1811 and, over a period of two days, became acquainted with Spalding’s story.<sup>23</sup> Taken together, the 1833 testimonies suggest that Spalding may have commenced his initial writing on the Conneaut story in early 1811.

Statements from family members and other acquaintances, however, associate Spalding’s tale with events of the War of 1812. According to Spalding’s widow, “This was about the year 1812. Hull’s surrender at Detroit, occurred near the same time, and I recollect the date well from that circumstance.”<sup>24</sup> John and Martha Spalding also dated Spalding’s writing efforts to late 1812, shortly before his departure for Pittsburgh, as do Matilda McKinstry, Abner Jackson, and Josiah Spalding. In 1855 Josiah prepared a statement describing early events of his life and his activities in connection with his brother Solomon: “We soon after went into a large speculation in new land in Pennsylvania and Ohio, and after

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19. Henry Lake statement, September 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 281–82.

20. Henry Lake and Solomon Spalding Agreement, 8 March 1811, “Spalding Studies: Ohio Sources, Part 3, Aaron Wright and Henry Lake Documents,” <http://solomonspalding.com/SRP/saga2/Ashtab3.htm> (accessed 29 October 2009).

21. John Miller statement, September 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 282–83.

22. Nahum Howard statement, August 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 285–86.

23. Artemus Cunningham statement, 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 286–87.

24. Matilda Spalding Davison statement, 1 April 1839, in “Mormonism,” *Boston Recorder*, 19 April 1839.

a few years he moved out there with his wife.” According to Josiah, during his residence at Conneaut, Solomon

sold a large amount of land on credit principally to people in Ohio. The war that broke out with England seriously affected that country. That circumstance, with some other misfortunes that happened, placed us in difficult circumstances. We were under the necessity to make great sacrifices to pay our debts. I went to see my brother, and staid with him for some time. I found him unwell, and something low in spirits. He began to compose his novel.<sup>25</sup>

The United States declared war on Great Britain on 18 June 1812. Josiah would have visited Solomon sometime later since the reason for his visit was to address the financial difficulties exacerbated by the war. It was then that Josiah became acquainted with his brother’s story, which was—judging by his description—similar if not identical to the first half of “Manuscript Story.” Significantly, Josiah’s description of the tale leaves off before the commencement of the climactic war in Spalding’s narrative, suggesting that his brother had not yet written that portion of the manuscript.

During the remainder of 1812, American forces experienced a series of military setbacks that threatened the land along the Great

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25. Josiah Spalding statement, 6 January 1855, in Samuel J. Spalding, *Spalding Memorial: A Genealogical History of Edward Spalding of Massachusetts Bay, and His Descendants* (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1872), 160–62. “Spalding’s manuscript,” suggests Traci Thomas, “could be said to reflect certain New England attitudes toward America’s declaration of war against Great Britain. Many New Englanders felt that the American involvement in the war would be beneficial for France but certainly not for the economy of the United States.” She argues that Spalding’s story of an unnecessary, wasteful, and ultimately destructive war between civilized pre-Columbian Americans can be read as “a reflection of contemporary New England concerns about the motivations and influences of powerful central government leaders.” Traci Thomas, “‘Brought Forth at Some Future Day’: Historical Narratives in the Book of Mormon, *View of the Hebrews*, and *Manuscript Found*,” in *Archive of Restoration Culture: Summer Fellows’ Papers 2000–2002*, ed. Richard Lyman Bushman (Provo, UT: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, Brigham Young University, 2005), 5.

Lakes. This included the surrender of General Hull's forces to the British on 16 August.

General Hull's surrender in 1812 at Detroit, whereby the British obtained possession of that commander's army and the Territory of Michigan, left the whole northern frontier exposed to the incursions of the English, who also had undisputed control of Lake Erie. The settlements along its shore were, therefore, kept in a continued state of agitation and alarm.

The country had been actually devastated as far east as the Huron River, and the inhabitants either murdered or driven from their homes before a sufficient force could be collected to arrest their progress. To repel this invasion the whole effective force of the country had been called into the field, leaving the new settlements in an exposed and defenseless condition. Knowing the widespread consternation among the settlers, the British vessels took delight in sailing along the coast, firing cannon, and making other sundry demonstrations of hostility in order to increase the alarm of the inhabitants.

They had in two or three instances effected a landing from their vessels in small parties, killed some cattle, and possessed themselves of some other articles of plunder of more or less value.

Tidings were frequently arriving from the seat of war, and it was not uncommon for the people to be called out of their beds at the dead of night to hear exaggerated accounts of the murders and cruelties of the Indians engaged in assisting the enemy.<sup>26</sup>

These turbulent local events along the northern Ohio and Pennsylvania border region may find echoes in "Manuscript Story."<sup>27</sup> Near the end of Spalding's tale, local villagers flee from their town to a

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26. William W. Williams, *History of Ashtabula County Ohio, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Pioneers and Most Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878), 157–58.

27. Broadhurst, "Spalding Studies: Ohio Sources, Part 4, Solomon Spalding Documents," <http://solomonspalding.com/SRP/saga2/Ashtab4.htm> (accessed 29 October 2009).

nearby fort while their community is looted and burned. Later, enemy forces gain access to the fort and massacre many refugees.<sup>28</sup> Local histories highlight the confusion and the sometimes mistaken but understandable fears of local residents during this time. For example, on the night of 11 August 1812, villagers near Spalding's home were frightened by the false report of a force of British soldiers and their Indian allies landing near the village. Fearing for their lives and afraid that the settlement might be looted and burned, some of the villagers fled over Conneaut Creek to one of the mounds known locally as "Fort Hill."

The younger children, and some of the women, were carried over on the shoulders of men. One rather portly lady was being thus transported on the back of her husband, who was but a small man, and lost his footing on a slippery rock in the centre of the stream, and he and his precious cargo were submerged in the current; and as the little man occupied the nether position he was nearly drowned before he could shift his ballast, and get his head above it and the water.<sup>29</sup>

These echoes of the local war hysteria from mid-August through the end of 1812 make it unlikely that Spalding abandoned "Manuscript Story" at that time for another. Josiah visited his brother in the summer of 1812, sometime *after* 18 June but likely left *before* the events in mid-August. Josiah's description of "Manuscript Story," as noted above, suggests that the war chapters were not yet written at the time of his visit. Spalding left Conneaut for Pittsburgh in the fall of 1812, probably by the end of October if not before.<sup>30</sup> If the war chapters in

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28. Solomon Spalding, "Manuscript Story" (unpublished), 159–63, as transcribed in Jackson, *Manuscript Found*, 115–18. In subsequent references, "Manuscript Story" is abbreviated as "MS." Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have been modernized for this article.

29. Williams, *History of Ashtabula County*, 158. Broadhurst suggests that Spalding may have been familiar with this event and drafted a more humorous variation, which appears in "Manuscript Story."

30. Broadhurst notes that on 4 November of that year, one William F. Miller, to whom Spalding owed a large debt, went before the Ashtabula Court of Common Pleas in an attempt to lay claim upon what was left of Spalding's assets. Spalding seems to have left town before this occurred. Broadhurst, "Spalding Studies: Ohio Sources, Part 3, Aaron

“Manuscript Story” were inspired by local events, they must have been written sometime *after* mid-August, leaving about two and a half months before Spalding fled Conneaut for Pittsburgh. That does not leave much time for crafting an entirely new story. Additionally, if “Manuscript Story” is not a first draft but a revision of the story, then at least two drafts of this story were written between the end of summer and the end of October.<sup>31</sup> Given the unsettling times, Spalding’s health problems, and other concerns, is it reasonable to see the former minister abandoning his old story at this time to craft an entirely new one? Advocates of the Spalding theory since E. D. Howe have claimed that “Manuscript Story” was only a first draft that was later abandoned for another, altogether different story called “Manuscript Found,” but the chronological evidence suggests that Spalding was most likely still fiddling with a draft of “Manuscript Story” at the time he left Ohio and that he had only one tale to show for his previous efforts at Conneaut.

There are indications that Spalding did very little work on his story after this time. Spalding’s widow related that following their departure from Conneaut in late 1812, her husband visited Robert Patterson Sr. in Pittsburgh regarding the possibility of publishing his manuscript. She said that Patterson “informed Mr. S. that if he would make out a title page and preface, he would publish it and it might be a source of profit. *This Mr. S. refused to do for reasons which I cannot now state.*”<sup>32</sup> Spalding’s daughter, Matilda McKinstry, reported that Patterson advised her father to “*polish it up, finish it, and you will make money out of it.*”<sup>33</sup> The remark that, besides requiring a title

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Wright and Henry Lake Documents,” <http://SolomonSpalding.com/SRP/Saga2/Ashtab3.htm> (accessed 29 October 2009).

31. “The hastily scribbled manuscript now on file at Oberlin College is not a first draft. It contains deleted and rewritten sections out-of-place among its pages and has some segments which show the calm hand of a copyist, complete with instances of a copyist’s dittographic mistakes.” Broadhurst, “Solomon Spalding of Ashford, Connecticut: The Spalding Saga, Episode 1,” <http://solomonspalding.com/SRP/saga/saga01a.htm> (accessed 25 April 2009).

32. Matilda Spalding Davison statement, 1839, emphasis added.

33. Matilda Spalding McKinstry statement, cited in an anonymous article titled “The Book of Mormon,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, August 1880, 615. The statement is dated 3 April 1880.

page and preface, Spalding's manuscript was unfinished and in need of "polish" suggests the rough-hewn nature of the manuscript shown to Patterson. Two years after the publication of McKinstry's account, Redick McKee, a neighbor of Spalding's during his final years in Amity, visited McKinstry in October 1882 and questioned her about her father's meeting with Patterson in Pittsburgh. McKinstry recalled her mother telling her of Patterson's suggestion that "Mr. Spaulding should write *a brief preface, and perhaps a chapter or two in concluding the romance, giving a little more elaborate description of the Indian mounds in Ohio.* Her mother," McKinstry told McKee, "thought he was engaged in doing that at the time I was living with the family at Amity."<sup>34</sup> That description again fits "Manuscript Story."

After about two years in Pittsburgh, Spalding and his family moved to Amity, Pennsylvania. The few sources that recall Spalding's final years in the town suggest that he may have engaged in occasional revision and correction of his old manuscript. Several residents remember reading or hearing Spalding read and explain his story but give little indication that he was crafting a new one.<sup>35</sup> In his several statements, Joseph Miller Sr. speaks only of Spalding's manuscript writing as something done *before* his arrival in Amity. He speaks of "papers which he said he *had* written" as if it were in the past (1869).<sup>36</sup> Redick McKee indicated that Spalding continued to dabble with the old story.

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34. Redick McKee, "From a Veteran Ruling Elder," *Pittsburgh Presbyterian Banner*, 15 November 1882.

35. "He used to *read* select portions of these papers to amuse us of evenings" (Joseph Miller Sr. statement, *Washington (PA) Reporter*, 7 April 1869); "Mr. S. seemed to take delight in *reading* from his manuscript . . . for the entertainment of his frequent visitors, heard him *read* most if not all of it, and had frequent conversations with him about it" (Joseph Miller [Sr.], "The Book of Mormon," *Pittsburgh Telegraph*, 6 February 1879); "often heard him *read* from what he called his MS. . . . Mr. Spaulding would *read* from his MSS to entertain us" (Joseph Miller [Sr.] to Mrs. Ellen E. Dickinson, 13 February 1882); "I *read*, or *heard him read*, many wonderful and amusing passages" (Redick McKee, 14 April 1869, in "Solomon Spalding Again," *Washington (PA) Reporter*, 21 April 1869), emphasis added.

36. Joseph Miller Sr. statement, 26 March 1869, *Washington (PA) Reporter*, 7 April 1869. "He said he *wrote* the papers as a novel" (1869); "He said he *wrote* it to pass away the time when he was unwell. . . . He told me that he *wrote* it for a novel" (Joseph Miller Sr. statement, 26 March 1869), emphasis added.

In 1869, he recalled, “I recollect quite well Mr. Spalding spending much time in writing on sheets of paper torn out of an old book.”<sup>37</sup> What was the nature of Spalding’s writing activity at this time? In 1879 McKee stated, “I also understood he was then *occasionally re-writing, correcting*, and he thought improving *some* passages descriptive of his supposed battles.”<sup>38</sup> It makes sense to see Spalding *editing* his earlier work in Amity rather than fabricating an entirely different story, which he would then have to get Patterson to accept. McKee’s recollection suggests the limited nature of Spalding’s activity during his final years of poor health. The work on his story at that time was “occasional” and said to include only “some” of the battle passages. This does not sound like a major revision. The evidence describes a Spalding manuscript in Pittsburgh and Amity that was still unfinished and in need of polish, requiring not only a title page and a brief preface or introduction but also an additional chapter or two giving a better description of the mounds and concluding the story. This is also consistent with the state of “Manuscript Story,” which is likewise unfinished and badly in need of polish and breaks off in the middle of the destructive war. It also shows evidence of revision and editing in the very places described. On page 152 of the manuscript, an entire paragraph describing a circular burial mound in which the bodies of the fallen dead were interred is crossed out and revised.<sup>39</sup> This is what one would expect if, as the above testimony indicates, Spalding was occasionally correcting and revising that portion of the narrative to discuss the final battles and the mounds. It also suggests that it was still “Manuscript Found” and not some hypothetical second story that was the focus of his concern in the final years of his life.<sup>40</sup>

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37. Redick McKee, “Solomon Spalding Again,” *Washington (PA) Reporter*, 21 April 1869. In a later statement McKee recalled occasionally visiting Spalding in his room, finding him at a table reading and writing.

38. Redick McKee to Robert Patterson Jr., 15 April 1879, in Boyd Crumrine, “Solomon Spalding and the Book of Mormon,” *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Everts, 1882), 432, emphasis added.

39. MS, 152, in Jackson, 110.

40. In order to support the theory that “Manuscript Found” was a second story, distinct from “Manuscript Story,” Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick note that Miller and McKee claimed that the document they saw Spalding correcting in Amity was written on fools-

## Testimony from the Spalding Family

Before the rediscovery of “Manuscript Story” in 1884, all members of Solomon Spalding’s family who provided testimony (John Spalding, Martha Spalding, Matilda Davison Spalding, Josiah Spalding, and Matilda McKinstry) mention only one Spalding story on ancient America. They place the writing of this story during the War of 1812 and identify that work as “Manuscript Found.” This is particularly interesting in the case of Josiah, who was not interviewed by Spalding investigators and who was unfamiliar with the Book of Mormon. His description of his brother’s story, as it stood in the summer of 1812, lacks the suspicious names and phrases of the 1833 testimony and is remarkably close to “Manuscript Story.”<sup>41</sup>

## The Spalding Manuscript and the Argument for Israelite Origins

In their 1833 testimony, several former neighbors of Spalding’s claimed that the Conneaut story involved the lost tribes of Israel. According to John Spalding, his brother endeavored “to show that the American Indians are descendants of the Jews, or the lost tribes.”<sup>42</sup> John’s wife, Martha, remembered that “he [Solomon] had for many years contended that the aborigines of America were descendants of some of the lost tribes of Israel, and this idea he carried out in the book in question.”<sup>43</sup> According to Henry Lake, “this book represented the American Indians as the descendants of the lost tribes.”<sup>44</sup> Aaron

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cap paper (Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* 90–92). The authors accept the preponderance of historical evidence that Hurlbut obtained only one manuscript written by Solomon Spalding and that this document was “Manuscript Story” (ibid., 59), yet they insist that the late recollections of Miller and McKee must be taken as definitive evidence for a second Spalding manuscript. The problem here is that Benjamin Winchester in another late recollection also described “Manuscript Story” as having been written on “foolscap,” which tends to undermine the authors’ argument. In light of the above, I argued that these late references to “foolscap” may simply reflect a broader usage of the term than the authors had considered (Roper, “Mythical ‘Manuscript Found,’” 28).

41. Roper, “Mythical ‘Manuscript Found,’” 84–86.

42. John Spalding statement, 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 279.

43. Martha Spalding statement, 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 280.

44. Henry Lake statement, September 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 282.

Wright claimed that Spalding's manuscript was a history "of the lost tribes of Israel, purporting that they were the first settlers of America, and that the Indians were their descendants."<sup>45</sup> It has been assumed by advocates of the Spalding theory that "Manuscript Story" could not have been the document remembered by Spalding's neighbors because it contains a story of Roman sailors arriving in America rather than a story about the lost tribes of Israel. The Israelite story, as the argument goes, must have been a later and different version of the earlier tale that Spalding abandoned. However, a closer reading of "Manuscript Story" suggests that it does support the theory of Israelite origins—but implicitly rather than explicitly.

Spalding's work differed from that of other advocates of Israelite origins in that it was a work of fiction rather than a treatise like those of James Adair,<sup>46</sup> Elias Boudinot,<sup>47</sup> and Ethan Smith.<sup>48</sup> Spalding wrote much of his narrative from the imagined first-person perspective of the Roman castaway Fabius, who describes the characteristics, beliefs, and practices of pre-Columbian Americans and provides commentary and observations but never *explicitly* links them with Israel. Yet for the reader, these descriptions do evoke the arguments for an Israelite origin, even if they are not explicitly stated.<sup>49</sup>

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45. Aaron Wright statement, September 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 284.

46. James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (1775; repr., London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1930).

47. Elias Boudinot, *A Star in the West; or, A Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Tribes of Israel* (Trenton, NJ: Fenton, Hutchinson, and Dunham, 1816).

48. Ethan Smith, *A View of the Hebrews*, 2nd ed. (Poultney, VT: Smith and Shute, 1825).

49. One of the main commanders toward the end of Spalding's story bears the name Hanock. Hanock was the firstborn son of Reuben and the name of an important clan of that tribe, who were known for their military prowess previous to their captivity with the ten tribes by the Assyrians (1 Chronicles 5:3–6, 18–22, 25–26). Other commanders that might recall biblical names include Lamock (compare *Lamech* in Genesis 4:18–24; 1 Chronicles 1:3), Hamelick (compare with *Amalek* in Exodus 17:8), Sambal (compare *Sanballat* in Nehemiah 2:10), and Sabamah (compare *Sibmah* in Isaiah 16:8–9). One of the most destructive battles toward the end of Spalding's story is called the battle of Geheno, a name that suggests the Hebrew word *Gehenna*.

*A Chosen People*

Early advocates of Hebrew origins frequently cited evidence that Native Americans, like ancient Israel, viewed themselves as a chosen people.<sup>50</sup> In Spalding's story, Fabius and his fellow Romans witness an annual festival in which the chief of the Delewans expresses their belief that they are the "favorite children of the great and good Spirit."<sup>51</sup>

*A Knowledge of Writing*

In Spalding's fictional story, Lobaska, the mysterious visitor from the west, is credited with introducing significant elements of culture and civilization among the Native Americans, including the art of writing. Fabius discusses the origins of writing, believed to have originated in Egypt and Chaldea. He rejects the theory of independent invention and suggests that it is most probable that the knowledge of writing was "communicated from one nation to the other." He then describes the practice of writing among Native Americans.<sup>52</sup> The implication is that the knowledge of writing that preserved and conveyed these teachings had been communicated to pre-Columbian Americans from a people who had once lived in Egypt or Mesopotamia. "In all their large towns and cities they have deposited under the care of a priest a sacred roll which contains the tenets of their theology and a description of their religious ceremonies. This order of men publish comments upon these sacred writings; they publish some tracts on moral philosophy and some containing a collection of proverbs and the wise sayings of their sages."<sup>53</sup> This description reminds one of the Hebrew scriptures, which were also carefully preserved and which recorded the religious practices, proverbs, and wisdom of ancient Israel.

*Native American and Israelite Beliefs*

Early writers who argued for an Israelite origin for Native Americans often focused on Indian beliefs that, in their view,

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50. Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 34–36; Boudinot, *Star in the West*, 192–93; Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 99.

51. MS, 23, in Jackson, 16.

52. MS, 51–52, in Jackson, 31–33.

53. MS, 53, in Jackson, 33.

compared favorably with those of ancient Israel. Typical in such comparisons were the ideas that (1) there is a supreme being or a Great Spirit who is the creator,<sup>54</sup> (2) there is a devil,<sup>55</sup> (3) there are angels or spirits,<sup>56</sup> (4) the soul is immortal,<sup>57</sup> and (5) there are rewards for good and evil in the afterlife.<sup>58</sup> Variations on each of these beliefs are also found in Spalding's description of the pre-Columbian beliefs of the fictional Kentucks and the Sciotans. A few examples follow. Regarding belief in a supreme creator, Fabius describes the theology of the Ohons, written in their sacred roll, as including belief in "an intelligent, omnipotent Being, who is self-existent and infinitely good and benevolent" and who is a creator and "presides over the universe and has a perfect knowledge of all things."<sup>59</sup> The lawgiver Lobaska, using familiar biblical language, teaches the people that they should view "all mankind as brothers and sisters," explaining, "You have all derived your existence from the Great Father of Spirits; you are his children and belong to his great family"<sup>60</sup> (see Hebrews 12:9; Numbers 16:22; 27:16). Concerning the devil, Spalding says his people believed in "another great, intelligent being who is self-existent and possessed of great power but not of omnipotence. He is filled with infinite malice against the good Being and exerts all his subtlety and power to ruin His works."<sup>61</sup> As far as belief in angels or spirits goes, Spalding states that the Supreme Being "formed seven sons" who were "his principal agents to manage the affairs of his empire."<sup>62</sup> The Jewish Apocrypha speaks of "seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One" (Tobit 12:15). In Spalding's story the people believe that the supreme being "formed the bodies of men from matter. Into each body he infused a particle of his own spiritual

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54. Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 98–107.

55. Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 99, 104, 139, 155.

56. Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 38; Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 98–99, 106, 155.

57. Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 101, 158.

58. Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 103, 108, 164–65.

59. MS, 56, in Jackson, 35.

60. MS, 79, 81, in Jackson, 50–51.

61. MS, 56–57, in Jackson, 35, 37.

62. MS, 56, in Jackson, 35.

substance, in consequence of which man in his first formation was inclined to benevolence and goodness." Those who live righteously will, in the afterlife, be able to "pass through any part of the universe and are invisible to mortal eyes. Their place of residence is on a vast plain which is beautified with magnificent buildings, with trees, fruits, and flowers. No imagination can paint the delights, the felicity of the righteous." Those who live wickedly will be denied such privileges. "Their souls, naked and incapable of seeing light, dwell in darkness and are tormented with the keenest anguish. . . . Now, O man, attend to thy duty and thou shalt escape the portion of the wicked and enjoy the delights of the righteous."<sup>63</sup>

#### *Israelite Laws*

Like those in the Bible (e.g., Ecclesiastes 12:13; Isaiah 57:1–2; Revelation 14:13), the people in Spalding's story were taught to keep the commandments and were promised that happiness would attend them in the afterlife if they did so. "Be attentive, O man, to the words of truth which have been recorded and pay respect to all the commandments which have been written for your observance."<sup>64</sup> They were not to kill, a crime that was punishable by death, as it was under the law of Moses<sup>65</sup> (Exodus 20:13; 21:12). They were not to commit adultery<sup>66</sup> (20:14) or to steal (v. 15). Like the ancient Israelites who were commanded "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him" (Leviticus 19:13), Spalding's ancient Americans were taught "Defraud not thy neighbor, nor suffer thy hands secretly to convey his property from him."<sup>67</sup> "The thief is compelled to make ample restitution"<sup>68</sup>

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63. MS, 56–58, in Jackson, 35, 37.

64. MS, 64–65, in Jackson, 40. "The good Being, looking upon his unhappy offspring with infinite love and compassion, made a decree that if mankind would reduce their passions and appetites under the government of reason he should enjoy blessings in this world and be completely happy after his soul quits his body" (MS, 57, in Jackson, 37).

65. "No crime is so horrid as maliciously to destroy the life of man" (MS, 58, in Jackson, 37). "Murder alone was punished with death" (MS, 99, in Jackson, 64).

66. "Preserve thy body from the contamination of lust and remember that the seduction of thy neighbor's wife would be a great crime" (MS, 58, in Jackson, 37).

67. MS, 58, in Jackson, 37.

68. MS, 99, in Jackson, 64.

(Leviticus 6:4–5). They were to honor father and mother<sup>69</sup> (Exodus 20:12); show kindness and respect to the stranger, the poor, and the aged;<sup>70</sup> and to treat their neighbor as they would treat themselves<sup>71</sup> (Leviticus 19:18). Judges were not to accept bribes or be oppressive, but were to be concerned with the welfare of the people<sup>72</sup> (Exodus 23:8; Leviticus 19:15). Like ancient Israel, they could pronounce blessings and curses<sup>73</sup> (Deuteronomy 28:2, 15). Polygamy was permitted, provided each wife was equally cared for<sup>74</sup> (Exodus 21:10). Humility was taught; idleness, envy, malice, and contention were discouraged; and pride was condemned.<sup>75</sup>

### *Israelite Practices and Ceremonies*

Early advocates for Israelite origins often compared what they observed of Native American festivals and religious practices with what they understood of similar Jewish practices in ancient Israel. These writers portrayed the former as corrupted versions of the latter: “The Indian system is derived from the moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws of the Hebrews, though now but a faint copy of the divine original.”<sup>76</sup> Spalding takes a similar approach in his novel. Fabius describes an annual harvest and atonement festival in September in which the Delewans sacrifice and burn two black dogs and then slaughter two white dogs, which the people then eat. The sacrifice of the dogs is considered a “solemn expiatory sacrifice,” during which the people pray for forgiveness of their sins. “The solemnities are ended and in their

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69. “Treat with kindness and reverence thy parents. Forsake them not in old age, nor let their cheeks be furrowed with tears for the want of bread” (MS, 58, in Jackson, 38).

70. “Let the stranger find an hospitable resting place under thy roof. Give him to eat from thy portion, that when he departs he may bless thee and go on his way rejoicing” (MS, 60, in Jackson, 38).

71. “Hold out the hand of kindness and friendship to thy neighbor; consider him when reduced to indigence and distress. He is as dear to the great and good Being as what thou art. To afford him relief will be pleasing to thy Maker and an expression of thy gratitude” (MS, 59, in Jackson, 38).

72. “Let rulers consult the welfare of the people and not aggrandize themselves by oppression and base bribes” (MS, 59, in Jackson, 38).

73. MS, 97, in Jackson, 63.

74. MS, 58, in Jackson, 37.

75. MS, 59–60, 62, 100, in Jackson, 38–39, 65.

76. Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 227.

opinion their poor souls are completely whitewashed and every stain entirely effaced."<sup>77</sup> At other times the people are also to pray and give thanks to God<sup>78</sup> and to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness.<sup>79</sup> "Once in three months," they are commanded, "ye shall hold a great festival in every city and town and your priests shall sacrifice an elk as a token that your sins deserve punishment, but that the divine mercy has banished them into shades of forgetfulness."<sup>80</sup> Spalding's people observe a Sabbath day that takes place on the eighth day rather than the sixth as in ancient Israel. "It is ordained that on every eighth day ye lay aside all unnecessary labor; that ye meet in convenient numbers and form assemblies. That in each assembly a learned holy man shall preside, who shall lead your devotions and explain this sacred roll and give you such instruction as shall promote your happiness in this life and in the life to come."<sup>81</sup> Such references in Spalding's story are clear references to Israelite practices.

### *Priesthood*

As part of the religious order described in Spalding's story, Lobaska has his son appointed high priest, a hereditary office among the eldest sons in his family with four other priests as his assistants. These religious leaders were to advise the rulers and preside over all the other priests in the kingdom to see that they faithfully performed their office and responsibilities.<sup>82</sup> The priesthood structure resembled

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77. MS, 22–26, in Jackson, 16–18.

78. "He requires us to supplicate His favors and when received, to express our gratitude" (MS, 62, in Jackson, 39).

79. "As our passions and appetites often get the ascendance of reason, we are therefore bound to confess our faults and implore forgiveness" (MS, 62–63, in Jackson, 39). "Let your earnest prayers ascend for pardon & your transgressions will flee away" (MS, 24, in Jackson, 16).

80. MS, 63, in Jackson, 40.

81. MS, 63, in Jackson, 39–40.

82. "In order that the priests and instructors of learning may know and perform their duty for the benefit of civilization, morality, and religion, Lambon, the third son of Labaska, shall preside over them and shall have the title of High Priest. And the office shall be hereditary in the eldest males of his family successively. There shall be associated with him four priests as his assistants. They shall exercise a jurisdiction over all the priests of the empire and shall see that they faithfully perform the duties of their office. They shall attend to the instructors of learning and shall direct that a suitable number are

the hereditary Aaronic Priesthood among the Israelites in the wilderness. The Israelites initially had Aaron as their high priest, assisted by his four sons, who presided over the other priests and Levites (Numbers 3:2–3). As in ancient Israel, the priests in Spalding’s tale received support from the offerings of the people.<sup>83</sup>

### *Prophets*

Spalding’s story tells of Lobaska’s arrival from a far-off country in the west. Able to do miraculous things, this enigmatic leader is, like Moses, both a revelator and a lawgiver. It was “generally believed that he held conversation with celestial beings, and always acted under the influence of divine inspiration.”<sup>84</sup> The laws and teachings he gave to the people were reportedly

revealed to him in several interviews which he had been permitted to have with the second son of the great and good Being. The people did not long hesitate, but received as sacred and divine truth every word which he taught them. They forsook their old religion, which was a confused medley of idolatry and superstitious nonsense, and embraced a religion more sublime and consistent and more fraught with sentiments which would promote the happiness of mankind in this world.<sup>85</sup>

Hundreds of years later there are false prophets among the people who use deceptive means to lead the people into war. One of these prophets uses a stone through which he falsely claims to see hidden things. The stone appears to be a negative version of the Urim and Thummim possessed by the high priest in ancient Israel.<sup>86</sup>

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provided throughout the empire. It shall likewise be their duty at all suitable times and places to instruct rulers and people in the duties of their respective stations” (MS, 87–88, in Jackson, 55–56).

83. “The people shall make contributions, in proportion to their wealth, for the support of their priests” (MS, 88, in Jackson, 56).

84. MS, 68, in Jackson, 45.

85. MS, 70–71, in Jackson, 46.

86. MS, 126, in Jackson, 89–90.

### An Asiatic Crossing

In their 1833 statements, several of Spalding’s neighbors recalled a journey by land as well as by sea in Spalding’s manuscript. In 1878 Daniel Tyler related information he had gathered decades earlier from fellow Latter-day Saint convert and neighbor Erastus Rudd, who had known Spalding when he lived in Conneaut<sup>87</sup> and “in whose house much of the romance was formerly written.” Rudd informed Tyler that “a superannuated Presbyterian preacher, Solomon Spaulding by name, had written a romance on a few mounds at the above named village, pretending that the ten tribes crossed from the eastern hemisphere via Behring Straits to this continent, and that said mounds were built by a portion of them, to bury the dead after some hard fighting.”<sup>88</sup> In 1880 another former neighbor of Spalding’s, Abner Jackson, provided similar recollections from 1812.<sup>89</sup> Consistent with Tyler’s testimony, he recalled that the Spalding story depicts Israel’s lost tribes wandering up through Asia and crossing the Bering Strait.<sup>90</sup> This detail has led Spalding advocates to conclude that Spalding must have written more than one story while he lived in Conneaut.<sup>91</sup> Yet a closer reading of “Manuscript Story” suggests that these later recollections are consistent with the document and do not require the existence of a second Conneaut story.

Reasoning that the world must be round, the fictional narrator of Spalding’s romance, shipwrecked in the Americas, concludes that it might be possible to travel far enough west to eventually reach his land of origin in Europe. “On what principle,” he asks, “can we account for

87. Rudd died during the Zion’s Camp journey in 1834.

88. Daniel Tyler, “The Spauldin[g] Story,” *Deseret Evening News*, 16 January 1878.

89. Abner Jackson statement, 20 December 1880, in “The Book of Mormon,” *Washington (PA) Daily Evening Reporter*, 7 January 1881. Jackson provided his statement after reading Matilda McKinstry’s recollections published earlier that year.

90. Abner Jackson statement, 20 December 1880. Benjamin Winchester spoke of another unnamed Jackson who refused to provide testimony to Hurlbut supporting the Spalding theory because “there was no agreement between them.” Benjamin Winchester, *The Origin of the Spalding Story, Concerning Manuscript Found; with a Short Biography of Dr. P. Hulbert* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking & Guilpert, 1840), 8–9. This again would be consistent with the evidence given above.

91. Cowdrey, Davis, and Vanick, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* 77.

the emigration of the ancestors of those innumerable hords of human beings that possess this Continent? Their tradition tells them that they emigrated from the westward. From this I draw the conclusion that the sea, if any, which intervenes between the two Continants at the westward is not so extensive, but that it may be safely navigated.”<sup>92</sup> Later, Spalding also tells the story of the lawgiver Lobaska, who introduced the art of writing, metallurgy, and other significant elements of civilization. This innovator is also said to have come from a country “at a great <distance> from the westward.”<sup>93</sup> The testimony of Tyler and Jackson, as well as the earlier 1833 testimony referencing a journey to the Americas by land, is explainable without recourse to a hypothetical second Conneaut story.

### Morse as a Source

In 1880 Abner Jackson recalled, “A note in Morse’s Geography suggested it as a possibility that our Indians were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. Said Morse, they might have wandered through Asia up to Behring’s Strait, and across the Strait to this continent.”<sup>94</sup> This apparent reference to Jedediah Morse offers additional evidence for the existence of only one Spalding manuscript. Although Morse did discuss the theory that Native Americans migrated from Asia across the Bering Strait to North America, contrary to Jackson’s recollection, Morse did not link this theory to the lost ten tribes of Israel. Morse wrote several popular geographical works, and Spalding was likely acquainted with at least one of them. Morse’s *The American Universal Geography* appeared in several popular American editions, including a third edition in 1796.<sup>95</sup> A similar work, *The History*

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92. MS, 33, in Jackson, 22–23.

93. MS, 65, in Jackson, 41.

94. Abner Jackson statement, 20 December 1880.

95. Jedediah Morse, *The American Universal Geography, or, A View of the Present State of all the Empires, Kingdoms, States and Republics in the Known World, and of the United States of America in Particular*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews, 1796).

of America, was also well known, with a third edition in 1798.<sup>96</sup> A comparison of *Universal Geography* and “Manuscript Story” suggests that Jackson was correct about Morse’s influence on Spalding’s tale. Confirmation of Jackson’s recollection on this point is shown in the comparisons below.

### Morse’s Possible Influence on Spalding

#### Morse’s *Geography*

#### Spalding’s “Manuscript Story”

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|---|---|
| <p>In the interior parts of America various monuments of <b>art</b> have been found, which discover greater <b>ingenuity</b> in their construction, than the <b>present generation of Indians</b> appear to possess.—Two miles <b>west</b> of the Genessee <b>river</b>, in the State of New York, we have been informed, are <b>the remains of an ancient Indian Fort</b>. (p. 96)</p> | <p>Near the <b>west</b> Bank of the Coneaught <b>River</b> there are <b>the remains of an ancient fort</b>. As I was walking and forming vario[us] conjectures respecting the character situation &amp; numbers of those people, who far exceeded the <b>present race of Indians</b> in works of <b>art &amp; ingenuity</b>. (p. 1)</p> |
| <p>The <b>earth</b> is now universally considered a planet. . . . The number of planets in the <b>solar system</b> is seven. (p. 26)</p>  | <p>Thus I reasoned respecting the <b>solar system</b> of which the <b>earth</b> is a part. (p. 30)</p>  |
| <p>[According to the Ptolemaic system] the <b>earth</b> is <b>immoveably fixed</b> in the centre of the universe and <b>all other bodies</b> revolve around it. (p. 26)</p>   | <p>Provided the <b>earth</b> is <b>stationary</b>, according to the present system of philosophy—then the <b>sun</b>, the moon &amp; the <b>planets</b>, being at &lt;an&gt; <b>immence distance &amp; from the earth</b>—must perform their <b>revolutions</b>. (p. 30)</p>  |

96. Jedidiah Morse, *The History of America, in Two Books* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1798).

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|---|---|
| <p>With Ptolemy he supposed the earth to be at rest in the centre of the universe, and the <b>sun, planets,</b> and fixed <b>stars</b> to <b>revolve</b> about it. (p. 27)</p>  |   |
| <p>But though the fixed stars are placed at such <b>immense distances from us.</b> (p. 33)</p>  |   |
| <p>The true <b>system</b> of the world is generally denominated the Capernican or solar <b>system.</b> (p. 26)</p>  | <p>Whereas, if according to the P&lt;I&gt;atonic &lt;other&gt; <b>system,</b> the earth is a globe—&amp; the <b>sun</b> is stationary. (p. 30)</p>  |
| <p>It supposes the <b>sun</b> to be in the centre of the system, and all the planets to move round him in the order already mentioned. (p. 28)</p>  |   |
| <p>The fundamental principles of geography are the <b>spherical</b> figure of the <b>earth.</b> (p. 34)</p>   | <p>The <b>earth</b> therefore must be of a <b>spherical form</b> &lt;a <b>Globe</b>&gt;. (p. 33)</p>  |
| <p>The <b>globular</b> figure of the <b>earth.</b> . . . A <b>sphere</b> literally signifies a ball or <b>globe.</b> (p. 37)</p>  | <p>The <b>earth</b> is a <b>globe.</b> (p. 30)</p>  |
| <p><b>Planets revolving</b> with the rest <b>about the sun as their common centre.</b> (p. 26)</p>  | <p>We behold <b>the Sun</b> suspended by omnipotence &amp; all the <b>planets moving round him as their common center.</b> (p. 31)</p>  |
| <p>It supposes <b>the sun</b> to be in the <b>centre</b> of the system, and <b>all the planets to move round him</b> in the order already mentioned. (p. 28)</p>  |   |
| <p>The astonishing <b>harmony</b> which prevails among the several parts prove it to have been the work of a divine hand; and that nothing less than infinite <b>wisdom</b> could have planned so beautiful a fabric. (p. 30)</p> | <p>Displaying the transcend&lt;ant&gt; <b>wisdom</b> of its almighty Architect—for in this, we behold the sun suspended by omnipotence &amp; all the planets moving round him as their common center in exact [or]der &amp; <b>harmony.</b> (p. 31)</p> |

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|---|---|
| <p>It completes its revolution round the sun once in a <b>year</b>, and occasions the <b>difference</b> in the length of <b>days and nights</b>, and the agreeable variety in the <b>seasons</b>. (p. 36)</p>   | <p>In this we can easily account for <b>days &amp; nights &amp; the different seasons of the year</b>. (p. 31)</p>  |
| <p>The first inhabitants of America might pass there in vessels <b>by sea</b>, or travel by land or by ice. 1. They might either pass there in vessels designedly, <b>if the distance by water were but small</b>, or be carried upon it accidentally by favourable winds. 2. <b>They might pass by land, on the supposition of the union of the continents</b>. 3. They might also make that passage over the ice of some frozen arm of the sea. The ancestors of the nations which peopled <i>Anahuac</i> (now called New Spain) might pass . . . <b>from the most eastern parts of Asia, to the most western parts of America</b>. (p. 81)</p> | <p><b>Perhaps this is a part of the eastern Continent</b>, or perhaps only a <b>narrow strip of Ocean</b> intervenes? (p. 32)</p> <p>From this I draw the conclusion—that <b>the sea &lt;if any&gt; which intervenes between the two Continents at the westward is not so extensive</b>, but that it may safely be <b>navigated</b>. (p. 33; note that Spalding, like Morse, expresses uncertainty about a land bridge)</p> |
| <p>This conclusion is founded on the constant and general <b>tradition</b> of those nations, which unanimously say, that their <b>ancestors</b> came into Anahuac from the countries of the <b>north and north west</b>. (p. 81)</p>  | <p>On what principle can we account for for the <b>emigration</b> of the <b>ancestors</b> of those innumerable hords of human beings that possess this Continent? Their <b>tradition</b> tells them that they <b>emigrated from the westward</b>. (p. 33)</p>   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>“A tradition prevails among the Indians in general, that all Indians came <b>from the west.</b>” This is a confirmation of the opinion that this second class of Indians, of whom we have been speaking, and of which the Six Nations make a part, <b>came over from the north east of Asia, to the north west coast of America, whence they migrated south towards Mexico, and eastward into the present territory of the United States.</b> (p. 97)</p>  |  |
| <p>In a journey made by the Spaniards in 1606, from New Mexico unto the <b>river</b> which they call <i>Tizon</i>, 600 miles from the Province <b>towards the north west</b>, they found there some large edifices, and met with some Indians who spoke the Mexican language, and who told them, that <b>a few days journey</b> from that river, <b>towards the north</b>, was the <b>kingdom of Tollan, and many other inhabited places</b>, whence the Mexicans <b>migrated</b>. In fact, the whole people of <i>Anahuac</i> have usually affirmed, that <b>towards the north</b>, were the <b>kingdoms of and provinces of Tollan, Aztlan, Copalla and several others.</b> (p. 81)</p> | <p>&lt;We are also informed by some of the&gt; natives, that at the distance of <b>about fifteen days journey in &lt;a&gt; northwesterly course</b> there is a great <b>River</b> which runs in a <del>south</del> westerly direction, <del>they cannot tell how far</del>—&amp; that along the banks of this river there are <b>great towns &amp; mighty &lt;kings&gt; &amp; a people</b> who live in a state of <b>civilization.</b> (p. 33)</p> |

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|--|---|
| <p>Judging of the ancient Indians from the traditionary accounts of them, and ruins we have been describing, we are led to conceive of them as more <b>civilized</b>, ingenious, and war-like <b>people</b> than their descendants at the present time. We are at a loss for the causes of their degeneracy. (p. 97)</p>   | <p><b>Their customs</b> manners, <b>Laws, government &amp; religion</b> all demonstrate that they must have originated from some other nation &amp; have but a very distant affinity with their savage neighbors. (p. 40)</p> |
| <p>Their <b>religion</b>, their <b>government</b>, their <b>laws</b> and <b>their customs</b>, . . . their ancient <b>government</b>, their <b>laws</b>, and their arts evidently demonstrate that they suffered no want of genius. (p. 88)</p>  |   |
| <p>As to the second class of American Indians, who formerly inhabited, and who yet inhabit Mexico and the country south of the lakes and west of the Mississippi, and who came over, as we have supposed, from the north east parts of Asia; they seem, from whatever cause, to be advanced somewhat higher, in the scale of human beings, than the South Americans, if we except the Peruvians. (p. 88)</p> |   |

In sum, the fact that (1) Jackson remembered only one manuscript, one that he called “Manuscript Found” and dated to about 1812; (2) most of the other elements he mentioned find echoes in “Manuscript Story”; and (3) “Manuscript Story” shows evidence of Morse’s influence all favor the conclusion that there was only one Spalding manuscript of any significance previous to Spalding’s departure from Conneaut in 1812.

### That Old Biblical Style

In support of the claim that “Manuscript Found” was a later version of Spalding’s story distinct from “Manuscript Story,” Spalding advocates point to testimony from Spalding’s former neighbors in Conneaut that the manuscript, as they remembered it, was written in an ancient or biblical style. In 1833 Artemus Cunningham described the manuscript he saw in late 1811 as one in which Spalding “had adopted the ancient, or scripture style of writing.”<sup>97</sup> Similarly, John and Martha Spalding described the manuscript they saw in 1812 as being written in “the old style” or “the old obsolete style.” John and Martha Spalding and Henry Lake claimed that Spalding made frequent use of the phrase “it came to pass.” In describing “Manuscript Story” in 1834, E. D. Howe claimed it was “written in a modern style.” According to Howe, when it was shown to several of those who had provided testimony to Hurlbut, they admitted that the manuscript was Spalding’s but now claimed it was merely an early draft and that in the later Conneaut version Spalding had written “in the old scripture style, in order that it might appear more ancient.”<sup>98</sup>

Historians should be suspicious of Howe’s self-interested assessment of Spalding’s writing style since it was merely asserted and not demonstrated. With his disappointment upon finding “Manuscript Story” only to learn that it could not be the source for the Book of Mormon, Howe needed there to be a second version. Howe’s quick dismissal of “Manuscript Story,” his failure to publish it or otherwise make it available for examination, and his subsequent suppression of the only Spalding narrative on ancient America ever proved to have existed should invite caution in accepting his inadequate description of the document.

Other Spalding neighbors provided a more conservative description. They recalled that Spalding wrote in an “old” style, but they did not remember any specific phrases such as “it came to pass.” In 1839 Spalding’s widow recalled that he had given his story “an air of antiq-

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97. Artemus Cunningham statement, 1833, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 286.

98. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 288.

uity” by writing “in *the most ancient style*, and as the *Old Testament* is the most ancient book in the world, he imitated its style as nearly as possible.” Her husband’s story, she affirmed, was simply “an historical romance, with the addition of *a few pious expressions and extracts from the sacred Scriptures.*”<sup>99</sup> Having read “only a few pages,” Robert Patterson Sr. (to whom Spalding submitted his manuscript for publication in Pittsburgh) described the manuscript as “a singular work, chiefly in the *style of our English translation of the Bible.*”<sup>100</sup> Consistent with Matilda Spalding Davison’s statement, Josiah Spalding, who examined the manuscript in mid-1812, said the story “would agree in sentiment and *style* with *very ancient writings.*”<sup>101</sup> Josiah’s description, however, is consistent with the contents of “Manuscript Story” and suggests that, in their later descriptions of Spalding’s manuscript, some of these witnesses exaggerated the so-called biblical style, which may have been much less pervasive than Spalding advocates would later claim.

One must, of course, ask what Spalding’s neighbors meant by an ancient, obsolete, or scriptural style. For some nineteenth-century readers, such descriptions could conceivably refer to any writing with an air of antiquity. Do they refer to biblical quotations or to formal, antiquated words and phrases like those in the King James translation?<sup>102</sup> Spalding did use antiquated words and phrases in “Manuscript Story,” though not consistently, and he quoted or paraphrased biblical passages. While this evidence seems to amount to less than the statements of John and Martha Spalding and Henry Lake would suggest, it fits well with Matilda Spalding’s description of a fictional romance “with the addition of a few pious expressions and extracts from the sacred Scriptures.”

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99. Matilda Spalding Davison statement, 1839, emphasis added.

100. Robert Patterson statement, 1842.

101. Josiah Spalding statement, 1855.

102. “Manuscript Story” includes the words *ye, thy, thou, hath, hath prepared, he who hath, let, and let not* and such formalized phrases as *forsake not, break forth, say not, thou art, thy maker, suffer not, hark ye, hail ye, partake, partake not, attend O friends, be attentive O man, and Now O man attend to thy duty.*

## Biblical Language in “Manuscript Story”

| Bible (King James Version)  | “Manuscript Story”  |
|---|---|
| But there is a <b>spirit</b> in man: <b>and the inspiration of the Almighty</b> giveth them understanding. (Job 32:8)   | A voice from on high hath penetrated my <b>soul &amp; the inspiration of the Almighty</b> hath bid me proclaim. (p. 9)  |
| Have mercy upon me, O <b>God</b> , according to thy <b>lovingkindness</b> : according unto the multitude of thy <b>tender mercies</b> . (Psalm 51:1)  | They extoled the <b>loving-kindness &amp; tender mercies</b> of their <b>God</b> . (p. 9)   |
| Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with <b>lovingkindness and tender mercies</b> . (Psalm 103:4)  |   |
| But <b>Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked</b> . (Deuteronomy 32:15)   | She sunk after him his heels <b>kicked</b> against the wind <b>like Jeshuran waked fat</b> . (p. 28)  |
| <b>Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears</b> , that I might weep day and night. (Jeremiah 9:1)   | <b>O that my head were waters &amp; my eyes a fountain of tears</b> . (p. 30)   |
| That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a <b>strong consolation</b> , who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the <b>hope</b> set before us: Which <b>hope</b> we have as an <b>anchor</b> of the soul, both <b>sure</b> and stedfast. (Hebrews 6:18–19) | She brings in her train <b>Hope</b> —that celestial Godes, that <b>sure &amp; strong anchor</b> —that dispencer of <b>comfort &amp; pleasing anticipation</b> . (p. 30) |
| The Lord shall roar <b>from on high</b> , and utter his <b>voice</b> . (Jeremiah 25:30)   | A <b>voice from on high</b> . (p. 9)  |
| <b>Woe unto the wicked!</b> it shall be ill with him. (Isaiah 3:11)   | <b>But wo unto you wicked</b> . (p. 23)   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>This is <i>the portion of a wicked</i> man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God. (Job 20:29; also 27:13; 11:20; Psalm 141:10)</p>                    | <p>Thou shalt escape <i>the portion of the wicked</i>. (p. 58)</p>   |
| <p><i>Pardon my transgression</i>. (Job 7:21)</p>   | <p><i>Pardon</i> &amp; your <i>transgressions</i>. (p. 24)</p>   |
| <p><i>Gall and wormwood</i>. (Deuteronomy 29:18; Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15; Lamentations 3:19)</p>   | <p><i>Gawl &amp; wormwood</i>. (p. 24)</p>   |
| <p><b>Thine own friend</b>, and thy father’s friend, <b>forsake not</b>. (Proverbs 27:10)</p>   | <p>Be grateful for all favours &amp; <b>forsake not thy friend</b> in adversity. (p. 58)</p>   |
| <p>Cast me not off in the time of <b>old age</b>; <b>forsake me not</b> when my strength faileth. (Psalm 71:9)</p>  | <p><b>Forsake them not in old age</b>. (p. 58)</p>   |
| <p>Be ye not unequally <i>yoked together</i>. (2 Corinthians 6:14)</p>  | <p>Being <i>yoked together</i> the husband &amp; wife ought to draw in the same direction. (p. 59)</p>   |
| <p>Charity vaunteth not itself, is <i>not puffed up</i>. (1 Corinthians 13:4)</p>   | <p>Pride was <i>not</i> bloated &amp; <i>puffed up</i>. (p. 100)</p>   |
| <p>Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the <b>Father of spirits</b>, and live? (Hebrews 12:9)</p>  | <p>You have all derived your existence from the great <b>father of Spirits</b>—you are his children &amp; belong to his great <b>family</b>. (p. 79)</p> |
| <p>For this cause I bow my knees unto the <b>Father</b> of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole <b>family</b> in heaven and earth is named. (Ephesians 3:14–15)</p> |  |
| <p>When all these things are come upon thee, the <b>blessing</b> and the <b>curse</b>. (Deuteronomy 30:1)</p>   | <p><b>Blessings</b> will attend you, if ye <b>fulfill</b>—but <b>Curses</b>, if ye <b>transgress</b>. (p. 97)</p>  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| All these <b>blessings</b> shall come on thee, and overtake thee, <b>if thou shalt hearken</b> unto the voice of the Lord thy God. (Deuteronomy 28:2) |  |
| <b>If thou wilt not hearken</b> . . . all these <b>curses</b> shall come upon thee. (Deuteronomy 28:15)   |  |

### Confusion and Contradiction in Later Conneaut Testimony

John Spalding, who provided a statement to Hurlbut in 1833, provided another description of his brother's Conneaut tale in 1851:

The American continent was colonized by Lehi, the son of Japheth, who sailed from Chaldea soon after the great dispersion, and landed near the isthmus of Darien. Lehi's descendants, who were styled Jaredites, spread gradually to the north, bearing with them the remains of antediluvian science, and building those cities the ruins of which we see in Central America, and the fortifications which are scattered along the Cordilleras.

Long after this, Nephi, of the tribe of Joseph, emigrated to America with a large portion of the ten tribes whom Shalmanezar led away from Palestine, and scattered among the Midian cities. This remnant of Joseph was soon after its arrival divided into two nations, the Nephites and the Lamanites. These nations made war constantly against each other, and in the year A. D. 420, a great battle was fought in western New-York, which terminated in the destruction of the armies of both the belligerent parties, and the annihilation of their power. One man only was left; Moroni, the son of Mormon, who hid the records of the Nephites near Conneaut, Ohio, previously at his death.<sup>103</sup>

103. "The Yankee Mahomet," *American Whig Review* 7 (1851): 554. Several of Spalding's former neighbors indicated that the lost tribes in Spalding's story departed

Spalding theory proponents sometimes take this statement as evidence for another Spalding manuscript that was closer to the Book of Mormon narrative. There are, however, problems with this argument. First, in 1833 John Spalding placed his recollection of the manuscript to a time shortly before his brother’s departure from Ohio in 1812. This was about the same time that Josiah Spalding visited Conneaut in an attempt to help resolve some of the Spalding family’s financial difficulties caused by the outbreak of the War of 1812. Like Spalding’s widow and daughter and Abner Jackson, Josiah knew of only one manuscript—the one they all called “Manuscript Found”—yet Josiah’s description of the manuscript he saw in the summer of 1812 matches very well the contents of “Manuscript Story.” In neither his 1833 statements nor his later one in 1851 does John Spalding give any indication that Solomon Spalding had written more than one story, and in both 1833 and 1851 he calls the story “Manuscript Found.”

Second, John Spalding’s 1851 statement contradicts his earlier one. In his 1833 statement Lehi and Nephi are said to have been leaders of the lost tribes during their journey to America. Spalding’s manuscript “gave a detailed account of their journey from Jerusalem, by land and sea, till they arrived in America, under the command of Nephi and Lehi.” Nephi and Lehi, according to Martha Spalding’s 1833 statement, “were officers of the company which first came off from Jerusalem.” Thus the 1833 testimony asserts that Spalding’s manuscript mentions only one pre-Columbian migration from Jerusalem to the Americas. In his 1851 statement, however, John recalls two different migrations separated by millennia. “The American continent was colonized by Lehi, the son of Japheth, who sailed from Chaldea soon after the great dispersion.” How this can be reconciled with his earlier statement and that of his wife in which Nephi and Lehi are said to have been Israelites leaving Jerusalem at the same time is not explained. John Spalding’s 1833 statement, which recalls a manuscript from late 1812,

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from Jerusalem. But even when they lived in the land of Israel before their captivity, the ten tribes never lived in Jerusalem. If one assumes that they left Jerusalem after their captivity, it makes even less sense since that would have needlessly taken them from Medea or Mesopotamia back through the lands they had lived in.

says that the Nephites and Lamanites in Spalding's manuscript were responsible for the relics and antiquities evidencing pre-Columbian civilization. In 1851 John attributed the artifactual remains not to Nephi's group but to the earlier group from the time of the dispersion, a group he associates with the Book of Mormon Jaredites. In 1851 John Spalding said that the group led by "Lehi son of Japheth" arrived in America and "spread gradually to the north, bearing with them the remains of the ante-deluvian science, and building those cities the ruins of which we see in Central America, in the fortifications which are scattered along the Cordilleras." Contrarily, in 1833 John Spalding and other witnesses said that Spalding's manuscript attributed the remains of pre-Columbian civilization to the Nephites and Lamanites.

Further, in 1833 John and Martha Spalding and other former neighbors stated that the purpose of Solomon Spalding's book was to show that the Indians were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. However, according to John's 1851 statement, Lehi's group could not have been Israelite since reference to the dispersion dates the group to a period far earlier than Lehi's time. Moreover, the group is not destroyed, while everyone involved in the later migration *is* Israelite and is annihilated in battle except for the survivor, Moroni. If John Spalding's 1851 testimony is accurate, how can the Indians be said to be descendants of the lost tribes of Israel? Spalding die-hards attempt to reconcile such difficulties by positing further hypothetical manuscripts, but for all of his creativity, John Spalding, in two separate statements, mentions only one.

### **Influence of the Classics**

In 1839 Solomon Spalding's widow remembered that her late husband "was enabled from his acquaintance with the classics and ancient history, to introduce many singular names, which were particularly noted by the people and could be easily recognized by them."<sup>104</sup> This description is consistent with "Manuscript Found," which contains

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104. Matilda Spalding Davison statement, 1839.

many unique names—including some of a classical variety such as Fabius, Constantine, Lucian, Crito, and Trojanus—and makes reference to various matters of ancient history.

### Similar Names and the Contamination of Memory

Spalding’s Conneaut story does have many unusual names, but the claims of former Conneaut neighbors that the Book of Mormon is full of names borrowed from Spalding have always seemed questionable.<sup>105</sup> Those who claimed similarity between Book of Mormon names and those remembered from Spalding’s manuscript could recall only a handful of names and tended to remember the same ones. Out of a potential 240 Book of Mormon personal names or place-names, the combined memories of eight of Spalding’s former neighbors recalled only seven (*Nephi, Lehi, Nephites, Lamanites, Laban, Moroni, Zarahemla*). If these recollections were at all accurate, why were only these few names remembered? Could the names *Nephi, Nephites*, and *Lamanites* have been suggested by the interviewer? It is possible, however, that after twenty years or more, some of Spalding’s former neighbors may have confused the name *Lamesa* in “Manuscript Story” with Book of Mormon names like *Laman, Lamanite*, or *Lamoni*. *Moonrod* might have suggested the name *Moroni*, a name John N. Miller claimed to remember. *Hamelick* might have been confused with *Amlici, Amalek*, or *Amalickiah*. Henry Lake may have confused *Labanco* with *Laban*.<sup>106</sup> “It would not be surprising,” wrote George Gibson in 1886, “if the shadowy resemblance of a few names . . . should after this long lapse of time persuade them that one was based upon the other.”<sup>107</sup>

I suspect that, in addition to the suggestion of these names, Hurlbut’s influence on the 1833 Conneaut testimony can also be seen in the selection of who was interviewed. After initially interviewing and questioning the witnesses, Hurlbut seems to have imposed his own language and structure into the testimony, possibly drafting the

105. Roper, “Mythical ‘Manuscript Found,’” 81–84.

106. Roper, “Mythical ‘Manuscript Found,’” 37.

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

statements himself before having the witnesses sign them. While this does not necessarily mean that Hurlbut deliberately tried to mislead those he interviewed, it arouses suspicion as to the accuracy of the details that really matter in the Spalding theory, such as the recollection of names, phrases such as “it came to pass,” and specifics of the story that are compared with the Book of Mormon. Advocates of the Spalding theory argue that false accretions on these recollections of earlier events are unlikely to have occurred without the knowledge of the witnesses. How could they have confused the Book of Mormon narrative with Spalding’s story if they were not the same? If Hurlbut or later interviewers had misrepresented the testimony intentionally or even unintentionally, would not the witnesses have said so?

Research by psychologists has shown how memories are often distorted in various ways. One form of memory distortion occurs when people confuse or conflate separate activities and events that have similarities but actually occurred at different times. “An event that occurs after (or before) some event of interest may later be retrieved as if it were an event of interest. . . . This can occur through leading questions or misleading statements in interviews” that can distort the accurate retrieval of the memory. “People sometimes remember events as having occurred in one situation when they actually occurred in another context.”<sup>108</sup> According to Elizabeth Loftus, “When people experience some actual event—say a crime or an accident—they often later acquire new information about the event. This new information can contaminate the memory. This can happen when the person talks with other people, is exposed to media coverage about the event, or is asked leading questions.”<sup>109</sup> Since Spalding’s “Manuscript Story” and the Book of Mormon share very general similarities, it would not be surprising if the witnesses conflated their twenty-year-old recollections of the Spalding tale with more recent and contemporary ideas about Mormonism and the Book of Mormon.

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108. Henry L. Roediger and Kathleen B. McDermott, “Distortions of Memory,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Memory*, ed. Endel Tulving and Fergus I. M. Craik (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 153–54.

109. Elizabeth F. Loftus, “Memory Faults and Fixes,” *Issues in Science and Technology* (Summer 2002): 43.

Although Spalding advocates argue that the witnesses would have recognized and then corrected such distortions, studies suggest that this is often not the case. Even a well-meaning but zealous interviewer, convinced of the correctness of his theory, may unintentionally influence and even contaminate details remembered by a subject or witness by simply phrasing the questions of the interview in a leading way, without the subject of the interview realizing that such distortion has occurred.

A 14-year-old boy was instructed to recall details over 5 days regarding four events involving his mother and older brother, of which one was false (as verified by his family). The fictitious event involved the boy having been lost in a particular shopping mall when he was 5 years old and being rescued by an elderly man. *Over time, even though given an option to state that he could not remember, the boy began to recall more and more details about the fictitious event in his writings. In a subsequent interview, he rated the false event as more likely to have occurred than all but one of the true events and was unable to identify which event was the false one. During debriefing, he was reluctant to believe the truth.*

Using a similar methodology, Loftus and Pickrell (1995) gave undergraduate students a mix of true and false events and asked them to recall details over several days. They found that 6 out of 24 participants erroneously believed part or all of the false event.<sup>110</sup>

These and other studies indicate that "suggestion can lead to rich false memories"; moreover, "just because a memory report is expressed with confidence, detail, and emotion does not necessarily mean the underlying event actually happened."<sup>111</sup> Memory research

110. Amy Tsai, Elizabeth Loftus, and Danielle Polage, "Current Directions in False-Memory Research," in *False-Memory Creation in Children and Adults: Theory, Research, and Implications*, ed. David F. Bjorklund (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), 33, emphasis added.

111. Elizabeth Loftus, "Make-Believe Memories," *American Psychologist* 58/11 (2003): 871.

also indicates that “repeated, suggestive conversation by authoritative and credible figures can lead to the creation of memories for false events.”<sup>112</sup> Brainerd and Reyna note that “eyewitnesses may be prone to rely on external supports to enrich their fragmentary memories. Of particular concern, leading questions and suggestive statements may cause eyewitnesses to add suggested details to their memories that cohere with the gist of their experience, including details that are false and could result in the prosecution of innocent defendants.”<sup>113</sup> Hence the danger of sincere but false accusation based on distorted memories. “The most effective situation for the creation of a false memory appears to be one in which the person is given a reason to believe the event happened (because a relative backs up the story or because a therapist says it must have happened) and is then pressured over multiple sessions to believe the memory. . . . However, milder forms of pressure, such as the act of imagining the false event, can sway assessments of the likelihood of the event; repetitive sessions can be done by self-report diaries or by a third party; and in the absence of repetitive sessions, a single strong authoritative source can be sufficient to create belief in false events.”<sup>114</sup> Memory studies often focus on recollections of recent events; however, “long delays since the event, many suggestions occurring during the interval, repeated recounting of the event (often with tacit demands to go beyond what the person remembers and to guess)” can exacerbate the distortion.<sup>115</sup>

In light of such findings, it is illuminating to examine the testimony of Spalding’s daughter, Matilda McKinstry, who in later years claimed that the Book of Mormon was largely based on Spalding’s tale. Speaking of the events leading to her mother’s 1839 statement and to her own subsequent involvement in the controversy,

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112. Tsai, Loftus, and Polage, “False-Memory Research,” 35.

113. C. J. Brainerd and V. F. Reyna, *The Science of False Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 34.

114. Tsai, Loftus, and Polage, “False-Memory Research,” 43.

115. Roediger and McDermott, “Distortions of Memory,” 158. The earliest recollections of Spalding’s manuscript were gathered more than twenty years after the fact. Other testimony is much later. This does not necessarily mean that late testimony is always wrong or unreliable, but it does suggest the need for caution and independent corroboration whenever possible.

McKinstry explained, "We *heard*, not long after she came to live with me, . . . something of Mormonism, and *the report* that it had been taken from my father's 'Manuscript Found'; and *then came to us direct an account* of the Mormon meeting at Conneaut, Ohio." After this, "there was *a great deal of talk and a great deal published* at this time about Mormonism all over the country." After these initial reports,

Hurlburt came to my house at Monson to see my mother, who told us that he had been sent by a committee to procure the "Manuscript Found," written by the Reverend Solomon Spaulding, so as to compare it with the Mormon Bible. He presented a letter to my mother from my uncle, William H. Sabine, of Onondaga Valley, in which he requested her to loan this manuscript to Hurlburt, as he (my uncle) was desirous "to uproot" (as he expressed it) "this Mormon fraud." Hurlburt represented that he had been a convert to Mormonism, but had given it up, and through the "Manuscript Found" wished to expose its wickedness. . . . She did not like his appearance and mistrusted his motives; *but having great respect for her brother's wishes and opinions, she reluctantly consented to his request.*

Several things are obvious from McKinstry's testimony. First, she and her mother had already, previous to Hurlbut's visit, heard several rumors and reports of the Spalding theory and its possible relation to Mormonism. Second, it is also clear that the widow and her daughter experienced a certain degree of pressure to support Hurlbut's endeavor, even though it went against the widow's personal inclination—pressure, which memory studies suggest can lead to distortion.

While *we had no personal knowledge* that the Mormon Bible was taken from the "Manuscript Found," there were many evidences to us that it was, and that *Hurlbut 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.*<sup>116</sup>

Here we have a situation that seems ripe for memory distortion. Not only were there early rumors and speculation and discussion about the subject, “Doctor” Hurlbut had been sent by a special “committee” to find out the truth and *uncles* John Spalding and William Sabine apparently thought there was a connection.

These influences seem to have been a factor not only in allowing Hurlbut to borrow the manuscript but also in influencing McKinstry’s recollections of the story. In her 1880 testimony, McKinstry claimed that she remembered several names from Spalding’s manuscript: “Some of the names that he mentioned while reading to these people I have never forgotten. They are as fresh to me to-day as though I heard them yesterday. They were ‘Mormon,’ ‘Maroni,’ ‘Lamenite,’ ‘Nephi.’”<sup>117</sup> In an 1882 interview, Edmund Kelly interviewed McKinstry and asked her, “When did you first think about the names in the Book of Mormon and the manuscript agreeing?” To this she responded: “My attention was first called to it by some parties who asked me if I did not remember it, and then I remembered that they were.”<sup>118</sup> While there is no doubt that McKinstry remembered something of her father’s old story, it seems likely that, under the circumstances, the Book of Mormon names were supplied in the questions asked by the interviewer.

The Book of Mormon and the success of early proponents of its message in northwestern Pennsylvania in the early 1830s was a puzzle and a challenge to that community—in their view a scandal and a mystery that demanded an explanation. It seems likely that, previous to Hurlbut’s activities in the neighborhood, some of Spalding’s former friends began to associate the Book of Mormon with what they

116. Matilda Spalding McKinstry statement, 3 April 1880, 616, emphasis added.

117. Matilda Spalding McKinstry statement, 3 April 1880, 615.

118. E. L. Kelly interview with Matilda McKinstry, 4 April 1882, in *Public Discussion of the Issues between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ [Disciples] held in Kirtland, Ohio . . .* (Lamoni, IA: Herald Publishing House, 1913), 82, emphasis added.

remembered of the Spalding tale more than twenty years before.<sup>119</sup> Both stories spoke of an ancient migration to the Americas from the Old World, Indian origins, the development of a pre-Columbian culture, and warfare between rival factions. Such broad similarities would be enough for the uncritical investigator to consider a link between the two. Once they had begun to associate the Book of Mormon with Spalding’s story, it would be easy to imagine that the names in both stories were the same.

One measure of a good explanation is how much it explains. The foregoing discussion suggests that the theory of a second Spalding story that differed substantially from “Manuscript Story” offers very little as an explanation of the Book of Mormon narrative. When we examine the collective testimony of Solomon Spalding’s former Conneaut neighbors and acquaintances, we are left with little in those recollections that supports a hypothetical second Spalding story, even if we were to accept the dubious post hoc claims of those who first proffered that theory. As the accompanying chart suggests, with the exception of a few questionable names and phrases, there is very little that was “remembered” by Conneaut residents that cannot be accounted for in the document known today as “Manuscript Story.”

### Elements in Conneaut Testimony (1833–1880) Found in “Manuscript Story”

| Elements Remembered<br>by Neighbors      | Elements in<br>“Manuscript Story” |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| A manuscript found                       | Yes                               |
| A manuscript found in a mound<br>or cave | Yes                               |
| A fictional history                      | Yes                               |
| Mound-Builders                           | Yes                               |

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119. Not all of Spalding’s former neighbors believed that there was a relationship between Spalding’s yarn and the Book of Mormon. See Roper, “Mythical ‘Manuscript Found,’” 73–77.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| First settlers or settlement of America | Yes   |
| Officers                                | Yes   |
| Journey by land                         | Yes   |
| Journey by sea                          | Yes   |
| Reflections on sufferings               | Yes   |
| Philosophical discussion                | Yes   |
| Astronomy                               | Yes   |
| Morse's influence                       | Yes   |
| Indian migrants from Old World          | Yes   |
| Departure from Jerusalem                | No  |
| Humorous passages                       | Yes   |
| Crossing of Bering Strait from Asia     | Yes   |
| Influence of classics                   | Yes   |
| Interesting names                       | Yes   |
| Pious expressions                       | Yes   |
| Arts, sciences, laws, civilization      | Yes   |
| Manners and customs                     | Yes   |
| Advanced culture                        | Yes   |
| Forts                                   | Yes   |
| Warlike people                          | Yes   |
| Large people                            | Yes   |
| Priests, teachers, education            | Yes   |
| Cultivation of land                     | Yes   |
| Two main groups                         | Yes   |
| Contention between groups               | Yes   |
| Terrible wars                           | Yes   |
| Many people slain                       | Yes   |
| Extermination                           | Yes   |
| Dead buried in mounds                   | Yes   |
| Similar names                           | Lamesa = Laman, Lamanite<br>Moonrod = Moroni<br>Labanko = Laban<br>Hamelick = Amlici, Amalickiah,<br>Amalek, etc. |
| Lost tribes of Israel                   | Implicit  |

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Personal Names:                         |      |
| Nephi                                   | No   |
| Lehi                                    | No   |
| Laban                                   | No   |
| Mormon                                  | No   |
| Moroni or Maroni                        | No   |
| Group Names:                            |      |
| Nephites                                | No   |
| Lamanites                               | No   |
| Jaredites                               | No   |
| Place-Names:                            |      |
| Jerusalem                               | No   |
| Zarahemla                               | No   |
| "It came to pass"                       | No   |
| Title of Story: "Manuscript' Found"     | No   |
| Old, ancient, or biblical writing style | Some |