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BOOK OF MORMON

JAMES D. BALES

It has long been contended that there is a connection between the BM and one of Solomon Spaulding's historical romances. The Mormons, of course, deny such a connection. They also maintain that a manuscript found in Honolulu, which was written by Spaulding, proves that his work did not constitute the foundation of the BM.

I. THE POSITION OF THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS


(1) Spaulding could not have had any connection with the BM for he was a Presbyterian and the BM condemns certain tenets of the Presbyterian Faith. Solomon Spaulding, be it known, was a Presbyterian minister; but this fact has been carefully concealed by those who have advocated the theory that Mr. Spaulding was the author of the BM. Had they let this fact be known undoubtedly they would have aroused suspicion and greatly weakened their argument. For this reason: Presbyterian ministers do not write books condemning in strong terms certain tenets of their church. There is in the BM much that is at variance with doctrines taught by the Presbyterian church; indeed, there is very little in the BM that is compatible with Presbyterianism. There is not a Presbyterian church in the world that believes in the BM. On the contrary, Presbyterian ministers have been the loudest in condemning the book. A Presbyterian minister could not write the BM if he would, and he would not write it if he could." (William A. Weston, *Why I believe the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City, 1918, p. 6).

Document #1:

1942 James Bales article

in: *The Christian Soldier*, Aug. 14, 1942.

Bales' list of textual parallels between Oberlin Spaulding MS and Book of Mormon revises the lists of Schroeder, Shook and Arbaugh. Bales expanded the list 16 years later in his [The Book of Mormon?](#) Bales is wrong in asserting that the Oberlin MS bears the title: "Manuscript Story." It is actually an untitled story -- discovered by Lewis L. Rice in 1884, enclosed in a paper wrapper on which somebody had once written "Manuscript Story -- Conneaut Creek."



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BOOK OF MORMON AND SPAULDING MANUSCRIPTS

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(a) To my knowledge no one has attempted to hide the fact that Spaulding was once a Presbyterian minister. However, he did not remain one for he became an infidel (Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, [p. 62](#)).

(b) It has never been contended that the Spaulding romance was a work on Presbyterianism. It was a historical novel concerning ancient America.

(c) **It has not been maintained that all of the BM was written by Spaulding. Thus it has not been claimed that all of the theological portion[s] were put in by him. These portions bear the imprint of Smith and Sidney Rigdon** (See the proof offered in Shook's *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, [pp. 126--](#)). It is maintained, however, that some things, including some Scripture, were added to one of Spaulding's manuscripts AND that his work was thus transformed into the BM (See the testimony of John Spaulding, Solomon's brother; Martha Spaulding, John's wife. They maintained that the historical po[r]tion of the BM was Spaulding's. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 1834, [pp. 278--](#), Shook. *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, [pp. 94--](#); [Braden-Kelley](#)).

(2) The Mormons contend that the discovery of one of Spaulding's manuscripts demonstrates that it was not the basis of the BM.

"I will here state that the Spaulding manuscript was discovered in 1884, and is at present in the library of Oberlin College, Ohio. On examination it was found to bear no resemblance whatever to the BM. The theory that Solomon Spaulding was the author of the BM should never be mentioned again -- outside a museum." (William A. Morton, op. cit., p. 6).

There are three errors in the above paragraph: viz. that Spaulding wrote but one manuscript; that the manuscript discovered in 1884 is the same one which non-Mormons have claimed constituted the basis of the BM, that the manuscript in Oberlin bears NO RESEMBLANCE WHATEVER TO THE BM.

(a) Spaulding wrote more than one manuscript. This was maintained by D. P. Hurlbut and Clark Braden before the Honolulu manuscript was found (Charles A. Shook, op. cit., [p. 77](#)); (Braden-Kelley Debate, [p. 158](#)). Spaulding's daughter also testified that her father had written "other romances." (Elder George Reynolds, *The Myth of the "Manuscript Found,"* Utah, 1883, [p. 104](#)).

(b) The manuscript found in Honolulu was called A Manuscript Story and not The Manuscript Found. The Honolulu manuscript, The Manuscript

Story, was in the hands of anti-Mormons in 1834. However, they did not claim that it was the manuscript which was the basis of the BM. It was claimed that another manuscript of Spaulding was the basis of the BM (Charles A. Shook, op. cit., p. 77, 15, 185, "*The Manuscript Found*" or "*Manuscript Story*" of the Late Rev. Solomon Spaulding, Lamoni, Iowa: Printed and Published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1885, [p. 10](#)).

(c)Although the Manuscript Story has not been regarded as the Manuscript Found, which constituted the basis of the BM, there is a great deal of resemblance between the Manuscript Story and the BM. These points of similarity can be accounted for upon the basis that The Manuscript Story was the first, and rough, draft of one of Spaulding's work[s] which he reworked into the Manuscript Found.

Howe in 1834, published a fair synopsis of the Oberlin manuscript now at Oberlin (Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled*, 288) and submitted the original to the witnesses who testified to the many points of identity between Spaulding's 'Manuscript Found' and the BM. These witnesses then (in 1834) recognized the manuscript secured by Hurlbut and now at Oberlin as being one of Spaulding's, but not the one which they asserted was similar to the BM. They further said that SPAULDING HAD TOLD THEM THAT HE HAD ALTERED HIS ORIGINAL PLAN OF WRITING BY GOING FARTHER BACK WITH HIS DATES AND WRITING IN THE OLD SCRIPTURE STYLE, in order that his story might appear more ancient, (Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled*, 288); (Theodore Schroeder, *The Origin of the BM Re-Examined in its Relation to Spaulding's 'Manuscript Found,'* p. 5).

This testimony is borne out by the fact that there are many points of similarity between the manuscript in Oberlin College and the BM. The observant reader will discover the following similarities. Anyone who so desires may check on us by comparing the two themselves.

II. POINTS OF SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE OBERLIN COLLEGE MANUSCRIPT AND THE BOOK OF MORMON.

- (1) Both found under a stone,
- (2) Both stones had to be lifted by a lever.

- (3) Both found in a box.
- (4) Both represent the ancient inhabitants of this country as coming to it from across the waters.
- (5) Both represent these inhabitants as great, powerful, civilized peoples.
- (6) Both represent them as engaging in bloody battles.
- (7) Both claimed to be a record of some of these peoples.
- (8) Both were written a foreign language which had to be translated.
- (9) Both had a "translator."
- (10) Both set forth "history of lost tribes."
- (11) Both mention "church."
- (12) Both mention Jesus Christ.
- (13) Both had people who believe in the religion of Jesus Christ.
- (14) Both mentioned "ministers."
- (15) The Manuscript Story mentioned the the Lord's day and devotional services on that day. The BM implies Lord's day services, for it maintains that there were Christians on this continent then; and Christians meet upon the first day of the week, the Lord's day.
- (16) Both represent the people, who came across the ocean to this country, as encountering a great storm at sea.
- (17) Both indicate that the storm subsided after prayer.
- (18) Both refer to written records which were placed in a box so that future generations might discover them and thus learn of these people.
- (19) Both referred to people who believed in the Great Spirit.
- (20). Both believed in an evil spirit.
- (21) Both referred to the motions of the earth.
- (22) Both mention large animals which the people worked.
- (23) Both mentioned the usage of cotton cloth.
- (24) Both mention the horse.
- (25) Both mention earthquakes.
- (26) Both taught an eternal life with rewards and punishments
- (27) Both recognized the Great Spirit as maker of Man.
- (28) Both spoke of white people.
- (29) Both referred to great cities.
- (30) Both spoke of a great teacher who wrought wonders.
- (31) Both spoke of a people who were able to write.
- (32) Both represented them as having some scientific knowledge.
- (33) Both knew something of mechanical arts.
- (34) Both used iron.
- (35) Both used coins.
- (36) Both had high priests, priests, kings, princes, oracles, prophets.
- (37) Both had seer stones, by means of which they could see many amazing

things (Smith used a seer-stone, Whitmer's "Address," p. 12; Shook, op. cit., p. 164, footnote).

(38) Both referred to a war of extermination.

(39) Both believed in providence.

(40) Both speak of indescribable horrors as the result of war.

(41) Some people in both held property in common.

(42) Both indicated that burnt offerings were made for sins.

(43) Both referred to judges over the people.

(44) Both indicated that there were at least three different peoples in this country.

(45) Both said that "characters" were used to represent words

(46) Both kept sacred writings separate from the other records.

(47) Both spoke of the people as receiving the words of a certain man as divine.

(48) Both taught that some sinners would be saved after death.

(49) Both had counselors

There are too many points of similarity for them to be without significance. Thus the internal evidence, combined with the testimony of witnesses, as referred to by Schroeder, produces evidence to the effect that Spaulding revised and revamped the Manuscript Story and that the revision was known as the Manuscript Found and that this manuscript became the basis of the Book of Mormon in at least its historical parts; and that its religious references furnished the germs from which a part, at least, of the religious portion of the BM had its beginning. (1118 Colusa Ave., Berkeley, Calif.)