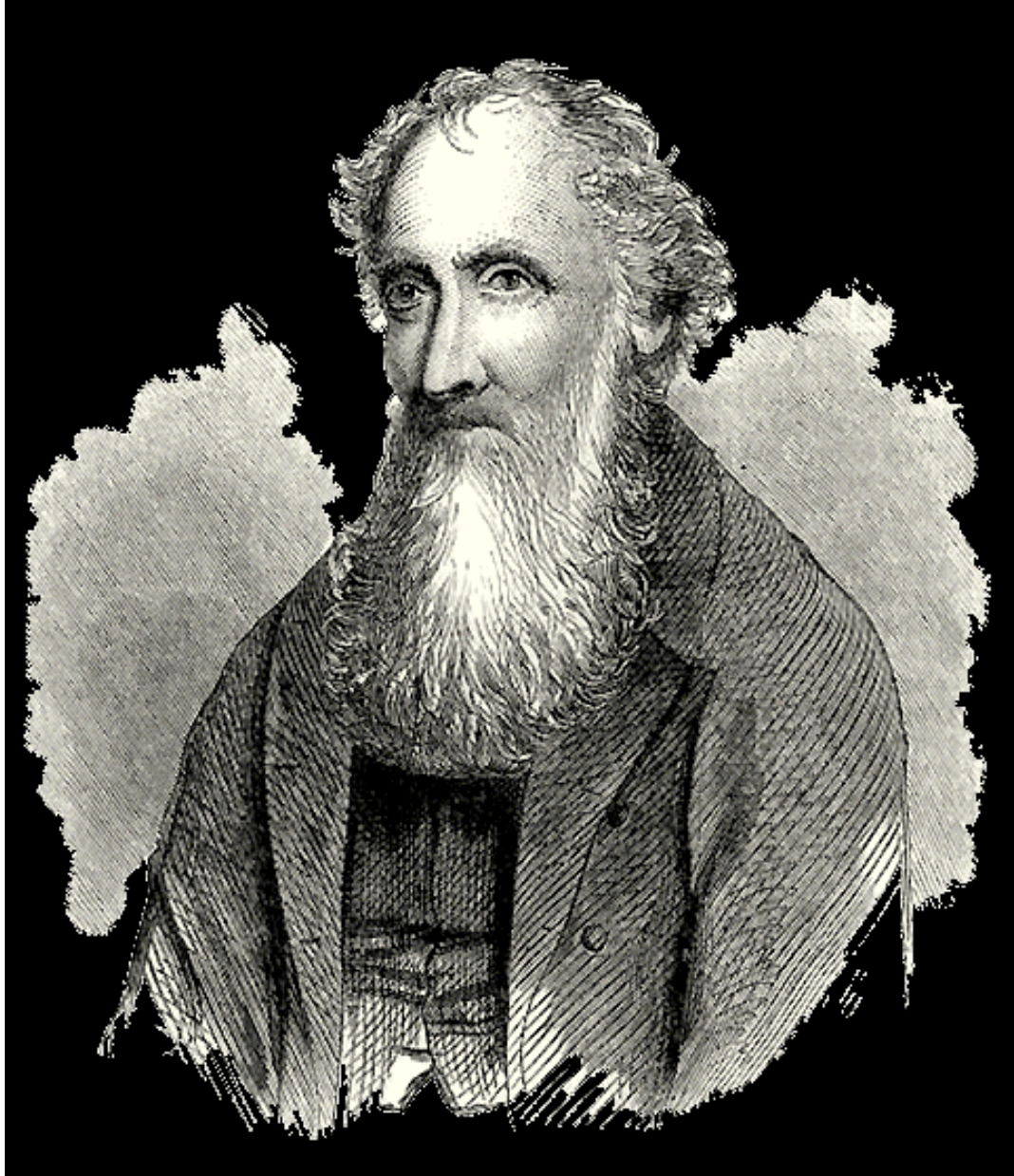


**SIDNEY RIGDON: CREATING THE BOOK OF MORMON**

8 Oct 2005  
Craig Criddle



Life sketch of Sidney Rigdon made for Moore's New Yorker in 1967  
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## **SIDNEY RIGDON: CREATING THE BOOK OF MORMON**

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### **INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

In this and a companion essay I provide an analysis of the two prevalent authorship theories for The Book of Mormon. They are the so-called Spalding-Rigdon Theory and the Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory. These theories represent extremes in a range of possibilities. I will present evidence consistent with the Spalding-Rigdon Theory and inconsistent with the Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory. Some of the evidence that I present could be consistent with other theories, provided that they acknowledge Rigdon as a significant participant. I will also summarize the strongest evidence against the Spalding-Rigdon Theory.

According to the Spalding-Rigdon Theory, The Book of Mormon is the product of a pious fraud perpetrated by Sidney Rigdon, aided and abetted by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The theory states that Rigdon made extensive use of materials written by Solomon Spalding (also spelled "Spaulding") to fabricate what became the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon. He then used Smith as his conduit to bring his new revelation to the attention of the public. In crafting this "American Bible", Rigdon sought to maximize the support that this new scripture would give to his particular version of Christianity.

The Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory asserts that Smith produced The Book of Mormon with or without supernatural assistance. This theory can be based on any of the following premises:

- Smith was a prophet of God as he claimed.
- Smith had a gift of some kind, perhaps like that attributed to certain artists and mystics and sometimes described as "automatic writing", and that he was sincere in his belief that this was a gift from God that enabled him to translate the golden plates that he saw in visions.
- Smith was a pious fraud who was trying to bring people to Christ by making up scripture that would support Christian belief.
- Smith was a successful con man who needed to find a new gig after his treasuring seeking business tailed off after skirmishes with the law.

In this essay I first discuss why authorship of The Book of Mormon matters. I will then describe methods used in this document to address the authorship question and the issue of biases, including my own. I then summarize the reasons why I believe that Sidney Rigdon was a major contributor to The Book of Mormon. In a separate essay I will give reasons to justify the view that Spalding was the primary author of documents used by Rigdon.

I am indebted for much of the data and analysis that follows to the scholarship of Dale Broadhurst and Ted Chandler, and their generosity in making their work available over the Internet and through private correspondence. When I wrote the first draft of this essay, it was written in the first-person, and it remains so now because of the personal account that I provide, but it has actually become a team effort. I want to thank in particular Dale Broadhurst for his additions and comments, as well as Bob McCue, Jeff Hammel, Kevin Knight, and Mark

Evenson, for revisions, additions, and editorial improvements. I thank Ron Dawbarn for an electronic copy of the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon.

## **THE POWER OF NARRATIVE**

Why does it matter how The Book of Mormon came to be? The answer lies in the power of stories to shape our lives by providing what most of us perceive to be “reality”.

As a boy I loved stories told around a scout campfire. Similar gatherings must have occurred, tens of thousands of years ago, as Neolithic hunters and warriors shared their adventures. Then too, the wide-eyed boys must have been present and eager to hear many things: where and how beasts were killed, how the battles were won, the dangers encountered, what natural and supernatural forces had provided protection; the cunning and cooperation required; and how the forces responsible for success were courted and thanked. Those who listened attentively would live to have children, while many of the inattentive would perish, and ultimately, storytelling and story listening would be written into our genes. So it should not be surprising that our leaders – our kings, prophets, shamans, and priests – are often also the Storytellers who create and preserve each social group’s foundational narratives. These narratives provide meaning and security to the group as well as practical knowledge. In fact, the threads of basic meaning and practicality are woven into a seamless social garment that all members of the group unknowingly wear. The Storytellers are therefore among the most powerful in any social group.

The most important narratives for a tribe are its foundation narratives – stories that explain where the tribe came from, how the leadership received its authority, and why the tribe should be defended. Such stories confer a sense of shared risk and security, and establish an emotional bond between members and leadership. They encourage sacrifice and altruism for the sake of the tribe. Members pattern their personal narratives upon the foundation narrative. The more transcendent and all-encompassing the narrative, the more likely that it will capture the support of high commitment individuals, who then align their personal narratives with it (Lalich, 2005).

Our personal narratives - whether given to us by someone else, such as a Mormon patriarchal blessing, or discovered or invented by our selves - have a profound effect on our ability to perceive and interpret the world around us. The classic example is a woman with a cheating husband. Presented with evidence of her husband’s infidelity, she is forced to decide between a personal narrative built on past expressions of her love from her husband and their shared interdependence and the a narrative consistent with new and painful information indicating that her husband has been sexually unfaithful to her. The conflict between these narratives results in what psychologists call “cognitive dissonance”. When this occurs, the stronger narrative suppresses the weaker. The more that the woman with a cheating husband fears the consequences of his infidelity, the more likely she is to deny evidence pointing to it. Her irrationality is obvious to her friends. If the situation was reversed – and it was one of her friends faced with the same evidence, she could easily perceive it and draw the correct conclusion. But her brain does not function rationally when the evidence threatens to destroy a relationship so central to her personal narrative. She cannot “see” the evidence because her unconscious mind fears it.

Like all thoughts and cognitions, our personal narratives are encoded within webs of neurons with their dendrites, axons, and synapses. The organization and structure of these webs affects our ability to perceive and interpret the world around us. Cats raised in an environment with no vertical components lacked cortical detectors for vertical shapes – they could not see anything

in the vertical plane. So they walked into table legs. Pygmies walking out of the forest for the first time were incapable of grasping the significance of animals grazing on a plain hundreds of yards away. Their brains had not developed the capacity to process perspectives of vast distance. So they saw miniature animals.

The neural webs we have developed can thus limit our perceptions. They can also enhance capabilities. Repeated use of a web to accomplish a task strengthens some connections and weakens others, adapting the structure of the web so as to expedite more efficient transmission of impulses needed to accomplish a task. Musicians and athletes understand the need for repetitive training, as do many religious leaders. I learned as an LDS missionary that “repetition brings conviction.” It also brings more than that. When members of a local branch of the LDS Church asked Brigham Young whether they could make up their own rules, Young responded that that they were free to do so, but...

“it is like the man who habituated himself to sticking his finger in a knot-hole, in a board partition, every morning, until custom compelled him to do it. Having omitted it one morning, he felt so curiously at the breakfast table that he could not eat – he then bethought himself, went and put his finger in the knothole and returned with a good appetite and ate a hearty breakfast.” (Arrington, 1986).

The greater ease with which information flows through habituated neural networks biases us in favor of not changing our minds or our actions. So does fear, an emotion associated with rigid or inflexible neural structures (LeDoux, 1996). It is easier to believe that hurricanes will bypass our town, as they have in the past, than to accept and act upon the fearful projections of meteorologists. Some psychologists believe that this bias that prevents us from changing our minds - what they call “confirmation bias” - is responsible for more faulty human decisions than any other human foible.

Yet we can and do change our minds. Both animal and human studies indicate that neural structures are plastic and adaptive, even in adults. However, when an established network biases our thought processes, time and effort are needed to change it, and the process can be uncomfortable (Taylor, 2005). Our networks are like a system of roads and pathways, and the most frequently used routes like a freeway system. On the freeways, traffic is unencumbered and speedy. But travel through the backwoods calls for a sustained effort over a long period of time. New neural structures are needed to encode and process new information.

The way in which stories control our perception of reality has helped me to understand my inability for many years to “see” things that are now seem obvious. Throughout childhood and the teenage years, my personal narrative reflected my tribe’s story. As a teenager, I could easily identify problems in other religions, but not my own - classic symptoms of what psychologists call “authority bias.” While on my LDS mission I began to experience cognitive dissonance. Small conflicts briefly surfaced when leaders who I considered inspired demonstrated a convincing lack of inspiration. More substantive conflicts arose when I was obliged to repeatedly justify the racist priesthood restriction on males of African descent - a restriction lifted on the very day I returned home. What followed after my mission was a long period of increasing cognitive dissonance as I attended college and learned more about science, and especially the chemical basis of life and the geologic record.

As suggested by McCue (2004a, 2004b), the effects of cognitive dissonance are like an old fashioned set of scales. I had a treasured personal narrative sitting on one side of the scales. On the other was disconfirming evidence that steadily accumulated. Eventually, the scales

tipped. For me, the final push seems to have also required an emotionally jarring family crisis. In any case, about ten years ago, I passed the "tipping point." When that happened, a new set of foundation narratives - previously held at bay by my unconscious mind - slid into place. Unlike the previous foundation narrative, these were consensus scientific narratives based on evidence and reasoning. I could finally understand the history of the earth, the relatedness of living things, the origin of the human species, and the origins of races. It seemed like a revelation, a kind of enlightenment. Facts that before had seemed so disconnected or conflicting and had to be suppressed by cognitive dissonance suddenly made sense. But the new narratives did not explain the foundation narrative of my Tribe – where did it come from? It has taken years to understand that to my own satisfaction. This essay and the companion essay summarize the outcome of that inquiry.

When Joseph Smith declared The Book of Mormon the “keystone of our religion”, he was recognizing that his narrative of The Book of Mormon’s origins would, if accepted, give him tremendous personal power - the right to speak in God’s voice for all who believed. The modern Mormon leadership understands that as well. They have inherited Smith’s power. Their ability to amplify that power depends on how many people believe the narrative they tell. So the narrative matters, including particularly questions like whether Joseph Smith translated The Book of Mormon from gold plates, or not, and whether or not he was sincere.

## **CSI MORMON – EPISODE 1**

Many scientific disciplines (archaeology, palaeontology, evolutionary biology, forensic science, astrophysics, etc.) develop a body of facts then construct narratives to explain those facts. Some have theorized that such disciplines, and perhaps even science itself, developed from skills that our ancestors acquired in tracking animals. It is easy to see how that could be. A skilled tracker must be able to perceive subtle details in footprints and residues; he must develop sophisticated reasoning skills; and he must develop a mental library that enables him to link observations to various subtle clues and animal types. His goal is to develop a story that explains the movements of predators and prey. Ultimately, the quality of his narrative is judged by the understanding it produces - how well it systematizes and unifies information – and by how useful or “fruitful” the narrative is in a practical sense – say, for example, in catching the prey, avoiding the predator, or guiding future discoveries.

The formulation of evidence-based narratives is subject to many kinds of uncertainty, starting with the facts themselves. Measurements and records have limited accuracy. The material world decomposes, so information is lost over time. And then there’s the human factor. Evidence can be mishandled or destroyed. Memory and perceptions are fallible and can be manipulated. Eyewitness accounts are much less reliable than generally believed.

Uncertainties force us to deal in probabilities in assessing past and present reality. The challenge comes in assigning values to those probabilities. For example, how likely is it that Joseph Smith spoke with God and translated The Book of Mormon from plates of gold? Devoted and thoughtful Mormons will feel that they have adequately reviewed the evidence and are justified in believing to a probability of near 100% that these events occurred. Virtually all non-Mormons who have reviewed the same evidence conclude that the probability is close to 0%. We can learn a lot from a careful examination of the reasoning processes that different groups use to answer the same question.

The popular TV show CSI illustrates the probability assignment process. Forensic researchers gather testimony, bits of cloth, blood and DNA samples, insects, notes, and other evidentiary



fragments - all with the aim of assembling the best possible narrative. They may begin with no suspects, but the evidence eventually leads to the formulation of a narrative, and the narrative points to a suspect. A probability can be assigned. The narrative guides the search for further evidence and the search leads to modifications in the narrative. So the process has a feedback loop. With each additional clue, probabilities change, and the narrative may also change. But in the TV show at least - if not always in real life - evidence piles upon evidence, until a pattern becomes clear, and the probability of one narrative becomes much larger than the competing alternatives.

The process of gathering and interpreting evidence, and the continuous updating of probabilities, leads us to “justified beliefs”. We do this in our everyday lives. We make decisions by weighing the evidence based on our perception of current and past reality. These decisions are based on probabilities, not certainties. For example, we may be wondering whether to trust someone asking for money for charity. We will decide based on past experience, what we know about the person, how familiar we are with the charity, documentation provided, and verbal and non-verbal cues. Sometimes we make the “right” decision; other times not. In any event, we understand that we cannot be certain about these decisions. So we do the best we can. We are less likely to make mistakes when we have accurate and complete information, when we are aware of our biases and vulnerabilities, and when we understand how other people can fool us - perhaps even unwittingly. In fact, the most effective persuaders are often the most sincere believers. Consequently, the most powerful mass persuasion occurs when leaders can persuade their sincere followers to become persuaders while at the same time persuading them to suppress information that could make their efforts insincere.

We are far from rational information processors. We have biases and suffer from cognitive dissonance induced denial. The best defence against denial and other biases is the kind of peer review used by the scientific community. The idea is to find a group of well-informed individuals who can act as “objective” forum of critics - the larger and more diverse, the better. That is because a diverse group will tend to spot, critique and nullify each other’s error and bias, while drawing attention to other relevant information.

Scientific inquiry is like a dot-to-dot puzzle, where the dots themselves have to be uncovered in some way. Each dot is a piece of evidence or data. The idea is to reveal as many dots as possible, then connect them as simply as possible. Data that seem clear are dark dots, whereas uncertain data are faint. When only a few faint dots are available, the picture is unclear. But as the dots accumulate, and become darker, a relatively reliable pattern often emerges. The more testable the pattern and more replicable the results of experiments designed to test it, the more reliable the pattern is. The peer review process seeks to ensure that the dots are shaded and located correctly and then connected using short straight lines so that the overall picture is interpreted correctly.

The opposite of the scientific approach is that of the “true believer”. People who feel impelled to “prove” that their group is “right” or has “the truth” (often called “apologists”) tend to start with the picture that must be true, then cherry pick the dots or use lines that go wherever necessary to conform to the already determined “truth” that the evidence must be made to fit.

Another tactic of apologists since at least the ancient Greeks is to emphasize the uncertainty of all “knowledge” and then to insist that, for really important things like religious beliefs, a high level of certainty is required before a change in belief is warranted. They hence set the bar of proof so high that practically speaking it is impossible to clear. Because the information presented in this essay undermines belief in the Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory, it can be

predicted that those who have based their lives or staked their reputations on some form of that theory will use this tactic. While this essay may have no effect on such individuals, I believe it will have value for those who are looking at Mormonism in relatively objective terms, or perhaps are approaching a “tipping point” as I did some time ago.

## **PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND BIASES**

No one can be entirely objective, and it is easiest to account for biases when they are acknowledged to the extent possible. So I will summarize my background related to this topic. Those who read this essay can then allow for the biases of which I am aware.

I am an academic scientist with a bias against supernatural explanations. I lead a team that does basic and applied chemistry and microbiology research. We assume that supernatural agents, if they exist, have no effect on the outcome of our experiments. So when microorganisms surprise us in some way, we attribute their behaviour to their genes and to their biochemical and ecological interactions with their environment, and through additional experiments, we try to understand what about those genes and interactions caused what we observed. We do not suspect or even acknowledge a role for the supernatural. We therefore implicitly assume that no gods, demons, hobgoblins, or evil witches mess with our experiments. It's that way with other scientific disciplines as well. When geologists examine sediments, they assume natural processes offer an adequate explanation for what they observe. They assume, for example, that no deity has altered the sediments to hide evidence of a worldwide “Great Flood” on which Noah floated his Ark.

Despite the above bias, for 25 years including about 10 years as a working scientist, I was among those who believed that The Book of Mormon was literally what it claims to be. Paradoxically and illogically, I never believed the Biblical stories of Noah's Ark or the Tower of Babel, even though these accounts are assumed valid in The Book of Mormon. This is evidence of denial produced by cognitive dissonance. As previously discussed, however, the dissonance between accumulating evidence against my Mormon beliefs and my understanding of science became so great that my beliefs changed. I came to the view that it was highly probable, on the basis of scientific considerations alone, that The Book of Mormon was a work of fiction. At that point, I assumed, as many do, that Smith must have been its author based on what I had read in Fawn Brodie's No Man Knows My History and books written by other well-regarded historians. I even wrote a short essay espousing the view of Smith-as-Sole-Author, and I posted that essay under the title “Storytime” at the [www.2Think.org](http://www.2Think.org) web site (a repost of that post is archived at <http://www.anyboard.net/soc/2think/archive/5818.html#5846>). I based my conclusion that Smith must have been the author on features of The Book of Mormon that seemed to me, as LDS apostle and historian B. H. Roberts put it, “the wonder-tale of a pious but immature mind” (<http://www.irr.org/mit/bhrobert.html>): the Monty Pythonesque scene of Ammon chopping off the arms of attacking thieves; the masculine bravado of Captain Moroni, waving the banner of liberty; the last desperate gasps of the beheaded Shiz. So it is fair to say that up to that time, I accepted and was thus biased in favor of a naturalistic Smith-as-Sole-Author explanation. I was also inclined to believe that Smith was somehow sincere; that the book contained fiction inspired by God. But cracks began to form in that belief as they had in Mormonism itself.

Sometime in the late 90's, I came across a sample of Smith's early writing, where he described his formal education, as follows:

"we were deprived of the benefit of an education Suffice it to say I was nearly instructed in reading writing and the ground [rules] of Arithmetic which constituted my whole literary acquirements".

This statement was written in 1831, one year after publication of The Book of Mormon. Despite my publicly announced belief in the Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory, I began to wonder how this uneducated young man (note that I am not saying "unintelligent") could have written The Book of Mormon – a book I knew well to be highly complex. It did not help matters that I had posed that same question to investigators when I was an LDS missionary.

Around the year 2000, I became involved in an exchange of letters with my father-in-law regarding my decision to withdraw from LDS Church activity (later I resigned my membership). He raised the question again - how could Smith, an uneducated young man, have written The Book of Mormon. I told him that I had some ideas, but that it would be better not to get into it. The truth is I was not sure.

I then came across posts by Jeff Hammel and Randy Jordan on the Recovery from Mormonism website at [http://www.exmormon.org/boards/w-agera/w-agera.php3?site=exmob&bn=exmob\\_recovery](http://www.exmormon.org/boards/w-agera/w-agera.php3?site=exmob&bn=exmob_recovery). Their arguments supported the Spalding-Rigdon Theory. I knew little about that theory, so I decided to look into it. That led me to the websites of Dale Broadhurst and Ted Chandler, where I found a wealth of information. At the same time, I renewed my study of The Book of Mormon, hoping to find clues to its origins.

After about 3 years of this, I was confident that the Spalding-Rigdon Theory was the best explanation for The Book of Mormon. What I liked about it was how it systematized and integrated the evidence, reconciling many otherwise irreconcilable facts. It also had predictive power. I should explain what I mean by that. If I assumed that the Spalding-Rigdon Theory was correct, I was able to infer a timeline for The Book of Mormon fabrication, and from that timeline, I could predict certain things about the structure and content of The Book of Mormon. When I investigated The Book of Mormon text to see if those predictions were confirmed. I found they were. For example, an important date in the timeline of The Book of Mormon is June 15, 1828. That was the date that Lucy Harris disposed of the first 116 pages of The Book of Mormon. Smith was highly distraught by this event. It is easy to see why, especially if he had been destroying Spalding originals after reading them to his scribe. He would have needed Rigdon to create a replacement. But for Rigdon, this would have created an opportunity, a chance to add doctrines that had become popular between September 21, 1827, when he presumably gave Smith the record, and June 15, 1828 when the pages were lost. He could add doctrines that appealed to him and especially those that had become popular in that time interval. That would increase the probability of a favorable reception for The Book of Mormon. But to do that, and to ensure internal consistency, he would need access to both the beginning and the end of The Book of Mormon. Based on this logic, I could predict that Rigdon's pre-1830 beliefs and perhaps his word usage signature patterns would be concentrated near the beginning of The Book of Mormon and at its end. And that is what I found. Rigdon-like theology is especially concentrated at the end of the Book of 2 Nephi and in the Book of Moroni. Especially significant is the presence in those sections of a Campbellite conversion sequence that became popular between 1827 and 1828. And these beliefs correlated with specific word usage patterns. I will return to this and other patterns later, but this example illustrates what I mean by prediction and confirmation of a hypothesis based on the assumption that the Spalding-Rigdon theory is correct.

As I hope that the above example illustrates, I have tried to the extent possible to use a scientific approach in order to define and connect the dots relevant to the authorship of The Book of Mormon. That is, I have made an effort to consider all of the evidence available to me, and I have attempted to assess that evidence in terms of its reliability. I have also attempted to identify and compensate for my biases and my limited access to information. I tried to do this by sending drafts of this essay to as many knowledgeable people as reasonably possible for their critique and have exposed significant parts of my analysis to public criticism by posting excerpts on the Recovery from Mormonism web site. In doing this, I learned that in some cases, I had included unreliable data. So I had to erase some dots and change the shading of others. More often, I added dots as new information came available to me through interactions with my review group. The new dots were generally consistent with the emerging picture. That gave me increased confidence in the overall picture. So while I expect new information to come to light, making further changes necessary, I believe it to be highly probable that that there are now sufficient dots to see a coherent picture, and the loss or gain of a few dots will not radically change it. This change of opinion means that I am again subject to confirmation bias. I have dealt with that as best I can in the manner indicated, and I invite any thoughtful critique that readers may wish to provide.

## **THE SPALDING-RIDGON THEORY: BACKGROUND**

The Spalding-Rigdon Theory proposes that the unpublished writings of Solomon Spalding (a Dartmouth-educated man who died in 1816) came into the possession of Sidney Rigdon, a reformed Baptist (Campbellite) preacher, and that Rigdon inserted into those writings his literalistic, pre-millennial, Restorationist Christian theology, along with other information useful for his purposes, to create the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon.

Rigdon's motive in doing this was to become the leader of a new Christian religious movement and to gather Israel to a "promised land" in North America, where he would usher in the Christian millennium. He imagined that the Kingdom of God would be built, as foretold in the Book of Daniel - fulfilling the biblical promises to the Tribe of Joseph, one of the Lost Ten Tribes. His intent was to use Smith as "translator" to reveal this new scripture. Rigdon planned to interpret the new scripture, and lead the new church. But he underestimated Smith's ability to attract and hold his own following. By early 1830, Smith had turned the tables on Rigdon, taking leadership of the new church. Thereafter, Rigdon tried at least twice to take the leadership of the church from Smith, and on Smith's death again tried to take control. In each case he was unsuccessful. Hence, Rigdon did not obtain what he sought, even though he played a central role in the composition of new scripture and gained a position of prominence second only to Smith in the new church.

The timeline of Figure 1 highlights events in the long life of Sidney Rigdon. Key points include: (1) Rigdon presumably had possession of Spalding's Manuscript Found for 13 years before Smith began his translation; (2) After Rigdon officially became a Mormon, he almost immediately acquired leadership status "co-equal" to Smith; and (3) Rigdon functioned as a prophet, receiving visions and revelations and actively developing new scripture, for most of his adult life. All of these facts are consistent with the Spalding-Rigdon Theory, and I will elaborate further on them later in this essay.

The weakest points of the Spalding-Rigdon Theory are:

- (1) The Spalding manuscript that contemporary witnesses described as similar to The Book of Mormon – a document ironically named "Manuscript Found" - is missing. Its absence

can be compared to the absence of a murder weapon in a murder case. In such cases, circumstantial evidence can often still secure a conviction, but it is an uphill battle.

- (2) There is uncertainty about how and when Rigdon first came into contact with a member of the Smith family. But while the exact circumstances have not been established, there is evidence that contact did occur. Several scenarios are plausible. Different theories propose as Smith's initial middlemen Alvin Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Parley Pratt.
- (3) Word print studies have not connected Spalding or Rigdon to The Book of Mormon. However, as I will discuss in the companion essay, these studies were not designed in a way that would enable a fair assessment of the Spalding-Rigdon Theory.
- (4) Some of the testimony cited in support of the Spalding-Rigdon Theory came many years after the alleged incidents and can be questioned on the grounds of memory fallibility. These are lightly shaded dots. Other pieces of evidence can be questioned on other grounds, such as bias. Where I am aware of such issues, I will address them in this and the companion essay. The fact that some pieces of evidence have more uncertainty than others when they are analyzed in isolation does not change the evidentiary value of the more certain evidence nor does it negate the value of lightly shaded dots when they are internally consistent and numerous and when they provide clues for additional investigation.

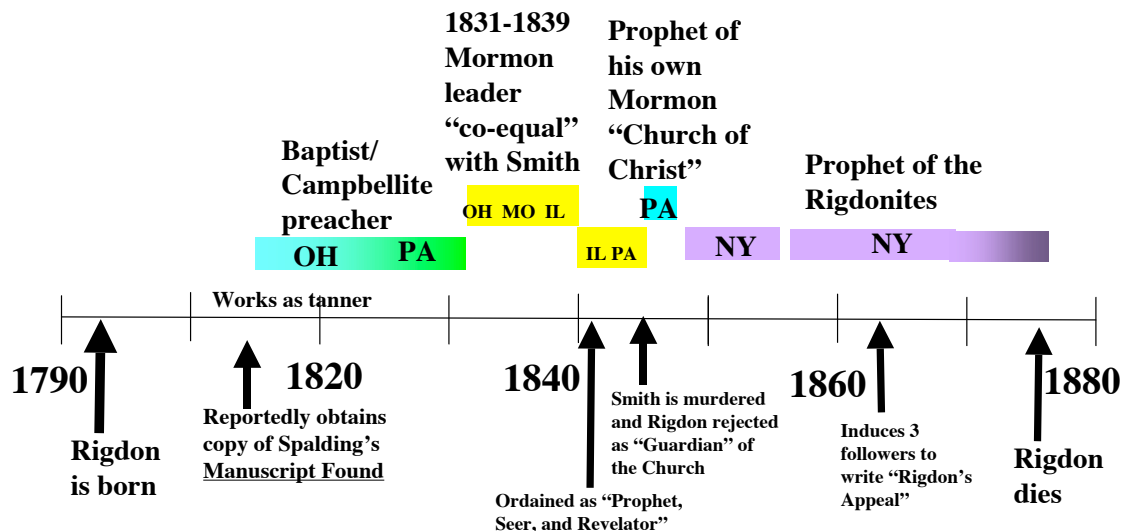


Figure 1. Timeline of important events in the life of Sidney Rigdon. Abbreviations indicate the primary state of residence.

In the following sections, I first discuss a preliminary issue often raised in authorship discussions, then the facts that demonstrate - to my satisfaction at least - that Rigdon had the motive, means, and opportunity to adapt Spalding's work and to thereby create the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon. His motive was to establish a Church of Christ modeled on his idea of Primitive Christianity, with himself as Spokesman and Gatherer of Israel. His means and opportunity came through the Spalding documents that came into his possession through his association with the Patterson bookselling and publishing businesses in Pittsburgh and through his acquaintance with a "prophet" in embryo by the name of Joseph Smith.

## **A PRELIMINARY MATTER AND CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW – “JOSEPH SMITH WAS INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO WRITE THE BOOK OF MORMON AND SO NO OTHER THEORIES DESERVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION”**

Before proceeding with the evidence relative to the Spalding-Rigdon Theory, I would like to address an important preliminary argument that is regularly used by some Smith-as-Sole-Author proponents who also take a naturalistic view of the evidence. These people assert that the Spalding-Rigdon Theory stands or falls on whether or not Smith was intelligent. They first claim that Smith was intelligent enough to write The Book of Mormon. They then assert that because this is so, no other theories deserve serious consideration. In my view, such reasoning distracts from a fair consideration of evidence. So a few comments on Smith’s intelligence are warranted.

First, let’s dispense with the view that Smith was stupid or unintelligent. He appears to have been both intelligent and charismatic. But if we are going to focus on his intelligence, shouldn’t we ask, “How was his intelligence most likely used?” And, more specifically, “How did he use that intelligence during the time period that he was, according to his own reports, attempting to secure and translate the gold plates?” Let’s examine the historical record.

There is abundant evidence that during the same time period that Smith claimed to be entertaining annual visits by an angel, he was also making a living as a con man (Figure 2). Included in the voluminous evidence that supports this view is the 1826 Bainbridge trial transcripts in which he was found guilty of perpetrating a money-digging scheme (see [http://www.xmission.com/~country/reason/ny\\_js.htm](http://www.xmission.com/~country/reason/ny_js.htm)). It also appears that Smith was no run-of-the-mill con man. He was actually a talented magician, with an act that included seer stones, fortune telling, palm reading, divining rods, amulets, incantations, and participation in rituals to summon spirits (Quinn, 1984) and showed a remarkable ability to induce and retain belief. The Bainbridge trial transcript describes some of the ruses used by Smith to con people, and it includes testimony that he was a fraud. Amazingly, some of those who testified and whom Smith had defrauded (Josiah Stowel, Jonathon Thompson) continued to believe in his magic, despite the fact that they had paid him to dig up buried treasure and he was unable to do. This is testament to his charisma and storytelling abilities. He was able to convince people that the treasures he could see buried in the ground would slip deeper into the earth when attempts were made to dig them up. The same “sinking treasures” appear in The Book of Mormon (see for example, Helaman 12:18-19; 13:19). This has been used to suggest that Smith at least influenced the translation process. Interestingly, Smith’s future father-in-law, Isaac Hale, was the same man with whom he boarded during his treasure seeking escapades, and he was one who lost faith in him and brought suit against him.

It is important to reiterate that Smith claimed to be receiving an annual angelic visitor in anticipation of The Book of Mormon *at the very same time* he was also engaged in activities that show him to be a con man (Figure 2). It is also important to note that Smith used the same seer stone-in-a-hat for both treasure hunting and translation. Later, Hale said of Smith:

“The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods!” (Affidavit of Isaac Hale, as printed in the Susquehanna Register, May 1, 1834). See: <http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/changech4.htm>.

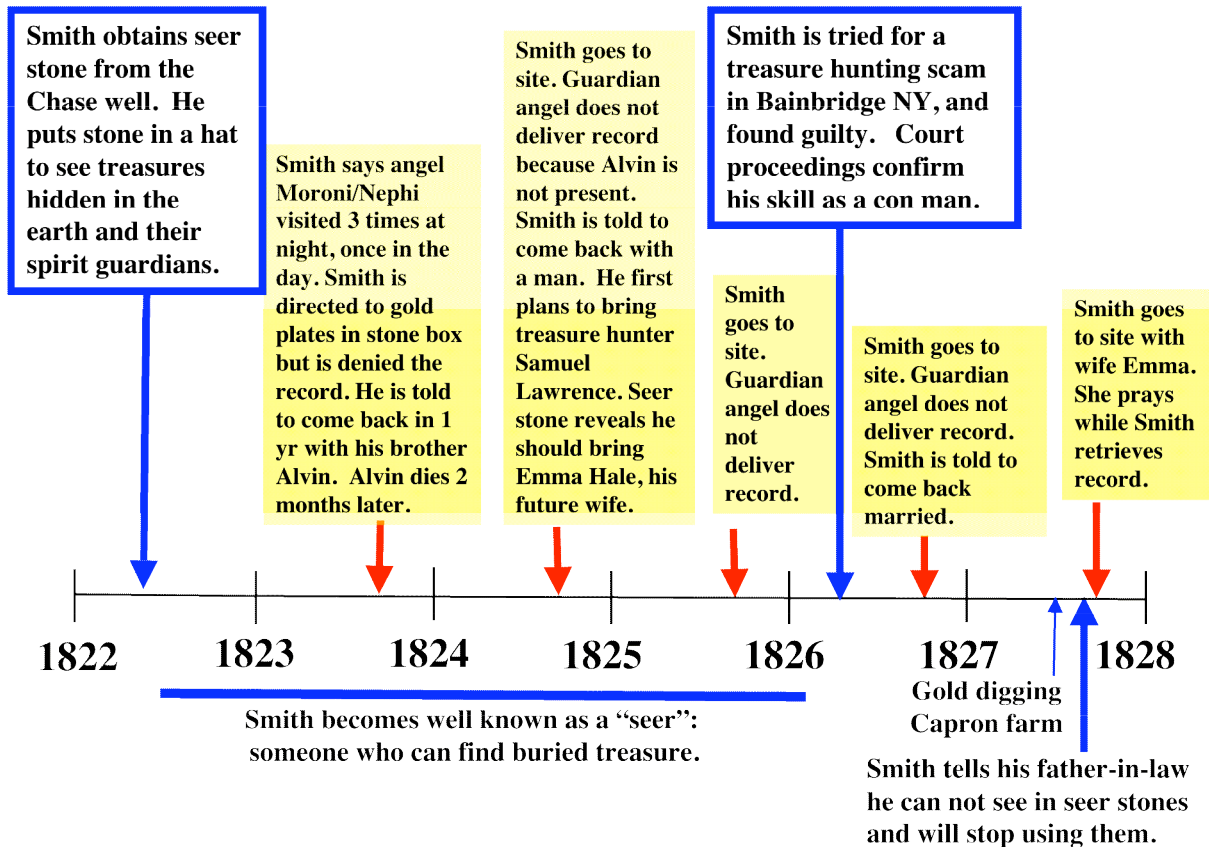


Figure 2. Timeline of events 1822-1828 showing that at the same time Smith claimed to be receiving a supernatural visitor (red arrows) in anticipation of The Book of Mormon, he was also engaged in activities that show him to be a con man (blue arrows).

The above information is consistent with a view of Smith as con man. And evidence that shows Smith to have been an honest man is also consistent with the con man theory, because that is precisely how many successful con men normally present themselves. A successful con man must pass himself off as trustworthy in order to gain the “confidence” of his marks so that he can then take advantage of them. Con men may even believe at some level that they can actually do the improbable things they claim to be able to do.

Of course, this is not to say that all people who present themselves, as honest “men of god” are con men. But the likelihood of former con men becoming real men of god and performing miracles is less than the likelihood of them remaining con men and performing tricks that appear to be miracles in support of some con. And the con man may even be sincere. The followers of Jim Jones clearly regarded him as a man of God – as evidenced by the testimonies they bore while committing mass suicide in accordance with his will. And the evidence suggests that Jones himself was sincere in his belief that God had called him to perform a special work.

Frankly, I don’t know how Smith so completely convinced some people that his tricks were real, but I also don’t think that such knowledge is critical to the overall argument. I don’t know how David Copperfield does his tricks either. That does not mean that he really does what he seems to do. In fact, my inability to explain Copperfield’s methods underscores the fact that Copperfield is an effective magician. And I am not saying that Smith had skills comparable to Copperfield’s.

Smith's marks were likely easier to trick because they lived in an era of greater superstition, and they were unsuspecting. Copperfield is subjected to intense scrutiny by a sceptical audience and still manages to pull off his tricks.

Now let's consider the probability of different naturalistic versions of the Smith-as-Sole Author Theory. These can be classified based upon two theories:

Theory 1: Smith had no written source materials at hand. Two explanations have been offered as to how Smith could have composed The Book of Mormon under such circumstances:

1. Composition of The Book of Mormon was a prodigious feat of memorization and dictation.
2. Composition of The Book of Mormon was an example of "automatic writing" (Dunn, 2002). This phenomenon has been previously invoked to explain authorship of improbable literary works in short periods of time by authors who seemingly lacked the ability to do so.

Theory 2: Smith previously prepared source documents that he used for dictation. When dictating, he was actually reading from his concealed source documents.

While it is theoretically possible that Smith performed an amazing feat of memorization and dictation or engaged in automatic writing (Theory 1), the likelihood is small because these capabilities are rare, and there is no evidence that Smith had such skills. But we have abundant evidence that Smith was capable of spinning a convincing tale on the spot with any material at hand. This has led several researchers to propose that some events in The Book of Mormon derive from incidents or stories told within the Smith family. For example, Smith's mother, Lucy, attributed a vision to her husband that is similar to Lehi's dream of the Tree of Life in 1 Ne 8 and 1 Ne 11-15. The similarity suggests that Smith may have incorporated his father's tale into The Book of Mormon. But there is no evidence that this storytelling ability would have enabled dictation of a narrative as lengthy and convoluted as The Book of Mormon without benefit of written source materials<sup>1</sup>.

Naturalistic theories proposing dictation without written source materials are on shaky ground for other reasons as well. For a time, Smith's wife, Emma, recorded dictation from her husband. She described the process this way:

"When he stopped for any purpose at any time he would, when he commenced again, begin where he left off without any hesitation, and one time while he was translating he stopped suddenly, pale as a sheet, and said, 'Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?' When I answered 'Yes,' he replied 'Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived.' He had such a limited knowledge of history at that time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls." See: <http://www.mormonstudies.com/author1.htm>

If this account is accurate, Smith could continue dictation from one session to the next, picking up exactly where he had left off on the previous session. Such a skill would be remarkable in the absence of written source materials, but easily explained if such material were available. Emma's account also indicates that Smith was unfamiliar with the text that he was translating, indicating source material written by someone else.

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<sup>1</sup> And it also appears quite possible that his father's tale actually came from the pen of Solomon Spalding.



During production of the first 116 pages (April 12 – June 14, 1828), Smith separated himself from Harris with a large blanket. For part of that time, the gold plates were reportedly hidden in the woods. As Cowdrey et al. (2005) asked - “Why would Smith need the blanket?” What was he concealing? Later, Smith used his seer stone in the hat trick, as he had previously done in his treasure seeking con. Again, we have to ask why? And, if he was dictating with his head in a hat, how did he manage to quote long passages from the King James Version of The Bible - including errors in the edition of his day? The only plausible explanations would be an exceptional memory or dictation from The Bible. Of these two options, the most probable is the latter. If he dictated from the Bible, then what would prevent him from dictating from a hidden text that he himself had previously written?

So Theory 2 appears more probable than Theory 1. But all of the evidence we have of Smith’s ability to write at the relevant time suggests that Theory 2 is also unlikely, if it does not allow for source material written by someone else. Moreover, if Smith did have some source material at hand - such as the King James Bible - then there is no reason that he could not have had other texts - such as a Spalding manuscript either altered by Rigdon or not. Historian and LDS General Authority Brigham H. Roberts advocated Theory 2 but his analysis notes inconsistencies:

“There is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency.”

Excerpt of Roberts' thoughts, in, B. D. Madsen, ed., *Studies of The Book of Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), page 244.

While Roberts attributed the inconsistencies in The Book of Mormon to an "undeveloped mind", another possible explanation would be clumsy or hurried copying and/or editing of texts created by others.

A related evidentiary issue concerns the type of errors made by Smith’s scribes in surviving fragments of the hand-written “original” of The Book of Mormon. Chandler (2004) identified errors that appear to be copying errors. It is not clear how the Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory would explain anything other than dictation errors, but the Spalding-Rigdon Theory would explain either copying errors or a mix of hearing and copying errors.<sup>2</sup>

See: <http://farms.byu.edu/display.php?table=jbms&id=167>

See: <http://www.mormonstudies.com/scribe.htm>

When I weigh the above factors together with evidence linking Ridgon and Spalding to fabrication of The Book of Mormon, as summarized below for Rigdon and in a companion essay for Spalding, I am persuaded that Smith-as-Sole-Author theories are far less probable than alternatives that incorporate Ridgon and Spalding.

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<sup>2</sup> I recently came across a small discrepancy in The Book of Mormon that lends some support to Chandler’s interpretation. 1 Ne 12:18 uses the phrase “word of the justice of the Eternal God”. Ether 8:23 uses the phrase “sword of the justice of the Eternal God.” Contextually, the word “sword” makes more sense than “word”. Given that “word” and “sword” have distinctive pronunciations, a copying error seems more likely than a dictation error. 1 Nephi 12:18 evidently contains a copying error in which the initial “s” in sword was omitted.

## **TWENTY-TWO PIECES OF EVIDENCE THAT RIGDON PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON**

In the following sections, I have compiled a list of evidence in support of the view that Sidney Rigdon played a central role in the composition of The Book of Mormon. The evidence falls into four major headings.

### **Historical evidence connecting Rigdon to Spalding**

1. Rigdon shared a post office with Solomon Spalding and evidently frequented a print shop where Spalding had left a manuscript entitled Manuscript Found. For a time, the manuscript disappeared. Spalding reportedly suspected Rigdon had taken it.
2. John Winter reported that Rigdon kept a copy of a Spalding manuscript in his study
3. Witnesses familiar with Spalding's Manuscript Found testified that it was similar to The Book of Mormon but lacked the religious content
4. Rigdon and Spalding were independently named as authors before anyone was aware of a connection between them.
5. In 1839, Rigdon wrote a letter denying his role in the composition of The Book of Mormon. His letter contained demonstrable falsehoods.
6. In 1888, Walter Sidney Rigdon - Sidney Rigdon's grandson - said that his grandfather's role in fabrication of The Book of Mormon was a family secret.

### **Textual and theological evidence implicating Rigdon**

7. The theology of Alexander Campbell, Rigdon's mentor, is sprinkled throughout The Book of Mormon.
8. On those issues where Rigdon and Campbell disagreed prior to 1830, The Book of Mormon strongly endorses Rigdon's views.
9. Sections of The Book of Mormon likely added after loss of the first 116 pages in June 1828 describe spiritual rebirth after baptism, consistent with Rigdon's changed beliefs after meeting with Walter Scott in March 1828.
10. The phrase "children of men" appears with exceptionally high frequency in those parts of The Book of Mormon that contain theological content reflecting Rigdon's pre-1830 views
11. Rigdon is known to have worked with Smith to produce The Book of Moses. The phrase "children of men" appears with high frequency in those parts of The Book of Moses that contain theological content reflecting Rigdon's pre-1830 views.

### **Historical evidence connecting Rigdon to Smith before 1830**

12. Prior to 1830, Rigdon reportedly made several statements in which he indicated his foreknowledge of The Book of Mormon and the impending rise of a new religion.
13. At a Reformed Baptist convention in Aug 1830, Rigdon spoke of a fuller revelation about to come forth and the need for a complete restoration of the gospel.
14. Rigdon denied meeting Smith before 1830, but several people reported seeing him at or near the Smith's prior to that date and Rigdon's calendar contains gaps at critical time periods when he would have had time to visit Smith
15. In 1868 Rigdon wrote a letter in which he claimed to know the contents of the sealed portion of The Book of Mormon
16. James Jeffery, a friend of Rigdon's, testified that in 1844 he heard Rigdon say that Smith used a Spalding manuscript to fabricate The Book of Mormon

### **Historical evidence related to the long-term relationship between Rigdon and Smith**

17. Almost immediately after his baptism, Rigdon acted as though he was in charge of the church. As soon as he officially met Smith, they began work on The Book of Moses, a scripture that endorses Rigdon's 1828 "discovery" of spiritual rebirth after baptism.

18. In March of 1828, the "Revelator" of The Book of Commandments and The Book of Mormon attempted to limit Smith's role to translation only.

19. In 1863 Rigdon said that Smith was supposed to be the Translator and Rigdon the Gatherer of Israel

20. Rigdon and Smith engaged in a see-saw power struggle that can be understood considering their vulnerabilities and co-dependency.

21. Rigdon and Smith collaborated on joint revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. They collaborated in changing revelations after the fact. They collaborated on illegal financial transactions.

22. In 1844 Sidney Rigdon seized upon the opportunity of Smith's death, instigating a cynical power grab, threatening to "expose the secrets of the church" and professing new revelations and visions

### **A final question:**

If Rigdon had nothing to hide from future generations, why did he ask that his writings be burned after his death?

### **HISTORICAL EVIDENCE CONNECTING RIGDON TO SPALDING:**

***RIGDON SHARED A POST OFFICE WITH SOLOMON SPALDING AND EVIDENTLY FREQUENTED A PRINT SHIP WHERE SPALDING HAD LEFT A MANUSCRIPT ENTITLED MANUSCRIPT FOUND. FOR A TIME, THE MANUSCRIPT DISAPPEARED. SPALDING REPORTEDLY SUSPECTED RIGDON HAD TAKEN IT.***

Rebecca Johnston Eichbaum worked in the Pittsburgh post office during the time Rigdon and Spalding both lived there. She gave the following statement on September 18, 1872:

"My father, John Johnson, was postmaster at Pittsburg for about eighteen years, from 1804 to 1822. My husband, William Eichbaum, succeeded him, and was postmaster for about eleven years, from 1822 to 1833. I was born August 25, 1792, and when I became old enough, I assisted my father in attending to the post-office, and became familiar with his duties. From 1811 to 1816, I was the regular clerk in the office, assorting, making up, dispatching, opening and distributing the mails. Pittsburg was then a small town, and I was well acquainted with all the stated visitors at the office who called regularly for their mails. So meagre at that time were the mails that I could generally tell without looking whether or not there was anything for such persons, though I would usually look in order to satisfy them. I was married in 1815, and the next year my connection with the office ceased, except during the absences of my husband. I knew and distinctly remember Robert and Joseph Patterson, J Harrison Lambdin, Silas Engles, and Sidney Rigdon, I remember Rev. Mr. Spaulding, but simply as one who occasionally called to inquire for letters. I remember there was an evident intimacy between Lambdin and Rigdon. They very often came to the office together. I particularly remember that they would thus come during the hour on Sabbath afternoon when the office was required to be open, and I remember feeling sure that Rev. Mr. Patterson knew nothing of this, or he would have put a stop to it. I do not know what position, if any, Rigdon filled in Pattersons's store or printing office, but am well assured he was frequently, if not constantly, there for a large part of the time when I was clerk in the post-office. I recall Mr. Engles saying that "Rigdon was always hanging around the printing office." He was connected with the tannery before he became a preacher, though he may have continued the business whilst preaching." See: <http://www.solomonspalding.com/docs/Eich1879.htm#1879a>

For many years, Eichbaum's testimony was dismissed on the grounds of memory reliability. However, important details of her testimony have now been confirmed. The names of Spalding and Rigdon both appear on the Commonwealth list of unclaimed letters shown here: [http://www.geocities.com/lds\\_research/solomonspalding.html](http://www.geocities.com/lds_research/solomonspalding.html). This makes it clear that Spalding and Rigdon received mail at the same Pittsburgh post office, as Eichbaum claimed. See: <http://www.mormonstudies.com/review.htm> Many. Eichbaum also correctly recalled Rigdon's association with a tannery, and she correctly recalled a subtle detail of post office operation on the Sabbath (Cowdrey et al., 2005, p. 139). Robert Patterson described Eichbaum as possessing

"[a] memory marvellously tenacious of even the minutest incidents, with the vivacity of a maiden in her teens...[t]hat one could hear her relate incidents of her youth, and specify her reasons for fixing names and dates with unusual distinction, would find it difficult to resist a conviction of the accuracy of her memory." (Cowdrey et al., 2005, p. 134).

Rev. Joseph Miller gave four statements (1869, 1879, Jan and Feb 1882) in which he connected Spalding to The Book of Mormon. In the latter three statements, he also connected Rigdon. For example, in his Feb 1879 statement, he wrote:

"My recollection is that Spalding left a transcript of the manuscript with Patterson for publication. The publication was delayed until Spaulding could write a preface. In the meantime the manuscript was spirited away, and could not be found. Spaulding told me that Sidney Rigdon had taken it, or was suspected of taking it. I recollect distinctly that Rigdon's name was mentioned in connection with it". (Cowdrey et al., 2005, p. 124).

See also <http://thedigitalvoice.com/enigma/wrw/1977DavD.htm>

Cowdrey et al. (1997) concluded:

"There is no credible objection to the evidence that Rigdon was in Pittsburgh during the period from 1813-14, when Spalding's manuscript was in the printshop, when Rigdon was seen by Spalding and suspected of taking the manuscript, and when Mrs. Eichbaum saw Rigdon and Lambdin together". See: <http://thedigitalvoice.com/enigma/wrw/1977DavD.htm>  
See also: <http://www.mormonstudies.com/review.htm>

### **JOHN WINTER REPORTED THAT RIGDON KEPT A COPY OF A SPALDING MANUSCRIPT IN HIS STUDY**

Rev. John Winter claimed to have seen "a large manuscript" which he described as "a romance of the Bible" in Rigdon's study. Winter claimed that Rigdon told him that "a Presbyterian Minister named Spaulding, whose health had failed, brought this to the printer to see if it would pay to publish it." See <http://mormonstudies.com/author2.htm>

Winter's stepson, Rev. Bonsall, remembered his father's comments:

"Rigdon had shown him (Winter) the Spalding manuscript romance, purporting to be the history of the American Indians, which manuscript he (Rigdon) had received from the printers".

Mrs. Mary W. Irvine, Winter's daughter, confirmed her stepbrother's report, adding that her father *frequently* repeated his sentiments:

"I have frequently heard my father (Dr. Winter) speak of Rigdon having Spaulding's manuscript, and that he had gotten it from the printers to read it as a curiosity; as such he showed it to my

father; and that at that time Rigdon had no intention of making the use of it that he afterwards did; for father always said Rigdon helped Smith in his scheme by revising and making the Mormon Bible out of Rev. Spaulding's manuscript."

A.B. Deming solicited testimony from Mrs. Irvine for his book, Naked Truths about Mormonism, and Mrs. Irvine replied with the following:

"Mr. A. B. Deming -- Sir: Your letter of November 1 received two days since. My father left no papers on the subject, but I distinctly recollect his saying that Sidney Rigdon showed him the Spaulding Manuscript as a literary curiosity left in the office to be published if it was thought it would pay. When father saw the "Book of Mormon" he said it was Rigdon's work, or he had a hand in it; I do not remember his words entirely, so many years have elapsed, but that was the import." Respectfully, Mary W. Irvine" See: <http://thedigitalvoice.com/enigma/wrw/1977DavD.htm>

Mrs. Amos Dunlap, of Warren Ohio reported on a childhood visit to Rigdon's family:

"When I was quite a child I visited Mr. Rigdon's family, He married my aunt. They at that time lived in Bainbridge, Ohio. During my visit Mr. Rigdon went to his bedroom and took from a trunk, which he kept locked, a certain manuscript. He came out into the other room, and seated himself by the fireplace and commenced reading it. His wife at that moment came into the room and exclaimed 'What! You're studying that thing again?' or something to that effect. She then added 'I mean to burn that paper.' He said 'No, indeed, you will not. This will be a great thing some day.' Whenever he was reading this he was so completely occupied that he seemed entirely unconscious of anything passing around him."

See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE2.htm#pg174>

***WITNESSES FAMILIAR WITH SPALDING'S MANUSCRIPT FOUND TESTIFIED THAT IT WAS SIMILAR TO THE BOOK OF MORMON BUT LACKED THE RELIGIOUS CONTENT***

While this piece of evidence does not directly implicate Rigdon, it is needed to understand what follows. On Feb 14 or 15, 1832, Mormon Elders Orson Hyde and Samuel H. Smith delivered a sermon on The Book of Mormon at a schoolhouse in Salem (Conneaut), Ohio. Nehemiah King, an old friend of Solomon Spaulding's, recognized it as Spaulding's work. Friends and relatives of Spaulding (John Spaulding, Martha Spaulding, Henry Lake, John Miller, Aaron Wright, Oliver Smith, Nahum Howard, Artemus Cunningham) agreed with King. These 8 people, referred to as the Conneaut witnesses, later signed affidavits to that effect. These affidavits were collected by D. P. Hurlburt, and published in Mormonism Unveiled (1834) by Eber Howe.

See: <http://home1.gte.net/dbroadhu/RESTOR/Lib/Smth1832.htm#Hyd32a>

<http://HOME1.gte.net/dbroadhu/RESTOR/Lib/HoweHL2.htm>

<http://solomonspaulding.com/SRP/saga/saga02a.htm>.

The Conneaut witnesses said of The Book of Mormon that

"its narrative followed the lines of Spaulding's novel. The plot was the same, the names of [the characters] were the same, the exact language was, in many instances... the same, and the only noticeable change was the addition of scriptural passages and religious matter which did not appear in Spaulding's original work." See: <http://thedigitalvoice.com/enigma/enigma1.htm>.

Considerable support for this piece of evidence will be provided in the companion essay on Solomon Spaulding. That essay will also address apologist objections to the testimony of the Conneaut witnesses.

***RIGDON AND SPALDING WERE INDEPENDENTLY NAMED AS AUTHORS BEFORE ANYONE WAS AWARE OF A CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM.***

Two 1831 newspaper reports demonstrate almost immediate suspicion that Rigdon was behind The Book of Mormon. Spalding was named as a possible author one year later, on Feb 14 or 15, 1832. A connection between Rigdon and Spalding was not proposed until late 1833. This is an important point and deserves extra emphasis. Rigdon and Spalding were independently named as authors by different groups of people who were unaware of the connection between the two men.

On Feb 15, 1831, The Cleveland Advertiser reported:

“Rigdon was formerly a disciple of Campbell’s and who it is said was sent out to make proselytes, but is probable he thought he should find it more advantageous to operate on his own capital, and therefore wrote, as it is believed the Book of Mormon, and commenced his pilgrimage in the town of Kirtland, which was represented as one of the extreme points of the Holy Land.”  
See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/OH/miscohio.htm#021531>

The above report identifies Rigdon as a likely author of The Book of Mormon just three months after his baptism at the hands of Oliver Cowdery.

In a two-part article published in August, 1831 in the Morning Courier-NY Enquirer (by JW Webb and MM Noah), writer James Gordon Bennett placed Sidney Rigdon with Smith during his money digging activities. According to Bennett’s account, one of the money diggers suggested going to Ohio to secure the services of Rigdon (referred to in the article as “Henry Rangdon or Ringdon so some such word” - but clearly referring to Rigdon based on the various descriptions of this person in the article), who was reportedly gifted at finding “the spots of ground where money is hid and riches obtained.” Rigdon was reportedly contacted and joined Smith and the other money diggers. See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/NY/courier.htm>. While Bennett’s report does contain some imprecise quotations and does not give well-defined dates, the events he described had to have occurred prior to the purported delivery of gold plates to Smith, and so must have occurred prior to 1827. Despite some fuzziness on the details, Bennett appears to be a generally reliable source. His journal entries confirm the basic facts of the article (Cowdery et al., 2005), and he later received national recognition for the accuracy and independence of his correspondence.

Bennett’s account is consistent with other money digging reports. Smith family money digging is well established. Less information is available on Rigdon’s interests in treasure and money digging, but there is some. In 1836, Rigdon traveled with Smith to Salem, MA, in a failed attempt to find a treasure supposedly hidden in the cellar of a house. Later in his life, while working as a shingle packer, Rigdon expressed interest in gold digging. In a letter written May 22, 1853 to former LDS Apostle Lyman Wight, then in Texas, Rigdon wrote:

“There is at this time some excitement in consequence of the reports which are circulating through the public papers of a rich gold region discovered in your state...should the prospect in your judgment in relation to the gold be such as warrant the effort, I will make one to visit Texas...Can I by coming there change my mode of living from a shingle packer to a gold digger is the question I want settled. If so the Lord permitting and opening a door for me to go, I will do so, and that as early a period as possible.” (Cowdery et al., 2005, p. 316).

Money was clearly important to Rigdon. Throughout his lifetime, he frequently and adamantly impressed upon his followers the need to provide for his financial support (Van Wagoner, 1994).

**IN 1839, RIGDON WROTE A LETTER DENYING HIS ROLE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON. HIS LETTER CONTAINED DEMONSTRABLE FALSEHOODS.**

For five years after publication of Howe's Mormonism Unveiled on Nov 28, 1834, Rigdon and Smith provided no written rebuttal to that book's central thesis, i.e. that Rigdon had modified Spalding's work to create The Book of Mormon. On May 27, 1839, however, Rigdon finally wrote a denial, accompanied by a vicious attack upon Matilda Spalding Davison (Solomon Spalding's widow) after she had provided a statement to the Boston Recorder (April 19, 1839) implicating Rigdon in the fabrication of The Book of Mormon. A portion of her letter read as follows:

"Here [in Pittsburg] Mr. Spaulding found a friend and acquaintance in the person of Mr. Patterson, who was very much pleased with it, and borrowed it for perusal. He retained it for a long time, and informed Mr. Spaulding that, if he would make out a title-page and preface, he would publish it, as it might be a source of profit. This Mr. Spaulding refused to do. Sidney Rigdon, who has figured so largely in the history of the Mormons, was at that time connected with the printing office of Mr. Patterson, as is well known in that region, and, as Rigdon himself has frequently stated, became acquainted with Mr. Spaulding's manuscript and copied it. It was a matter of notoriety and interest to all connected with the printing establishment. At length the manuscript was returned to its author, and soon after we removed to Amity where Mr. Spaulding deceased in 1816. The manuscript then fell into my hands, and was carefully preserved." See: <http://home1.gte.net/dbroadhu/RESTOR/Lib/New1839a.htm>

Rigdon's denial letter is available at: <http://www.solomonspalding.com/docs2/Rob1905a.htm>

Cowdrey et al. (2005) have demonstrated that Rigdon's letter contained various deceptions. These are summarized in the following paragraphs.

In his letter, Rigdon claimed no prior knowledge of Spalding ("I had not the most distant knowledge of his existence"), or of Spalding's work ("lying scribblings", "a bundle of lies for the righteous purpose of getting money"), and disparaged Spalding while attacking Matilda ("I of necessity have a very light opinion of him as a gentleman, a scholar, or a man of piety; for had he been either, he certainly would have taught his pious wife not to lie, nor unite herself with adulterers, liars, and the basest of mankind."). His claim to have never known Spalding and his work is refuted by the testimony of Rebecca Eichbaum who worked in the Pittsburgh post office during the time Rigdon and Spalding both lived there.

See: <http://www.solomonspalding.com/docs/Eich1879.htm#1879a>

As evidence that he had not acquired a copy of Spalding's work at the Patterson Print Shop in Pittsburg, Rigdon claimed "There was no man by the name of Patterson during my residence in Pittsburg who had a print shop". It is now known that Rev. Robert Patterson had control of a print shop owned by his cousin, Silas Engles and connected with the Patterson book shop, and that he lived in Pittsburg for a time period overlapping the time of Rigdon's residence in Pittsburg (1821 - Feb, 1823)). It is also known that Patterson operated as a news agent and bookseller until nearly fifteen years after the death of his Junior partner (J. H. Lambdin) in Aug 1825 (Cowdrey et al., 2005).

Regarding the print shop, Rigdon claimed "what might have been there before I lived there I know not." It is now known that (1) Rigdon visited Pittsburg before the time he lived there to collect his mail; (2) Rigdon had an extensive personal library, and Pittsburg was the most likely place for him to have obtained his books, (3) Rigdon had a personal association with J. H.

Lambin, the clerk, and Silas Engles, the printer for the Patterson publishing house from 1812 to 1816, (4) Rigdon manufactured leather book bindings for Engles.

See: <http://www.solomonspalding.com/docs/Eich1879.htm>

See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/PA/penn1860.htm#021779>

In her 1839 statement, Matilda said that her husband had shown his story to Mr. Patterson and that he was pleased with it, borrowed it, and was willing to publish it if a title page and preface were added. But according to Howe's Mormonism Unveiled [sic] (1834), Robert Patterson did not recall the manuscript. In his attack on Matilda, Rigdon seized upon that fact: "Why was not the testimony of Mr. Patterson obtained to give force to the shameful tale of lies?" As Cowdrey et al. (2005) have shown, Rigdon's question appears to have been a deliberate attempt at misdirection. Rigdon knew that there were two Pattersons: Robert and Joseph, and Rigdon's dealings were with Joseph. When Spalding took his manuscript to the print shop, Silas Engles was conducting the business. By 1839, when Rigdon made his statement, Joseph had moved away, and both Lambin and Engles had died.

Cowdrey et al. (2005) concluded: "Rigdon...simply denied knowing Spalding, proceeding to label all his critics liars or adulterers, and, by planting the Robert Patterson red herring, managed to get away with it."

***IN 1888, WALTER SIDNEY RIGDON - SIDNEY RIGDON'S GRANDSON - SAID THAT HIS GRANDFATHER'S ROLE IN FABRICATION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON WAS A FAMILY SECRET.***

Mormon apologists and Smith-as-Sole-Author advocates claim that Sidney Rigdon himself, and his family consistently denied Rigdon's involvement with the fabrication of The Book of Mormon and that every member of the family supported this denial, even some who were antagonist to Mormonism. While Rigdon's wife and children evidently remained loyal in denying his involvement, one of Rigdon's grandchildren gave a different account. In 1888, Reporter Beadle of the Tribune interviewed Walter Sidney Rigdon, a son of Algernon. Here are excerpts from the interview:

'Sidney Rigdon's Grandson Says Their Family Understood it to be a Fraud.

-- EDITOR TRIBUNE: -- In the intervals of my literary labors here I have many talks with men who were in Utah at a very early day, and occasionally with original Mormons or their sons.... [M]y chance talks with one of these are so agreeable that I report him briefly for you. Mr. Walter Sidney Rigdon is a citizen of Carrolton, Cattaraugus County, N. Y., and a grandson of Sidney Rigdon, the partner of Joe Smith. He talked with old Sidney hundreds of times about the "scheme of the Golden Bible," and his father still has many of the old Sidney's documents. "Grandfather was a religious crank," says Mr. Rigdon, "till he lost money by it. He started in as a Baptist preacher, and had a very fine congregation for those days, in Pittsburg. There was no reason at all for his leaving, except that he got 'cracked.' At that time he had no ideas of making money. Indeed, while he was with the Mormons, his chances to make money were good enough for most men; but he came out of it about as poor as he went in."

[Mr.] Beadle, the reporter: -- "But how did he change first?"

"Well, he tried to understand the prophecies, and the man who does that is sure to go crazy. He studied the prophets and baptism, and of course he got 'rattled.' Daniel and Ezekiel and Revelations will 'rattle' any man who gives in his whole mind to 'em -- at any rate they did him, and he joined Alexander Campbell. Campbell then believed that the end of the world was nigh -- his Millennial Harbinger shows that they 'rattled' all who listened to him in Ohio and other places;



then grandfather got disgusted and decided on a new deal. He 'found' Joe Smith and they had a great many talks together before they brought out the plates. None of us ever doubted that they got the whole thing up; but father always maintained that grandfather helped get up the original Spaulding book. At any rate he got a copy very early and schemed on some way to make it useful. Although the family knew these facts, they refused to talk on the subject while grandfather lived. In fact, he and they took on [a] huge disgust at the whole subject...."

I only report that part of Mr. Rigdon's talk which shows the history of the "Golden Bible," as accepted in the family. Of course, if Sidney Rigdon had wanted the world to believe the Smith story of the plates, he would have told them so. But, though the family do not care to ventilate it, he evidently taught them to treat the whole thing as a fraud.'

J. H. Beadle. -- New York, April 7, 1888.

"The Golden Bible" (Salt Lake Tribune, 1888 -- full text on web)

See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/UT/tribune2.htm#041588>

## **TEXTUAL AND THEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IMPLICATING RIGDON:**

### ***THE THEOLOGY OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL, RIGDON'S MENTOR, IS SPRINKLED THROUGHOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON.***

Similarities between beliefs of the Mormons and the Campbellites (also called the Reformed Baptists, and later known as the Disciples of Christ) were quickly noted. On Nov 18, 1830, just ten days after Rigdon's baptism, Warren Isham, the editor of the Hudson, Ohio *Observer* published his description of Mormonism as "Campbellism Improved".

See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/OH/miscohio.htm#111830>

Rigdon was known to borrow from Alexander Campbell and advocated many of Campbell's teachings in the early and mid-1820's. Evidence that Rigdon borrowed from both Campbell and from the preacher Walter Scott is provided by A. S. Hayden's reference to a letter from Scott to a Dr. Richardson:

"In a letter to Dr. Richardson, written in 1830... He [Walter Scott] strongly commends [Elias] Smith's book [on the apocalypse] to the doctor [Richardson]. This seems to be the origin of millennial views among us. Rigdon, who always caught and proclaimed the last word that fell from the lips of Scott or Campbell, seized these views (about the millennium and the Jews) and, with the wildness of his extravagant nature, heralded them everywhere." A.S. Hayden "Early History of the Disciples' Church in the Western Reserve," p. 186.

See: <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/ahayden/ehd/EHD07.HTM>

A problem in dealing with this evidence is that Campbell's teachings included beliefs also found in other Christian denominations, and especially in Primitivism and Seekerism, which attracted the interest of Smith's parents, particularly his father. Smith-as-Sole-Author advocates have used this observation to discount connections to Campbellism. In so doing, they ignore (1) the fact that features that appear unique to Campbellism are found in The Book of Mormon, (2) that contemporary newspapers quickly recognized a connection between Mormonism and Campbellism, and (3) that Rigdon viewed The Book of Mormon as having gutted Campbellism. In an article in the *Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland) in June, 1837, Rigdon wrote:

"One thing has been done by the coming forth of The Book of Mormon. It has puked the Campbellites effectually; no emetic could have done so half as well.... The Book of Mormon has revealed the secrets of Campbellism and unfolded the end of the system. "

See: <http://www.centerplace.org/history/ma/v3n04.htm>

The following list summarizes Campbellism doctrines, and indicates where they can be found in The Book of Mormon:

1. A Great Apostasy necessitating a Restoration of the doctrines and practices of New Testament Christianity. Campbell referred to this as a restoration of the “Ancient Order of Things.” Rigdon referred to it as a “restoration of all things.” References in The Book of Mormon include the following: 1 Ne 12:11; 13:26; 2 Ne 26:9-10, 20; Hel 13:5.

Walter Scott took Campbell’s idea of a restoration a step further, even calling for a “new Bible”. Hayden described Scott’s preaching in the winter of 1827-1828 this way: “He contended ably for the restoration of the true, original apostolic order which would restore to the church the ancient gospel as preached by the apostles. The interest became an excitement; ...the air was thick with rumors of a 'new religion,' a 'new Bible.' " [not an entirely different Bible, but rather, Alexander Campbell's 1820's edition of the New Testament].

2. Restoration and Gathering of the Jews – 1 Ne 15:19-20; 2 Ne 29:4; Restoration and Gathering of the House of Israel – 3 Ne 29:1.  
See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/VA/harb1830.htm#090630>
3. Imminent millennial reign of Christ - 1 Ne 20:26. Amos Hayden wrote of the millennial beliefs among the followers of Campbell (Reformed Baptists):

“There were many at that time who believed the millennium was at hand, and in 1830, there were many who were convinced it had dawned...the long expected day of gospel glory would be ushered in...These glowing expectations formed the staple of many sermons... they were the continued and exhaustless topic of conversation. They animated the hope and inspired the zeal to a high degree of the converts and many of the advocates of the gospel. Millennial hymns were learned and sung with joyful fervor and hope surpassing the conception of worldly and carnal professors. It was amid a people full of these expectations, and with hearts fired with these things, that Mormonism was brought, and small wonder that it found a welcome.” (van Wagoner, 1994, p. 61). See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE3.htm#pg205>

Alexander Campbell referred to Rigdon as ‘a flaming literalist of the school of [Elias] Smith a Millennarian of the first water.’ (Dec,1837, Millennial Harbinger 1:578).

In his autobiography, written in the third person for the Time and Seasons (1838), Rigdon described his pre-1830 millennial preaching, saying that he had:

”proved to a demonstration the literal fulfillment of prophesy, the gathering of Israel in the last days, to their ancient inheritances, with their ultimate splendor and glory; the situation of the world at the coming of the Son of Man—the judgments which Almighty God would pour out upon the ungodly, prior to that event, and the reign of Christ with his saints on the earth, in the millennium.” See:<http://sidneyrigdon.com/Rigd1843.htm>

4. Campbell’s followers used the “Bethany dialect”, and especially what was referred to as the “word alone system“. This is a belief that religious experience came from hearing the divine word alone. Alexander Campbell referred to this concept in his remarks on the Bible Dec 1, 1828: <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/acampbell/tcb/TCB605.HTM>. Mosiah 26:15-16 reads:

“Blessed art thou, Alma, and blessed are they who were baptized in the waters of Mormon. Thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the *words alone* of my servant Abinadi. And blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the *words alone*, which thou hast spoken unto them.”

5. Sacrament prayer and partaking of the sacrament bread and wine as a memorial rite in frequent gatherings – Moroni 4:3, 5:2, 6:6
6. Rejection of infant baptism and original sin – Moroni 8:1-12, 14, 20, 22. This doctrine is at odds with Methodism. This is relevant because of Smith’s documented attraction to Methodism, even during the translation process.
7. Adult immersion for the remission of sins as the central ordinance of the Gospel - 3 Ne 11:26. This elevation of the importance of baptism happened at a time when practically no other group of Christians made baptism that important or so easy to obtain. Calvinist churches demanded proof of a spiritual conversion experience before acceptance into a congregation. Campbellites merely asked for a statement of belief, and baptism was possible at a moment’s notice. In Mormonism, acceptance of The Book of Mormon qualified a new convert for immediate baptism, quick confirmation, and speedy ordination of male converts. This was a useful strategy for rapidly acquiring new converts among those who had been turned down for membership in other faiths.
8. Missionaries of the church should provide their own support - Mos 18:24-26; Mos 27:4-5; Alma 1:3, 26; Alma 30:31-32; 2 Ne 26:31 – and the clergy as well - Alma 1:3. Alma 35:3, 1 Nephi 22:23.

In September 1824, Campbell publicly commended Scott and Rigdon, the "two bishops" of a church in Pittsburgh, "who while they watch over and labor among the saints, labor, working with their own hands, according to the apostolic command; and not only minister to their own wants, but are (ensembles) to the flock in beneficence and hospitality" (C.B., p. 93). See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE6.htm>

9. Elders set apart by the laying on of hands. Alma 6: 1

Writing in *The Christian Messenger* on October 25, 1827, Disciple preacher Walter Scott commented on the laying on of hands:

"If a church have elders, and desire others, the elders in that particular Society, can proceed to set them apart by the imposition of hands." *The Christian Messenger* 1: 283-286. See <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/wscott/cm/FTCM02.HTM>

10. Speaking as if authorized by Jesus Christ - Words of Mormon 1:17; Mos 13:6; Mos 18:13; Alma 17:3; 3 Ne 5:13; 3 Ne 11:25; Moro 7:2; Moro 8:16. Disciples' preachers understood that they spoke directly for God. Referring to the preaching of Rigdon and Bentley, after a visit to Scott in March, 1828, Hayden said: "They spoke with authority, for the word which they delivered was not theirs, but that of Jesus Christ." See: <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/ahayden/ehd/EHD08.HTM>
11. Reference to "the Holy Spirit" as a kind of shared divine nature – 1 Ne 2:17; 2 Ne 2:28; Jar 1:4; Mosiah 3:19; Alma 5:46; 11:44; 13:28; 18:34; 31:35. According to Vogel (1989),

Campbellites made unusually frequent use of the term “Holy Spirit”. See: <http://www.xmission.com/~research/central/resth2.htm> Writing in “The Christian Baptist” (Dec, 1824), Rigdon made frequent reference to the “Holy Spirit” writing under the pen name “Theophilus”: See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/VA/harb1830.htm>

Rigdon is known to have played a role in the fabrication of scripture that shows signs of Campbell’s influence. As noted by Whittsitt, the Inspired Version of the Bible that Rigdon worked on with Smith less than two months after his baptism has similarities to Campbell’s edition of the Bible: both documents use the word “Testimony” as titles for the Gospels (for example, “The Gospel of Matthew” becomes “The Testimony of Matthew”), and both dropped use of special pronouns when addressing deity. The Book of Moses, now a part of the Pearl of Great Price, but initially fabricated as the first chapters of the Inspired Version of the Bible, clearly teaches Walter Scott’s pet doctrine of baptism by immersion before spiritual rebirth (Moses 6:52, 59; 8;24). See: [http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/basic/bible/jst\\_eom.htm](http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/basic/bible/jst_eom.htm)

Ideally, data on beliefs, such as the information on Campbellism summarized above, should be analyzed in the context of the major beliefs of each of the Christian sects in North America 1820-30. The relative uniqueness of each belief or practice could then be determined. However, in the absence of such data, it is reasonable to assume that those best qualified to compare Mormonism with the beliefs of other religions at the same time and place would be those living in that same time and place. Among them, Mormonism was quickly branded “Campbellism Improved.” See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/OH/miscohio.htm#111830>

Another way of assessing the significance of Campbellism in The Book of Mormon is to search The Book of Mormon for practices or doctrines that are inconsistent with Campbellism. The major inconsistencies are beliefs advocated by Sidney Rigdon prior to 1830, as discussed in greater detail in the next piece of evidence.

**ON THOSE ISSUES WHERE RIGDON AND CAMPBELL DISAGREED PRIOR TO 1830, THE BOOK OF MORMON STRONGLY ENDORSES RIGDON’S VIEWS.**

Rigdon believed that members of the restored church should have common property; Campbell did not. Rigdon believed the restored church must carry Christ’s name; Campbell did not. Rigdon believed that the restored church must have spiritual gifts and miracles; Campbell did not. Rigdon believed in divine authority revealed by God; Campbell believed that authority came from the Bible. Rigdon viewed the Old Testament and the New Testament as a continuous and consistent narrative - “one eternal round”; Campbell viewed the two testaments as discontinuous; with the Old Testament supplanted by the New.

Prior to the appearance of The Book of Mormon, Campbell had public disputes with Rigdon about the following beliefs, listed along with passages from The Book of Mormon that support Rigdon’s pre-1830 views:

COMMON PROPERTY: 3 Ne 26:19; 4 Nephi 1:3, 25.

NAME OF THE CHURCH: Mos 5:10; 3 Ne 27:8. - A difference between Walter Scott and Alexander Campbell was Scott’s insistence that the church should bear the name of Christ. According to Whittsitt.

“Rigdon espoused the side of Walter Scott as opposed to the views of Mr. Campbell in the controversy.” See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/whi/1891WhE6.htm>..

When Rigdon formed his own Church in 1845, he named it the “Church of Christ”.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT AND MIRACLES: 2 Ne 26-28; Mormon 8-10; Ether 12, and Moroni. Rigdon was a firm believer in miracles. In 1824, writing again under the pen name “Theophilus”, Rigdon declared:

“Here [in the Primitive Christian Church] all was evident, certain, and satisfactory; founded upon a divine testimony, divinely attested; God himself, by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness to the truth and certainty of every item of the faith and obedience inculcated. Here was nothing of human authority -- nothing of the opinions or inventions of men. No contested propositions to be first proved by human reasonings, and then to be believed or practised by the disciples who acknowledged apostolic authority. But how is it now! Surely the very reverse. Alas! when will it be so again? Never, surely, until the professors of Christianity return to the original standard of Christianity.” *The Christian Baptist* Vol II (No. 5), Dec 6, 1824. See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/VA/harb1830.htm#080224>

As noted by Whitsitt,

“Mr. Rigdon confidently affirmed that Christianity would never be “restored” until the power of speaking with tongues and working all kinds of miracles was also restored.” See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE1.htm#pg149>

The above differences between Rigdon and Campbell were publicly debated, but the following less public differences on authority and the Old Testament are also noteworthy because they distinguish Rigdon’s views from those of Campbell prior to 1830.

AUTHORITY: Like other Protestants, Campbell saw religious authority as derived from the Bible. There was no need for a special call from God. Rigdon believed that authority came via a revelation from God. Writing under the pen name “Theophilus” in *The Christian Baptist*, he argued:

“Here [in the Primitive Church] all was evident, certain, and satisfactory; founded upon a divine testimony, divinely attested; God himself, by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness to the truth and certainty of every item of the faith and obedience inculcated. Here was nothing of human authority -- nothing of the opinions or inventions of men. No contested propositions to be first proved by human reasonings, and then to be believed or practised by the disciples who acknowledged apostolic authority. But how is it now! Surely the very reverse.” See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/VA/harb1830.htm#080224>

Rigdon’s pre-1830 views on the need for divine call or summons are found in The Book of Mormon. In 1 Ne 10:22, Nephi cites the Holy Ghost as his source of authority. In 2 Ne 29:10, the adequacy of the Bible is questioned. Mosiah 23:16-17 states that “none received authority to preach or teach except it were by him from God”. Ammon claims to be called by the Holy Spirit (Alma 13:34). Alma claims to have been called by God (Alma 29:13), as does Nephi the Disciple (3 Nephi 5:13), and Moroni (Moroni 8:1-2).

See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE1.htm#pg149>

RELEVANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: To Campbell, the Old Testament was the scripture of the Mosaic Dispensation, and was not relevant to the Christian Dispensation, except as referenced in the New Testament. Prior to 1830 and throughout his life, Rigdon was enthralled with Old Testament prophets and prophecies. He viewed the gospel of the New Testament as a

continuation of the gospel of the Old Testament. Speaking in the third person, Rigdon described his own preaching in Mentor, OH, around the year 1826:

“Not only did the writings of the New Testament occupy his [Rigdon’s] attention, but occasionally those of the ancient prophets, particularly those prophesies which had reference to the present and to the future, were brought up to review and treated in a manner entirely new, and deeply interesting. No longer did he follow the old beaten track, which had been travelled for ages by the religious world but he dared to enter upon new grounds; called in question the opinions of uninspired men; shewed the foolish ideas of many commentators on the sacred scriptures -- exposed their ignorance and contradictions -- threw new light on the sacred volume, particularly those prophesies which so deeply interest this generation and which had been entirely overlooked, or mystified by the religious world -- cleared up scriptures which had heretofore appeared inexplicable, and delighted his astonished audience with things "new and old" -- proved to a demonstration the literal fulfillment of prophesy, the gathering of Israel in the last days, to their ancient inheritances, with their ultimate splendor and glory; the situation of the world at the coming of the Son of Man” Times and Seasons Vol IV, No. 12, May 1, 1843. See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/Rigd1843.htm>

Rigdon’s pre-1830 views on the Old Testament, as expressed above, are captured in The Book of Mormon. Old Testament prophets and prophecies are emphasized - especially those connected to the gathering of Israel. Sections of the Old Testament that were copied almost verbatim include Isaiah 48-49 in 1 Nephi 20-21, Isaiah 50-51 in 2 Nephi 7-8, Isaiah 2-14 in 2 Ne 12-24, Isaiah 54 in 3 Nephi 22, and Malachi 3-4 in 3 Nephi 24-25. The text that elaborates on these Biblical passages equates “times of old” and “times to come” as “one eternal round”, arguing that God’s method of revelation - the Holy Ghost – has always been the same (1 Ne 10:17-19). In 2 Ne 29:10, the author further argues that the existence of the Bible does not preclude more revelation.

Rigdon’s pre-1830 use of the Old Testament, and particularly the prophecies of The Book of Malachi, is noteworthy. Malachi 3:1 reads:

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”

In a document known as “Rigdon’s Appeal” (1863), Rigdon induced three of his followers to proclaimed him:

“the messenger spoken of in Malachi... the one who is to gather up the residue, after all others are broken and scattered.”

This is significant because Smith claimed in his 1838 personal history that the angel visitor Moroni quoted from the Book of Malachi in his 1823 visit:

"[Moroni] quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi and he quoted also the fourth or last chapter of the same prophecy, though with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bibles..." JS-H 1:36

Whitsitt proposed that the angelic visitor who had visited Smith in anticipation of The Book of Mormon was in fact Sidney Rigdon.

See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE4.htm>

See also: <http://www.mormonstudies.com/visions2.htm>

**SECTIONS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON LIKELY ADDED AFTER LOSS OF THE FIRST 116 PAGES IN JUNE 1828 DESCRIBE SPIRITUAL REBIRTH AFTER BAPTISM, CONSISTENT WITH RIGDON'S CHANGED BELIEFS AFTER MEETING WITH WALTER SCOTT IN MARCH 1828.**

Figure 3 illustrates a timeline of events from 1827 to 1831 relevant to the translation of The Book of Mormon. In June of 1828, Joseph Smith entrusted the first 116 pages of his translation of The Book of Mormon to Martin Harris. Harris showed these pages to his wife, Lucy. Lucy evidently lost or destroyed them. These lost pages included The Book of Lehi and covered material preceding The Book of Mosiah in The Book of Mormon as it was later published. Rather than immediately replacing the lost pages, Smith continued translation from the Book of Mosiah onward. Material needed to replace the lost pages was “translated” last. Thus, composition of the replacement material for the lost 116 pages was an opportunity to add theology attractive to Rigdon and especially doctrines that became popular in 1828.

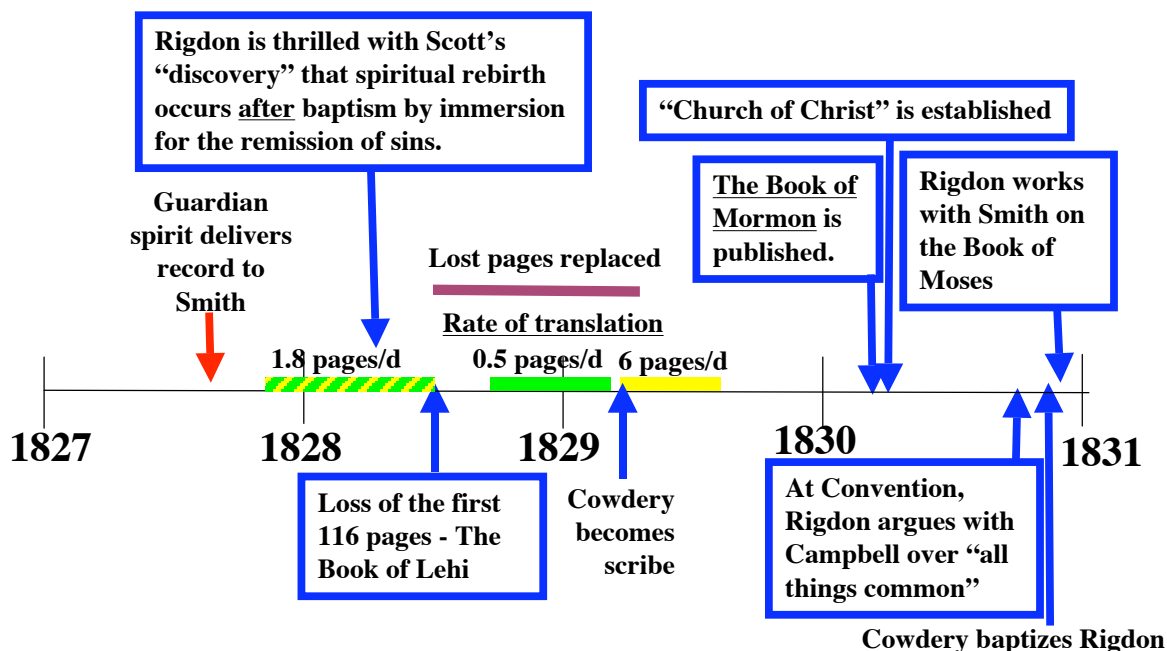


Figure 3. Timeline for translation of The Book of Mormon showing that: (1) Rigdon embraced Scott's conversion sequence after Smith had begun translation but before the lost pages episode; (2) the translation process proceeded rapidly after Oliver Cowdery came to serve as Smith's scribe, and the lost pages were replaced; and (3) Rigdon became involved in The Book of Moses translation process almost immediately after his baptism into Mormonism.

Prior to 1828, Rigdon apparently believed in the "Arminian" conversion process. This process contemplated three steps: (1) faith, (2) repentance, and (3) spiritual rebirth. This sequence appears in those sections of The Book of Mormon that were likely written before 1828 (i.e., before the lost 116 pages incident). See for example Mos. 5:7, 27:24-27; Alma 5:12-13; 22:15-16; and Alma 36:16-24. In these sections, baptism was a sign of having been born of God, not a requirement for spiritual rebirth. As I will discuss further in the companion essay, there is reason to believe that Solomon Spalding may have introduced this conversion sequence into The Book of Mormon, and that Rigdon merely concurred with it.

In 1828, a different conversion sequence became popular. This was due to the preaching of Walter Scott, an evangelist with whom Rigdon worked, and a person who Rigdon reportedly copied. From Aug. 1827 though 1828, Scott acquired many converts teaching the following sequence: (1) faith, (2) repentance, (3) baptism for the remission of sins and (4) spiritual rebirth. In this sequence, spiritual rebirth comes after baptism, not before. In March of 1828, Scott discussed this sequence with Rigdon, and effectively convinced Rigdon that baptism was a requirement for spiritual rebirth. This was a critical realization for Rigdon. According to AS Hayden:

“The missing link between Christ and convicted sinners seemed now happily supplied...Rigdon was transported with the discovery.”

A few months later, Rigdon visited Scott in Warren, Ohio. After the visit, Rigdon was reportedly “so impressed with Scott’s “discovery” he began preaching it far and wide.’ See:

<http://sidneyrigdon.com/books/2001Read.htm#pg055b>

<http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/VA/harb1844.htm#010044>

Assuming that the Spalding-Rigdon Theory is correct, the lost pages incident furnished Rigdon with the opportunity to update The Book of Mormon. Given his on-going dispute with Campbell, he would have been highly motivated to compose replacement material containing theology attractive to Campbell’s followers. Scott’s theology of spiritual rebirth coming after baptism was particularly exciting. It is logical that added material would appear at the beginning of The Book of Mormon to replace the lost pages. It is also logical that added material would appear at the end of The Book of Mormon, to ensure consistency between beginning and end and to allow for some finishing touches on the manuscript. These two places are, in fact, exactly where Scott’s doctrine appears – in the “small plates” prepared to replace the lost Book of Lehi (2 Nephi 31:11-14) and near the end of The Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 18:11, 27:19-20, 30:2; Mormon 7:8-10; and Moroni 8:11).

Walter Scott was known for more than his distinctive conversion sequence. He was also known for his frequent use of the phrase, “Jesus is the Christ” which he caused to be written in large letters with chalk over the door of his academy<sup>3</sup>. See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhtD.htm>. Scott’s phrase appears in the same scriptural locations within The Book of Mormon as the change to the conversion sequence that he advocated, i.e., in Moroni 7:44; Mormon 5:14; and twice in 2 Nephi 26:12. It is also found in the book’s title page, of which Smith said:

“I wish to mention here, that the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general; and that said title-page is not by any means a modern composition, either of mine or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation. Therefore, in order to correct an error which generally exists concerning it, I give below that part of the title-page of the English version of the Book of Mormon, which is a genuine and literal translation of the title-page of the original Book of Mormon, as recorded on the plates.”--DHC 1:71. (1830).

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<sup>3</sup> The phrase “Jesus is the Christ” is a Sandemanian phrase. The Sandemanians were a Primitivist Christian sect founded in Scotland by John Glas and propagated in England and America by Robert Sandeman. They believed that faith was an intellectual act, observed the Lord’s Supper weekly, had lay elders and bishops, and viewed the accumulation of wealth as improper.



The Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory does not explain the presence of two conversion sequences in The Book of Mormon. Smith had no known attraction to the teachings of Walter Scott. After the lost pages incident in June 1828, Smith even attempted to join his wife Emma's Methodist Church for three days, and was allowed in until expelled. In Methodism, the conversion sequence is: faith, repentance, being born of God (i.e., the Arminian sequence). Baptism comes after being born of God, and is viewed as a sign that spiritual rebirth has occurred. Moreover, Methodists do not require baptism by immersion. Baptism can be by sprinkling, pouring or immersion. Baptism by immersion is what Scott taught in 1828, and it is the baptismal rite advocated in The Book of Mormon (3 Ne 11:26). See: <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/josephsmithmethodist.htm>  
<http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/Whitldx0.htm>

***THE PHRASE “CHILDREN OF MEN” APPEARS WITH EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH FREQUENCY IN THOSE PARTS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON THAT CONTAIN THEOLOGICAL CONTENT REFLECTING RIGDON’S PRE-1830 VIEWS***

Those sections of The Book of Mormon that espouse Rigdon's pre-1830 theological views are connected by more than shared theology. They also share word usage patterns. As just noted, Walter Scott's phrase "Jesus is the Christ" appears in the same locations within The Book of Mormon as the doctrines that Scott espoused and Rigdon adopted in 1828. Another example is the phrase "children of men", which is used with exceptional frequency in parts of The Book of Mormon that advocate Rigdon's pre-1830 views, such as his beliefs in a divine calling, miracles, gifts of spirit – such as the gift of tongues - and spiritual rebirth *after* baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. This particular phrase does not appear in the New Testament, but does appear in the Old Testament, especially in Psalms, where it appears 14 times. Rigdon frequently preached from the Old Testament, and he gave sermons based on Psalms. The phrase "children of men" also appears in Rigdon's autobiography and in the biography of Joseph Smith, which was apparently also written by Rigdon. See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/Rigd1843.htm>;  
<http://truthseeker.tripod.com/LDSQUESTION13.html>.

In the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon, the phrase "children of men" appears 130 times. Excluding passages copied from the Bible, there are 251,204 words in The Book of Mormon, so the frequency of appearance of this phrase within these sections is  $130 \div 251,204 \times 1000 = 0.52$  per 1,000 words. In those sections of The Book of Mormon that have theological content reflecting Rigdon's pre-1830 views, the frequency of occurrence is considerably higher. For example, 2 Nephi 25-33 endorses spiritual rebirth after baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, as well as other beliefs that Rigdon is known to have held prior to 1830. Within these chapters, the phrase "children of men" appears at a frequency of 3.45 per 1,000 words (26 times out of 7,530 words total) – nearly seven times the average rate for The Book of Mormon overall (excluding sections copied from the Bible).

Many witnesses reported that, in writing Manuscript Found, Spalding made frequent use of the phrase "came to pass". It is useful to compare the frequency of the phrase "children of men" to the frequency of the phrase "came to pass". In the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon, the phrase "came to pass" appears at an average frequency of 5.6 times per 1000 words (1,402 appearances in 251,204 words, excluding those chapters copied from the Bible in which it appears just once). 2 Nephi 25-33 contains 7,530 words, so the phrase "came to pass" would be expected to appear  $7,530 \times 5.6 \div 1000 = 42$  times if it occurred at the same average frequency in these chapters as it does in The Book of Mormon overall. But in these chapters, the phrase "came to pass" does not appear even once. This is evidence against Spalding

authorship of 2 Nephi 25-33. Conversely, the high frequency of appearance of the “children of men” phrase is evidence of Rigdon authorship or authorship of someone who shared Rigdon’s theological views.

Figure 4 shows how the frequency of usage of “came to pass” and “children of men” vary throughout The Book of Mormon. The Book of Moroni is similar to 2 Ne 25-33. In the Book of Moroni, the phrase “children of men” appears at a frequency of 2.5 per 1000 words – 5 times the average for The Book of Mormon overall. Again, this section contains not a single instance of “came to pass.” Yet it contains 6,100 words, so we would expect this phrase to appear  $6100 \times 5.6 \div 1000 = 34$  times if it appeared at the same average frequency as it does in The Book of Mormon overall. In addition to this distinctive word usage pattern, the Book of Moroni shares numerous themes with 2 Nephi 25-33.

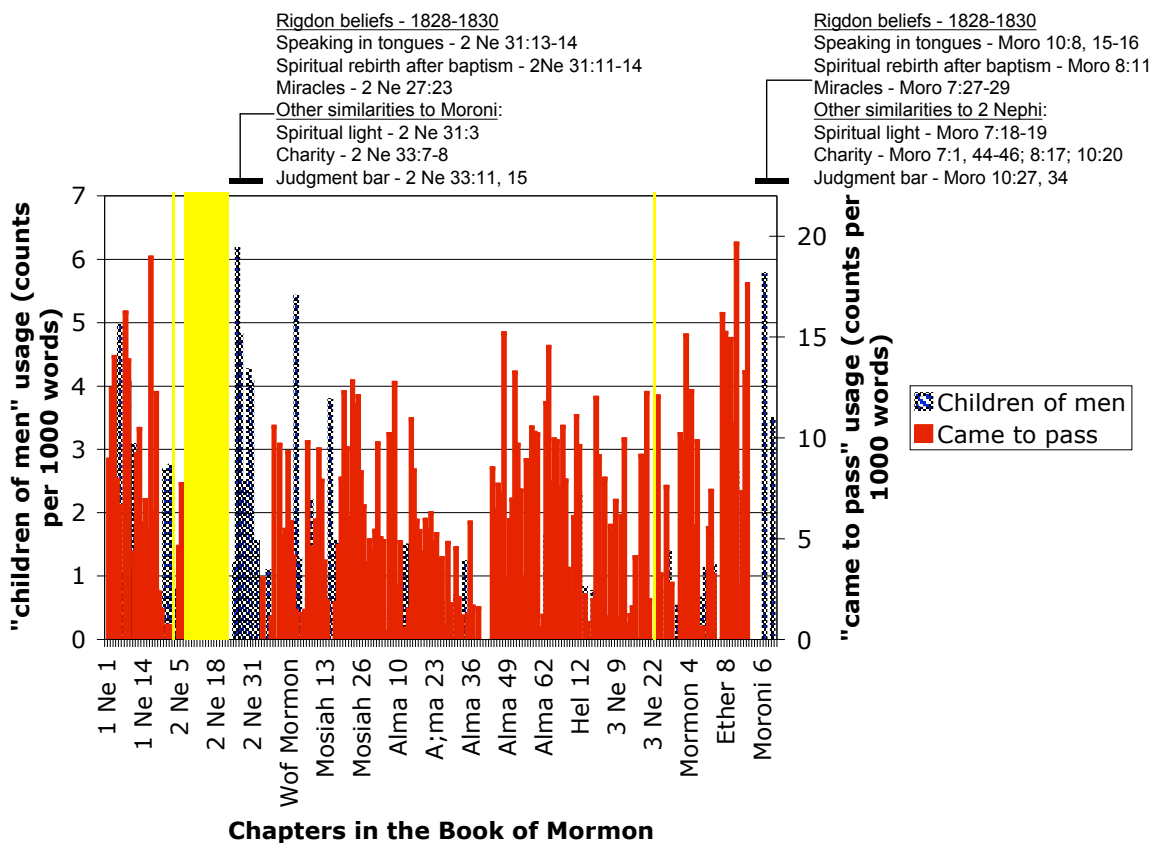


Figure 4. Frequency of appearance of the phrases “children of men” (black hatched) and “came to pass” (red) in the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon. For The Book of Mormon its entirety (excluding passages copied from the Bible, highlighted in yellow), the phrase “children of men” appears at an average frequency of 0.52 per 1,000 words; the phrase “came to pass” appears at an average frequency of 5.6 per 1,000 words.

As noted in Figure 4, final chapters of 2 Nephi and Moroni have many other similarities besides shared word usage patterns. Both rely on the literary device of an editor and narrator, Nephi or Moroni, respectively, who summarizes a purportedly much larger record and speaks directly to

the reader, using language similar to that which a 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher would be expected to use in addressing an audience. The final chapters of 2 Nephi and Moroni deal with the same themes, including spiritual gifts (such as the gift of tongues), spiritual rebirth after baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, miracles, spiritual light, charity, and both use phrases from the Apostle Paul. Both end with a promise to meet the reader at the judgment bar of God. These commonalities indicate a high probability of near simultaneous composition by a single mind.

Also relevant here are the word usage patterns and themes of The Book of Commandments (BC). This book contained early revelations that Smith claimed to have received, including many revelations that were purportedly received prior to 1830. The BC was published in 1833, but a mob destroyed the printing press. Loose pages were salvaged for reprinting in 1835 as The Doctrine and Covenants (D&C). Key phrases (including the phrase “children of men”) and themes (revelatory process, authority, and church organization) that are found in 2 Nephi and Moroni are also found in BC Sections 10-11 and 14-15, or, equivalently, D&C sections 11-12 and 14-18. The dates recorded for these latter scriptures are May-June of 1829. This would be near the completion of the translation process for The Book of Mormon (Figure 3). The correspondence in theme and word usage patterns between these passages suggests a correspondence in authorship and time of composition.

The phrase “children of men” actually appears 39 times in the Doctrine and Covenants (sections 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 29, 35, 38, 39, 43, 45, 46, 58, 63, 64, 66, 93, 96, 101, 104, 109, 112, 121, 128, 135), but especially in sections 11, 17, 18 and 19. It occurs the most number of time (four) in Section 18. In this same section, Jesus Christ speaks of authority of the twelve apostles:

“And, behold, you are they who are ordained of me to ordain priests and teachers; to declare my gospel, according to the power of the Holy Ghost which is in you, and according to the callings and gifts of God unto men” D&C 18:32

Moroni 3:4 reports on the visit of the resurrected Christ to America and describes the authority of his 12 Nephite disciples:

“And after this manner did they ordain priests and teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God unto men; and they ordained them by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them.”

The similarities in the above passages are obvious. These and other similarities suggest that the same mind was at work on the end of The Book of Mormon and The Book of Commandments.

In The Book of Mormon, the instructions of Jesus Christ to his Nephite disciples regarding operation and organization of the Church, such as information of ordination and sacrament prayers (given in Moro 3-5), should logically be found in 3 Nephi - the book that contains the account of the ministry of the resurrected Christ among the Nephites. But instead they suddenly and inexplicably appear in the Book of Moroni - the last book of The Book of Mormon, a book purportedly written almost four hundred years after the visit of the resurrected Christ. This makes little sense in terms of rational composition of The Book of Mormon, but makes perfect sense if, in May, 1829, the author of the Book of Moroni was attempting at the same time, to lay groundwork for a new Church, but was unable to revise 3 Nephi, perhaps because it was not available to him or had already been translated. Thus, it appears that the Book of Moroni and the end of 2 Nephi were added to The Book of Mormon to strengthen the theological foundation

of the modern restored church. The themes of Moroni and 2 Nephi correlate with themes in those sections of the Doctrine and Covenants that date to the time period when The Book of Mormon was completed. In D&C 13, for example, John the Baptist gives authority for baptism for the remission of sins to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The date recorded for this revelation was May 15, 1829. Moroni 8:10 and 2 Ne 31:17 both emphasize baptism for remission of sins. I am not the first to note these thematic similarities. William Whitsitt concluded that Rigdon wrote both 2 Nephi 31-33 and Moroni, and proposed that 2 Nephi 31-33 was added as a kind of Appendix to 2 Nephi. See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE5.htm>.

Near simultaneous composition of Moroni and the end of 2 Nephi could explain confusion in early Mormon accounts regarding the identity of the angel who visited Smith and reportedly entrusted the golden plates to him. In modern accounts, the angelic visitor is named "Moroni"; in accounts written in 1842, 1851, and 1853, official Mormon documents refer to the angelic visitor as "Nephi". For example, the 1842 Times and Seasons reported:

"He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Nephi." *The Times and Seasons* Vol. III, pp. 749, 753

See: <http://trialssofarascension.net/mormon/nephi.html>  
<http://www.mormonstudies.com/visions2.htm>.

***RIGDON IS KNOWN TO HAVE WORKED WITH SMITH TO PRODUCE THE BOOK OF MOSES. THE PHRASE "CHILDREN OF MEN" APPEARS WITH HIGH FREQUENCY IN THOSE PARTS OF THE BOOK OF MOSES THAT CONTAIN THEOLOGICAL CONTENT REFLECTING RIGDON'S PRE-1830 VIEWS.***

Immediately after his baptism, Rigdon began work with Smith on The Book of Moses, now the first book of The Pearl of Great Price, another body of scripture in the Mormon canon. He apparently adopted the same strategy in The Book of Moses that he had previously used in The Book of Mormon. 2 Nephi 25-33 emphasizes foreknowledge of Jesus Christ among the Nephites. The Book of Moses emphasizes foreknowledge of Jesus Christ among Old Testament figures, such as Adam and Eve (Moses 6:51-63). Sacrificial offerings were depicted as "a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten" (5:6-8). Adam was baptized in water, received the Holy Ghost (5:9; 6:64-68) in the same way as the Disciples of Christ. Adam and Eve and their posterity were taught the purpose of the Fall and rejoiced in the Lord's plan for redemption (5:10-12).

Oliver Cowdery was Smith's scribe for The Book of Moses between June and October 1830. Cowdery recorded an introductory revelation (Moses 1) and the translation of Genesis 1:1 to Genesis 4:18. John Whitmer was Smith's scribe from October until December 1830, recording the translation of Genesis 4:19 to Genesis 5:20. Rigdon was the scribe from early December 1830 until completion of translation on July 2, 1833. The Book of Moses Chapters 2-end was written in Rigdon's handwriting, and contains his signature beliefs and word usage patterns.

As shown in Table 1, the Book of Moses contains word usage evidence supportive of the hypothesis that Rigdon modified a base document written by Spalding. Overall, the phrase "children of men" appears at a frequency of 1.0 per 1,000 (13 times out of 12,545 words). In those parts of the Book of Moses (chapters 1, 3, 6-8) that emphasize Rigdon's pre-1830 theology, it appears at a frequency of 1.5 per 1,000 words (13 times out of 8494 words). It does not appear in chapters that lack Rigdon's pre-1830 theology (Chapters 2, 4-5). These chapters contain a total of 4051 words, so it would be expected to appear 4 times. By contrast, the

Spalding phrase “came to pass” is found throughout the Book of Moses. Excluding Chapters 2-4, which are similar to Genesis, the phrase “came to pass” appears 42 times in 9,567 words, a frequency of 4.4 times per 1,000 words, a frequency close to that of The Book of Mormon. These data are consistent with the hypothesis that Rigdon or someone with the same theological views modified a Spalding text to create The Book of Moses.

Table 1. Frequency of appearance of the phrases “children of men” and “came to pass” in the Book of Moses and coincident occurrences of other information indicative of Rigdon or Spalding authorship, respectively.

Chapter in the Book of Moses	“Children of men” counts	Number of words	Frequency per 1000 words	Does section contain Rigdon pre-1830 beliefs?	“Came to pass” counts	Frequency per 1000 words	Other Spalding words & themes?
1	4	1472	2.7	Yes - Moses Is called of God	10	6.8	Unclear, but similar to Ether 3.
2	0	1018	0	No	1	1	No
3	1	888	1.1	Unclear.	0	0	Unclear.
4	0	1072	0	No	0	0	No
5	0	1961	0	No	4	2.0	Yes. Story of Master Mahan
6	4	2400	1.7	Yes. Ancient gospel was the same as modern gospel. Spiritual rebirth comes after baptism by immersion.	6	2.5	Yes. Enoch story
7	2	2842	0.7	Yes. Gather to Zion.	16	5.6	Yes. Enoch story.
8	2	892	2.2	Yes. Ancient gospel was the same as modern gospel.	6	6.7	Yes. Enoch-Noah story.
Total	13	12,545	1.0		43	3.4	

### HISTORICAL EVIDENCE LINKING RIGDON TO SMITH BEFORE 1830:

***PRIOR TO 1830, RIGDON REPORTEDLY MADE SEVERAL STATEMENTS IN WHICH HE INDICATED HIS FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE IMPENDING RISE OF A NEW RELIGION.***

Said Darwin Atwater, a Patriarch in the Disciples Church at Mantua:

“That he [Rigdon] knew before of the coming of The Book of Mormon is to me certain, from what he said the first of his visits to my father’s some years before [at about the close of January 1827]”. “He gave a wonderful description of the mounds and other antiquities found in some parts of America, and said they must have been made by the aborigines. He said there was a book to be published containing an account of those things. He spoke of these in his eloquent, enthusiastic style as being a thing most extraordinary.”

See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE3.htm#pg205>  
[http://www.knowledgerush.com/paginated\\_txt/tsotm10/tsotm10\\_s1\\_p87\\_pages.html](http://www.knowledgerush.com/paginated_txt/tsotm10/tsotm10_s1_p87_pages.html)

Dr. Storm Rosa, a well-known “botanic physician” of Ohio, said in, an 1841 letter to Rev. John Hall of Ashtabula:

“In the early part of the year 1830 I was in company with Sidney Rigdon, and rode with him on horseback for a few miles.... He remarked to me that it was time for a new religion to spring up; that mankind were all right and ready for it.” See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/RigHist/RigHist2.htm>

In a Jan 22, 1841 letter written to Walter Scott, Adamson Bentley said:

“I know that Sidney Rigdon told me that there was a book coming out, the manuscript of which had been found engraved on gold plates, as much as two years before the Mormon Book made its appearance, or had been heard of by me.”

See: <http://www.solomonspalding.com/docs2/1914Shk1.htm#pg055b>  
<http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/OH/evan1832.htm#000043>

Thomas Clapp, a deacon in the church where Rigdon preached, confirmed Bentley’s statement:

“Elder Adamson Bentley told me that as he was one day riding with Sidney Rigdon and conversing upon the Bible, Mr. Rigdon told him that another book of equal authority with the bible, as well authenticated and as ancient, which would give an account of the history of the Indian tribes on this continent, with many other things of great importance to the world, would soon be published. This was before Mormonism was ever heard of in Ohio, and when it appeared, the avidity with which Rigdon received it convinced him that if Rigdon was not the author of it he was at least acquainted with the whole matter some time before it was published to the world”. See: <http://thedigitalvoice.com/enigma/wrw/1977DavD.htm#pg116b>

John Rudolph stated:

“For two years before The Book of Mormon appeared Rigdon’s sermons were full of declarations and prophecies that the age of miracles would be restored, and more complete revelations, than those in the Bible, would be given. When The Book of Mormon appeared, all who heard him were satisfied that he referred to it.” (Cowdrey et al., 2005, p. 313).

Reuben P. Harmon said:

“My parents came to Ohio from Vermont in 1815. I resided in Kirtland when the Mormons first arrived. I was personally acquainted with Rigdon....I have heard [him] several times say in his sermons that before long the Indian mounds and forts about there would all be explained. He caused a row of log houses to be built on Isaac Morley’s farm, and established a Communistic Society before Mormonism was heard of. I heard Rigdon preach his first sermon at Kirtland Flats, and after he embraced Mormonism. He said that he had been preaching wrong doctrine and asked their forgiveness...” (Cowdrey et al., 2005, p. 313).

Smith-as-Sole-Author advocates explain the above statements as information Rigdon acquired from local newspaper accounts prior to publication of The Book of Mormon. Newspapers published at Rochester, NY, on August 31 and Sept 5, 1829, indicated that Smith’s activities were known in Palmyra and vicinity as early as the fall of 1827. (Van Wagoner, 1994, pages 55-56). A November 16, 1830 article in the Painesville Telegraph entitled “The Golden Bible” reported:

“Some two or three years since, an account was given in the papers, of a book purporting to contain new revelations from Heaven, having been dug out of the ground in Manchester, Ontario County, NY.”

While these articles suggest some level of public awareness of Smith and his activities before 1829, the earliest known newspaper articles date only to the early part of 1829 and so would not explain Rigdon’s foreknowledge of The Book of Mormon.

***AT A REFORMED BAPTIST CONVENTION IN AUG 1830, RIGDON SPOKE OF A FULLER REVELATION ABOUT TO COME FORTH AND THE NEED FOR A COMPLETE RESTORATION OF THE GOSPEL.***

Rigdon attended the annual Mahoning Baptist Association meeting in Warren, Trumbull, OH, and became embroiled in a controversy with former mentor Campbell. According to Hayden:

“Rigdon introduced an argument to show that our pretension to follow the apostles in all their New Testament teachings, required a community of goods; that as they established this order in the model church at Jerusalem, we were bound to imitate their example.”

See: <http://www.mun.ca/re/hayden/restmov/texts/ahayden/ehd/EHD13.HTM>

Here is another account of the same meeting, given by Almon B. Green:

“In the annual meeting of the Mahoning Association held in Austintown in August, 1830, about two months before Sidney Rigdon’s professed conversion to Mormonism, Rigdon preached Saturday afternoon. He had much to say about a full and complete restoration of the ancient gospel. He spoke in his flowing style of what the Disciples had accomplished, but contended that we had not accomplished a complete restoration of the Apostolic Christianity. He contended such restoration must include community of goods – holding all in common stock, and a restoration of the spiritual gifts of the apostolic age. He promised that although we had not come up to the apostolic plan in full yet as we were improving God would soon give us a new and fuller revelation of his will. After the Book of Mormon had been read by many who heard Rigdon on that occasion, they were perfectly satisfied that Rigdon knew all about that book when he preached that discourse. Rigdon’s sermon was most thoroughly refuted by Bro. Campbell, which very much offended Rigdon” See <http://thedigitalvoice.com/enigma/rrw/1977DavD.htm#pg091a> (Also cited in Cowdery et al., 2005, p. 313)

“This [Alexander Campbell’s denunciation of Rigdon’s plan] put an end to it. Rigdon finding himself foiled in his cherished purpose of ingrafting on the reformation his new community scheme, went away from the meeting at its close, chafed and chagrined, and never met with the Disciples in a general meeting afterward. On his way he stopped at Bro. Austin’s, in Warren, to whom he vented his spleen, saying; “I have done as much in this reformation as Campbell or Scott, and yet they get all the honor of it!”

See: <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/ahayden/ehd/EHD13.HTM>

***RIGDON DENIED MEETING SMITH BEFORE 1830, BUT SEVERAL PEOPLE REPORTED SEEING HIM AT OR NEAR THE SMITH’S PRIOR TO THAT DATE AND RIGDON’S CALENDAR CONTAINS GAPS AT CRITICAL TIME PERIODS WHEN HE WOULD HAVE HAD TIME TO VISIT SMITH***

If the Spalding-Rigdon Theory is correct, Rigdon would have visited Smith several times prior to 1830. He also would have had motive to minimize his connection to Smith, and he would therefore have taken care to conceal himself. Thus, sightings of Rigdon at the Smith residence

prior to that date, while supportive of the Spalding-Rigdon Theory, are not essential to the overall theory.

Two individuals provided statements indicating that they had seen Sidney Rigdon in New York prior to 1830: (1) Abel D. Chase (Statement of May 2, 1979); and (2) Lorenzo Saunders (affidavit with William H. Kelly of Sep 20, 1884; interview by E. L. Kelly on Nov 12, 1884; letter to Thomas Gregg, Jan 28, 1885; statement to Arthur Deming, July 21, 1887). John H. Gilbert repeatedly confirmed that Lorenzo Saunders had reported seeing Rigdon prior to 1830 (letter to James T. Cobb of Oct 14, 1879; and 1881 interview by William H. and Edmund L. Kelley; letter to Thomas Gregg, June 19, 1881). These statements and other evidence of pre-1830 Rigdon visits to New York are available at <http://www.mormonstudies.com/history2.htm>.

The above statements are contested on the grounds of memory fallibility and the contrary testimony of Mormon insider witnesses, including of course Sidney Rigdon. These arguments are summarized by LDS apologist Wade Englund at: <http://www.scn.org/~bp760/visit.htm#4>. So, while reported sightings are supportive of the Spalding-Rigdon Theory, these evidentiary “dots” must be shaded lightly.

See: <http://www.mormonstudies.com/history1.htm>  
<http://www.mormonstudies.com/history2.htm>  
<http://sidneyrigdon.com/RigHist/RigHist2.htm>

Sidney Rigdon’s schedule is fairly well documented because of his records of service as a minister. Cowdrey et al. (2005) have demonstrated that gaps in the record correspond to critical periods of time when Rigdon could have made contact with Smith.

***IN 1868 RIGDON WROTE A LETTER TO “THE FIRST PRESIDENCY OF ZION” IN WHICH HE CLAIMED TO KNOW THE CONTENTS OF THE SEALED PORTION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON***

In a letter dated Sept 1, 1868, Rigdon wrote that the sealed portion of The Book of Mormon contained an account of the history of Zion, including prophecies of the Old Testament prophets, and an account of Joseph in Egypt. He also described the remnant of Joseph account as a kind of on-going revelation, that was unfolding with the destruction of the Smith family (Van Wagoner, 1994). That would be consistent with The Spalding-Rigdon Theory in which Rigdon presumably updated and revised Spalding’s “scriptures”.

Rigdon’s 1868 letter poses a dilemma for those who dismiss the Spalding-Rigdon Theory. Either an untranslated portion of The Book of Mormon existed or it did not. If no untranslated portion existed, why did Rigdon claim that it did? What does this indicate about Rigdon’s willingness to deceive in order to obtain and retain a following? Does this mean that he lied? If he lied in this case, why should any weight be placed on his denials of having participated in the creation of The Book of Mormon? On the other hand, if an untranslated record did exist, how would Rigdon know its contents if he had nothing to do with the fabrication of The Book of Mormon?

***JAMES JEFFERY, A FRIEND OF RIGDON’S, TESTIFIED THAT IN 1844 HE HEARD RIGDON SAY THAT SMITH USED A SPALDING MANUSCRIPT TO FABRICATE THE BOOK OF MORMON***

On 20 January 1884, James Jeffery, an acquaintance of Rigdon’s, wrote:



" Forty years ago I was in business in St. Louis. The Mormons then had their temple in Nauvoo Illinois. I had business transactions with them. I knew Sidney Rigdon. He acted as general manager of the business of the Mormons (with me). Rigdon told me several times in his conversations with me, that there was in the printing office with which he was connected in Ohio, a MS of the Rev. Spaulding, tracing the origin of the Indians from the lost tribes of Israel. This MS was in the office several years. He was familiar with it. Spaulding wanted it published but had not the means to pay for printing. He (Rigdon) and Joe Smith used to look over the MS and read it on Sundays, Rigdon said Smith took the MS and said "I'll print it," and went off to Palmyra New York." See: <http://home1.gte.net/dbroadhu/RESTOR/Lib/Prp1844a.htm>

Fawn Brodie (1945) characterized Jeffery's testimony as an example of faulty memory. But Jeffery's testimony is supported by a Nov 16, 1844 article entitled "Rigdon's Folly" - probably written by Sam Brannan or William Smith. In the article, the author reports: "...we had the word of a man, that while in Missouri, he [Rigdon] stood up and cursed God to his face and pronounced Mormonism to be a delusion."

See: <http://home1.gte.net/dbroadhu/RESTOR/Lib/Prp1844a.htm>

As noted by Chandler (2005), at the time Rigdon purportedly made his statement to Jeffery, his leadership had been rejected in favor of Brigham Young, and he was trying to obtain documents from Emma. He may actually have fulfilled his earlier threats to "expose the secrets of the church." It is worth noting that in the Jeffery's statement, Rigdon identifies Smith as the plagiarizer of Spaulding's work, omitting a role for himself, except as the one who provided access to the document. This would be expected for a person attempting to minimize self-incrimination while pronouncing Mormonism a delusion and exposing "the secrets of the church". See: <http://www.mormonstudies.com/author2.htm>

## **HISTORICAL EVIDENCE RELATED TO THE LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RIGDON AND SMITH:**

***ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS BAPTISM, RIGDON ACTED AS THOUGH HE WAS IN CHARGE OF THE CHURCH. AS SOON AS HE OFFICIALLY MET SMITH, THEY BEGAN WORK ON THE BOOK OF MOSES, A SCRIPTURE THAT ENDORSES RIGDON'S 1828 "DISCOVERY" OF SPIRITUAL REBIRTH AFTER BAPTISM.***

A timeline of Rigdon's activities during the period after his baptism demonstrates his nearly immediate participation in Church governance and fabrication of The Book of Moses:

Nov 1, 1830 – Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt travelled directly to the home of Sidney Rigdon and presented him with a copy of The Book of Mormon

Nov 7, 1830 – Rigdon tells his congregation of his belief in The Book of Mormon.

Nov 8, 1830 – Cowdery baptized Rigdon on at Mentor, OH.

Dec 7, 1830 – Rigdon appeared in Fayette, NY.

Early Dec, 1830 – Rigdon met with Smith near Waterloo, NY, and they immediately began to "translate" The Book of Moses and to create the Inspired Version of The Bible. Everything after the first 30 pages is recorded in Rigdon's handwriting.

late Dec. 1830. – Rigdon gave the first public Mormon sermons in Palmyra and Canadawigua, NY

Jan 25, 1831 – The Cleveland Advertiser reported:

“[A man] by the name of *Whitmer* arrived here last week from Manchester, N. Y., the seat of wonders, with a new batch of revelations from God, as he pretended, which have just been communicated to Joseph Smith. As far as we have been able to learn their contents, they are a more particular description of the creation of the world, and a history of Adam and his family, and other sketches of the anti-deluvian world, which Moses neglected to record.”

See: <http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/OH/miscohio.htm#021531>

Based on the above report, it appears that the Rigdon-Smith collaboration on the Book of Moses, begun in Dec 1830, produced a marketable product within one month. The Book of Moses teaches baptism before spiritual rebirth as taught by Walter Scott in 1828, and as subsequently adopted by Rigdon (see Moses 5:9; 6:64-68).

See:

<http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/NY/wayn1830.htm#122230>

<http://www.lavazone2.com/dbroadhu/NY/wayn1830.htm#010131>

[http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/basic/bible/jst\\_eom.htm](http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/basic/bible/jst_eom.htm)

<http://webpages.marshall.edu/~brown/chu-org.html>

David Whitmer complained that when Rigdon appeared, he immediately exhibited a great influence upon Smith:

“In February, 1831, Brother Joseph came to Kirtland where Rigdon was. Rigdon was a thorough Bible scholar, a man of fine education, and a powerful orator. He soon worked himself deep into Brother Joseph's affections, and had more influence over him than any other man living”. See:

<http://home1.gte.net/dbroadhu/RESTOR/Lib/Bush1984.htm>

### **IN MARCH OF 1828, THE “REVELATOR” OF THE BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS AND THE BOOK OF MORMON ATTEMPTED TO LIMIT SMITH’S ROLE TO TRANSLATION ONLY.**

As previously mentioned, The Book of Commandments (BC) contained early revelations that Smith claimed to have received from God. It was published in 1833, but a mob destroyed the printing press used for its production. Loose pages were salvaged for reprinting in 1835 as The Doctrine and Covenants.

BC 4:2 was recorded March 1828 – the time when The Book of Mormon was about to be completed. It reads: “and he [Smith] has a gift to translate the book [of Mormon], and I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift”.

At about the same time that BC 4:2 was recorded (March 1829), replacement sections for the lost 116 pages of The Book of Mormon (the “small plates of Nephi”) were nearing completion. This material includes 2 Nephi 3:8 which reads:

“And I will give unto him [Smith] a commandment that he shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work”.

If Smith was sole author and mastermind behind the new church, why would he limit his own authority to translation? It seems more plausible that someone was attempting to rein him in, and these early revelations were attempts to do just that. These considerations are consistent

with Rigdon's apparent view of his mission, and otherwise align with the Spalding-Rigdon theory. They are inconsistent with the Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory.

### ***IN 1863 RIGDON SAID THAT SMITH WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE TRANSLATOR AND RIGDON THE GATHERER OF ISRAEL***

In 1863, three Rigdonites (members of the small branch of Mormonism that followed Rigdon after Smith's death) – Joseph H. Newton, William Richards, and William Stanley – wrote an “appeal to the Latter Day Saints” later referred to as “Rigdon's appeal”. According to Dale Broadhurst, “There is some evidence available to suggest that these three men did little more than compile and edit the thoughts and opinions of Sidney Rigdon”. This document spells out Rigdon's intended roles for Smith and himself: Smith was supposed to have been the Translator – the one who prepared the way for Rigdon. Rigdon was to have been Spokesman and Gatherer of Israel, the One to establish Zion and prepare the way for Jesus Christ. See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/books/Appl1863.htm>

Of note is the following passage from page 27 of “Rigdon's Appeal”:

“The Lord had said, in the Book of Mormon, that he would raise up to Joseph Smith a spokesman; and the Spirit said, in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, that Sidney Rigdon was that spokesman. The case then stands thus: Joseph Smith was to translate the Book of Mormon, and Sidney Rigdon was to take it, and gather Israel. Here is the sum of the whole matter. The prophet Malachi had said that before Christ came, he would send his messenger, and he should prepare the way before him. Joseph Smith said that Sidney Rigdon was that messenger. The Spirit said that the Lord would raise up a spokesman to Joseph Smith, and Joseph Smith said that Sidney was that spokesman. The Lord said he would prepare a priesthood with which he would gather Israel. Joseph Smith said that Sidney Rigdon held that priesthood.”

The Book of Mormon and The Doctrine and Covenants are consistent with the argument in Rigdon's Appeal. Smith was to translate. Rigdon was to speak and expound the translations. Rigdon was to prepare the way for Christ's second coming. In The Book of Mormon, Rigdon is referred to as “spokesman”. Says 2 Nephi 3:17-18:

“And the Lord hath said, I will raise up a Moses [Joseph Smith]; and I will give power unto him in a rod; and I will give judgment unto him in writing. Yet I will not loose his tongue, that he shall speak much; for I will not make him mighty in speaking, but I will write unto him my law, by the finger of mine own hand; and I will make a spokesman for him. And the Lord said unto me also, I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins, and I will make for him a spokesman. And I, behold, I will give unto him that he shall write the writing of the fruit of thy loins unto the fruit of thy loins; and the spokesman of thy loins shall declare it”.

It is not clear how Smith would have had foreknowledge of a spokesman, as mentioned in the above passage, if Rigdon had no hand in composing The Book of Mormon.

The above scriptures are consistent with the argument in “Rigdon's Appeal” and are in fact cited in the Appeal. According to most versions of the Spalding-Rigdon Theory, Rigdon was Smith's “Revelator”, at least for The Book of Commandments. As such, Rigdon would have “revealed” scriptures that outlined his role as he anticipated it to be.

Another important feature of “Rigdon's Appeal” is Rigdon's self-identification with previous prophets. He claims to be “the messenger spoken of in Malachi... the one who is to gather up

the residue, after all others are broken and scattered". He also identifies himself with John the Baptist - the one chosen to prepare the way for Jesus Christ.

See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE4.htm>  
<http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE5.htm>

Rigdon's identification with John the Baptist may have begun early, before his announced conversion to Mormonism. In his 1843 "Time and Seasons" third person autobiography, Rigdon gave this description of his pre-1830 ministry:

"He [Rigdon] accordingly commenced to baptize, and like John of old, there flocked to him people from all the region round about—persons of all ranks and standings in society—the rich, the poor, the noble and the brave, flocked to be baptized of him. Nor was this desire confined to individuals, or families, but whole societies threw away their creeds and articles of faith, and became obedient to the faith he promulgated, and he soon had large and flourishing societies throughout that whole region of country. Courted by all, he now was a welcome visitor wherever he traveled—his society was courted by the learned, and intelligent, and the highest encomiums were bestowed upon him for his biblical lore, and his eloquence."  
See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/Rigd1843.htm>

In August, 1830, Smith claimed to meet a heavenly messenger while preparing for a sacrament ordinance. He then recorded D&C 27:8 which refers to John the Baptist as the person who ordained him and Cowdery to the Aaronic Priesthood:

"Which John I have sent unto you, my servant Joseph Smith jun., and Oliver Cowdery to ordain you unto this first priesthood, which you have received that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron."

In 1838, Smith described the above visit of John the Baptist:

"The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this priesthood upon us said his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who hold the Priesthood of Melchisedek, which Priesthood he said should in due time be conferred on us, and that I should be called the first elder and he the second. It was on the 15th day of 1824 that we were baptized, and ordained under the hand of the messenger." JS-H 1:72

D&C 35:3-4, recorded Dec 1830, linked Rigdon to John the Baptist:

"Behold, verily, verily, I say unto my servant Sidney, I have looked upon thee and thy works. I have heard thy prayers, and prepared thee for a great work. Thou art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John - to prepare the way before me, and before Elijah, which should come, and thou knew it not. Thou didst baptise by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost; but now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptise by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old." See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE5.htm>

Based on the above scriptural correlations, William Whitsitt hypothesized that the visitor who conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon Smith and Cowdery was Sidney Rigdon himself.

See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhE5.htm#pg354>

## ***RIGDON AND SMITH ENGAGED IN A SEE-SAW POWER STRUGGLE THAT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD CONSIDERING THEIR VULNERABILITIES AND CO-DEPENDENCY***

The following written timeline summarizes three power struggles between Smith and Rigdon:

### Conflict #1 Aug-Sep, 1831:

Aug. 1831 – Smith received a revelation admonishing Sidney Rigdon for exalting himself.

Aug 15, 1831 – Newspaper accounts begin to circulate naming Rigdon as the likely mastermind for The Book of Mormon. See earlier citations.

Sep 1831 – Smith received a revelation that only he could receive revelations and commandments for the church.

Sep 1831 – Rigdon preached that the “keys of the Kingdom were taken from us,” and said that he was going to expose Mormonism. Hyrum Smith disputed Rigdon’s claim and said the keys were not lost. Joseph Smith rebuked Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon was reportedly flung about a room by an unseen force and laid up for five or six weeks [source: autobiography of Philo Dibble].

See: <http://www.exmormon.org/mhistpart3.html>

It is not clear how advocates of the Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory explain Rigdon’s reported threat to “expose Mormonism” on this occasion and after Smith’s death.

Mar. 8 1832 - Rigdon was appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> counselor in the First Presidency.

### Conflict #2 July, 1832:

5 July 1832 - Rigdon tried to seize control of the church and was disfellowshipped.

28 July 1832 – Rigdon was re-ordained a high priest.

28 July 1832 – Smith ordained Rigdon to the high priesthood “the Second time” on 28 July after he had “repented like Peter of old.”

12 Oct. 1833 – A revelation appointed Rigdon “a spokesman to my servant Joseph”.

19 Apr. 1834 – Smith authorized Rigdon to preside over the church in his absence.

1838 – Rigdon gave high profile sermons supporting Smith

In 1835, The Doctrine and Covenants was published. The new scripture included a revision of the Book of Commandments. Of interest is a revision to BC 4:2, which originally limited Smith’s power:

“I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift”.

This above scripture was revised in 1835 to create D&C 5:4, which reads:

“And you have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the *first* gift that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished”.

The above wording changes were clearly intended to expand Smith’s power.

11 Apr. 1841 –Smith and Rigdon rebaptized each other for remission of sins and “renewal of covenants”.

Conflict #3 Oct, 1843:

1 Oct. 1843 – At a meeting of the anointed quorum, Smith anointed and ordained William Law as first counselor and Amasa M. Lyman as second counselor in anticipation of dropping Rigdon at the upcoming conference.

8 Oct. 1843 – The general conference refused to sustain Smith’s motion to drop Rigdon from the First Presidency

6 Apr. 1844 – Rigdon told the general conference: ‘There are men standing in your midst that you can’t do anything with them but cut their throat & bury them.’”

27 June 1844 – Smith was murdered.

Sept 1844 – After his rejection as leader of the Church, Rigdon threatened to “expose” the Church. This appears to be the second time that he issued this threat.

12 Oct. 1845 – Rigdon’s supporters in Pittsburgh publicly sustained him as “first president of the church” which was formally organized as a new “Church of Christ” on 6 Apr. 1845.

The above timeline includes two conflicts in which Smith disempowered Rigdon then promptly re-empowered him. Such a see-saw relationship makes sense in the Spalding-Rigdon Theory considering the two men’s co-dependencies and vulnerabilities: Smith benefited from Rigdon’s prowess in formulating new scripture and in marshalling support through his oration; Rigdon benefited from Smith’s charisma and political savvy. Both needed the other to remain silent.

***RIGDON AND SMITH COLLABORATED ON JOINT REVELATIONS RECORDED IN THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS. THEY COLLABORATED IN CHANGING REVELATIONS AFTER THE FACT. THEY COLLABORATED ON ILLEGAL FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS.***

Rigdon’s long-term intimacy with Smith far exceeded that of other men elevated rapidly to positions in the new Church, such as the now forgotten Jesse Gause, or the largely political James C. Bennett. Says Van Wagoner (1994, p. 160):

“The window of opportunity during which Rigdon achieved co-equal billing with Joseph Smith, lasted from 1831-39. During this era he and the prophet, both gifted visionaries, jointly developed the church’s infrastructure and its governing agenda. Retrospectively, the duo seem mismatched. Rigdon was highly educated and well read while Smith possessed only rudimentary education. Rigdon was pessimistic while Smith demonstrated *joie de vivre*. Smith was remarkable for his charisma, Rigdon for his eloquence. But despite occasional friction, they were virtually inseparable. Their burdens, in fact, were their bonds.”

Rigdon and Smith collaborated on shared revelations, beyond The Book of Moses and The Inspired Translation of the Bible. Examples of “revelations” or “visions” given to both Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon include Doctrine and Covenants sections 35, 37, 40, 44, 71, 73, 76 and 100. In 1892, Philo Dibble, an eyewitness to the revelation of Section 76, gave the following description of the event:

"The vision which is recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants was given at the house of 'Father Johnson,' in Hyrum [sic], Ohio, and during the time that Joseph and Sidney were in the spirit and saw the heavens open, there were other men in the room, perhaps twelve, among whom I was one during a part of the time-probably two-thirds of the time,-I saw the glory and felt the power, but did not see the vision..

"The events and conversation, while they were seeing what is written (and many things were seen and related that are not written), I will relate as minutely as is necessary."

"Joseph would, at intervals, say: 'What do I see?' as one might say while looking out the window and beholding what all in the room could not see. Then he would relate what he had seen or what he was looking at. Then Sidney replied, 'I see the same.' Presently Sidney would say 'what do I see?' and would repeat what he had seen or was seeing, and Joseph would reply, 'I see the same.' "

"This manner of conversation was repeated at short intervals to the end of the vision, and during the whole time not a word was spoken by any other person. Not a sound nor motion made by anyone but Joseph and Sidney, and it seemed to me that they never moved a joint or limb during the time I was there, which I think was over an hour, and to the end of the vision."

"Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which, Joseph remarked, smilingly, 'Sidney is not used to it as I am'." Cited on page 112 in Van Wagoner (1994). See also: [http://jfs.saintswithouthalos.org/Reprints/js\\_remd\\_pd.htm#76](http://jfs.saintswithouthalos.org/Reprints/js_remd_pd.htm#76).

Advocates of the Smith-as-Sole-Author Theory sometimes claim that Rigdon was an “honest man” who would not mislead those who followed him. How then to explain the shared revelations and visions with Smith, such as the vision described in the above account, if they are not “real” revelations from God? Which is more plausible – that Smith had the ability to convince Rigdon that they were experiencing a great vision or that Rigdon and Smith colluded in fabricating visions? If they colluded on post-1830 revelations, why not prior to 1830?

In 1835, The Doctrine and Covenants was published. The new scripture included many revisions of the Book of Commandments, such as the aforementioned change in BC 4:2. Regarding these changes, David Whitmer, a witness to The Book of Mormon and close associate of Smith and Rigdon, said:

“many of the brethren objected strenuously to it but they did not want to say much for it was Brother Joseph and the leaders who did it...I was told that Sidney Rigdon convinced Brother Joseph and that committee that it was all right.” (Van Wagoner, 1994, p. 163).

Rigdon and Smith also colluded on financial transactions that were apparently justified by revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 101 recorded on 6 Dec 1833). These incidents raise additional questions about Rigdon’s honesty.

29 May 1837 – Smith, Rigdon, and others were accused of fraud in what became the collapse of the church in Kirtland

24 Oct. 1837 – an appeals court confirmed conviction of Smith and Ridgon and fined each \$1,000 for operating an illegal bank.

12 Jan. 1838 – Smith and Rigdon fled Kirtland to escape lawsuits related to the illegal failed bank.

18 Mar 1838 - Smith set Rigdon apart as first counsellor in the First Presidency.

12 Apr. 1838 – Smith and Rigdon accused Cowdery of leaving Kirtland because he was about to be indicted for counterfeiting. Cowdery accused them of conscious lying. (Quinn,1994).

17 June 1838 - Rigdon gave his infamous 'Salt Sermon' by adapting Matt 5"13 (D&C 101:39-40; 103:10). In this sermon, he declared that it was:

“the duty of this people to trample [dissenters] into the earth, and if the county cannot be freed of them any other way, I will assist to trample them down or erect a gallows on the square of Far West and hang them as they did the gamblers at Vicksburg and it would be an act at which the angels would smile in approbation.” (Van Wagoner, 1994, p. 218).

July 1838 - Rigdon said of former Church associates:

" Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman E. Johnson, united with a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars, and blacklegs of the deepest dye, to deceive, cheat, and defraud the saints out of their property." US Senate Document 189

See: <http://thedigitalvoice.com/enigma/essays/rodsmn04.htm>

December 16, 1838 – Smith said of former Church associates:

"Such characters as McLellin, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris are too mean to mention; and we had liked to have forgotten them". See: <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no88.htm>

1838 - Rigdon approved Danite removal of dissenting members arguing that it was

"the imperative duty of the Church to obey the word of Joseph Smith, *or the presidency*, without question or inquiry, and that if there were any that would not, they should have their throats cut from ear [to] ear."

By adding "*the presidency*", Rigdon sought to establish policy that would maximize his own personal power. See: <http://sidneyrigdon.com/Hyd1845A.htm>. Later, he admitted that a principal reason for the subsequent harassment of Mormons in Missouri was the attitude of the Saints regarding the laws of the land – “we did not break them, we were above them.” (Van Wagoner, 1994; p. 224).

Rigdon was motivated by ecclesiastical power. He understood that his ability to “bring souls to Christ” and to gather Israel would depend upon his ability to remain in power. To that end, he was able to justify deceptive changes in the content of scriptures, financial fraud, or worse. Quinn (1994) has referred to such justification as “theocratic ethics”. Theocratic ethics are found in The Book of Mormon. In Ether 4:11 and Moroni 7:12-17, “good” is defined as whatever brings souls to Christ. Deception could potentially be “good” if it brought about the stated purpose of The Book of Mormon - “the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ”.



The Spalding-Rigdon Theory is consistent with ecclesiastical power and money as motivators and the use of theocratic ethics as justification. Initially, Smith and Rigdon worked together to bring about Rigdon's vision of the Christian faith and to make money. They then colluded to realize Rigdon's dream of leading the Church, gathering Israel and establishing a community of goods. With this came opportunities for power and financial gain. The result was an unanticipated scenario that held opportunity and danger for both of them. Smith acquired a reasonably paying job and more power than he likely had ever dreamed possible. Rigdon was able to "bring people to Christ" and also enjoyed considerable influence, though in a situation unlike the one he had foreseen. They both must have realized how precarious their situation was.

***IN 1844 SIDNEY RIGDON SEIZED UPON THE OPPORTUNITY OF SMITH'S DEATH, INSTIGATING A CYNICAL POWER GRAB, THREATENING TO "EXPOSE THE SECRETS OF THE CHURCH" AND PROFESSING NEW REVELATIONS AND VISIONS***

At the time of Smith's murder on June 27, 1844, Rigdon was in Pittsburgh. He almost immediately claimed to have had visions and lied as needed to gain control of the Church.

See: <http://www.centerplace.org/history/ts/v5n17.htm>.

In the Nauvoo Times and Seasons Press (1845), Orson Hyde provided a description of the visions that Rigdon claimed to have had while in Pittsburgh before coming to Nauvoo. Hyde reported:

"In this discourse he [Rigdon] related the wonderful visions he had received in Pittsburgh just before he left that place. There were perhaps five or six thousand persons who listened attentively to his sayings on that occasion. The place where he received them, he said, was in an upper room in his own hired house; a room which he had prepared for retirement and sacred reflection. On this occasion, he testified that Joseph had ascended to heaven, and that he stood on the right hand of the Son of God, and that he had seen him there, clothed with all the power, glory, might, majesty, and dominion of the celestial kingdoms:-- That he held the keys of the kingdom and would continue to hold them to all eternity, -- that he had received the crown, and the kingdom must be built up unto him, and that no man could ever take his place, neither have power to build up the kingdom to any other creature or being but to Joseph Smith. While here just before his excommunication from the church, he taught that Joseph Smith was at the head of this kingdom -- that our prayers went first to him -- from him to the Apostle Peter, -- from Peter to Christ, -- and that Christ presented them to the Father. He further said that the visions he had in Pittsburgh were a continuation of the same vision that he and Joseph had in Kirtland several years ago concerning the different glories or mansions in the "Father's house." These statements were furnished me by those who heard them". (page 12).

See: <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/Hyd1845A.htm#pg06c>

Hyde continued:

"But again, if Sidney was a true man when he came to us from Pittsburgh, he is false now: for he now testifies directly against that which he then declared God had given him by revelation. He now says that Joseph is with hypocrites and unbelievers. If he is true now, he was false then and we, of course, did right in cutting him off from the church: for he was found guilty of attempting to palm upon us a revelation which he said came from God: but we knew it came from himself. He told us some truths, however in order to gain our confidence that we might place him at the head of the church." (page 33). See: <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/Hyd1845A.htm>

Jedediah M. Grant, a President of Seventies in the LDS Church, collected statements about Rigdon's behaviour after Smith's death. According to Grant,

Rigdon responded in the most sympathetic manner to the death of Elder Joseph Smith saying, he was cut off in an hour when he looked not for it, breaking out into a half crying tone, exclaiming, "Oh, Joseph! Joseph! Joseph! Where art thou! Oh, Joseph! thou wicked servant, thou hast fallen because of thy transgression! Thou hadst the promise that thou shouldst live if thou wert faithful until the coming of the Saviour! Thou didst have the promise of translating more of the sacred Records! Oh Joseph! if thou hadst not sinned thou mightest have been here, to have thundered forth Heaven's Eternal truth! Oh Joseph, Joseph, I shall not see thee till I meet thee in the Eternal World!" See: <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/Grnt1844.htm>.

Additional insight into Rigdon comes from his response when the apostles asked him to surrender his licence to preach:

"Elder Hyde continued and said: . . . When we demanded his [Rigdon's] license, he said, "I did not receive it from you, neither shall I give it up to you." He then threatened to turn traitor. His own language was, inasmuch as you have demanded my license, I shall feel it my duty to publish all your secret meetings, and all the history of the secret works of this church, in the public journals. . . . He was the cause of our troubles in Missouri, and although Brother Joseph tried to restrain him, he would take his own course, and if he goes to exposing the secrets of this church, as he says, the world will throw him down and trample him under their feet."

Grant, J. M., 1844. A Collection of Facts, Relative to the Course Taken By Elder Sidney Rigdon, In the States of Ohio, Missouri, Illinois and Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, pages 650-661.

On Aug 8, 1844, Rigdon sought to be named as "Guardian of the Church." He explained that:

"he was the identical man the ancient prophets had sung about, wrote and rejoiced over; and that he was sent to do the identical work that that had been the theme of all the prophets in every preceding generation." Orson Hyde, as cited by Van Wagoner (1994), page 337.

But Rigdon was denied in favor of Brigham Young and the Apostles. Thereafter, Rigdon began scheming to split the Church so as to acquire his own following. This led to his excommunication trial on Sept 8, 1844. At the trial, Young responded to Rigdon's earlier threat to expose the church:

"President Young arose again and said he wanted to read some testimony which had been presented to him relative to this case, but did not wish to mention the names of the individuals at the present time, if it could be dispensed with. He continued: honest men may be deceived for a time, but they will generally see their error and turn about. There are some who are trolling off and wanting to make divisions amongst us. Brother Sidney says, "if we go to opposing him he will tell all of our secrets!" but I would say, oh don't, Brother Sidney! don't tell our secrets, oh don't! But if he tells of our secrets, we will tell of his -- tit for tat . . . " (ibid, page 664). See: <http://home1.gte.net/dbroadhu/RESTOR/Lib/Prp1844a.htm>

After his excommunication Rigdon converted several hundred people to his new Church, and established a splinter group in Pittsburg where he continued to fabricate heavenly visitations, doctrines, and prophecies. See: <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/RigWrit/M&A/MA-1844.htm>  
See also: <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/Hyd1845A.htm>

## A FINAL QUESTION:

### ***IF RIGDON HAD NOTHING TO HIDE FROM FUTURE GENERATIONS, WHY DID HE ASK THAT HIS WRITINGS BE BURNED AFTER HIS DEATH?***

From Van Wagoner (1994), p.456:

'Prior to Phebe's death [Sidney Rigdon's wife], according to some family members, she burned all Sidney's private papers. Granddaughter Jessie Rigdon Secord related in 1967: "I was told that [grandfather] made grandmother promise that upon his death everything he had ever written would be destroyed so a short time after, on the absence of the family, she burned all the records, and the brilliant sermons and orations lay in a heap of ashes." Grandson Edward Hatch, a New York Supreme Court justice, stated in 1896 that "during the last six or seven years of his life" his grandfather "wrote a great deal, daily using from seven to nine pages of foolscap paper; but as to the subject matter no one knew anything, as at his death all the manuscripts were burned, the family not considering them of any real worth; today they regret their haste in thus destroying." '

Before dying, Rigdon refused to comment on the Spalding manuscript, saying that his "lips were forever sealed on that subject." See: <http://thedigitalvoice.com/enigma/rww/1977DavD.htm>  
<http://solomonspalding.com/Lib/Enig2005.htm>

## CONCLUSION

Contrary to the assertions of apologists and Smith-as-Sole-Author advocates, there is ample evidence that Sidney Rigdon played a role in the composition of The Book of Mormon. Moreover, his role was likely extensive and justifies naming him as probable mastermind. He had motive, means, and opportunity. Throughout his life, he demonstrated a willingness to use deceit to achieve his aims. He is reported to have had direct contact with Solomon Spalding. Spalding himself evidently suspected Rigdon of taking his manuscript. A copy of Spalding's manuscript was later reported in Rigdon's study. Word usage patterns and themes consistent with Rigdon participation are found throughout The Book of Mormon. Material likely created after 1828 in response to the lost pages incident – such as 2 Nephi 25-33 and most of the Book of Moroni - lack Spalding signature phrases and emphasize Rigdon's changed beliefs in 1828. In a companion essay (in preparation), I summarize evidence that Solomon Spalding was likely the primary author of source material adapted to create the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon as well as other foundational Mormon narratives.

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