



MOONMEN and NEPHITES

At the time Joseph Smith established the Mormon Church, many people believed that the moon was a habitable globe. Adam Clark, a Protestant writer, stated: "There is scarcely any doubt now remaining in the philosophical world that **the moon is a habitable globe**" (*Clark's Commentary*, vol. 1, page 36). Josiah Priest made this statement:

It is believed and asserted by astronomers as their opinion, obtained from telescopic observation, that the moon, . . . is a globe in ruins, or if not so, it at least is frequently much convulsed by the operations of volcanic fires. Its surface, as seen through the glasses, is found extremely mountainous, . . . a great number of rivers, creeks, lakes and small seas must divide the land of this globe into a vast number of tracts of country, which are doubtless filled with animals,—consequently with rational beings in the form of men, as ourselves, for we can conceive of none other, as fitted to preside over its animals. **The same we believe of all the stars of heaven.** (*American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, Albany, N.Y., 1835, page 396)

Although we know that Joseph Smith was influenced by the views of his time, he claimed to receive his information directly from heaven. Oliver B. Huntington, who was a member of the Mormon Church in Joseph Smith's time, claimed that Smith gave the following information concerning the inhabitants of the moon:

INHABITANTS OF THE MOON

"The inhabitants of the moon are more of a uniform size than the inhabitants of the earth, being about 6 feet in height.

"They dress very much like the quaker style and are quite general in style, or the fashion of dress.

"They live to be very old; coming generally, near a thousand years."

This is the description of them as **given by Joseph The Seer**, and he could "see" whatever he asked the father in the name of Jesus to see. (*Journal of Oliver B. Huntington*, vol. 2, page 166 of typed copy at the Utah State Historical Society)

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, also seemed to believe that the moon was inhabited (see *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 13, page 271, or *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 89) but it is doubtful that many Mormons today can accept Joseph Smith's statement about the "inhabitants of the moon," especially in light of the fact that men have now landed on the moon.

Joseph Smith's statement concerning the "inhabitants of the moon," however, raises a very important question: Could it be possible that Joseph Smith's revelations—the revelations which are accepted as scripture by the Mormon people—are the product of his own imagination, influenced by the thinking of his time, rather than revelations from God?

NEPHITES

We feel that the works of Josiah Priest had a real influence on Joseph Smith's thinking. Joseph Smith was probably very familiar with Priest's *American Antiquities* (which speaks of the moon being a habitable globe), for he quotes from this book in the *Times and Seasons*, vol. 3, pages 813-814.

In 1825—five years before the Book of Mormon was published—Josiah Priest wrote a book entitled, *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*. In the *Salt Lake Messenger*, issue No. 22, we presented evidence that seems to show that Joseph Smith used material from this book when he wrote the Book of Mormon. Priest's book contained "Proofs that the **Indians** of North

America are lineally descended from the ancient **Hebrews**" (*The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, Albany, N.Y., 1825, page 297). The Book of Mormon also teaches that the Indians are the descendants of a group of Hebrews who came to America.

However this may be, the Mormon people accept the Book of Mormon as scripture. Some members of the Church have made some fantastic claims about archaeologists using the Book of Mormon. For instance, we are informed that a letter which was written to Ernest L. English on May 3, 1936, was duplicated and "distributed to LDS church members by leaders (local) in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1959." We quote the following from this letter:

. . . it was 1920 before the Smithsonian Institute officially recognized the **Book of Mormon as a record of value**. All discoveries up to this time were **found to fit** the Book of Mormon accounts and so the **heads** of the Archaeological Department decided to make an effort to discover some of the **large cities** described in the Book of Mormon records.

All members of the department were **required** to study the account and make **rough-maps** of the various populated centers. When I visited the **Smithsonian Institute Library** in 1933 I noticed that there were over thirty copies of the Book of Mormon on file . . . **it is true that the Book of Mormon has been the guide to almost all of the major discoveries**.

When **Col. Lindbergh** flew to South America five years ago, he was able to sight **heretofore undiscovered cities which the archaeologists at the Institute had mapped out according to the locations described in the Book of Mormon**. This record is now **quoted** by the members of the **Institute as an authority** and is recognized by **all** advanced students in the field.

New Book

Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This is a 64-page book dealing with such subjects as: the Book of Mormon in light of archaeological findings in the New World, the disagreement between Dr. Nibley and Dr. Jakeman over archaeology and the Book of Mormon, Nephite coins, the Anthon transcript, Mayan glyphs, the Parahyba text, Kinderhook plates, Newark stones, Lehi Tree of Life Stone, and the problem of Book of Mormon geography.

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In a review of the first two volumes of this work. Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, Dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School stated:

These books represent no ordinary polemic against Mormonism. This is the definitive, fully-documented, utterly-devastating case against the divine authority and truthfulness of the foundational documents upon which the Mormon religion is based. (*Evangelical Beacon*, October 8, 1968, page 7)

Because of many false statements, such as the one printed above, the Smithsonian Institute has been forced to publish a statement concerning these matters. In this statement we find the following:

1. **The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide.** Smithsonian archeologists see **no connection** between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book.

We have recently completed a 64-page book entitled, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*. In this book we show that archaeology does **not** support the Book of Mormon, and that the Nephites mentioned in the Book of Mormon never really existed. In fact, all evidence seems to show that the Nephites were as mythical as Joseph Smith's description of the "inhabitants of the moon."

One of the subjects which we cover is the "Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone." We devote 18 pages to this matter in the new book. The following is a sample of some of the information we give on this subject.

In 1965 the Mormon-owned *Deseret News* announced that the *El Paso Times* had published an article which seemed to show that the Book of Mormon had been proven by archaeologists. The article had appeared in the *El Paso Times* on July 4, 1965. In this article we find the following statements:

The Book of Mormon, . . . is purported to be an ecclesiastical and historical record of the American continent . . .

Archaeologists have **conceded** the possible existence of such a **record**, and a recent archaeological find in Mexico has been interpreted of relevance to its **authenticity**.

A **large carving unearthed in Chiapas, Mexico**, has been **interpreted** and offers the **first sound evidence** of the near-eastern origin of its carvers—**an origin set in the Book of Mormon**.

. . . **Three name glyphs** on the carving have been **translated** as "**Lehi**," "**Sariah**," and "**Nephi**," prominent names in the Book of Mormon, and the study shows a detailed symbolization of a crucial scene in the book termed "Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life." It may be one of the **most important** finds in the **history of archeology**, some think. (*El Paso Times*, July 4, 1965)

At first sight this article appears to be very impressive, but careful research shows it to be nothing but old Mormon propaganda rewritten. In the book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, we show that this is a rehash of material which appeared in a sheet entitled, "Near East Type Ancient Carving Found in Mexico," which was published in Safford, Arizona, a few years before. When we wrote to the *El Paso Times* for information regarding this article, we were informed that it was submitted to the newspaper by "missionaries" from the Mormon Church:

The material, in somewhat elongated form, was submitted to our religion desk by Robert Elder and Vaughn Byington, missionaries of the Church of Christ of Latter-Day Saints assigned to El Paso wards.

The information was written by Mr. Byington, who said his sources were articles obtained at the Department of Archaeology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. (Letter from Joseph Rice, Religion Editor, *El Paso Times*, dated November 3, 1965)

A photograph of this letter is found in our book *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*.

Notice that the article in the *El Paso Times* stated: "Three name glyphs on the carving have been **translated** as 'Lehi,' 'Sariah,' and 'Nephi,' prominent names in the Book of Mormon. . . ." Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, of Brigham Young University, is responsible for the idea that these names appear on this stone. In our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, we show that this claim is not based on facts, and that Dr. Jakeman has not read a single Book of Mormon name on this carving.

We sent a copy of the clipping from the *El Paso Times* to the Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson. After examining this clipping, Mr. Nelson made the following statement:

Thank you for the kind letter and the newspaper clipping. I never take much stock in newspaper articles which do not carry bylines. **I think someone is talking through his hat when he claims that the names "Lihi, Sariah and Nephi" are written upon the Tree of-Life stella.** I have studied the features of that stella very carefully . . . I found nothing which transliterated into the three names. . . .

Believe me when I say that nothing would delight me more than to learn that I am wrong and that the Tree-of-Life Stella was made to commemorate

Lehi's dream and that the names had been found and identified. I must be honest with myself though. **I don't buy the story.** (Letter from Dee Jay Nelson, dated December 16, 1968)

Dee Jay Nelson's statement is especially interesting in light of the fact that he is probably the most qualified Egyptologist in the Mormon Church and has also studied Mayan glyphs. Furthermore, he wishes to prove the Book of Mormon true, but he will not accept evidence which he knows to be false.

Mr. Nelson is certainly not the only Mormon who has questioned the identification of Lehi and his family on the carving. Dr. John L. Sorenson has served as Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Brigham Young University and was editor of the *University Archaeological Society Newsletter* from August 15, 1951, to July 1, 1952. Writing in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Dr. Sorenson stated:

. . . the uncontrolled use of trait comparison leads to absurd conclusions. Particularly, it leads to overambitious interpretations of shared meaning and historical relationship, as in Jakeman's previous **pseudo-identifications** of "Lehi" (and other characters from the Book of Mormon) on an Izapan monument. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1966, page 148)

Dr. Hugh Nibley does not seem to accept Dr. Jakeman's work on the "Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone." In fact, Dr. Nibley frankly admits that there is no definite archaeological evidence to support the Book of Mormon:

Of course, almost any object could conceivably have some connection with the Book of Mormon, but **nothing short of an inscription which could be read and roughly dated could bridge the gap** between what might be called a **pre-actualistic** archaeology and contact with the realities of Nephite civilization.

The possibility that a great nation or empire that once dominated vast areas of land and flourished for centuries could actually **get lost and stay lost** in spite of every effort of men to discover its traces, has been demonstrated many times since Schliemann found the real world of the Mycenaeans. . . .

So it is with the Nephites. All that we have to go on to date is a written history. That does not mean that our Nephites are necessarily mythical, . . . as things stand we are still in the pre-archaeological and pre-anthropological stages of Book of Mormon study. Which means that there is nothing whatever that an anthropologist or archaeologist as such can say about the Book of Mormon. Nephite civilization was urban in nature, . . . It could just as easily and **completely vanish** from sight as did the worlds of Ugarit, Ur, or Cnossos; and until some **physical remnant** of it, **no matter how trivial**, has been identified beyond question, what can any student of physical remains possibly have to say about it? Everything written so far by anthropologists or archaeologists—even real archaeologists—about the Book of Mormon must be discounted, for the same reason that we must discount studies of the lost Atlantis: not because it did not exist, but because it **has not yet been found.** (*Since Cumorah*, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1967, pages 243-244) (Continued on page 4)

Rocket Expert Speaks

Dr. Wernher von Braun made these statements regarding religion and science:

"I think science has a real surprise for the skeptics. Science, for instance, tells us that nothing in nature, not even the tiniest particle, can disappear without a trace.

"Think about that for a moment. Once you do, your thoughts about life will never be the same.

"Science has found that nothing can disappear without a trace. Nature does not know extinction. All it know is transformation!

"Benjamin Franklin, a scientist, put it well: 'I believe . . . that the soul of Man is immortal and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this.'

"Now, if God applies this fundamental principle to the most minute and insignificant parts of His universe, doesn't it make sense to assume that He applies it also to the masterpiece of His creation—the human soul? I think it does. And everything science has taught me—and continues to teach me—strengthens my belief in the continuity of our spiritual existence after death. . . . I think science is basically an attempt to better understand creation. Since I cannot contemplate a creation with a Creator or a Divine intent I believe science has the same motivation as religion—communion with the Creator." ("The Farther We Probe into Space The Greater My Faith . . .", C. M. Ward's account of his interview with Dr. Wernher von Braun, pages 6, 8 and 12) ■

Joseph's "Inspired" Bible

Joseph Smith claimed that after the Bible came from the Jews to the Gentiles, a "great and abominable church" was formed, and that this church made many changes in the Scriptures. In the Book of Mormon we read:

... thou seest the foundation of a great abominable church which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have **taken away** from the gospel of the Lamb **many parts** which are plain and most precious; and also **many covenants** of the Lord have they **taken away**. (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:26)

Mormon writers still teach that the "great and abominable Church" altered the Bible. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. (son of the Mormon Historian Joseph Fielding Smith) made this statement:

The early "Apostate Fathers" did **not** think it was wrong to **tamper** with inspired Scripture. If any scripture seemed to **endanger** their viewpoint, **it was altered, transplanted,** or completely **removed** from the Biblical text. All this was done that they might keep their traditions. Such **mutilation** was considered justifiable to preserve the so-called "purity" of their doctrines. (*Religious Truths Defined*, page 175)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made this statement concerning Joseph Smith's criticism of the text of the Bible:

The teachings of the Book of Mormon, and the revelations he had received, convinced Joseph that **in the Bible were many errors**, . . . after placing the matter before the Lord, he began the so-called "**inspired translation**" of the Bible . . .

Towards the end of the year 1830, with Sidney Rigdon as assistant, he began a somewhat full "explanation and review" of the Old and New Testaments. The work then done is a convincing evidence of Joseph's inspiration. (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, Salt Lake City, 1951, page 139)

In 1859 the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt claimed that the "oldest manuscripts of the New Testament which this age are in possession of are supposed to date from the sixth century of the Christian era" (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, page 26). While the Apostle Pratt's statement was an exaggeration (Codex Vaticanus was probably written in the fourth century), there was a substantial gap between the original manuscripts and the earliest copies known to scholars. Consequently, Mormons would not accept these manuscripts as evidence against Joseph Smith's "Inspired Translation" of the Bible.

Since the turn of the century the situation has entirely changed, for papyrus fragments have been found which virtually close the gap and prove that the Scriptures have not been rewritten by a "great and abominable church." F. F. Bruce, of the University of Manchester, states:

In addition to the two excellent MSS of the **fourth century** mentioned above, which are the earliest of some thousands known to us, considerable fragments remain of papyrus copies of books of the New Testament dated **from 100 to 200 years earlier still**. The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, the existence of which was made public in 1931, consists of portions of eleven papyrus codices, three of which contained most of the New Testament writings. One of these, containing the four Gospels with Acts, belong to the first half of the third century; another, containing Paul's letters to churches and the Epistle to the Hebrews, was copied at the beginning of the third century; the third, containing Revelation, belongs to the second half of the same century. . . .

Earlier still is a fragment of a papyrus codex containing John xviii. 31-33, 37f., now in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, dated on palaeographical grounds around AD 130, showing that the latest of the four Gospels, which was written according to tradition, at Ephesus between AD 90 and 100, was circulating in Egypt within about forty years of its composition (if, as is most likely, this papyrus originated in Egypt, where it was acquired in 1917.) **It must be regarded as being, by half a century, the earliest extant fragment of the New Testament.**

A more recently discovered papyrus manuscript of the same Gospel, while not so early as the Rylands papyrus, is incomparably better preserved: this is the **Papyrus Bodmer II**, whose discovery was announced by the Bodmer Library of Geneva in 1956: it was written about **AD 200**, and contains the **first fourteen chapters of the Gospel of John** with but one lacuna (of twenty-two verses), and **considerable portions of the last seven chapters.**" (*The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?* Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976, pages 17-18)

The Papyrus Bodmer II, dated about 200 A.D., provides an excellent test for Joseph Smith's "Inspired Translation" of the Bible. Below is a photograph of the first page "of the Gospel of John in Papyrus Bodmer II." This is taken from *The Biblical Archaeologist*, September, 1957.



The reader will notice that we have placed an arrow at the beginning of the text of the Gospel of John—the writing just above this is the introduction to John's Gospel. In this study we are only dealing with the first line and about half of the second. Below we have copied the characters—written in the "Greek Uncial Script"—from the papyrus, and with the help of Berry's *Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament* we have been able to divide the words and give the English translation below each word.

ΕΝ	ΑΡΧΗ	ΗΝ	Ο	ΛΟΓΟΣ	ΚΑΙ	Ο	ΛΟΓΟΣ	ΗΝ
<u>In the</u>	<u>beginning</u>	<u>was</u>	<u>the</u>	<u>Word,</u>	<u>and</u>	<u>the</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>was</u>
ΤΡΟC	ΤΟΝ	ΘΝ	ΚΑΙ	ΘC	ΗΝ	Ο	ΛΟΓΟC	
<u>with</u>	<u>God,</u>	<u>and</u>	<u>God</u>	<u>was</u>	<u>the</u>	<u>Word.</u>		

The reader will note that the right side of the fragment is damaged, and that we have restored the word which translates "God" (ΘΝ is an abbreviation for ΘΕΟΝ). According to Floyd V. Filson the word "God" is always abbreviated in this manuscript (*The Biblical Archaeologist*, September, 1957, page 59). Except for the last letter in the word ΤΟΝ, this is the only restoration we have had to make. This word means "the," but in this case it is best to leave it untranslated. W. E. Vine states that "the article is often used with proper names, but must not be rendered in English" (*New Testament Greek Grammar*, page 21).

It is extremely interesting to find that the translation of the papyrus confirms the reading found in both the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

When we examine Joseph Smith's "Inspired Revision," however, we find that this verse has been drastically altered:

In the beginning was **the Gospel preached through the Son. And the Gospel was** the word, and the word was with **the Son, and the Son was with** God, and the **Son** was of God.

While Joseph Smith would have us believe that he was restoring the text of the Bible to its original purity, the evidence indicates just the opposite. Because of recent discoveries of papyrus manuscripts Mormon writers are faced with a serious dilemma. It is almost impossible to maintain Joseph Smith's teachings concerning the Bible in light of these discoveries.

Dr. Richard L. Anderson, of Brigham Young University, is undoubtedly one of the top authorities on Bible manuscripts in the Mormon Church. In a paper read at the "Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures," Dr. Anderson seemed to be warning his people against the idea that the New Testament has been drastically altered:

This process of uncovering the **major papyrus manuscripts** of the **New Testament** has largely taken place not only in our own century, but in our own generation. . . . **Almost the whole New Testament is represented in the papyrus fragments.** The only two exceptions now are I and II Timothy. The real achievement, then, is that **the antiquity of the text has now been pushed back almost another century.** . . . the gap now separating the time of the writing of the New Testament and the oldest preserved manuscripts is now generally **no more than 200 years.** To underline the extent of the findings, let us stress that some part of every book of the New Testament is represented by papyrus dated as early as the third century, with the present exception of Philemon, I Timothy, II Timothy, I, II and III John. . . . As to its antiquity, p 46 is thought by leading papyrologists to be no later than 200 A.D. This means that the oldest collection of Paul's letters now dates from **a maximum of 150 years after Paul wrote.** With such an early collection, **the question naturally arises how the text is different from the traditional one.** Differences lie in numerous details, but the outstanding conclusion is that **there is little, if any, significant change.** . . .

Among the Bodmer Papyri, the greatest treasures are the copies of the Gospels dating back to the end of the second century. The original publication took place in 1956 of a manuscript enumerated P66. **It is a practically complete copy of the Gospel of John,** which the editor dates **about 200 A.D.** . . . **the most impressive contribution** of the new manuscripts of Luke and John is **not** the few differences, but the extent of their **agreement** with the life and teachings of Christ as preserved in other manuscripts. . . . For a book to undergo progressive uncovering of its manuscript history and come out with **so little debatable** in its text is a great tribute to its **essential authenticity.** In tracing the history of manuscript investigation, the student finds that **two great facts emerge.** First, **no new manuscript discovery has produced serious differences in the essential story.** This survey has disclosed the leading textual controversies, and together they would be well within one percent of the text. Stated differently, **all manuscripts agree on the essential correctness of 99% of the verses in the New Testament.** . . .

It is true that the Latter-day Saints have taken the position that the present Bible is much **changed** from its original form. However, greatest changes would logically have occurred in writings more remote than the New Testament. **The textual history of the New Testament gives every reason to assume a fairly stable transmission of the documents we possess.** (*Fourteenth Annual Symposium in the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, Brigham Young University, 1963, pages 54-59)

Robert J. Matthews, Director of Academic Research for the Department of Seminaries and Institutes in the Mormon Church, has done a great deal of research on Joseph Smith's "Inspired Version" of the Bible. In an article published in a recent issue of *BYU Studies*, Dr. Matthews goes so far as to admit the possibility that Joseph Smith may have added material which was never contained in the original manuscripts of the Bible:

The question might be raised whether the Prophet actually **restored** the text as Matthew wrote it, or whether, being the seer that he was, he went even **beyond Matthew's text** and recorded an event that actually took place during the delivery of the Sermon, **but which Matthew did not include.** . . .

It is probable that the Inspired Version is **many things, and that only portions** of it represent **restorations** while other portions **may be explanations, interpolations, enlargements, clarifications and the like.**

The science of textual criticism offers an objection to the Inspired Version being a restoration of the original text on the basis that the Prophet's work is **not** extensively supported by the **many ancient manuscripts and fragments of the Bible** that are now in common use by scholars. However, this may possibly be accounted for in two ways. First, no original manuscripts of the Bible are available, and even the earliest available documents are removed from the originals by many decades. Corruption of the texts could have taken place in the intervening years. Second, many of the passages in the Inspired Version may be reiterations of events which were either **not recorded by the Biblical writers** or were lost before the Bible was compiled **in which case even the original Bible manuscripts would not contain the information.** . . .

My analysis leads me to conclude that the Inspired Version is many things. There are passages that are strongly persuasive of being restorations of the original text, or even of **historical events beyond the text.** There are other passages that may be inspired explanations, but **not** necessarily restorations. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1969, pages 170, 173 & 174)

The Mormon scholar Dr. Hugh Nibley has recently stated that "Whatever translation comes by the gift and power of God is certainly no translation in the ordinary sense, . . . **In every case** in which he has produced a **translation,**

Joseph Smith has made it clear that **his inspiration is by no means bound to any ancient text, but is free to take wings at any time**" (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Autumn 1969, page 71).

Dr. Nibley and other Mormon scholars would, no doubt, like to prove that Joseph Smith carefully followed the ancient texts which he claimed to translate, but since the evidence is so clearly against such an idea, they are forced to say that Joseph Smith's inspiration went beyond the written texts. We feel that this is a very compromised position and comes very close to rejecting Joseph Smith's entire work. The question comes to mind: **Where do you draw the line between "inspiration" and "imagination"?** ■

(Continued from page 2) — **MOONMEN and NEPHITES**

In 1843 some brass plates were reported to have been found near Kinderhook, Illinois. The Mormon used these plates as evidence for the Book of Mormon (see *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, page 406), but it later turned out that they were forgeries that were made to trap Joseph Smith. On June 30, 1879, W. Fugate wrote a letter to James T. Cobb. In this letter we find these statements:

I received your letter in regard to **those plates** and will say that they are a **humbug,** gotten up by Robert Wiley, Bridge Whitton and myself. . . .

We read in Pratt's prophecy that "Truth is yet to spring out of the earth." We concluded to prove the prophecy by way of a **joke.** We soon made our plans and executed them. Bridge Whitton cut them out of **some pieces of copper;** Wiley and I made the **hieroglyphics** by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid and putting it on the plates. (*The Kinderhook Plates*, by Welby W. Ricks, reprinted from *Improvement Era*, September 1962)

Evidently Joseph Smith was not aware of the fact that the plates were made to trick him, for Charlotte Haven stated that he "said that the figures or writing on them was similar to that in which the Book of Mormon was written, . . . **he thought that by the help of revelation he would be able to translate them**" (Letter dated May 2, 1843, as printed in *Overland Monthly*, December 1890, page 630).

Under the date of May 1, 1843, this statement appeared in Joseph Smith's *History*:

I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth. (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 372)

After Joseph Smith's death the Kinderhook plates were lost. Fortunately however, one of the plates has recently been found in the Chicago Historical Society Museum. In 1962 Welby W. Ricks wrote an article for the *Improvement Era* in which he told about the plate in Chicago and claimed that the discovery "reaffirms" Joseph Smith's "prophetic calling." Mr. Ricks claimed that there were discrepancies in Fugate's account of how the plates were made, but he furnished no evidence to show that they were genuine relics of antiquity.

During the summer of 1965 George M. Lawrence, a Mormon physicist, was given permission to examine and make "some non-destructive physical studies of the surviving plate." In the Summary to his study, we find this statement:

The plate is not pure copper. It may be a low zinc brass or a bronze. The dimensions, tolerances, composition and workmanship are consistent with the facilities of an 1843 blacksmith shop and with the fraud stories of the original participants. ("Report of a Physical Study of the Kinderhook Plate Number 5," by George M. Lawrence)

In our new book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, we have six pages of information on the Kinderhook plates. The reader will, no doubt, be interested in learning more about these plates and Mr. Lawrence's research with them. In this 64-page book we cover such subjects as: the Book of Mormon in light of archaeological findings in the New World, the disagreement between Dr. Nibley and Dr. Jakeman over archaeology and the Book of Mormon, Nephite coins, the Anthon transcript, Mayan glyphs, Parahyba text, Kinderhook plates, Newark stones, Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone, and the problem of Book of Mormon geography.

The prices on this book are: \$2.00 each — 2 for \$3.50 — 5 for \$7.00 — 10 for \$12.00.