

# ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON



By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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**1969**

(Digital version 2023)

**Utah Lighthouse Ministry**

**[www.utlm.org](http://www.utlm.org)**



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# CONTENTS

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Smithsonian Uses Book of Mormon? .....	1
A Pagan People.....	6
A Lost Civilization .....	9
Nephite Coins .....	11
Anthon Transcript .....	12
Paraíba Text .....	22
Kinderhook Plates .....	25
Falsification of History .....	30
“Childish Forgeries” .....	31
Newark Stones .....	31
“Me A Nephite” .....	34
Lehi, Sariah, & Nephi .....	37
Criticism from Within .....	40
Pagan Elements .....	43
Other Problems .....	50
Geography .....	52
Hill Cumorah .....	54
Conclusion .....	64

## Appendix

Only Baal .....	65
Archaeological Myths .....	65
Nibley Attacks Jakeman .....	66
Bountiful Found? .....	66
Gigantic Wheels .....	68
“Deformed English”? .....	68
Quetzalcoatl Crucified? .....	69

## Appendix No. 2

Still No Nephites .....	72
Adam’s Altar .....	74
Kinderhook Plates .....	78
Dr. Gordon’s Work .....	80
Paraíba Text Criticized .....	80
Bat Creek Stone .....	84

# Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Some members of the Mormon Church have made 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:

The inquiry you made regarding the Book of Mormon is a commendable one and I will be pleased to mention the part which it has played in helping the government to unravel the problem of the aborigines.

The Book of Mormon was first brought to the attention of the Smithsonian Institute by James H. Fairchilds, a New York editor. At first the account was not taken seriously, . . . It was recognized because it contained many excellent philosophical assertions, but apparently was not regarded as having any historical value until about 1884, . . . it was 1920 before the Smithsonian Institute officially recognized the Book of Mormon as a record of any 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 larger 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. During the past fifteen years the Institute has made remarkable study of its investigations of the Mexican Indians and 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**.

Because of many false statements, such as the one printed above, the Smithsonian Institute has been forced to publish a statement concerning these matters. The reader will find a photograph of the entire statement on the next page. 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.

Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., Acting Director, Smithsonian Institution, made this statement in a letter dated February 16, 1951.

In reply to your letter of February 11, 1951, permit me to say that the **mistaken** idea that the Book of Mormon has been used by scientific organizations in conducting archeological explorations has become quite current in recent years. It can be stated definitely that there is no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book of Mormon.

There is no correspondence whatever between archeological sites and cultures as revealed by scientific investigations and as recorded in the Book of Mormon, hence the book cannot be regarded as having any historical value from the standpoint of the aboriginal peoples of the New World.

The Smithsonian Institution has never officially recognized the Book of Mormon as a record of value on scientific matters and the Book has never been used as a guide or source of information for discovering ruined cities. (Letter dated February 16, 1951, photographically reproduced in *The Book of Mormon Examined*, by Arthur Budvarson, La Mesa, California, 1959, p. 37)

In a letter to Marvin Cowan, Frank H. H. Roberts stated:

There is no evidence whatever of any migration from Israel to America, and likewise no evidence that pre-Columbian Indians had any knowledge of Christianity or the Bible. (Letter from Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., to Marvin Cowan, dated January 24, 1963)

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  
Office of Anthropology  
Washington, D.C. 20560

STATEMENT REGARDING THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Smithsonian Institution has received hundreds of inquiries in recent years regarding the use of the Book of Mormon as a guide to archeological researches. Answers to questions most commonly asked are as follows:

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.
2. The physical type of the American Indian is basically Mongoloid, being most closely related to that of the peoples of eastern, central, and northeastern Asia. Archeological evidence indicates that the ancestors of the present Indians came into the New World--probably over a land bridge known to have existed in the Bering Strait region during the last Ice Age--in a continuing series of small migrations beginning about 30,000 years ago.
3. Present evidence indicates that the first people to reach this continent from the East were the Norsemen who arrived in the northeastern part of North America around A.D. 1000. There is nothing to show that they reached Mexico or Central America.
4. There is increasing evidence of the spread of cultural traits to MesoAmerica and the northwestern coast of South America across the Pacific, beginning several thousand years before the Christian era. However, these appear to be the result of accidental voyages originating in eastern and southern Asia and show no relationship to ancient Egyptian or Hebrew cultures.
5. We know of no authentic cases of ancient Egyptian or Hebrew writing having been found in the New World. Reports of findings of Egyptian influence in the Mexican and Central American areas have been published in newspapers and magazines from time to time, but thus far no reputable Egyptologist has been able to discover any relationship between Mexican remains and those in Egypt.
6. There are two copies of the Book of Mormon (and part of a third copy) in the United States National Museum, and another copy

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was sent by the Smithsonian library to the Library of Congress for deposit. Two of these were gift copies, and one was received by transfer from another government agency. One or two members of the staff have personal copies that were presented to them by Mormons.

Suggested Reading

- Coe, Michael D.  
1962. Mexico. 245 pp., 75 pls., 32 figs., 8 maps, 1 table. Frederick A. Praeger, New York (Ancient Peoples and Places Series, vol. 29). (A well-written and authoritative summary of Mexican archeology.)
- Jennings, Jesse D., and Norbeck, Edward.  
1963. Prehistoric Man in the New World. 633 pp., illus. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. (The most recent and thorough survey of New World archeology, written by leading American archeologists.)
- Ferguson, Thomas S.  
1958. One Fold and One Shepherd. 405 pp. illus. Books of California, San Francisco. (A book presenting the Mormon point of view.)
- Hunter, Milton R., and Ferguson, Thomas S.  
1950. Ancient America and the Book of Mormon. 450 pp., 53 figs., Kolob Book Co., Oakland, California. (Another book presenting the Mormon point of view.)
- MacGowan, Kenneth, and Hester, Joseph A., Jr.  
1962. Early Man in the New World. Rev. ed. 333 pp. illus. Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New Jersey. (The Natural History Library). (Good general reading; also provides some Old World background.)
- Morley, Sylvanus G.  
1956. The ancient Maya. 494 pp., 102 pls., 57 figs. (3d ed., rev. by George W. Brainerd.) Stanford University Press, Stanford, California (Maya history: origin of their civilization, its rise, first florescence, first decline, renaissance and final decline, Spanish conquest.)
- Thompson, J. Eric.  
1954. The rise and fall of Maya civilization. 287 pp., 24 pl., 20 figs., map. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman. (An important account of Maya civilization based upon archeological discoveries.)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

The University Archaeological Society at Brigham Young University published these comments concerning the statement from the Smithsonian Institution:

For as long as we can remember, and perhaps for a good while before that, the claim has been circulated among uninformed Latter-day Saints that some important non-LDS research organization “back east” has been using the Book of Mormon as a guide in its archaeological field work. However, when the question comes up as to just which institution is involved, no one seems able to identify it, although the Smithsonian Institution of Washington is sometimes mentioned as a possibility. A brief examination of this extraordinary claim will bring to light some of the difficulties it entails. In the first place the Book is **not**, in its present form, a suitable “guide” for archaeological field work: The ancient authors seem **not** to have had in mind the problems of geographical identification which face the modern archaeologist. And in any case, there are no modern place-names mentioned within its covers.

Moreover, no reliable reconstruction of the geography of the Book of Mormon showing at least the approximate location of its principal cities, has yet been published. If Latter-day Saints themselves have not yet accomplished this task, how can Smithsonian or any other non-LDS archaeologists be expected to use the Book of Mormon as a guide for field work?

In a word, we believe this claim to be **false**. (Cf. Newsletter, 57.50, *Progress in Archaeology*, pp. 141–144).

So many inquiries have nevertheless been sent to the Smithsonian Institution on this subject that the following printed statement has been used for some years by its officials to mail out to correspondents, so as to save time in answering letters:

.....

... our reasons for urging Latter-day Saints to refrain from writing Smithsonian on this subject may be different from those of the Institution itself. It is simply that that organization, however valuable its contributions have been along other lines, is not set up to handle problems of this kind. Their scholars appear to have no special knowledge of the actual contents of the Book of Mormon, nor in fact any special competence in the methodology of historical archaeology, without which such a document purporting to originate in the ancient past cannot be properly evaluated.

In addition, they appear to have **no interest** in examining the claims of such a peculiar writing as the Book of Mormon, . . . Under these circumstances, it is unlikely that they could give suitable answers to inquiries on this subject.

We should rather like to suggest that questions . . . be addressed to the University Archaeological Society, an organization which was created to assist Latter-day Saints in this very field. (*University Archaeological Society Newsletter*, Brigham Young University, April 16, 1965, pp. 5–7)

George Crossette, of *National Geographic Magazine*, has made this statement concerning the idea that the Book of Mormon is used by archaeologists:

The National Geographic Society has been asked several times whether The Book of Mormon has been substantiated by archeological findings. We referred this question to Dr. Neil M. Judd, a noted archeologist at the Smithsonian Institution. His reply follows:

Neither representatives of the National Geographic Society nor, to my knowledge, archeologists connected with any other institution of equal prestige have ever used the Book of Mormon in locating historic ruins in Middle America or elsewhere.

For additional assistance, I suggest you write to the Office of Cultural Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20506. (Letter dated October 21, 1965)

The Mormon writer Franklin S. Harris, Jr. frankly admits that the Book of Mormon cannot be used as an explorer’s guide at the present time:

The Book of Mormon then is not suitable, at present, for an explorer’s guide in looking for cities, either by the Smithsonian Institution or other organizations, until we have more information from the ruins to make a definite correlation possible. (*The Book of Mormon Message and Evidences*, by Franklin S. Harris, Jr., 1961, Salt Lake City, p. 56)

In his pamphlet, *Archeology and the Book of Mormon*, Hal Hougey gives us the following information:

The numerous books and articles by Latter-day Saints over the years have shown that Mormons believe that the fruits of archeological research may properly be applied to verify the Book of Mormon. Dr. Ross T. Christensen, a Mormon anthropologist, agrees with this in the following quotations from the Newsletter of the University Archaeological Society which has its headquarters at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah:

... the Book of Mormon is in such a key position in relation to the Latter-day Saint religion as a whole that the entire structure of the latter must stand or fall with the verification or refutation of the former; and finally, that the Book of Mormon is of such a nature that its validity can be submitted to a thorough and objective scientific test. (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, No. 64, January 30, 1960, pp. 5–6)

.....

Latter-day Saints have only recently entered seriously into the field of anthropology, though they have “long evidenced an avid, though amateur, interest in the subject” since the earliest days of the Mormon church. It was not until 1938 that the first Latter-day Saint earned a doctorate in anthropology (M. Wells Jakeman, at the University of California). In 1946 a Department of Archaeology was established at Brigham Young University. This department “was particularly dedicated to researches bearing on the Scriptures upon which Latter-day Saints base their faith” (*Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2).

.....

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

While there are today fewer Latter-day Saints with doctor's degrees in anthropology than there are fingers on one's right hand, these few have served to curtail the extravagant claims which Mormon missionaries have made . . .

When Mormon missionaries make their extravagant claims about American archeology proving the Book of Mormon, we need only to refer them to the following statements by their own anthropologists:

The statement that the Book of Mormon has already been proved by archaeology is misleading. The truth of the matter is that we are only now beginning to see even the outlines of the archaeological time-periods which could compare with those of the Book of Mormon. How, then, can the matter have been settled once and for all? That such an idea could exist indicates the ignorance of many of our people with regard to what is going on in the historical and anthropological sciences. (Christensen in *U.A.S. Newsletter*, No. 64, January 30, 1960, p. 3)

Many times, Mormon missionaries have told their investigators that such late-period ruins as Monte Alban (periods III–V), Yagul, and Mitla were built by the Nephites and that the archaeologists would confirm this. Both claims are untrue. However, the earliest periods of the area, Monte Alban I and II, although as yet little known, are of Preclassic (i.e. Book of Mormon period date). One may think of these earlier peoples as Jaredites or Nephites, but if so it must be on the basis of faith, not archaeology, for so far there is no explicit evidence that Book of Mormon peoples occupied this area [Oaxaca, in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec area of Mexico]. (Joseph E. Vincent in *U.A.S. Newsletter*, No. 66, May 7, 1960, p. 2)

Christensen chides his brethren with the following comment:

As for the notion that the Book of Mormon has already been proved by archaeology, I must say with Shakespeare, "Lay not that flattering unction to your soul!" (Hamlet 111:4). (*U.A.S. Newsletter* No. 64, January 30, 1960, p. 3)

What about the Mormon claim that non-Mormons have found the Book of Mormon helpful as a guide in locating ruins of cities in Central America? M. Wells Jakeman, Mormon anthropologist, answers this question:

It must be confessed that some members of the "Mormon" or Latter-day Saint Church are prone in their enthusiasm for the Book of Mormon, to make claims for it that cannot be supported. So far as is known to the writer, no non-Mormon archaeologist at the present time is using the Book of Mormon as a guide in archaeological research. Nor does he know of any non-Mormon archaeologist who holds that the American Indians are descendants of the Jews, or that Christianity was known in America in the first century of our era. This in itself, of course, does not disprove the Book of Mormon; for not enough is yet known of the actual period of that record in ancient America

or of the origin of the American Indians, for a final judgment at this time, scientifically speaking. (*Ibid.*, No. 57, March 25, 1959, p. 4)

With the exception of Latter-day Saint archaeologists, members of the archaeological profession do not, and never have, espoused the Book of Mormon in any sense of which I am aware. Non-Mormon archaeologists do not allow the Book of Mormon any place whatever in their reconstruction of the early history of the New World. (Christensen in *U.S.A. Newsletter*, No. 64, January 30, 1960, p. 3)

We conclude, therefore that the Book of Mormon remains completely unverified by archeology. The claims Mormon missionaries have made are fallacious and misleading. Many honest and sincere people who have no background or training in the field of archeology have been converted to Mormonism at least in part because of their false conviction that American archeology has verified the Book of Mormon record. (*Archeology and the Book of Mormon*, by Hal Hougey, Concord, California)

The Mormon writer Davis Bitton made this interesting observation concerning the Book of Mormon and archaeology:

. . . although archaeology may not have "disproved" the Book of Mormon claims in an absolute sense, confident claims of "tangible proof" of the Nephite civilization were now uttered only by the uninformed. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1966, p. 123)

John L. Sorenson, who was assistant Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at Brigham Young University, made this criticism of the book, *Book of Mormon Evidences in Ancient America*, by Dewey Farnsworth:

This book is a revised version of past Farnsworth picture-books which have enjoyed success on the L.D.S. book market. It purports to be a comparison of the Book of Mormon "with Archaeological Evidence from the Scientific World" (respectful capitalization is the author's). Such a project has two prerequisites: a thorough, systematic knowledge of the Book of Mormon, and an equally thorough, systematic knowledge of American archaeology. Unfortunately, Farnsworth displays deficiencies in both fields.

A surprising lack of understanding of the claims of the Book of Mormon is displayed.

Turning to the author's preparation in archaeology for this work we note the staggering statement that he "has read all the literature and books of both Spanish and English available," on the materials he treats. No competent archaeologist, had he read for 75 years, would make such an impossible claim. Had the author's claims been more humble some of his archaeological sins might be forgiven more readily. . . . A look at the bibliography (which, incidentally, omits a number of references cited in the text) is enlightening. Of some 95 works cited (from about 65 authors) only 15—a very liberal figure—approach being what could be called primary sources, that is, reports of actual original investigation by the writer of the work. Every one of these has long since been supplemented or superseded by other, uncited sources. Many of these



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

citations are torn from context, left to give an incorrect impression of the author's views or otherwise misused (for example the citations from Vaillant's *Aztecs of Mexico*, pp. 76–77). . . . As a matter of fact, a general rule can be formulated to express Farnsworth's use of authorities: if an original source exists, ignore it and find one that is second or third hand. . . . Once in a while Farnsworth gets carried away and forgets to delete contradictory material. . . .

Perhaps the statement of the author that "it has been a little confusing to me at times to follow the writings of some of our modern archaeologists" is a result of the increasing accuracy and complexity of modern archaeological writing, for we note that less than one-fourth of the works cited date within the last 25 years. This is as important an omission as would be the case of a physician who is ignorant of antibiotics, or of the bacteriologist who doesn't believe immunization will work.

. . . . .  
A summary of the book appears on the flap of the dust cover. Of the sixteen points listed there which are said to be supported by archaeological findings, not over four or five, and those so general in nature as to be of little importance, are acceptable to archaeologists. All others are unproved or in error. Instead of feeling challenged by the yet-to-be-proved, the L.D.S. reader of this book is led to a complacent, All-is-well-in-Zion attitude that implies that nothing remains for the Book of Mormon student except becoming a tourist. We are of the opinion that Latter-day Saints ought to be satisfied with the truth and not try to improve upon it by gratuitous "proofs" which are themselves based on untruth.

. . . There is a distinct need for some book of the kind this one claims to be, but when such appears it should be based on acceptable sources, sound reasoning, and above all, a thorough knowledge of the Book of Mormon itself as well as of American archaeology. (*Progress in Archaeology—An Anthology*, BYU, 1963, pp. 103–106)

In 1966 John L. Sorenson made these comments concerning some of the Mormon books on archaeology and the Book of Mormon:

Various individuals unconnected with these institutionalized activities have also wrestled with the archaeological problem. Few of the writings they have produced are of genuine consequence in archaeological terms. Some are clearly on the oddball fringe; others have credible qualifications. Two of the most prolific are Professor Hugh Nibley and Milton R. Hunter; however, they are not qualified to handle the archaeological materials their works often involve.

. . . As long as Mormons generally are willing to be fooled by (and pay for) the uninformed, uncritical drivel about archaeology and the scriptures which predominates, the few L.D.S. experts are reluctant even to be identified with the topic. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1966, pp. 145 and 149)

In a paper presented at the "Thirteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures," April 1, 1961, at the Brigham Young University, Clark S. Knowlton made the following observations:

Unfortunately many of our Mormon researchers have lacked the necessary training in archaeological techniques and data analysis to properly evaluate the archaeological materials that they were using. Others who were not well read in the literature of archaeology made rather serious errors in interpretation and analysis that might have been avoided if the writers had had a greater familiarity with the writings of modern American archaeologists. This ignorance of the history, theory, techniques, and basic conclusions of American archaeology has caused many of our writers to fall into intellectual pitfalls. The several examples that follow are indicative of the many that exist.

Several writers have gone to great lengths to assemble lists of words taken from many different Indian languages. They have compared these word lists to similar lists in the Hebrew language. Through a comparison of these word lists they have hoped to prove a definite relationship between Hebrew and the Indian languages. Indian languages, however, differ enormously in matters of grammatical structure and sound system as well as in vocabulary. The matter of the relationships between them is still a subject of considerable debate and disagreement. By careful word selection from a group of Indian languages, take at random it is possible to compare word lists that might resemble similar lists from almost any European or Asiatic language. Such word lists have little value and prove nothing unless a thoroughgoing linguistic comparison is made of the grammatical structure, sound system, vocabulary, and the possibilities of historical contact of the two languages involved in the comparison.

The publication of magnificent volumes of photographs of the ruins of buildings and cities located in the area of high civilizations in the Americas is another example. These lavishly illustrated books are frequently written and published in an endeavor to prove that complex civilizations existed in the Book of Mormon period. Unfortunately, their photographs for the most part are of cities that were built after the Book of Mormon period had ended. They can thus have little bearing on the problem of the cultural characteristics of the Book of Mormon peoples.

There is also the human tendency to erect out of zeal for one's beliefs complex theories about the origin, the cultural relationships, the migratory routes, the areas of entry into the Americas, and the location of the civilizations mentioned in the Book of Mormon. There is not yet enough evidence from past or present archaeological work to firmly support many theories in this area. Before much along this line can be done there must be sent into the areas of possible Book of Mormon occupancy many properly equipped and staffed archaeological expeditions.

And finally, there is the tendency to utilize only those writers or authors whose points of view support our own and to ignore completely those who differ from us. As many scholars in the nineteenth century speculated on the possible connections between the Ten Tribes of Israel and the American Indians and sought out evidence to support such relationships, their writings are abundantly used by some of our own writers. The writings of the majority of modern archaeologists who do not accept the present

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

possibility of such connections are ignored. In several recent books by Mormon writers, the archaeologists and authorities quoted all lived before 1920. None who have worked in recent years are mentioned. It is as though archaeology came to an end before 1930.

Because of these factors, books and articles written by Mormons on the archaeology of the Americas or on the relationship of archaeological discoveries to the problems of the Book of Mormon find it difficult to receive a non-biased analysis by non-Mormon scholars. There is unfortunately prejudice in the field against publications in archaeology by members of our Church as all too often such works have contained unsupported speculations, wishful thinking, and theories resting on little evidence.

The problems created by the lack of knowledge among our people of the basic theories, techniques, conclusions, and practices of American archaeology can be remedied only by the development of a group of men who are both trained archaeologists and faithful members of the Church. The training and preparation of such men can best be done in departments of archaeology attached to Church-supported universities and colleges.

Another weakness that has handicapped the formation of a genuine field of study of Book of Mormon archaeology is the tendency among many Mormon scholars and students in the area of Book of Mormon archaeology to divide into conflicting schools of thought. These competitive schools among us have been characterized by professional feuding, academic jealousies, personality conflicts, and maneuvering for control of publication outlets. (*Papers of the Thirteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, pp. 53–54)

### A PAGAN PEOPLE

M. T. Lamb once made this interesting observation concerning archaeology and the Book of Mormon:

The presentation in the previous chapter is only one point. We shall find a great many other representations of the Book of Mormon equally at fault, squarely and flatly contradicted by the facts of ancient American history.

For instance, what can be more clearly stated than the religious condition of this country, especially Central America, for a period of over two hundred years after Christ? A Christian civilization prevailed all over both continents.

It is not necessary here to repeat the passages in the Book of Mormon which describe such civilization (pages 491–492). It was fully presented in Chapter IV. It is only needful now to show that nothing could be wider from the truth, unless all ancient American history is a lie, and its ten thousand relics tell false tales.

It may be stated in a general way that there never has been a time upon this western hemisphere within the historic period, or within three thousand years past, when a uniform civilization of **any kind** prevailed over both continents.

But this will be considered hereafter. We are to learn now—

1st. That a Christian civilization has never existed in Central America, not even for a day.

2d. The people of Central America, as far back as their record has been traced (and that is centuries earlier than the alleged beginning of Nephite history), have always been an idolatrous people, as thoroughly heathen as any which the history of the world has described, worshipping idols the most hideous in form and feature that have ever been found upon earth, and accompanying that worship by human sacrifices as barbarous as the annals of history have recorded.

. . . A sad fatality, is it not, dear reader, that in the very region of country where the Book of Mormon fixes magnificent temples and sanctuaries erected by a Christian people for the worship of the true God, there should be dug up out of the ruins of old temples and palaces such relics of the real religion of these ancient peoples? All the records that have come down to us make it certain that these horrid idols instead of the Lord Jesus were worshipped throughout Central America 2000 years ago. It would indeed be a bright page in Central American history if the assertions of the Book of Mormon were true. But no such bright spot can be discovered either in the Nahuatl or the Mayan records. For more than three thousand years it was one unbroken record of superstition and human slaughter. Mr. Bancroft occupies nearly one entire volume of his valuable series of ancient American history in explaining the complicated religious system of these two old peoples. —Vol. 3, pages 1–550.

. . . . .  
But why longer delay the reader before making the sweeping charge that he has already anticipated? The entire civilization of the Book of Mormon, its whole record from beginning to end is flatly contradicted by the civilization and the history of Central America. (*The Golden Bible; or The Book of Mormon. Is It From God?* by Rev. M. T. Lamb, New York, 1887, pp. 284, 285, 287, 289)

On page 11 of the same book Mr. Lamb states:

But after a very careful study of the book, a conscientious and painstaking examination of all the evidences he has been able to gather both for and against it, the author of these pages has been forced to reject every one of the above claims. He is compelled to believe that no such people as are described in the Book of Mormon ever lived upon this continent; that no such records were ever engraved upon golden plates, or any other plates, in the early ages; that no such men as Mormon or Moroni or any other of the prophets or kings or wise men mentioned in the book, ever existed in this country; that Jesus Christ never appeared upon this continent in person, or had a people here before its discovery by Columbus. In short, that no such civilization, Christian or otherwise, as is described in the Book of Mormon ever had an existence upon either North or South America.



Copan Statue



Sculptured Tablet in the Palace —  
(See J.T.S. p. 387.)



Stucco Bas-Relief in the Palace —  
(See J.T.S., p. 384.)

Illustrations of pagan art in the New World from Lamb's "Golden Bible."

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Milton R. Hunter, of the First Council of the Seventy, claims that when he saw the “grotesque, ugly” serpent heads in the Temple of Quetzalcoatl he thought they were “pagan representations or idols.” Later, however, he became convinced that the serpent was used as a symbol of Jesus Christ:

My first impression of the serpent heads on the Temple of Quetzalcoatl was that they were grotesque, ugly creatures and certainly could not be symbols of Quetzalcoatl. Since I was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, I was quite familiar with the Book of Mormon account of the appearance of Jesus Christ to the inhabitants of ancient America following his resurrection; and I had also heard that he had been identified with Quetzalcoatl. As I looked at those hideous serpent heads, I thought: “I see nothing here that reminds me of the beautiful account in the Book of Mormon of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. These snake heads are pagan representations or idols.”

The idea that these venomous serpents were supposed to be symbols of the Savior was repulsive to me.

... I was confronted with the problem of trying to ascertain why the inhabitants of ancient America employed such a noxious creature as the serpent, along with the resplendent quetzal bird, to symbolize the glorious and radiant resurrected Savior—the “White Bearded God”; and so I began the study of archaeology and anthropology.

... Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are informed that in the very beginning of human history the serpent became identified with Satan and in a certain sense became a symbol of the Prince of Darkness; however, peculiar as it may seem and also in spite of the fact that the devil in the form of a serpent had played such a prominent role in the Garden of Eden story, history affirms that coatl or serpent in very early times became identified also with the crucifixion and atonement of Jesus of Nazareth and hence it became a symbol of the Son of Man.

The fact that ancient peoples adopted the serpent as a symbol of the Messiah does not necessarily classify them as devil worshipers. It merely indicates that a certain creature or object would be adopted by a people as a symbol of righteousness—even the Messiah—and during another period of human history the same creature or object may serve as a symbol of evil—even the devil.

... Thus the Indian descendants of Book of Mormon peoples distorted the serpent symbol into the various pagan forms that were found in Mexico and throughout Central America by European missionaries following the Spanish conquest. Although the quetzal-serpent symbols are degenerated pagan reminders of the “White Bearded God,” they also serve as reminders of the true Savior who had once visited ancient America and had given his gospel to its inhabitants.

While visiting thirty-two archaeological sites and museums in Mexico and Central America during the winter of 1954–55, I saw the quetzal-serpent symbolism practically everywhere. . . .

Bearing all of the foregoing discussion in mind, what did I see on my last trip to teotihuacan? Instead of repulsive, ugly, grotesque serpents, I saw on the front of one part of the temple six beautiful serpent heads, each surrounded by quetzal feathers, and six comparable ones on the other side, making twelve. I also observed that there had been twelve serpent heads up the edges of the staircase—six on each side. Each serpent head contained twelve teeth. . . .

The Temple of Quetzalcoatl now appeared to me to be a beautiful building which had been erected in honor of Jesus Christ . . .

As I visited the various archaeological sites and museums, everywhere I looked I saw temples, pyramids, pottery, representations of men, and numerous other things, decorated with feathers of the “sacred quetzal, or bird of paradise,” and serpents, as well as serpent heads, all symbolizing Quetzalcoatl or Jesus Christ. (*Christ in Ancient America*, by Milton R. Hunter, Salt Lake City, 1959, pp. 109, 110, 121, 124 and 125)

Anthony W. Ivins, who was a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, saw nothing beautiful about the serpent; for he felt that it was a symbol of the devil:

Since the temptation of Mother Eve, the serpent has been the symbol of the evil one, the tempter, the devil.

... .  
It has been the privilege of the writer to look upon ruins, found throughout Mexico, which had been in the remote past great cities, temples and palaces. Wherever he has come in contact with the vestiges of the lost civilization of which these ruins bear silent witness he has been confronted by the serpent, cut in imperishable stone. Sometimes in monolithic form as shown in the engravings here reproduced, perhaps coiled ready to strike, or again coiled about a human form, always with forked tongue protruding and dripping fangs.

Wherever the writer has come in contact with Indians, and he has visited many tribes, the liar or deceiver is referred to as being like the serpent. He talks with a forked tongue, and walks in crooked paths. At the time of the conquest of the people of South America the Indians like those of Mexico, were Devil worshipers as the following shows.

... .  
To quote all of the references made by de Leon to devil worship and the abominations which it had introduced among the Indians would require many pages of space. Some of their practices were so abominable that decency forbids their publication. (*The Relationship of “Mormonism” and Freemasonry*, by Anthony W. Ivins, Salt Lake City, 1934, pp. 135, 139, 140 and 141)

On page 251 of the same book Mr. Ivins stated:

Secret Societies in Ancient America: That secret societies existed among the ancient inhabitants of America, and that the Indians recognized the Evil One as the author of them and worshiped him, through the

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

serpent, which to them was his representative, is proven by the authorities quoted. For further information on this subject see chapters on Secret Societies in Ancient America, and the Devil and Devil Worship.

### A LOST CIVILIZATION

Dr. Hugh Nibley, of the Brigham Young University, tries to explain away the fact that archaeologists have not found any evidence that the Nephites or Jaredites ever existed:

Book of Mormon archaeologists have often been disappointed in the past because they have consistently looked for the wrong things. We should not be surprised at the lack of ruins in America in general. . . . In view of the nature of their civilization one should not be puzzled if the Nephites had left us no ruins at all. People underestimate the capacity of things to disappear, and do not realize that the ancients almost never built of stone. Many a great civilization which has left a notable mark in history and literature has left behind not a single recognizable trace of itself. We must stop looking for the wrong things.

.....  
Proceed with Caution!: There is certainly no shortage of ruins on this continent, but until some one object has been definitely identified as either Nephite or Jaredite it is dangerous to start drawing any conclusions. . . . The search must go on, but conclusions should wait. We are asking for trouble when we describe any object as Nephite or Jaredite, since, as Woolley says, “no record is ever exhaustive,” and at any moment something might turn up (and often does!) to require a complete reversal of established views. Aside from the danger of building faith on the “highly ambiguous materials” of archaeology and the “unavoidable subjective” and personal interpretations of the same, we should remember that archaeology at its best is a game of surprises.

A Disappointing Picture: People often ask, if the Book of Mormon is true, why do we not find this continent littered with mighty ruins? In the popular view the normal legacy of any great civilization is at least some majestic piles in the moonlight. Where are your Jaredite and Nephite splendors of the past? A reading of previous lessons should answer that question. In the Nephites we have a small and mobile population dispersed over a great land area, living in quickly-built wooden cities, their most ambitious structures being fortifications of earth and timbers occasionally reinforced with stones. This small nation lasted less than a thousand years. Their far more numerous and enduring contemporaries, the Lamanites and their associates including Jaredite remnants (which we believe were quite extensive) had a type of culture that leaves little if anything behind it.

. . . We have no description of any Book of Mormon city to compare with Homer’s description of Troy. How shall we recognize a Nephite city when we find it? (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, Hugh Nibley, Salt Lake City, 1957, pp. 366, 370 and 373)

M. Wells Jakeman, Professor of Archaeology at the BYU, differed sharply with Dr. Nibley and accused him of misrepresentation;

Unfortunately, the author’s discussion of the archaeological approach to the Book of Mormon is vitiated by an apparent attempt to implant an emotional judgment in the mind of his reader against this approach or the way it is being developed. Thus he refers disparagingly to those investigating this field as “people calling themselves archaeologists” (p. 366) and “these self-appointed archaeologists” (p. 363). He then—although not an archaeologist himself—proceeds to instruct the reader as to what archaeology is, and as to its true value for the Book of Mormon. . . .

The misrepresentations and misconceptions comprising the “instructions” on archaeology given in this appendix are too numerous to deal with completely here. . . .

Turning to the author’s “instructions” with respect to the special field of Book of Mormon archaeology (“Advice to Book of Mormon Archaeologists”), we find that his main “teaching” here is that Book of Mormon archaeologists “have consistently looked for the wrong things”; i.e., they have been looking for the cities of the Nephites as marked by the ruins of great stone buildings (pp. 366, 370–375). . . .

Unfortunately, in these “instructions” the author, instead of providing advice of real value to Book of Mormon archaeologists, merely reveals his own complete unawareness of the actual situation in this field. . . . the Nephite people . . . usually built their dwellings, temples, and palaces of timber or wood, and their fortifications of earth, rather than of stone (although stone appears to have been used occasionally, as also cement and probably brick). . . . Apparently the author did little reading in the actual field of Book of Mormon archaeology before penning his “Advice to Book of Mormon Archaeologists.” . . . that “the ancients almost never built of stone” must surely be an intentional exaggeration. . . .

Finally, we cannot pass by the author’s reference to “the lack of ruins in America in general.” This is truly an astonishing statement from one presuming to give instructions involving American archaeology! . . . That the Book of Mormon civilizations, thus being mainly nomadic, could have flourished in the New World and yet not left behind any archaeological or material evidence of their existence, is supported, according to the author, by the fact that “many a great civilization which has left a notable mark in [Old World] history and literature has left behind not a single recognizable [archaeological] trace of itself” (p. 366; “that they existed there is not the slightest doubt, yet some of the greatest have left not so much as a bead or a button that can be definitely identified”—p. 371).

Two serious misconceptions are apparent in the above argument. First of all, the idea that the Book of Mormon peoples were mainly nomadic simply ignores the numerous indications in the Record to the contrary. . . . the Book of Mormon refers time and again to permanent settlements of its peoples—“cities,” “towns,”

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

or “villages,” with grain fields round about—and only rarely to temporary settlements (tent encampments). . . . the Book of Mormon peoples, instead of having a “type of culture [namely nomadic] that leaves little if anything behind it,” as claimed by the author, in reality had cultures of mainly sedentary type, which—as proved by the results of archaeological excavation throughout the world—invariably leave behind extensive material remains!

The other serious misconception of the author is his belief that nomadic hunting or herding cultures, . . . in his view, leave “little if anything” behind them . . . Now all students of archaeology will know that this claim is directly opposite to the fact. Even though ruins, or the remains of buildings, are not ordinarily left behind by nomadic cultures, the literature of archaeology is full of excavation reports and other descriptions of material remains marking the camp or cave sites of such cultures—in fact, remains often of kinds that last almost indefinitely, and therefore may easily survive from the time of the Book of Mormon cultures: stone and bone implements, food-refuse heaps . . . Consequently, even if the Book of Mormon peoples had been mainly nomadic—which we have seen they were not—a great deal in the way of material remains or archaeological traces of their existence would have had to be expected. . . . Archaeology also most surely has the final word with respect to the existence of an entire ancient culture itself. At least this is so in the case of an urban culture of many-centuries’ duration, featured by numerous permanent settlements, such as the civilizations of the Book of Mormon; it is inconceivable—and contrary to world-wide archaeological experience—that such civilizations could ever have existed without leaving behind some identifiable remains.

Indeed, a serious misrepresentation of the value of archaeological materials as sources of historical information must be charged to the author. (*The University Archaeological Society*, BYU, March 30, 1957, pp. 1–7)

In Dr. Hugh Nibley’s most recent book he still maintains that archaeologists are looking “for the wrong things in the wrong places”:

Recently a Protestant journal of wide circulation reported with obvious satisfaction that there is “no non-Mormon archaeologist who holds that the Indians descended from the Jews, or that Christianity was known in the New World before Columbus.” That is hardly surprising. For years we have pointed out that such results are only to be expected as long as people insist on looking for the wrong things in the wrong places. How could an archaeologist, of all people, hope to prove “that the Indians descended from the Jews, or that Christianity was known in the New World before Columbus?” (*Since Cumorah*, Hugh Nibley, Salt Lake City, 1967, p. 162)

On pages 243–244 of the same book Mr. Nibley states:

From the first both Mormons and their opponents recognized the possibility of testing the Book of Mormon in a scientific way. The book described certain aspects

of civilizations our purported to have existed in the New World in ancient times. Very well, where were the remains? A vast amount of time, energy, and patience has been expended in arguing about the interpretations of the scanty evidence that is available, but very little has been devoted to the systematic search for more. 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, since the case of those Old World civilizations has taught us by now that the existence of written records which no one claims the credit of having invented, is in itself good if not the very best evidence that a people really did exist. But 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, like the civilizations of Athens or Babylon, and was far more confined in space and time than either of them. 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.

In an address to the Brigham Young University Archaeological Society, March 25, 1964, Fletcher B. Hammond frankly stated:

. . . there does not yet appear any artifact that we Latter-day Saints can present to the world—and prove by any scientific rule—that such artifact is conclusive proof of any part of the Book of Mormon. The lack of certainty in Book of Mormon land marks justifies the conclusion that there must have been extensive land-changes in Mesoamerica during the last 1500 years; and such appears to be factual. (*Geography of the Book of Mormon*, by Fletcher B. Hammond, an address given March 25, 1964, BYU, p. 5)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

The Mormon writer J. N. Washburn remarked:

My main interest is with that which is found within the record itself. Nothing, for instance, dealing with such things as external evidences is attempted here. (I am strongly of the opinion that at the present time there are not many external evidences to the divinity of the Book of Mormon. Much that is often cited as evidence is, in my mind, wishful thinking. (*Contents, Structure, and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, by J. N. Washburn, Salt Lake City, 1954, p. 203)

### NEPHITE COINS

Although the text of the Book of Mormon never uses the word “coin”, it does speak of the Nephites having a money system. In Alma 11:4 we read: “Now these are the names of the different pieces of their gold, and of their silver, according to their value.” The chapter heading for Alma 11 calls these “pieces” of gold and silver “Nephite coins.” It seems logical, therefore, that some of these coins should be found by archaeologists if the story in the Book of Mormon is true. Welby W. Ricks stated:

I have here the Nephite money system, as indicated on page 222 of the Book of Mormon. . . . In my thinking, since this was the Nephite money system as established by Mosiah, approximately 92 B.C., it will be possible in some future time that some of these may be found, since these were their pieces of gold and silver. . . . It is likely, since this was their money system, that they had something stamped on them or written on them. If there were something written on them, it is likely they would have used some of their ancient writing system, hence, possibly, some Hebrew or Egyptian.

It is possible, archaeologically, to find some of these, since they had such a system. It seems reasonable to me that some day they will be found. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, BYU, December 5, 1959, pp. 54–55)

Dr. James R. Clark, of the Brigham Young University, related the following:

. . . we must realize that for some of these things we must rely on testimony alone. I did have the opportunity of taking the testimony of two persons from my home town, a man and his wife, Brother and Sister Robinson, who brought what was reported to be a Nephite coin to the offices of the First Presidency around the turn of the century. He had served in the Southern States as a missionary. He came back from the Southern States with what he believed to be a Nephite coin. His mission president, Ben E. Rich, had so identified it. I do not know the means by which the mission president made the identification. But Brother Robinson was told that it was a Nephite coin. He was told also by his mission president

to take it to the First Presidency when he returned home. He did so. I took the testimony from him and from his wife, had it recorded and then read it to them and had them sign it. They testify that such a coin was delivered to the Church. I was also told in that interview that they were shown a bag of coins of similar nature, by members of the First Presidency. This, as I say, happened around the turn of the century, around 1890. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, BYU, December 5, 1959, p. 55)

We feel that if the Mormon leaders really had a bag of Nephite coins they would have made them available so that archaeologists could have examined them to determine their authenticity. The fact that they have not done this throws a shadow of doubt upon the whole story.

Actually, archaeologists claim that coins were not used in the New World until later times. Carl F. Miller, an archeologist of the Smithsonian Institution, made this statement:

. . . the inhabitants of North and South America did not use coins before the time of Columbus. As far as we know there are no records that they used either silver or gold as a medium of exchange for the buying, selling (trading — if you want to put it that way). (Letter from Carl F. Miller, Smithsonian Institution, dated February 5, 1962)

Dudley T. Easby, Jr., feels that “small copper axe blades” were used around 1000 A.D. as a medium of exchange:

Although more an economic than a metallurgical matter, metallic money appeared in Ecuador and northern Peru about A.D. 1000 or slightly earlier. It consisted of small copper axe blades, too thin for any practical purpose, that were used as a medium of exchange. This concept of copper axe-money was transmitted, probably by maritime contacts, to western Mexico, where hoards of such axes numbering in the hundreds have been found in the state of Oaxaca. (*Scientific American*, April 1966, p. 77)

John L. Sorenson, who was Assistant Professor of Anthropology at BYU, made this interesting observation concerning Nephite coins:

For example, can we expect to locate Nephite coins as “proof” of their presence? The answer is no. In the first place the Book of Mormon, thank goodness, never mentions coins—only money. (“Coins of the Nephites” occurs only in a chapter heading inserted in the course of publishing the scripture.) . . . No authentic “coin” has ever been found in America under convincing circumstances, and some reported finds can be shown to be either fakes or otherwise unbelievable. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, BYU, December 5, 1959, p. 26)

The Book of Mormon also claims that the Nephites had “chariots” (3 Nephi 3:22), but so far archaeologists have

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

not found any in the New World. The Mormon writer Paul R. Cheesman states:

In the New World, many miniature models of wheeled vehicles have been found, but no counterparts in the larger, more practical design have been discovered as yet. The absence of these larger artifacts has caused some archaeologists to think that the practical use of the wheel was not known. Their assumption demands a stone or metallic wheel. However, there may have been large, wooden wheels in use. If there were large, wooden-wheeled vehicles, they probably would have decomposed by now. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1969, p. 188)

### ANTHON TRANSCRIPT

In the Book of Mormon, Mormon 9:32–33, we read:

And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.

And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.

The anti-Mormon writer M. T. Lamb makes these observations concerning the idea of Hebrews writing in Egyptian:

The Book of Mormon sets out with four very improbable and really absurd statements.

I. The first is that Lehi and his family used the Egyptian language.

I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. — (Page I.)

There are a multitude of reasons that make such a statement altogether improbable. In the first place, Lehi had lived all his lifetime, “in all his days” (page 3), in the city of Jerusalem, surrounded constantly by those who spoke only the Hebrew language. Had he been an Egyptian by birth, and with loving tenderness clung to his native tongue, the above statement would have a very different look. But Lehi was a Hebrew, a pure Hebrew, was born and reared in the city of Jerusalem, with family relationships and social surroundings all Hebraistic. In the second place, the Jews hated the Egyptians with a bitter hatred, and it is therefore inconceivable that a true-born Jew a real lover of his own people, loyal and patriotic as he professes to have been, would have been willing thus to insult his people, or that the Jews around him would have endured the insult. In the third place, the ancient Jew had an unusual veneration for his mother tongue, the sacred Hebrew, the most ancient language upon earth, as he believed; the loved tongue of his illustrious ancestry; the language in which God himself

had spoken from Sinai; the language in which all their sacred books had been written—the law, the prophets and the Psalms; the language in which the daily services at the temple were conducted. And this man Lehi is presented to us as a leader and a teacher among his people, a most devout and careful observer of the law of Moses, in fact, a prophet of the Lord, a prophet mighty in word and in deed. Now that such a man with such a venerated language could have accepted instead the Egyptian tongue, which was associated only with ignominy and dishonor, [is] the height of absurdity. But in the fourth place, God’s will had been very clearly expressed upon a multitude of occasions as to the propriety of having any intercourse with the Egyptians or longings for anything to be found there. (See Numb. 11:5, 6, 18–20; Deut. 17:16; Is. 31:1; Hos. 11:5, etc., etc.) It is not therefore conceivable that so earnest a lover of the Lord would be willing thus to offend God; or, if willing, that God would choose such a man for the bestowment of the rarest favors and honors.

2. The second statement is still more objectionable—that there were found in the possession of a man by the name of Laban, a relative of Lehi’s, and also a resident of the city of Jerusalem, certain brass plates upon which were engraven, in the Egyptian language, the five books of Moses, containing the law, the entire history of the Jews from the first down to Laban’s time, including the Psalms, and all the prophets who had written down to the same date, the beginning of King Zedekiah’s reign, not omitting a portion of Jeremiah’s prophecies. In other words, these brass plates contained all of the Old Testament as we have it, that had been written up to that time, six hundred years before Christ. . . . All this engraven in the Egyptian language . . . This is more improbable and absurd than the first statement. All the objections urged against the first would be equally valid against this, while it also supposes a series of devout men belonging to the most honored family in Israel to have perpetuated from the beginning this insult to the Hebrew language, and this disregard of God’s express will. (*The Golden Bible; or, The Book of Mormon. Is It From God?*, by Rev. M. T. Lamb, New York, 1887, pp. 89–91)

The Mormon writer J. N. Washburn admits that this is a real problem:

The point at issue is not that Father Lehi, the Jew, could read and understand Egyptian, though that is surprising enough. . . .

No, the big question is how the scripture of the Jews (official or otherwise) came to be written in Egyptian. It is hardly enough to say that the Jews as a long and intimate association with Egypt. That was long before the days of most Hebrew scriptures. Nor does it help very much to remind ourselves that probably the Egyptian characters require less space than the Hebrew, since we have little knowledge of other Hebrew sacred writings preserved in that language.



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

As a matter of fact, I once asked Dr. Edgar J. Goodspeed, foremost American Bible authority, if he knew of any such document. He replied that there is one such small record. It was a telephone conversation, however, and not very satisfactory. I was not able to get the name of the remnant to which he referred.

If I were to suggest what I think to be the most insistent problem for Book-of-Mormon scholarship, I should unquestionably name this one: account for the Egyptian language on the Plates of Brass, and the Brass Plates themselves! (*The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, by J. N. Washburn, p. 81)

Dr. Hugh Nibley feels that “reformed Egyptian” came from the Egyptian script known as demotic, and he states that demotic was “the most awkward, difficult, and impractical system of writing ever devised by man” (*Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, Salt Lake City, 1952, p. 16)! On page 15 of the same book Dr. Nibley states:

. . . the Persian conquerors of Egypt learned Aramaic instead of Egyptian because the Egyptian script was too clumsy and hard to learn.

However this may be, Joseph Smith claimed that he made a copy of some of the characters on the gold plates and that Martin Harris showed them to Professor Charles Anthon, in New York. Joseph Smith quotes Martin Harris as saying:

I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyric, and Arabic; and he said they were true characters. He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct. I took the certificate and put it into my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the place where he found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him.

He then said to me, “Let me see that certificate.” I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying, that there was no such thing now as ministering of angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him, he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, “I cannot read a sealed book.” I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation. (*History of the Church*, by Joseph Smith, Vol. 1, p. 20)

We do not think that Professor Anthon could have made the statement attributed to him in Joseph Smith’s history. Even Mormon writers question the accuracy of some of the statements in this report. Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, of the BYU, states:

In relation to the last point, when Professor Anthon is reported to have said that the characters “were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyric, and Arabic,” we can readily believe that he might have said “Egyptian” and “Arabic,” but if he said “Chaldaic” and “Assyric,” what did he mean by those terms? Did he mean “Hebrew” and “cuneiform” or “cuneiform” and “Syriac” characters? Or, if he actually said the two words, was he only attempting in a general way to indicate a conglomerate of characters? The answers are not too important, but they illustrate our point that some minor matters relating to Martin Harris’ interview with Professor Anthon might not have been correctly reported. We must also keep in mind that Martin Harris was no linguist, and in his report to the prophet he might have unwittingly misinterpreted some of Professor Anthon’s statements concerning translation. (*The Problems of the Book of Mormon*, by Sidney B. Sperry, Salt Lake City, 1964, pp. 55–56)

The most important question concerning Martin Harris’ visit to Charles Anthon, however, is whether Prof. Anthon said that the characters were “true characters” and that “the translation was correct.” In a letter dated February 17, 1834, Professor Anthon claimed that the “whole story” was false:

“The whole story about my pronouncing the Mormon inscription to be reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics is perfectly false. Some years ago, a plain, apparently simple-hearted farmer called on me with a note from Dr. Mitchell, of our city, now dead, requesting me to decipher, if possible, the paper which the farmer would hand me. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick—perhaps a hoax. . . . I have frequently conversed with friends on the subject since the Mormon excitement began, and well remember that the paper contained anything else but Egyptian hieroglyphics.” (Letter by Professor Charles Anthon, as quoted in *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 103)

B. H. Roberts admitted that the “statements of Professor Anthon and Martin Harris are very contradictory,” but he states that Professor Anthon wrote another letter in 1841 which contains a few statements that are not in harmony with the earlier letter (see *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 100–109). However this may be, in both letters Anthon stated that the characters were NOT genuine. Some Mormon writers are willing to admit that Anthon could not have claimed that the characters were correctly translated. Dr. Ross T. Christensen, of the BYU, stated:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

During this same year, Martin Harris took the “Anthon transcript” to Professor Charles Anthon of Columbia University. (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 2:63-65.) Professor Anthon, by the answer that he gave to Martin Harris (as told by Harris to Joseph Smith; and I assume that it was correctly told), demonstrated that he was willing to claim knowledge in the field of philology which I do not believe existed on the earth at that time. “. . . The translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian,” he told Harris. (verse 64.) I do not believe he knew what he was talking about; he could not have known whether it was a correct translation. For one thing, Egyptian writing had not yet been deciphered in 1828. For another thing, it was not Egyptian that he was dealing with—that is, not any of the forms of Egyptian now known to scholars, (*Book of Mormon Institute*, BYU, December 5, 1959, p. 10)

R. C. Webb, who defended the Mormons, made this statement:

According to accounts, uttered by Mr. Harris and Prof. Anthon, there seem to be several discrepancies in regard to their interview. To Harris is credited the statement that the Professor had pronounced the translation correct—“more so than any he had seen translated from the Egyptian.” But in letters said to have been written by Prof. Anthon himself, we read that the “transcript” shown by Harris “consisted of all kinds of crooked characters, disposed in columns,” to which is added, “the paper contained anything else but ‘Egyptian hieroglyphics.’”

. . . it is difficult to understand how Prof. Anthon could have stated that the translation was correct, from the fact that, at that time (1828), the science of Egyptology, or the knowledge of the Egyptian language, had not advanced sufficiently to warrant the supposition that he, or any other scholar, could read a given inscription offhand. (*Joseph Smith as a Translator*, by R. C. Webb, Salt Lake City, 1936, pp. 3-4)

The Mormon writer Ivan J. Barrett remarked:

When he (Prof. Anthon) told Martin that the translation was the most correct of any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian, he was guilty of honest deception. True it was the most correct of any translation he had seen in Egyptian because he had not seen any Egyptian hieroglyphics translated. (*Supplement to the Remarkable Story of How We Got the Revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants*, by Ivan J. Barrett, BYU, p. 25)

Curt H. Seemann stated:

Unfortunately, this account has led people to claim that the Book of Mormon has been “proven” to be translated correctly, for Professor Anthon certified to this effect. Actually, nothing could be farther from the truth! At the time of the above incident, the study of Egyptian was in its beginning stage. . . .

It was entirely impossible for Professor Anthon to claim that “they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct.”. . . But all Professor Anthon could have done was to verify that the appearance of these characters of the Book of Mormon was similar to those of the Egyptian demotic script. He was in no position to vouch for the correctness of the translation. (*Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, April 13, 1963, p. 20)

Sidney B. Sperry, of the Brigham Young University, makes this statement concerning Prof. Anthon:

. . . he was acquainted with the latest discoveries pertaining to the Egyptian language. Professor Kimball tells us that Champollion’s two-volume work, *Precis du Systeme Hieroglyphique* (1824), was in Anthon’s possession. . . . Even if Professor Anthon had mastered its contents, able scholar that he was, it is not to be supposed that he could translate even simple Egyptian sentences with any facility. (*The Problems of the Book of Mormon*, by Sidney B. Sperry, p. 59)

The idea that Prof. Anthon endorsed the translation of the Egyptian characters was probably an after-thought, for when Joseph Smith first wrote his history in the early 1830’s he said nothing about Professor Anthon approving of the translation. The following is taken from Joseph’s handwritten manuscript:

. . . Martin Harris . . . said the Lord had shown him that he must go to New York with some of the characters so we proceeded to copy some of them and he took his Journey to the eastern City and to the learned saying read this I pray thee and the learned said I cannot but if he would bring the plates they would read it but the Lord had forbid it and he returned to me and gave them to me to translate and I said I cannot for I am not learned but the Lord had prepared spectacles for to read the Book . . . (“An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith’s Early Visions,” Master’s thesis by Paul R. Cheesman, BYU, 1965, p. 131)

According to Mormon historians “a fragment of the transcript of the Book of Mormon characters” which was submitted to Professor Anthon is still in existence (see *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, Vol. 1, page 100). On the next page is a photograph of that transcript.

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Anthon Transcript

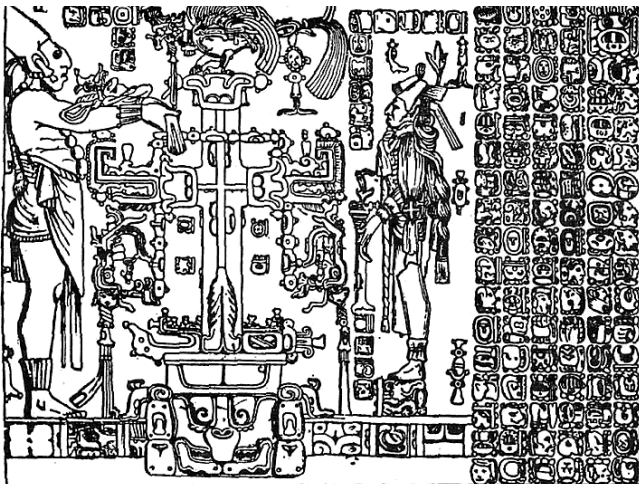


We know of three Egyptologists who have recently examined the Anthon transcript. One felt that the characters resembled demotic. Another thought they looked like abbreviated hieratic, and the third stated that they were nothing but “doodlings.” It is possible, of course, that Joseph Smith copied the characters from some book containing material about Egypt. It should be remembered that the Rosetta Stone had been found just before the turn of the century, and therefore, there was a great deal of interest in Joseph Smith’s day concerning the Egyptian language.

Whether Joseph Smith copied the characters or made them up, the Anthon transcript provides no evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon because no one is able to read it. Sidney B. Sperry states:

Dr. Ariel L. Crowley has done a lot of hard work over the years on the Anthon Transcript, and it is now our considered opinion that he has correctly identified numbers of the characters thereon as true Egyptian. It is too much to expect that professional Egyptologists will agree with all of his identifications, but we believe his work is often correct. But though identification of characters has been made, no one, the prophet Joseph Smith excepted, has yet translated the Anthon Transcript. If modern students of Egyptians can’t do it—at least they haven’t—it is too much to believe that Professor Anthon could. (*The Problems of the Book of Mormon*, by Sidney B. Sperry, p. 60)

Actually, the Anthon transcript provides a great deal of evidence against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. M. T. Lamb stated:



Tablet of the Cross

The point we here wish to make is this: throughout North America, according to the Book of Mormon, this reformed Egyptian was the universal language of the people fifteen hundred years ago, when the Book of Mormon was compiled.

Now fortunately or unfortunately Joseph Smith has preserved for us and for the inspection of the world, a specimen of the characters found upon the plates from which he claims to have translated the Book of Mormon. He transcribed a few of the characters from the plates as specimens. . . .

Well, now, unfortunately for the claims of the Book of Mormon, we are able to learn precisely what kind of characters were used in Central America by its ancient inhabitants. They have been preserved in imperishable marble. Engraven upon stone in such a way as to remain to the end of time a silent though solemn rebuke to the false and foolish pretensions of the author of this book.

In the ruins of the two oldest cities in Central America, Copan and Palenque, are found in abundance the strange hieroglyphics, the written language of the people who once inhabited those old cities. Thousands of these mysterious characters are scattered about, engraven over ruined doorways and arches, upon the sides and backs of hideous-looking idols carved in stone, upon marble slabs, on the sides of immense pillars, here and there through the ruins of magnificent palaces and monster heathen temples. . . .

We present the reader some very good specimens of these hieroglyphics copied from actual photographs.



Hieroglyphics on the Copan Statue

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

These same hieroglyphics have been preserved in other forms—for the ancient Mayas had books, real books, a large number of which were found in Central America upon its occupation by the Spaniards 300 years ago—but ruthlessly destroyed by the superstitious Catholic priests. An examination of the three that are now known to be preserved, shows the same characters that are found upon the stone tablets, idols, etc., as seen in the cuts—and represent the actual written language of the ancient Mayas—a people who are known to have occupied Central America, and been the sole occupants of a portion of that country at the very time, and covering the whole period, when, according to the Book of Mormon, the Nephites lived and flourished there.

.....

We ask the candid reader carefully to examine these characters, and then look back again to page 261. [See page 15 of this book] Those are the characters Joseph Smith tells us were universally used in Central America 1,500 and 2,000 years ago—while the ruins, the engraved stones, the chiseled marble, tell us that these were the characters actually used in that locality, and at that time. Look at the two attentively—see if you can discover any likeness whatever between them. A woeful fatality, is it not? that there should not happen to be even one of Mr. Smith's characters that bears a family likeness, or the least particle of resemblance to the characters actually used by the ancient inhabitants of Central America!

And you gain no crumb of comfort by separating these complex combinations of letters and words into their simplest elements. The ancient Maya alphabet bears no more resemblance to Mr. Smith's characters than when combined into words or thoughts.

The task is utterly hopeless to find any possible or conceivable resemblance between these simple elements of sound and the characters presented to the world by Mr. Smith.

... the Book of Mormon tells us of a civilization extending generally over both continents. In fact, of a period covering nearly 200 years, when the entire population of both continents were converted and actually enrolled as members of the churches everywhere organized. During all this happy time the arts of war were forgotten, and the highest possible christian civilization was enjoyed. During all this period the people were not only rapidly increasing in numbers, but also in wealth, in the cultivation of the fine arts, in the building of magnificent buildings, palaces and temples, and in the general prevalence of education. . . .

We should, therefore, certainly expect to find, in every portion of both continents, the same evidences of an ancient civilization as are found in Central America. We ought to find not only the remains of great cities, filled with the ruins of magnificent temples and palaces all through these "valleys of the mountains," through the various states and territories and all over South America as well—but especially among these ruined temples and over the doorways of palatial residences we should find, in thousands of places, these reformed Egyptian

characters engraved upon marble blocks and granite pillars, brass plates by the thousand, inscribed tablets of gold and silver, remnants of old parchment leaves with passages of scripture, histories of wars, lives of sages and philosophers, textbooks for schools, poetic effusions from many a Homer and Virgil, eloquent sermons, and prophecies by the cart load, scattered here and there amid the rubbish of ten thousand deserted and ruined cities all over both these broad continents.

But need we say that just the contrary of all this is found to be true. . . .

It would therefore be sheer nonsense to imagine that the assertions of the Book of Mormon may after all have been true, but that through the lapse of time all traces of such a written language may have disappeared. Stone and marble, and gold and silver, and copper and brass are not liable to disappear in the brief period of 1500 years. (*The Golden Bible*, by M. T. Lamb, pp. 259, 260, 262, 265, 266, 268, 269 and 272)

Mormon apologists have tried to show a relationship between Mayan and Egyptian writing. Paul Rivet, however, made this statement:

It can be stated with complete certainty that the Mayan hieroglyphic system is not connected in any way with the Egyptian system of hieroglyphics. (*Maya Cities*, by Paul Rivet, New York, 1960, p. 67)

On September 27, 1957, M. Wells Jakeman stated that "nearly half of the known" Mayan glyphs have been deciphered, and that most of those "deciphered are symbols for numbers, planets, the four directions, months, years, etc." He also stated:

It is possible that some of the presently undeciphered glyphs have to do with historical matters. Therefore, information on ancient names and events in the Mesoamerican or Book of Mormon area may be learned when they are deciphered.

.....

The decipherment of the non-calendrical Maya hieroglyphs may be of extreme importance for identifying Book of Mormon place-names. . . .

About two years ago the announcement was made that a young Russian linguist, Yuri Knorozov, had succeeded in a preliminary decipherment of the non-calendrical Maya hieroglyphs (Newsletter, 39.2), proposing meanings for about 300 glyphs. (*University Archaeological Society Newsletter*, BYU, September 27, 1957, p. 3)

On September 21, 1962, the *U.A.S. Newsletter* reprinted the following statements from the *New York Times*:

April 14—Three Soviet mathematicians have deciphered the hieroglyphics of the Mayan Indians of Central America, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization reported this week.

.....

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Complete translations of two of the three existing Mayan manuscripts were made by members of the Novosibirsk Institute of Mathematics, UNESCO said.

....  
Thus, step by step, identifying and comparing, and using the computer to analyze the glossaries and calculate frequencies, UNESCO said, the mathematicians deciphered the manuscripts. Parts of the translation went like this:

“The young maize-god fires pottery from white clay.”  
and again:

“The god of death, the destroyer, fires a pot.”  
The legend of one drawing cited this observation:

“The woman’s burden is the . . . of war.”

....  
Dr. Satterwaite said that, if proved accurate, the translations could provide the information needed for understanding as-yet-undeciphered stone hieroglyphs from Maya ruins. (*University Archaeological Society Newsletter*, BYU, September 21, 1962, pp. 7 and 8)

Michael D. Coe speaks respectfully of Knorosov’s work; however, he states:

So far, no Champollion has appeared who could read the Maya inscriptions in toto. But it should be remembered that it was the identification of personal names and titles in the Egyptian script that enabled that great scholar to do what he did. Indeed; the recognition of the real subject matter of the Maya monumental texts has opened the way to their eventual decipherment. (*The Maya*, Michael D. Coe, New York, 1966, p. 174)

Although it will be interesting to see what develops with regard to the translation of the Maya glyphs, the reader can see for himself that they do not resemble Joseph Smith’s purported transcript of “reformed Egyptian” characters.

In 1959 the Mormon archaeologist Ross T. Christensen frankly admitted that Joseph Smith’s “reformed Egyptian” had not been found:

It was “reformed” Egyptian (cf. Mormon 9:32.), a form of writing which we have not yet identified in the archaeological material available to us. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, BYU, 1964 ed., p. 10)

Thomas Stuart Ferguson stated that in October, 1957, the New World Archaeological Foundation found a cylinder seal, and that Dr. William F. Albright, a noted philologist, claimed that the seal contains “several clearly recognizable Egyptian hieroglyphs” (*One Fold and One Shepherd*, by Thomas Stuart Ferguson, San Francisco, California, 1958, pp. 22–23). Mr. Ferguson admits, however, that “some of the experts who have seen the seal impression say that it is difficult to accept the idea of Egyptian influence in Mexico 300 years before Christ. . . .” (*One Fold and One Shepherd*, p. 25). A drawing of the impression made by this seal is

found on page 24 of Mr. Ferguson’s book. While it is true that “the triangular hieroglyph” resembles the Egyptian hieroglyph meaning “give,” most of the writing or design does not seem to resemble Egyptian writing. Since there are hundreds of hieroglyphs in the Egyptian language, it is easy to find parallels. The important question, however, is whether there are enough similarities so that it is possible to read the text or show a definite relationship. In this case no Egyptian reading is possible, and the purported relationship to the Egyptian language is questionable. Dr. John L. Sorenson, who was Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Brigham Young University, apparently did not believe that the cylinder seal provided conclusive proof that Egyptian writing had been found, for two years after it was found he stated:

I do not believe that any neutral-but-interested jury would be convinced today by any evidence that is at hand that Zarahemla has been found, that **any** Egyptian writing has been found in the New World, that any Semitic language has been found in the New World, or any other of these specific kinds of proof. I do not believe that we have sufficiently convincing evidence—that is, convincing to those who do not already want to believe—of this nature. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, pp. 26–27)

Mr. Ferguson shows drawings of four other cylinder seals on pages 24–25 of his book. None of the others bear any resemblance to Egyptian writing. On page 263 of his book, Mr. Ferguson states:

In 1957–1958 the thrilling discoveries of the cylinder seals with inscriptions, shown in Chapter 1, were made at Chiapa de Corzo. In my opinion, nothing more significant has been discovered anywhere—all things considered. The important thing now is to continue the digging at an accelerated pace in order to find more inscriptions dating to Book-of-Mormon times. Eventually we should find decipherable inscriptions in modified (reformed) Egyptian, in a modified or pure Hebrew or in cuneiform, referring to some unique person, place or event in the Book of Mormon. (*One Fold and One Shepherd*, p. 3)

It has been over ten years since Mr. Ferguson made these statements, and still no conclusive evidence for the Book of Mormon has been discovered. Welby W. Ricks reproduces a number of impressions from cylinder seals found in the New World in an article published by *The Society For Early Historic Archaeology* at Brigham Young University (Issue No. 112, February 28, 1969), but he does not make any special claims for them with regard to the Book of Mormon. Ross T. Christensen, of Brigham Young University, makes these observations concerning the cylinder seals:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

It seems that what has been discovered is a heretofore **unknown** form of writing, perhaps alphabetic in principle and earlier than and very different from Maya and other previously known Mesoamerican scripts. In my opinion, there is a distinct possibility that this new script may turn out to be Hebrew or Phoenician. . . . Book of Mormon civilizations, . . . were concentrated in southern Mexico and northern Central America, and their early inscriptions, **if they have been found at all**, would seem to have been written in the newly-discovered Mexico Valley script, already evolved to a point where **it is difficult to recognize its true origin.** (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology*, January 13, 1969, p. 10)

A set of gold plates inscribed with “mixed Anthon Transcript and Maya-like characters” was reported to have been found a few years ago. Archaeologists at the Brigham Young University, however, denounced these plates as forgeries:

Dr. Jakeman, as well as Dr. Ross T. Christensen also of the archaeology department, feel that these plates are **not** of ancient origin, because of the mixing, in the inscriptions, of symbols from at least two different writing systems widely separated in time. . . .

But even stronger indication that the plates are not of ancient origin or authentic, is the near-certainty that the Aztec symbols were copied from one of the two surviving Aztec hieroglyphic manuscripts . . . .

From a preliminary investigation, then, it would appear that these gold plates from Mexico are **forgeries**, and that **a serious fraud** has been committed, . . . (*University Archaeological Society Newsletter*, January 17, 1962, p. 4)

A more complete statement concerning this matter can be found in our *Case Against Mormonism*, Vol. 2, pages 37–38.

According to the Mormons many books and records were kept by the Nephites:

And now there are many records kept of the proceedings of this people, by many of the people, which are particular and very large, concerning them.

. . . .

But behold, there are many books and many records of every kind; and they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites. (Book of Mormon, Heleman 3:13 and 15)

The Book of Mormon also states that the Nephites wrote in Hebrew as well as in “reformed Egyptian” (Mormon 9:33). Therefore, we should expect to find a great deal of Hebrew as well as Egyptian writing in the New World. The statement issued by the Smithsonian Institution, however, contains this comment concerning Egyptian and Hebrew writing in the New World:

5. We know of no authentic cases of ancient Egyptian or Hebrew writing having been found in the New World. Reports of findings of Egyptian influence in the Mexican and Central American areas have been published in newspapers and magazines from time to time, but thus far no reputable Egyptologist has been able to discover any relationship between Mexican remains and those in Egypt.

John A. Wilson, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, made this statement in a letter to Marvin Cowan:

From time to time there are allegations that picture writing has been found in America. For example, carved on the sides of rock canyons. In no case has a professional Egyptologist been able to recognize these characters as Egyptian hieroglyphs. From our standpoint there is no such language as “reformed Egyptian!” (Letter from John A. Wilson to Marvin Cowan, dated March 16, 1966)

Richard A. Parker, Dept. of Egyptology at Brown University, made this statement:

No Egyptian writing has been found in this hemisphere to my knowledge. (Letter from Richard A. Parker to Marvin Cowan, dated March 22, 1966)

In the same letter Richard A. Parker stated: “I do not know of any language such as Reformed Egyptian.”

Frank H. H. Roberts, of Smithsonian Institution, made this statement in a letter dated October 10, 1958:

To the best of my knowledge no authentic Hebrew or Egyptian writings have ever been found in the New World. A number of years ago the existence of an extensive Hebrew inscription was reported from New Mexico. It had been cut in the face of a cliff. Careful examination by linguists familiar with Hebrew writings indicated that the inscription was not genuine and probably was quite recent in age. I knew the late Dr. Breasted of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago very well and on several occasions heard him specifically state that he had never seen anything Egyptian in the New World. He was a recognized authority on Egypt and an outstanding scholar in Egyptian hieroglyphics. I was at the Maya city of Chichen Itza in Yucatan in 1932 when Dr. Breasted spent two weeks studying the ruins and inscriptions at that location as well as at several other cities in the area, and at the end of the period he was very emphatic about the total lack of evidence for any Egyptian influence. (Letter from Frank H. H. Roberts, as quoted in *True Archeological Data Versus Book of Mormon*, Utah Christian Tract Society, California, pp. 6 & 7)

Sidney B. Sperry, of BYU, made these statements in rebuttal to Dr. Roberts:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

It may be true that Dr. Roberts has no knowledge of authentic Hebrew or Egyptian writings being found in the New World, but we, on the other hand, have some reason to believe that a few samples of true Hebrew writings have been found. And we happen to know of three instances where two pendants and a part of another, with Egyptian hieroglyphic characters upon them, have been found. Three young women found a copper or bronze triangle with such characters upon it under a rock on the mountains east of Provo, Utah. A number of men on the Brigham Young University staff saw it. We, of course, thought it might be a forgery. Three years later, Mr. Jesse Roots of Salt Lake City sent us a picture (both sides) of a pendant found by him twenty-two years before in a field in Illinois. It was covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics and the triangle at one end was proved similar to the one found by the girls east of Provo! The very same characters were upon both, but it was apparent they did not come out of the same mold. To cap it all, Dr. W. W. Strong, a physicist of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, sent us a photograph of a “brass” pendant covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics that had been found near Wellsville, York Co., Pa. This pendant proved to be the same kind as the one found by Mr. Roots. Here we have three separate finds far remote from one another and by people completely unknown to each other. Dr. Strong and his friends had also collected enough Hebrew-like inscriptions on rocks as to justify their forming “The Phoenician Historical Society of Americas.” It is of interest to know that two or three ancient Roman coins, quite unrelated to the Book of Mormon material, have been found in Idaho and Utah. Latter-day Saint scholars are, of course, making no scientific claims for the small number of Hebrew and Egyptian materials that have, come to our attention, but we are keeping our eyes open. (*The Problems of the Book of Mormon*, by Sidney B. Sperry, pp. 243–244)

Some Mormon archaeologists seem to be using caution with regard to purported discoveries. Welby W. Ricks, who was President of the University Archaeological Society at BYU, related the following:

Many requests have come to me from time to time for information about a certain inscription on stone found near Los Lunas, New Mexico, which contains extracts from the Ten Commandments in a Phoenician script, which type of writing was in existence in Palestine during Lehi’s day around 600 B.C. To find such a script on stone in the New World is indeed interesting, but upon translation for it to contain the Ten Commandments seems almost incredible.

To Latter-day Saints such a discovery would appear to agree with the Book of Mormon. But to accept such evidence at face value, i.e., without investigation, could be embarrassing to this Society as well as to the Latter-day Saint Church, especially if it were later shown to be fraudulent. Because of the position of the Church, we must exercise every caution, even greater-than-objective scholarship, if possible, to make sure any purported Hebrew (or Phoenician) writing found in the New World is genuine.

It was in October, 1953, that a group of us—Dr. Milton R. Hunter, Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, Dr. Hugh Nibley, Mr. (now Dr.) John L. Sorenson, and myself—got together and made a trip to New Mexico to investigate the inscription.

I should like to say by way of background that investigation on this subject had begun several years prior to this as the result of an interesting article in the *Improvement Era* of April, 1951, . . .

Our investigation in New Mexico continued through letter-writing with William McCart. . . . We wanted to determine factually whether the Ten Commandments inscription was genuine or fraudulent. . . .

So in October, 1953, we went to Albuquerque, picked up Mr. McCart, went out past Los Lunas, which is about twenty-one miles south of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and then went approximately eighteen miles west . . . There we found a flat mesa-type hill, . . . We went up one of the arroyos (dry gullies) of the hill, and in a somewhat shaded area we found a large stone approximately twelve feet long, four feet wide, and three feet thick, the face of which was carved with a Hebrew-like inscription. We were quite thrilled at first sight and fascinated by its contents. It began with these words: **יהוה** (‘Nky Yhwh ‘Lhyk); that is to say, “I am the Lord thy God.”

My job was to take a latex impression of the stone, but everybody was discussing its contents, tilt, and exposure to the sunlight so enthusiastically that nobody wanted to move away from it. So I thought I would take advantage of the situation by making some photographs. I took some shots of surrounding petroglyphs and was surprised to find they were heavily patinated, whereas none of the carvings on the Phoenician stone were thus darkened. (Patination is the discoloration due to oxidation which develops on exposed surfaces of stone over very long periods of time.) As far as we could discover no patination was present on the surfaces exposed by the grooves of the inscription on the stone.

We went up the arroyo a short distance and were further surprised to find another inscribed stone with the same size of groove and the same depth and freshness of cut, which read, “Eve and Hobie, 3-13-30.” This we didn’t like. We had come a long way to find something we hoped to be genuine, and here we were faced with the real possibility of someone having inscribed the stone quite recently, perhaps even in order to embarrass us and the L.D.S. Church. . . .

While on top we found two other inscribed stones in the same Phoenician script, with the same grooving end freshness. One might argue that because the large inscription had been in the shade, oxidation would not have taken place as rapidly there as with those on top, where they were exposed fully to the sun and weather. But the writings on top were equally as fresh as those below. Dr. Nibley said it appeared to him that they were so fresh that the dust of the cutting was still on them. He blew on one of them, in fact, and blew loose some grayish matter.

Bill was worried for fear the latex would pull apart some of the stone when it hardened and ruin the marvelous production. I wondered at the time why he was so worried. We were, I believe, as objective and scientific a group as one could get together. If his purpose was to learn for sure whether or not the inscription was genuine, I didn’t think he should be afraid to have some of its loose surface come off for the cause of truth. . . . the McCart showed us two hand-size stones of material similar to that of the Ten Commandments stone and inscribed with similar letters which they had placed in their back yard, exposed to the sun, to see how long it would take for patina to form. . . .

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Another factor seems strange to me. The two stones kept in their back yard for patina testing were also inscribed in Phoenician characters, with groove, depth, and size nearly the same as those on the Ten Commandments stone.

...

During the course of the evening, Mike Castillo was introduced to us, who claimed to have seen another inscription in the area where we had been which had been translated by Dr. Pfeifer as reading "Temple of Toni." I didn't like that word "Toni" because it is too good Spanish but not very good Hebrew. In that form it would be in the construct state and would not come at the end of the phrase.

He told us a very interesting story about this Temple of Toni, in which he had once been and found some wonderful treasure. It was primarily gold, which the Phoenicians had obtained when they had come across to the New World but hadn't been able to make it back to the Old World. We didn't ask him what the evidence was that they had never gotten back.

No one who has ever heard a story like the one we had just heard could help being intrigued. Nevertheless, there seemed to be so many holes in it that we were ready to go home, and we soon departed.

I was pretty stubborn, I suppose. I was the last one out of the house. Mrs. McCart and Mr. Castillo were still inside. It was dark and the others were out at the curb. I stood outside the closed door and tried to listen to the conversation inside. Mike said to her, "How do you think my story went?" She answered, "They lapped it up." When I heard that, I had had enough. I stepped off the porch very sad and went back to the motel, where I told the others.

We felt as if we had been led into a trap and had bitten. We were all ready to go home by then, but two things delayed us: (1) The latex was still on the stone; and (2) there was still a remote possibility that the inscription was genuine, although other things were not. Were they trying to take advantage of a genuine find in order to advance their quest for gold? . . .

As I was taking the latex impression off, Mike Castillo and Bill McCart came over to me. I had been considering this whole matter quite seriously. I turned to Me Cart and said, "Bill, as I see the whole picture, you want to try to raise funds by showing us this stone so you can go out there in the lava area [an area where an old spanish church was left in ruins] and hunt for treasure."

He said, "Yes!" We contributed from \$5 to \$10 for their services, took the latex impression, and went home.

To conclude, I should like to list the evidences which make me believe the inscription is fraudulent:

(1) The characters in the stone were too fresh. They did not have any patination. If they had been of ancient date there would have been some patination, and certainly there would have been some in those inscriptions on top of the mesa. One might argue that the Ten Commandments stone could have been covered up for centuries by sand, but the Phoenician inscriptions on top must surely be related to the one below. They also were without patination.

(2) The finding of the words, "Eva and Hovie, 3-13-30," nearby, cut in the same size, depth, and freshness, is sufficient to create suspicion as to the origin of the Phoenician inscription.

(3) The finding of the dust of freshly cut stone still in the grooving suggests very recent origin.

(4) The making by the McCarts of an inscription in Phoenician characters on each of two stones to test for patination seems strange, indeed.

(5) The obvious lying about finding another inscription, "Temple of Toni"; the finding of the entrance at one time and not another; the finding of gold in the temple and not taking any out to prove it; and, above all, not being able to find it again—all this is fantastic beyond human limits of comprehension.

(6) The admission by Bill McCart that they were doing this to get money to sponsor a search for treasure in the malpais (lava remains) area, where there was supposedly the possibility of finding Spanish gold.

For these reasons and others I am fully convinced that the Ten Commandments stone found near Los Lunas, New Mexico, **is a fraud**. Its age does not go back into ancient times. It is probably from thirty to fifty years old, perhaps even dating to as late as March 13, 1930. (*Fifteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, Brigham Young University, 1964, pp. 94–100)

Some rather strange artifacts were found near Tucson, Arizona, in 1924–25, but their authenticity is in question. Evan I. DeBloois writes:

The first of a series of very unusual artifacts was discovered by Charles E. Manier on September 13, 1924, near Tucson, Arizona. Stopping to examine one of the abandoned limekilns located about nine miles northwest of Tucson, Mr. Manier noticed an object protruding from the side of the passageway leading to the base of the kiln. Upon excavation, the object proved to be a cross of lead weighing 62 pounds. . . .

Closer examination of the cross revealed that it was made of two segments riveted together. When separated, a wax-like substance was removed from the joined surfaces, exposing several lines of inscribed Latin characters.

...

Between September 14, 1924, and November 13, 1925, 27 artifacts were found. These consist of six crosses, nine swords or sword fragments, eight spearheads and fragments, a "labarum," a "serpent cross," a "crescent cross," and a piece of inscribed caliche. Five other spear fragments were later found, four of them by the University of Arizona during an excavation in February, 1928, and by John S. Bent on March 15, 1930.

The Latin is of a style popular up to the eighth century AD, and the inscriptions themselves contain dates ranging from 560 to 900 AD. Along with the Latin some Hebrew words are found, such as "Jehovah," "peace," and "mighty empire." The Latin appears to be an attempt to record some kind of history but seems to make little sense. The Hebrew does little more than add to the confusion.



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Are these artifacts genuine and of the date they claim to be? It is impossible to be certain on the basis of the evidence presented. The use of a soft lead alloy for weapons seems rather strange but the four to six feet of apparently undisturbed overburden above the artifacts speak convincingly for antiquity. . . .

An attempt was made shortly after the discovery to link these artifacts with the Book of Mormon narrative, but the dates, the Latin, and the cross all argue against such a connection.

It is unfortunate that not enough interest was shown in these materials by the University of Arizona staff to have led to the excavation of most of them by professionals, instead of amateurs.

More information is necessary before any explanation beyond mere speculation can be made. Due to their controversial nature, it is doubtful that these lead objects will ever be without question as to their authenticity or meaning, unless other finds of similar artifacts can be made in the region, which will relate to and support this most unusual find.

For the present at least, the “Tucson Artifacts” will have to be assigned to the category of “maverick archaeology,” that is, unrelated to and unexplained in terms of the known culture-history of the prehistoric Southwest. (*University Archaeological Society Newsletter*, Brigham Young University, February 16, 1966, pp. 4–6)

Even if these artifacts could be proven genuine, they would not help the case for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The Nephites certainly could not have written in Latin characters.

We feel that Mormon archaeologists should be very careful about drawing conclusions from these purported finds. It should be remembered that a great deal of material from Egypt and other countries has been brought to the New World since the time of Columbus. If some artifact was lost here in the United States it is possible that some one finding it might think that he had made a great discovery.

Even some of the antiquities which are supposed to have come from ancient Egypt are in reality modern reproductions. In *The Biblical World* we find this information concerning scarabs:

Because of the wide use and popularity of scarabs, their workmanship varied greatly. Many are beautiful pieces of art work, while others are so poorly made that one can be sure of their genuineness only if they have been found in controlled excavations. Speaking of genuineness, it may be useful to point out that it is extremely difficult to be sure of the ancient origin of any scarab that was not found by archaeologists, because the demand of tourists for these small fine objects has been so great that the falsification of ancient scarabs has for many years been a lucrative business in modern Egypt, where a number of scarab factories produce imitation scarabs that are put on the market as genuine specimens. There probably does not exist a single sizable collection of scarabs in this world that can claim to be entirely free of fakes. (*The Biblical World*, by Charles F. Pfeiffer, Michigan, 1966, p. 509)

It should also be remembered that even some people and organizations in America have used Egyptian hieroglyphics. For instance, Claudia Veteto stated:

As an interesting sidelight, the Masonic jewel belonging to Joseph Smith, which was recovered from the cornerstone of the Masonic Temple at Nauvoo, Illinois, is a small silver disk with a field and a border occupied by a text of “hieroglyphics engravings.” (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, May 1, 1967, pp. 6–7)

The Mormon archaeologist Ross T. Christensen claims that the “amount of evidence which points in the direction of authentication” of the Book of Mormon is “impressive,” but he seems to be puzzled by the lack of evidence for “reformed Egyptian” and Hebrew writing:

. . . the spirit of caution is urged, for the reason that there are a number of points where correspondence [between the Book of Mormon and the Old World] should have been found but to this date has not been. There seems to be no fully adequate explanation for the lack of such traits in the New World, required by the Book of Mormon, as Old World plants, smelted iron, and Near Eastern forms of writing. (*Progress in Archaeology*, BYU, 1963, p. 147)

Welby W. Ricks tries to explain away the absence of Hebrew writing in the following manner:

The Book of Mormon informs us that one of its peoples (the Nephites) had a knowledge of Hebrew script, which by the close of the Record had been somewhat modified. It naturally follows that evidence of Hebrew-like writing should be found in ancient America.

It has been well over a hundred years since the Book of Mormon was published, yet rather few finds of supposed Hebrew writings have been reported. This may be due, in part, to the hatred of the Lamanites for the Nephites. The Lamanites may have confiscated and destroyed many valuable Nephite records. Or, perhaps only the priests and a small educated class kept records. (*Progress in Archaeology*, p. 210)

We do not feel that this is an adequate explanation for the lack of either Hebrew or reformed Egyptian, and we must agree with M. T. Lamb when he states:

We have found that the entire ancient history of this western world is flatly against the claims of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Smith has preserved a specimen of the characters found by him, as he professes, in the hill Cumorah, and which he would have us believe were the ancient characters in common use upon this continent 1500 years ago—but a large number of the real characters in use in Central America at that time have fortunately been preserved in imperishable marble, proving Mr. Smith’s characters a fraud. (*The Golden Bible*, p. 319)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

While there is no archaeological evidence to support the idea that Nephites lived here, this does not completely close the door between the Old and New World. It is possible that some ships may have arrived in the New World before Columbus. Ross T. Christensen claims that there is a current in the Atlantic Ocean which might cause a ship to drift “from the Old World across the Atlantic to the West Indies.” Thor Heyerdahl tried to prove that it is possible to drift to the New World with a papyrus raft which is named after the Egyptian god Ra. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for July 19, 1969, contained this statement:

CHRISTIANSTED, V.I. (AP)—Thor Heyerdahl abandoned his battered reed boat Ra 600 miles short of his goal Friday night after sharks chased away his six crewmen as they tried to repair the craft.

It is claimed that the Egyptians used Phoenician sailors in their explorations and that they even sailed around Africa:

... Necho II ... conceived the idea of circumnavigating Africa. He equipped an expedition, manned it with Phoenician sailors and sent it off to explore the feasibility of the route. The voyage was successful, but the time it took—three years—could not have been very encouraging; ...

The use of Phoenician sailors was typical of the 26th Dynasty’s reliance on foreigners for many important jobs: Phoenicians did Egypt’s exploring; ... (*Ancient Egypt*, by Lionel Casson and The Editors of *Time-Life Books*, New York, 1969, page 161)

In the light of our next topic—i.e., the inscription reported to have been found, at Parahyba, Brazil—this reference may prove to be very significant.

### PARAÍBA TEXT

Welby W. Ricks made this interesting observation:

It seems that whenever a purported ancient inscription written in any Old World script is found in the New World, it is immediately thought to be fraudulent, since everyone knows the ocean could not be crossed by sea-going craft 2000 years ago. This argument does not seem valid to me. The facts should govern the case—not the case govern the facts. Therefore, each finding in the New World of writing in an Old World script should be investigated according to the facts and judged on its own merits. (*Fifteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, p. 95)

We certainly agree with Mr. Ricks concerning this matter. Every inscription should be judged according to its own merits. On the other hand, however, we must realize that there have been a number of forgeries; so the matter must be approached with caution.

There is one inscription (the Paraíba script) which could have an important and lasting effect on Mormon archaeologists if it should turn out to be authentic. *Newsweek Magazine* carried these statements about it:

Columbus has a lot of company these days. Many archeologists believe that the Vikings preceded him by 500 years. Pottery shards, others argue, indicate a pre-Columbian arrival of Japanese in Ecuador, and some say Chinese visited Mexico in A.D. 459.

The latest people to be championed as the discoverers of the New World are the Phoenicians . . . According to a report last week by Cyrus H. Gordon, professor of Mediterranean studies at Brandeis University, at least one crew of Phoenician sailors landed in South America at Parahyba, Brazil, 2,000 years before Columbus set sail. . . .

Gordon’s case rests on the Parahyba text, a copy of an inscription engraved on a stone found by plantation slaves at Parahyba in 1872. Ladislau Netto, then director of the National Museum in Brazil, requested that the stone be given to his institution. The request was not honored and no one today knows where the stone is. But Netto did visit the plantation and copied the inscription. . . . The text, chiseled in the long-extinct Phoenician characters, describes how the crew sailed with ten other ships from the port of Eziongeber in the Gulf of Aqaba and rounded Africa. Then their vessel was separated from the flotilla by a storm. Arriving at Parahyba, the crew of twelve men and three women sacrificed one of their number to propitiate their gods.

“ERRORS”: The text has been known to archeologists and linguists for the better part of a century. But most believed it to be a forgery. The original Netto copy published in 1874 in an obscure New York Portuguese language periodical had dropped from sight. The only other copy that anyone knew about was a faulty transcription of Netto’s original, . . . This crude version contained words and grammatical forms that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars had never encountered in Phoenician or other Semitic writings. The scholars dismissed the Parahyba text as a clumsy, error-riddled fake.

Like others, Gordon accepted this judgment until a friend found a copy of the Netto transcription stuck away in a scholarly scrapbook bought at a rummage sale. The clear Netto copy contained none of the garbling that made scholars suspicious. It did contain the unfamiliar grammar and vocabulary that had also convinced scholars the text was a forgery. But some of these forms of the language have since appeared in Phoenician texts of unquestioned authenticity. The “errors,” Gordon writes . . . support the stone’s authenticity. “No forger,” Gordon adds, “who knew enough Semitics to compose such a document would have committed so many apparent errors.” . . .

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Furthermore, Gordon believes he can trace indications of Mediterranean architecture and engineering in ancient Central and South American civilizations. . . .

Not all scholars, by any means, are convinced by Gordon's interpretations. Gordon F. Ekholm at The American Museum of Natural History, a specialist in pre-Columbian archeology, believes the text is too pat. "It says just what someone who wants to believe the Phoenicians crossed the Atlantic would want it to say," he comments. And Frank M. Cross Jr., professor of Hebrew at Harvard, calls the Netto copy "a mishmash of Phoenician letters from various periods." (*Newsweek*, May 27, 1968, p. 62)

Dr. Loren R. Fisher agreed with Dr. Gordon on the authenticity of the inscription:

Strong support for the thesis that South America was discovered by a Phoenician sea expedition six centuries before Christ has been offered by a language specialist and Old Testament scholar at the School of Theology at Claremont.

Dr. Loren R. Fisher, 41, backed the widely-publicized report to this effect made recently by Dr. Cyrus H. Gordon of Brandeis University. . . .

"Even if the stone were brought to Brazil from Sicily or somewhere else, it would still be extremely important," Dr. Fisher said. That suggestion, however, has not been seriously put forward to date. (*Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1968, Sec. E, p. 7)

The translation of this inscription reads as follows:

"We are Sons of Canaan from Sidon, the city of the king. Commerce has cast us on this distant shore, a land of mountains. We set (sacrificed) a youth for the exalted gods and goddesses in the nineteenth year of Hiram, our mighty king. We embarked from Ezion-Geber into the Red Sea and voyaged with ten ships. We were at sea together for two years around the land belonging to Ham (Africa) but were separated by a storm (lit., "from the hand of Baal") and we were no longer with our companions. So we have come here, twelve men and three women, on a new shore which I, The Admiral, control. But auspiciously may the exalted gods and goddesses favor us!" (Translation as given in the *Deseret News*, Church Section, June 15, 1968, p. 6)

Ross T. Christensen, editor of the *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* at the BYU, seems to be in a real dilemma concerning this inscription. He wants to use it as evidence for the Book of Mormon, yet he seems to realize that the pagan content of the script could prove rather embarrassing to the LDS Church. Dr. Christensen accepts the authenticity of the inscription, but he tries to disassociate the Nephites from this and other inscriptions found in Brazil and the eastern United States:

I also propose that the Phoenician-like inscriptions found in the eastern United States and Brazil were indeed

left by Phoenician (or possibly Carthaginian) travelers ranging in time between, say, 900 and 200 BC.

It is therefore my proposal that the Phoenician-like inscriptions, found in the two mentioned areas have nothing to do with the Book of Mormon peoples but represent the visits of other travelers. These were either Phoenicians or Carthaginians who were perhaps lost or perhaps knew their way perfectly well, but in any case reached those parts of the New World and left inscriptions.

Moreover, I should like to believe that in the eastern United States and Brazil the Phoenician element constituted only a tiny part of the total population and therefore had no great influence upon either racial or cultural types.

. . . the Phoenician-like inscriptions of the Atlantic seaboard of both North and South America—although left by Phoenician or Carthaginian voyagers—nevertheless represent non-Book of Mormon contacts from the Old World; . . .

I used to wonder why it is that all the Phoenician-like or Hebrew-like inscriptions found so far seemed to be located in the eastern United States and Brazil but not in the actual Nephite-Jaredite homeland. The answer is beginning to emerge: Semitic-type inscriptions found on the eastern seaboard represent Phoenician or Punic contacts entirely unrelated to Book of Mormon history. (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, January 13, 1969, pp. 5, 6, 10)

On the other hand, Dr. Christensen wants to tie into the idea of Phoenicians in America, so he suggests that the Mulekites (a group of Hebrews who were supposed to have come to America and later joined the Nephites) were "largely Phoenician in their ethnic origin":

Who were the Mulekites? Nothing is said in the Book concerning their identity, with the exception of one person: Mulek. This young son of King Zedekiah, evidently unknown to the authors of the Bible, escaped the wrath of the Babylonians. He was of course a Jew of the house of David. But of those who came with him (he could not have come alone) we have not one explicit statement.

I propose that the Mulekites of the Book of Mormon were largely Phoenician in their ethnic origin.

Particularly impressive to me were some indications within the Book of Mormon itself of an important Phoenician element in the native population of Mesoamerica.

The tentative hypothesis presented in the 1967 paper may be summarized as follows: The Mulekites of the Book of Mormon were largely Phoenician in the ethnic origin; a sizable proportion of the present native population of Mesoamerica is therefore of the same ultimate extraction; . . . (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, January 13, 1969, pp. 3, 5, and 6)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Dr. Christensen, however, has to acknowledge the fact that the Book of Mormon does not even mention the Phoenicians:

May I call your attention to certain statements in the Book of Mormon? What does that volume say about Phoenicians in the New World? In explicit terms, it says nothing. The name is not written there; there is no direct reference to it.

The hypothesis that Mulek escaped with the aid of Phoenician mariners is hardly more than a guess; I cannot actually prove it from the Book of Mormon. (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, January 13, 1969, pp. 2 and 3)

Actually, the Book of Mormon itself makes it plain that the Mulekites, who are called “the people of Zarahemla,” were from Jerusalem, and it says nothing concerning the Phoenicians helping them come to the New World:

Behold, it came to pass that Mosiah discovered that the people of Zarahemla came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon.

And they journeyed in the wilderness, and were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters, into the land where Mosiah discovered them; and they had dwelt there from that time forth. (Book of Mormon, Omni 15–16)

Dr. Christensen’s idea that the Mulekites may have been “largely Phoenician in their ethnic origin” seems to be in contradiction to the statement in the Book of Mormon itself.

Actually, the inscription found in Paraíba and the idea of Phoenicians being in America could undermine a great deal of the work which Mormon scholars have done in the past. For instance, Mormon writers have always wanted to show a relationship between Hebrew and Indian languages. The following appeared in the newsletter published at BYU on December 16, 1959:

. . . Robert Blair, author of an unpublished doctoral thesis on the Yucatec Maya language, spoke to about 30 members of Campus Chapter, Wednesday evening, December 9. Mr. Blair completed studies in American aboriginal linguistics at the University of Indiana, and then spent some months living with the Yucatec Mayas near Chichen Itza, Yucatan. There he learned the rudiments of the modern spoken language and made a series of tape recordings of the Mayas for future study.

. . . He denounced early “so called” linguists who, untrained, made attempts to prove that there was a definite relationship between Hebrew and some of the Indian languages. “Some of our own LDS writers,” he said, “have fallen into the trap of using these writings to support the Book of Mormon.” He commented that he personally knows of no such relationship, but also said that the case is not hopeless as he has only scratched the surface. . . . The field is wide open for those who can persist in language studies. (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, BYU, December 16, 1959, pp. 3 and 4)

On January 13, 1969, Dr. Christensen stated that progress was being made:

Within the past five years Thomas Stuart Ferguson, founder of the New World Archaeological Foundation and onetime general officer of the SEHA (*Newsletter*, 8.4, 9.01), has organized a program of comprehensive lexical comparisons by competent linguists between Hebrew and certain New World languages. I have seen no published report of this work but have been informed verbally that the Zapotec language of the State of Oaxaca, southern Mexico, shows a 30% comparison in its word list with Hebrew. (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, January 13, 1969, p. 9)

On February 28, 1969, Pierre Agrignier reported:

A number of agreements in vocabulary have been noted. In the diagnostic word list, the agreements run about 18% (still subject to restudy). [In *Newsletter* 111, page 9, the proposed figure of 30% is incorrect.] This figure is far above the index of chance, which is considered to be about 5% at most. But, if it is accepted as indicating a connection, this figure also represents a distinct fading of original identity. In this case, we suppose it to be due to corruption of the language under the influence of the neighboring tongues. (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, February 28, 1969, p. 5)

While Mormon scholars feel that they have been showing a relationship to the Hebrew, it may turn out that they are in reality proving a relationship to the Phoenicians. As far as language was concerned, the Phoenicians and Hebrews had a great deal in common (see *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, by William F. Albright). Dr. Ross T. Christensen states:

The Phoenician civilization was Semitic; in language and culture it belonged to what we call the West Semitic branch of that language family. Its original speech was identical with ancestral Hebrew and its script, the alphabet it used, was the same as the ancestral script of Hebrew. Thus there is small wonder, when we consider certain purported Phoenician inscriptions in America, that they are sometimes called Hebrew. . . . Actually, the Phoenicians were the same people that the Old Testament calls Canaanites. (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, January 13, 1969, p. 1)

The word “Baal,” for instance, is found among both the Hebrews and the Phoenicians. John A. Widtsoe and Franklin S. Harris, Jr., use this word to prove that Hebrew is found among the American Indians:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Many Hebrew names are found among the American Indians, as illustrated by the following; . . .

“**Baal**. This name was applied to the supreme god of the Phoenicians and the Canaanites. He was also known as Bel and Belus, and in early times the true God was known by the name of Baal; but later this use of the name was discontinued, presumably on account of its desecration by association with the name of an idol god. It occurs in the Bible in various forms, according to use, as Baal, Baale, Baali, Baalim, Baalah—the latter going to Balah in Josh. 19:3, and to Bilhah in 1 Ch. 4:29. Among the ancient American names we find Baali, Zapotec captain; Baaloo, Zapotec captain.” (*Seven Claims of the Book of Mormon*, by John A. Widtsoe and Franklin S. Harris, Jr., Missouri, 1937, pp. 94–95)

If the word “Baal” did come to the Indians from the Old World, the Phoenicians may have been the people who brought it. It is interesting to note that in the inscription found at Paraíba the word “Baal” is found. Dr. Ross T. Christensen, of the BYU, has frankly admitted the possibility that what are considered “Hebrew loan words” might in reality be “Phoenician loan words”:

Any Hebrew loan words in a native New World language, it would seem to me, could be construed equally as well, as Phoenician loan words—the two languages are so closely related. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, January 13, 1969, pp. 9–10)

While the Hebrews and the Phoenicians shared many things in common as far as language was concerned, the Phoenicians were pagans and believed in many gods and human sacrifice. In the inscription found at Paraíba, Brazil, we read:

We set (sacrificed) a youth for the exalted gods and goddesses . . . may the exalted gods and goddesses favor us! (*Deseret News*, Church Section, June 15, 1968, p. 6)

After Dr. Christensen had given a speech on the Phoenicians in the New World, he was asked if they might have left more here than just inscriptions:

QUESTION: You mentioned only Phoenician inscriptions in your discussion. Are we to understand that there are no other remains which could be attributed to a Phoenician origin in the Western Hemisphere?

ANSWER: I had in mind particularly inscriptions, but there may very well also exist other kinds of Phoenician antiquities. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, January 13, 1969, p. 5)

Actually, the pagan religion of the Phoenicians would probably fit the picture of what is being found by archaeologists in the New World far better than the idea of Nephites and Christianity. Dr. Ross T. Christensen, of Brigham Young University, gives this interesting information:

The Phoenician theory of the ancient American civilizations has come into some prominence once again in this decade with the publication of a book by Constance Irwin . . . She proposes a Phoenician explanation for a number of apparently Near Eastern traits in the advanced civilizations of ancient America, such as infant sacrifice, serpent symbolism, and belief in the Fair God.

Perhaps Mrs. Irwin will be ignored also. But I have read her book and am convinced that this whole question should be opened up for reconsideration. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, January 13, 1969, p. 2)

On page 10 of the same “Newsletter,” Dr. Christensen states:

The native populations of the New World appear to be of a multiple-racial origin. A Strong Mongoloid element doubtless came by way of the Bering Strait, but various other groups must also have reached these shores, not only from Asia, but also from Europe.

Mormon archaeologists have labored for years trying to prove that the culture in the New World was influenced by the arrival of people from the Near East. However, to prove the Book of Mormon they need to show a strong Hebrew and Christian influence, rather than the pagan cultures which have been found.

### KINDERHOOK PLATES

On May 1, 1843, the *Times and Seasons* reprinted the following from the *Quincy Wig*:

A Mr. J. Roberts, from Pike county, called upon us last Monday, with a written description of a discovery which was recently made near Kinderhook, in that county.

It appeared that a young man by the name of Wiley, a resident in Kinderhook, dreamed three nights in succession, that in a certain mound in the vicinity, there was treasures concealed.—Impressed with the strange occurrence of dreaming the same dream three nights in succession, he came to the conclusion, to satisfy his mind by digging into the mound. . . . Finding it quite laborous, he invited others to assist him. Finally, a company of ten or twelve repaired to the mound, and assisted in digging out the shaft commenced by Wiley. After penetrating the mound about 11 feet, they came to a bed of limestone, that had apparently been subjected to the action of fire, they removed the stone, which were small and easy to handle, to the depth of two feet more, when they found **six brass plates**, secured and fastened together by two iron wires, but which were so decayed, readily crumbled to dust upon being handled. The plates were so completely covered with rust as almost to obliterate the characters inscribed upon them; but after undergoing a chemical process, the inscriptions were brought out plain and distinct. . . .

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

By whom these plates were deposited there must ever remain a secret, unless some one skilled in deciphering hieroglyphics, may be found to unravel the mystery. Some pretend to say, that Smith the Mormon leader, has the ability to read them. If he has, he will confer a great favor on the public by removing the mystery which hangs over them. We learn there was a Mormon present when the plates were found, who it is said, leaped for joy at the discovery, and remarked that it would go to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon—which it undoubtedly will.

The plates above alluded to, were exhibited in this city last week, and are now, we understand, in Nauvoo, subject to the inspection of the Mormon Prophet. The public curiosity is greatly excited and if Smith can decipher the hieroglyphics on the plates, he will do more towards throwing light on the early history of this continent, than any man now living. (*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 4., 1843, pp. 186–187)

Below is a photograph of drawings which the Mormons made of the Kinderhook plates. We are showing only one side of each plate (see *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, pp. 374–376)

In a letter written from Nauvoo, dated May 2, 1843, Charlotte Haven stated:

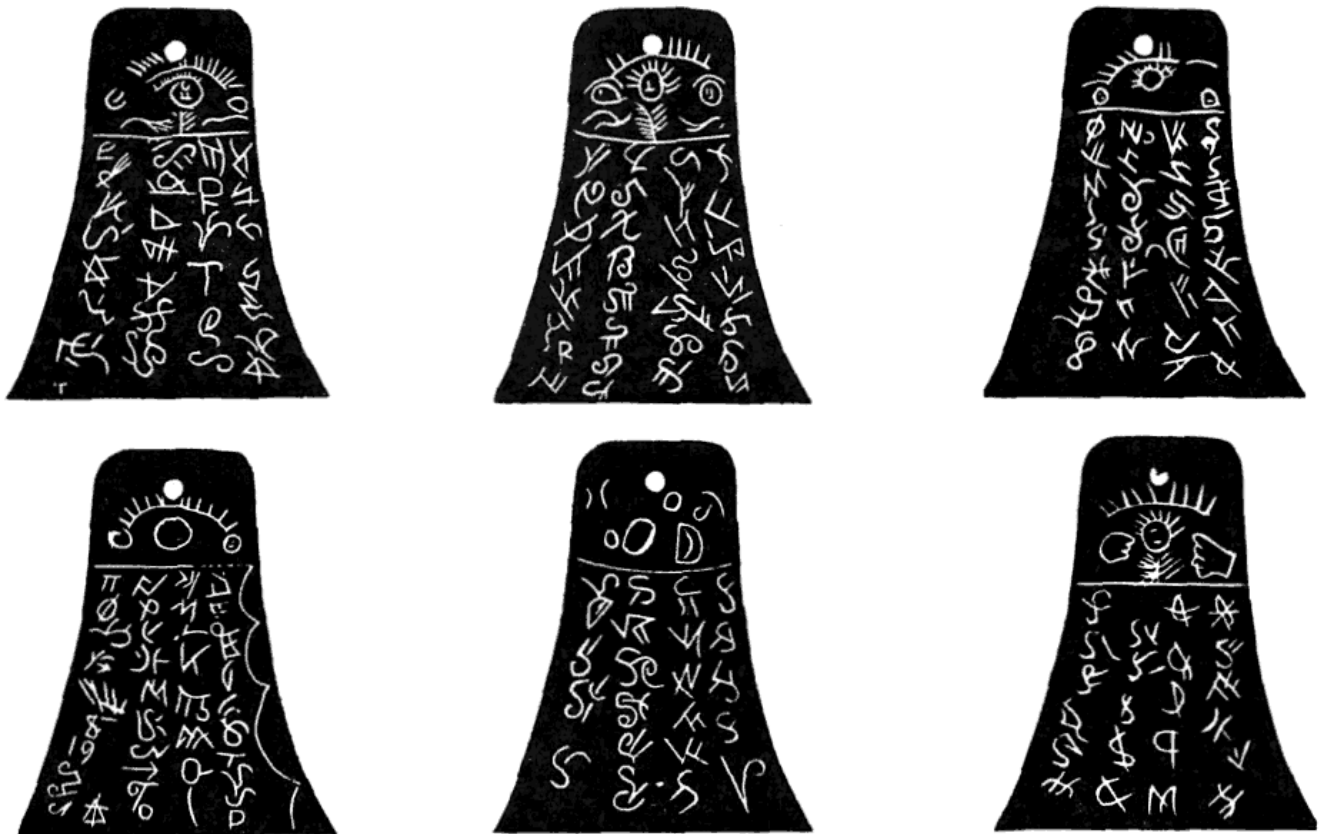
We hear very frequently from our Quincy friends through Mr. Joshua Moore, . . . His last call on us was last Saturday and he bought with him half a dozen thin

pieces of brass, apparently very old, in the form of a bell about five or six inches long. They had on them scratches that looked like symbolic characters. They were recently found, he said, in a mound a few miles below Quincy. When he showed them to Joseph, the latter said that the figures or writing on them was similar to that in which the Book of Mormon was written, and if Mr. Moore could leave them, he thought that by the help of revelation he would be able to translate them. So a sequel to that holy book may soon be expected. ("A Girl's Letters From Nauvoo," *Overland Monthly*, December 1890, p. 630)

According to the *History of the Church*, Joseph Smith did accept these plates as authentic and even claimed to translate a portion of them:

Monday, May 1.— . . . I insert fac-similes of the six brass plates found near Kinderhook, in Pike county, Illinois, on April 23, by Mr. Robert Wiley and others, while excavating a large mound. They found a skeleton about six feet from the surface of the earth, which must have stood nine feet high. The plates were found on the breast of the skeleton and were covered on both sides with ancient characters.

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, p. 372)



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

On January 15, 1844, this statement appeared in the *Times and Seasons*:

Why does the circumstance of the plates recently found in a mound in Pike county, Ill., by Mr. Wiley, together with ethnology and a thousand other things go to prove the Book of Mormon true?—Ans. Because it is true! (*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 5, p. 406)

A number of the citizen of Kinderhook certified that the plates were taken from a mound by R. Wiley:

We the citizens of Kinderhook, whose names are annexed do certify and declare that on the 23d April, 1843, while excavating a large mound, in this vicinity, Mr. R. Wiley took from said mound, six brass plates of a bell shape, covered with ancient characters. Said plates were very much oxidated—the bands and rings on said plates mouldered into dust on a slight pressure. The above described plates we have handed to Mr. Sharp for the purpose of taking them to Nauvoo.

ROB'T WILEY,	W. P. HARRIS,
G.W.F. WARD,	W. LONGNECKER,
FAYETTE GRUBB,	IRA S. CURTIS,
GEO. DECKENSON,	W. FUGATE.
J.R. SHARP.	

(*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 4, p. 186, May 1, 1843)

Unfortunately for the Mormon position, it was later discovered that the plates were forgeries, made for the purpose of tricking Joseph Smith. W. Fugate, one of those who signed the certificate, wrote the following in a letter to James T. Cobb:

Mound Station, Ill.  
June 30, 1879

Mr. Cobb:

I received your letter in regard to those plates, and will say in answer that they are a HUMBUGH, gotten up by Robert Wiley, Bridge Whitton and myself. Whitton is dead. I do not know whether Wiley is or not. None of the nine persons who signed the certificate knew the secret, except Wiley and I.

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. When they were finished we put them together with rust made of nitric acid, old iron and lead, and bound them with a piece of hoop iron, covering them completely with the rust.

Our plans worked admirably. A certain Sunday was appointed for the digging. The night before, Wiley went to the Mound where he had previously dug to the depth of about eight feet, there being a flat rock that sounded hollow beneath, and put them under it. On the following morning quite a number of citizens were there to assist in the search, there being two Mormon elders present (Marsh

and Sharp). The rock was soon removed but some time elapsed before the plates were discovered. I finally picked them up and exclaimed, "A piece of pot metal!" Fayette Grubb snatched them from me and struck them against the rock and they fell to pieces. Dr. Harris examined them and said they had hieroglyphics on them. He took acid and removed the rust and they were soon out on exhibition.

Under this rock (which) was dome-like in appearance (and) about three feet in diameter, there were a few bones in the last stage of decomposition, also a few pieces of pottery and charcoal. There was no skeleton found. Sharp, the Mormon Elder, leaped and shouted for joy and said, Satan had appeared to him and told him not to go (to the diggings), it was a hoax of Fugate and Wiley's, but at a later hour the Lord appeared and told him to go, the treasure was there.

The Mormons wanted to take the plates to Joe Smith, but we refused to let them go. Some time afterward a man assuming the name of Savage, of Quincy, borrowed the plates of Wiley to show to his literary friends there, and took them to Joe Smith. The same identical plates were returned to Wiley, who gave them to Professor McDonnell, of St. Louis, for his Museum.

W. Fugate

STATE OF ILLINOIS

BROWN COUNTY. s s

W. Fugate, being first duly sworn, deposes and says that the above letter, containing an account of the plates found near Kinderhook, is true and correct, to the best of his recollection.

W. Fugate

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 30th day of June, 1879.

Jay Brown, J. P.

(*The Kinderhook Plates*, by Welby W. Ricks reprinted from the *Improvement Era*, September 1962)

At the time of the Civil War the Kinderhook plates were lost. M. Wilford Poulson, a former teacher at the BYU and a student of early Mormon history, told us that he found one of the original Kinderhook plates in the Chicago Historical Society Museum, but it was mislabeled as one of the original gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The plate Mr. Poulson found has been identified as number 5 in the facsimiles found in the *History of the Church*. Except for an acid blotch on one side, the plate is in excellent condition. Mr. Poulson did a great deal of research concerning the Kinderhook plates and was convinced that they were made in the 1840's as W. Fugate claimed.

Welby W. Kicks, who was President of the BYU Archaeologic Society, had another opinion concerning these plates. In September, 1962, he announced:

A recent rediscovery of one of the Kinderhook plates which was examined by Joseph Smith, Jun.. reaffirms his prophetic calling and reveals the false statements made by one of the finders.

.....

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

The plates are now back in their original category of genuine.

What scholars may learn from this ancient record in future years or what may be translated by divine power is an exciting thought to contemplate.

This much remains. Joseph Smith, Jun., stands as a true prophet and translator of ancient records by divine means and all the world is invited to investigate the truth which has sprung out of the earth not only of the Kinderhook plates, but of the Book of Mormon as well. (*The Kinderhook Plates*, by Welby W. Ricks, reprinted from the *Improvement Era*, September 1962)

Mr. Ricks based his conclusion on the fact that “two non-LDS professional engravers” examined the plate and made an affidavit in which they stated that the plate “was engraved with a pointed instrument and not etched with acid.” The reader will remember that W. Fugate claimed that the hieroglyphics were formed “by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid and putting it on the plates.” Mr. Ricks feels that this contradiction is of such a nature that it invalidates Fugate’s entire story. We cannot agree with Mr. Ricks concerning this matter, for there is additional evidence which proves that the plates were forgeries.

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.” Mr. Lawrence has kindly allowed us to quote from his study, which he has recently revised. In the Summary he states:

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. The characteristics of the inscription grooves can be reproduced in great detail using the simple acid-wax technique, contrary to the judgement of the engravers. (“Report of a Physical Study of the Kinderhook Plate Number 5,” by George M. Lawrence)

Mr. Lawrence even made his own etchings using beeswax and nitric acid:

To make these etchings, I melted a thin layer of beeswax (paraffin is too brittle) onto a piece of brass, scratched “inscriptions” in the wax with the point of a scribe and then etched the exposed metal with a few drops of concentrated nitric acid. The nitric acid tends to stay in drops because the wax is not wet by it. The amount of acid in one drop is enough to produce roughly the proper depth of groove under the drop. The grooves are quite variable in depth and width due to changes in wax depth, scratch point attitude, and time allowed for etching. However, after a few attempts to control the depth, I was able to make more uniform inscriptions than the actual ones. (“Report of a Physical Study of the Kinderhook Plate Number 5,” p. 2)

Although Mr. Lawrence found that “only the more regular of the grooves made by me are as smooth as the Kinderhook plate’s,” he found some interesting similarities between his etchings and those on the Kinderhook plate:

Some other characteristics of the acid-beeswax process are: Rounded groove ends and bottoms. Soft copper gives less angular groove edges than harder metals such as yellow brass or steel. There is an absence of striations (scratches) along the length of the groove. There sometimes is an extra area of etching action when two lines join obliquely—caused by acid working under the narrow wedge of displaced wax between the two lines. Most grooves cross at exactly the same depth with no markings to show which groove was made last. The flatness of the metal is not disturbed in the neighborhood of the groove. Bubbles formed in the etching process form irregularities or lumps along the length of the groove. The size of these irregularities can be controlled somewhat by “stirring” or diluting the acid.

The above characteristics of this type of etching were found on the actual Kinderhook plate.

The plate has, as “trim,” long grooves along the side and bottom edge that could have been made by a sharp knife with some pressure: On these grooves the metal is deformed and traces can be seen on the reverse side. This is not true of the inscriptions though many are deeper than the knife marks. Attempts by me to reproduce the inscriptions by scratching were not successful. (“Report of a Physical Study of the Kinderhook Plate Number 5.” pp. 2–3)

Welby W. Ricks points out that W. Fugate said that the plates were made of copper, whereas it was originally claimed that the plates were of brass:

... the original finders said the plates were of brass. Mr. Fugate said they were made up “out of some pieces of copper.” (*The Kinderhook Plates*, reprinted from *Improvement Era*, September 1962)

While it is true that Mr. Fugate said the plates were made of copper in his affidavit, we feel that this would be an easy mistake to make and should not be used to invalidate the rest of his statement. It is interesting to note that even W. P. Harris, the man who cleaned the plates after they were discovered, stated that they at first appeared to be made of copper:

The plates appeared first to be copper, and had the appearance of being covered with characters. (*History of the Church*, Vol. 5, pp. 375–376)

George M. Lawrence gives this interesting information concerning the composition of the plate he examined:



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Because the plate was borrowed for non-destructive tests, no “wet” chemical analysis or spectrographic analysis was made. Thus, the exact alloy of the plate is not yet known. However, the density and color of the plate and the results of an X-ray diffraction analysis put some useful bounds on its composition. The color is somewhere between that of bronze and ordinary yellow brass. (It is not surprising that the original accounts of the plate disagree as to whether it is brass or copper.) The specific gravity is  $8.6 \pm 0.1$ . The angles of 12 X-ray diffraction “lines” show the atomic crystal structure to be face-centered cubic like copper but with an atom spacing  $1.27 \pm 0.16$  per cent larger than copper. Such an increase in the average crystal size is typically caused by the solid solution of other metals in the copper. To be consistent with the measured amount of stretch, the alloy could be a 23% zinc - 77% copper brass or an 8% tin - 92% copper bronze or copper with similar percentages of several other metals - or a combination of them. The density is consistent with the 23% zinc brass (low brass) but not with the bronze alloy mentioned. (“Report of a Physical Study of the Kinderhook Plate Number 5,” p. 1)

Mr. Lawrence seems to feel, however, that the plate was buffed at the Historical Society, and he notes that “buffing darkens the color.” Mr. Lawrence also states:

A useful, definite, statement is that it is not the natural copper (99% pure) found in objects made by Indians of the Great Lakes Region.

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts claimed that the fact that Mr. Fugate waited 36 years to tell that the plates were made as a joke invalidates his story:

Of this presentation of the matter it is only necessary to say that it is a little singular that Mr. Fugate alone out of the three said to be in collusion in perpetrating the fraud should disclose it, and that he should wait from 1843 to 1879—a period of thirty-six years—before doing so, when he and those said to be associated with him had such an excellent opportunity to expose the vain pretensions of the Prophet—if Fugate’s tale be true—during his life time. . . . The fact that Fugate’s story was not told until thirty-six years after the event, and that he alone of all those who were connected with the event gives that version of it, is rather strong evidence that his story is the hoax, not the discovery of the plates, nor the engravings upon them. (*The History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 379, footnote)

Welby W. Ricks uses the same arguments as Roberts in an attempt to undermine the story:

For thirty-six years the plates went undisputed, but in 1879, Mr. Wilbur Fugate, one of the men present at the time of the find, wrote a letter to Mr. James T. Cobb stating that the plates were a “Humbug.”

. . . of the witnesses to the find Mr. Fugate alone was the only one to declare the plates fraudulent. The others died without having said anything about a hoax. . . . Mr. Fugate waited a suspiciously long time,

thirty-six years to be exact, which was thirty-five years after the death of his prey, before declaring the plates a “Humbug” when he could have done so within a few weeks after their discovery. Does this sound like a man who is anxiously waiting to catch something in a snare? (*The Kinderhook Plates*, reprinted from the *Improvement Era*, September 1962)

Actually, there is evidence that the hoax was exposed many years before Fugate made his affidavit and that at least one other witness to the plates declared them a fraud. Dr. Wyle gives this information:

Now just hear what was told me by a Mormon elder, an eye and ear witness: “A ‘class of elders,’ eleven or twelve, of whom I was one, was assembled in the Endowment House in 1858. Apostle Orson Pratt told us that he had been reading a work in which an account was given of the Kinderhook Plates. An archeological society had heard of the plates and they wanted to get a reliable account of them. They sent down to Kinderhook, Ill., two men to investigate the matter. These men had been there for two or three weeks without result. At last they learnt the names of the parties concerned, and that the plates were made by a blacksmith; they were told so by the artist himself. Pratt told the ‘class’ that he was well convinced that the plates were a fraud.” (*Mormon Portraits*, by Dr. W. Wyl, 1886, p. 211)

W. P. Harris was one of the nine witnesses to the plates, and he also made a separate statement telling how he cleaned them, etc. (see *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, pp. 374–377). In 1855 (24 years before Fugate’s affidavit) Harris wrote a letter in which he stated that the plates were not genuine and that Bridge Whitten had already acknowledged his part in the hoax:

Barry, Pike Co., Ill.  
April 25, 1855.

Mr. Flagg,

Dear Sir: Yours of the 4th of April came to hand on the 23rd. This thing is stale with me, although I have feelings and respect for the truth.

Some years since, I was present with a number at or near Kinderhook, and helped to dig at the time the plates were found that I think you allude to. Robert Wiley, then a merchant of that place, said that he had had a number of strange dreams (as I have learned) that there was something in the mounds near Kinderhook. If I recollect right, he began to dig on Saturday, and on Sunday the discovery was made. I was present with quite a crowd. The plates were found in the pit by Mr. Fayette Grubb. I washed and cleaned the plates and subsequently made an honest affidavit to the same.

But since that time, Bridge Whitten said to me that he cut and prepared the plates and he (B. Whitten) and R. Wiley engraved them themselves, and that there was nitric acid put upon them the night before that they were found

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

to rust the iron ring and band. And that they were carried to the mound, rubbed in the dirt and carefully dropped into the pit where they were found.

Wilbourn Fugit appeared to be the chief, with Dr. Wiley and B. Whitten. Fugit lives at Kinderhook and B. Whitten at Alton, Illinois, to both of which you can refer.

Subsequently to my receiving your letter, I have seen Dr. P. M. Parker, M.D., that graduated at St. Louis, Mo., last winter. Dr. Parker says that R. Wiley graduated at the same place since the finding of the plates at the same school, and that Professor McDowell on Surgery has the plates at his office, and he (Dr. Parker) saw them there last winter.

If it would be any satisfaction you will write to Dr. P. M. Parker, to Wilbourn Fugit and Bridge Whitten. Esq. W. Murray said that he had wrote you on the subject. What Esq. Murray says you may rely upon.

I believe that I have stated all as far as I know that would be any satisfaction to you, so with much esteem I remain, Fraternally Yours, W. P. Harris.

Mr. W. C. Flagg,

P. S. Mr. Fugit, Mr. Whitten and I are all of us belonging to one order that ought to bear witness to the truth. If anything should transpire that you would wish to hear from me again (an old man rising of sixty) please write me and I will cheerfully give you all the information that I can. It is a late hour and I have worked hard all day in my garden and my health is very poor. So I hope you will excuse. Yours Respectfully, W. P. H. (Letter from the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, 1912, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 271–273, as quoted in *The Book of Mormon?* by James Bales, pp. 95–96)

Thus we see that Mr. Fugate was not the only one who exposed the hoax. At least 24 years before Fugate made his affidavit one of the witnesses had stated that it was a hoax.

B. H. Roberts asks why they did not disclose the hoax during Joseph Smith's life time. The reasonable answer is that they were waiting for Joseph Smith to translate the plates, but he was murdered about one year after the plates were found and never published a translation. The statement that he had "translated a portion of them" and found them to contain a history of a "descendant of Ham" was not published until after the Mormons came to Utah.

Even B. H. Roberts had to admit that Joseph Smith's statement that "the find was genuine, and that he had translated some of the characters" may "not have been known at the time to the alleged conspirators to deceive him. . ." (*History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 379). They were obviously waiting for Joseph Smith to produce another book of "scripture" from these plates. Fawn M. Brodie observed:

Joseph stated in his journal that he "translated a portion" and discovered it to be a history of the person whose bones lay in the mound, "a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt."

If the Kinderhook conspirators expected to see another Book of Abraham result from their deception, they were disappointed. (*No Man Knows My History*, by Fawn M. Brodie, New York, 1957, p. 291)

### FALSIFICATION OF HISTORY

In order to support the story of the Kinderhook plates Mormon historians have made at least two serious changes in Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*.

In his affidavit Mr. Fugate claimed that there were "two Mormon elders present (Marsh and Sharp)" at the time the plates were found, and that "Sharp, the Mormon Elder, leaped and shouted for joy . . ." The fact that at least one Mormon was present and that he leaped for joy was printed in the *Times and Seasons*—a Mormon publication:

**We learn there was a Mormon present when the plates were found, who it is said, leaped for joy at the discovery, and remarked that it would go to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon—which it undoubtedly will.** (*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 4, p. 187)

Evidently Mormon historians could see that the fact that a Mormon was present would cast doubt upon the authenticity of the discovery; therefore, when they reprinted this statement in Joseph Smith's *History* they falsified it so that no one would know that a Mormon was present or that he leaped for joy. In the *History of the Church* we read:

**A person present when the plates were found remarked that it would go to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, which it undoubtedly will.** (*History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 378)

The original certificate by the witnesses included a statement about Mr. Sharp taking the plates to Nauvoo. Fugate says the Mormon elder who leaped and shouted for joy was named Sharp. In the *Times and Seasons* the end of the statement read:

. . . said plates mouldered into dust on a slight pressure. The above described plates we have handed to Mr. Sharp for the purpose of taking them to Nauvoo.

ROB'T WILEY,            W. P. HARRIS,  
G. W. F. WARD,        W. LONGNECKER,  
FAYETTE GRUBB,      IRA S. CURTIS,  
GEO. DECKENSON,    W. FUGATE.  
J. R. SHARP,

(*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 4, p. 186)

In the *History of the Church* the statement concerning Mr. Sharp taking the plates to Nauvoo has been entirely deleted without any indication:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

... said plates mouldered into dust on a slight pressure.

ROBERT WILEY,      W. LONGNECKER,  
GEO. DECKENSON,    FAYETTE GRUBB,  
W. FUGATE,            W. P. HARRIS,  
J. R. SHARP,           G.W.F. WARD,  
IRA S. CURTIS

(*History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 377)

The fact that Mormon historians had to falsify Joseph Smith's *History* to remove references to Nauvoo and Mormonism from the original accounts throws another shadow of doubt upon the authenticity of the story of the Kinderhook plates.

### “CHILDISH FORGERIES”

We feel that the work George M. Lawrence has done on the Kinderhook plate proves it to be a modern production. Although the ancient inhabitants of the New World were very skilled in working with metals (see *Scientific American*, April 1966, pp. 72–81), we do not feel that they could meet the close tolerances which Mr. Lawrence has found on the Kinderhook plate:

The plate is about 2-7/8” high, weighs 0.621 oz. and has an area of 4.66 sq. inches. The diameter of the hole in the top is 0.126” and is round within 0.001”. The metal around the hole bulges, suggesting that the hole was punched.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the plate upon visual examination is its Food thickness uniformity and local surface flatness. The thickness of the plate was measured at about 50 points on the surface to an accuracy of 0.0002”. The plate has a slight taper, thinning slightly toward the bottom. One may describe the thickness as 0.030” ± 0.001 except for the last 1/4” of taper at the bottom, where the plate thins approximately 0.002”.

The metal of the plate is fine grained and homogeneous as are modern metals. It has no spring when flexed, like annealed copper. Except for scratches, the surface is smooth as if the plate had been rolled or ground rather than hammered or cast. There is no evidence of corrosion except for the nickel-sized etch blotch on the “reverse” side. This region is quite irregular, is about 0.01” deep, and cuts into the surface along a sharply defined boundary. The sharp edge is characteristic of acid attacking a greasy or waxy surface, whereas acid on a clean metal surface produces feathered edges.

I conclude from the local flatness, the small thickness variation, the basic surface smoothness, and the taper, that the plate was cut from sheet which had been rolled, probably in a direction perpendicular to the length of the plate. The nominal size of the hole and thickness were perhaps 1/8” and 1/32”, respectively. (“Report of a Physical Study of the Kinderhook Plate Number 5,” p. 2)

We do not feel that it would have been possible for an ancient inhabitant of America to have made a plate that

is so flat, and we agree with Mr. Lawrence that the plate must have been cut from a rolled sheet of metal. Mr. Lawrence informs us that “Brass was first rolled in the U.S. in Connecticut in 1832.” Notice that Mr. Lawrence finds the plate to be approximately .030 of an inch thick. This is only a thousandth or two off from 1/32”. From this we conclude that the Kinderhook plates were cut from a standard sheet measuring 1/32 of an inch thick. Notice also the hole through the top of the plate measures .126 of an inch. This is only one thousandth over 1/8 of an inch.

George M. Lawrence has stated that “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.” The evidence from the Kinderhook plate itself, then, indicates that it is a fraud.

James D. Bales gives this interesting information concerning the Kinderhook plates:

The plates are referred to in the *Fourth Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, p. 247 as the work of a village blacksmith. F. S. Dellenbaugh referred to them as the work of an Illinois blacksmith and stated that they were a fraud (*The North Americans of Yesterday*, p. 49).

James H. Breasted, Orientalist, Historian, Egyptologist, and Professor of Egyptology in the University of Chicago—from 1905 and a number of years thereafter—stated in a letter to R. B. Neal, on April 20, 1914 that the “Kinderhook Plates are, of course, childish forgeries, as the scientific world has known for years.” . . .

What does this all add up to? Does it merely mean that one of the “finds” which the Latter Day Saints believed supported the Book of Mormon does not support it, and that there is no real blow dealt to the prophetship of Joseph Smith? Not at all, for as Charles A. Shook well observed—in a personal letter to the author—“Only a bogus prophet translates bogus plates.” Where we can check up on Smith as a translator of plates, he is found guilty of deception. How can we trust him with reference to his claims about the Book of Mormon? If we cannot trust him where we can check him, we cannot trust him where we cannot check his translations.

... Smith tried to deceive people into thinking that he had translated some of the plates. The plates had no such message as Smith claimed that they had. Smith is thus shown to be willing to deceive people into thinking that he had the power to do something that could not be done. (*The Book of Mormon?* by James D. Bales, Old Paths Book Club, 1958, pp. 95, 97, 98 and 99)

### NEWARK STONES

On April 10, 1870, the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt made these statements:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

“But,” some may inquire, “have you any external evidence to prove what you are now saying?” I think we have. Thirty years after the Book of Mormon was put in print, giving the history of the settlement of this country, one of the great mounds south of the great lakes near Newark, in Ohio, was opened. What was found in it? A great many curiosities, . . . they found a large stone that appeared to be hollow; . . . they broke it open, when another stone was found inside of it, of a different nature entirely from its covering. On the stone taken from the inside was carved the figure of a man with a priestly robe flowing from his shoulders; and over the head of this man were the Hebrew characters for Moshe, the ancient name of Moses; while on each side of this likeness, and on different sides of the stone, above, beneath, and around about were the Ten Commandments that were received on Mount Sinai, written in the ancient Hebrew characters. Now recollect that the Book of Mormon had been in print thirty years before this discovery. And what does this discovery prove? It proves that the builders of these mounds, south of the great lakes in the great Mississippi Valley in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, New York, etc., must have understood the Hebrew characters; and not only that, but they must also have understood the law of Moses. Otherwise how happened it that they should write on this stone the Ten Commandments almost verbatim as they are now contained in King James’ translation of the Bible. . . .

I have seen that sacred stone. It is not a hatched up story. . . . being acquainted with modern Hebrew, I could form some kind of an estimate of the ancient Hebrew, for some of the modern Hebrew characters do not vary much in form from the ancient Hebrew. . . . This, then, is external proof, independent of the Scriptural proofs to which I have alluded, in testimony of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

. . . .  
Five years after the discovery of this remarkable memento of the ancient Israelites on the American continent, and thirty-five years after the Book of Mormon was in print, several other mounds in the same vicinity of Newark were opened, in several of which Hebrew characters were found. Among them was this beautiful expression, buried with one of their ancient dead, “May the Lord have mercy on me a Nephite.” It was translated a little different—“Nephel.” Now we well know that Nephi, who came out of Jerusalem six hundred years before Christ, was the leader of the first Jewish colony across to this land, and the people, ever afterwards, were called “Nephites,” after their inspired prophet and leader. The Nephites were a righteous people and had many prophets among them; and when they were burying one of their brethren in these ancient mounds, they introduced the Hebrew characters signifying “May the Lord have mercy on me a Nephite.” This is another direct evidence of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, which was brought forth and translated by inspiration some thirty-five years before this inscription was found. (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 13, pp. 130–131)

On November 27, 1870, the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt gave another discourse in which he claimed that these purported antiquities proved the Book of Mormon (see

*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 19, pp. 296–297). While many Mormons have accepted these finds as genuine, scholars have looked upon them with skepticism. The Editor of the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* made this statement in 1908:

[The following article . . . was forwarded to us with the inquiry whether the statements therein contained concerning the “Holy Stones of Newark” or Jackstown were authentic. To this we reply that the statements as to the finding of such alleged relics are correct, but as to the genuineness of the relics, we are compelled to say that the evidence is overwhelming against it.—Editor] (*Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications*, April 1908, p. 2)

This same issue of the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* contains the following information:

In a work entitled “Archaeology of Ohio,” by M. C. Read, one of the most reliable and studious investigators of Ohio archaeology, formerly of the Geological Survey of Ohio; Trustee of the Ohio Archaeological Society in charge of the Society’s exhibit at Philadelphia (1876); and Assistant Commissioner at the Exposition at New Orleans in 1884-5, the author said:

“The controversy over the Hebrew inscriptions, claimed to have been found by David Wyrick, near Newark, is now generally regarded as closed. They were found when evidence was eagerly sought to connect the aboriginal races with the house of Israel. Now that the idea of such a connection is abandoned by all, the discovery of Hebrew inscribed stones would be an anachronism, for such forgeries will always in some way represent the ideas of the time of the forgery. . . . It is significant that Mr. Wyrick’s published accounts of the ‘finds’ were largely devoted to an attempt to prove that they could not be forged, and that upon his death there was found in his working-room a Hebrew Bible which doubtless aided him much in finding Hebrew inscriptions.

“These Holy relics were sold to David M. Johnson, of Coshocton, Ohio, who in 1867 employed laborers for several days in exploring a mound from which one of the inscribed stones, he obtained from Wyrick was taken. His search was rewarded by finding inside of a human skull a conical stone about three (3) inches long on which was also a Hebrew inscription. No one seems to have been surprised by the peculiarity of the place in which it was found, or to have doubted its genuineness. It is probable that no archaeologist of fair standing can now be found to advocate its genuineness or that of the Wyrick finds.”

Professor Warren K. Moorehead in the preface to his work on “Primitive Man in Ohio” has this to say concerning the Newark discovery:

“Some writers have misrepresented and distorted field testimony to uphold theories previously formed. As an illustration of this, and of the great damage that it has done, we need but call the attention of our readers to the famous ‘Holy Stone’ of Newark. An enthusiastic archaeologist resided many years ago at Newark, Ohio. He was thoroughly in love with his work, and his life’s

ambition was to discover the origin of man upon the American continent. He believed the lost ten tribes of Israel to be the ancestors of the mound-building tribes. After opening mound after mound and finding no evidence whatever in support of his hypothesis, he became desperate. He purchased a Hebrew Bible and primer, and shortly afterwards there was discovered in a stone box, in a mound that he had investigated, a slab, on one side of which was a likeness of Moses, and on the reverse an abridged form of the ten commandments. The stone attracted world-wide attention, and many publications were issued describing it. No one doubted the genuineness of the affair until after the man's death. In cleaning up his office the administrator found in a small rear room bits of slate with attempts at carving Hebrew characters upon them. They also found a fair copy of the wood-cut of Moses use, as a frontispiece in the testament.

"The influence of this over-zealous deceiver has gone throughout the length and breadth of our land, and one may still hear at lectures upon American archaeology statements concerning the Indian's descent from the Jew, basing such assertions upon the testimony of the supposed 'Holy Stone of Newark,' which, as is above shown, was simply a counterfeit."

.....  
Col. Chas. Whittlesey, President of the Western Reserve and Northern Ohio Historical Society, in his pamphlet on "Archaeological Frauds," has this to say about the Newark "Holy Stones":

"... David Wyrick, ... had adopted the theory that the Hebrews were the builders of the earthworks of the West, ...

"... he died, and in his private room among the valuable relics he had so zealously collected, a Hebrew Bible was found, which fully cleared up the mystery of Hebrew inscriptions 'even in Ohio.' This had been the secret and study of years, by a poverty stricken and suffering man, who in some respects was almost a genius. His case presents the human mind in one of its most mysterious phases, partly aberration and partly fraud. ..."

We have thus given at some length most of the material worth reproducing, hitherto published, concerning the so-called "Holy Stones of Newark." The testimony thus produced we believe is sufficient to convince any reader that these alleged religious relics of a prehistoric people were frauds. They cannot therefore be reckoned as of any value in establishing the theory that the Mound Builders were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. ... It might be added in closing that many other stones have been found in various mounds bearing alleged inscriptions which the respective finders claim are evidences that the Mound Builders, whoever they were, had a written language. But in almost every instance these so-called findings are proven to have been unauthentic or of such a dubious environment as to have no value as proof. ... (*Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, April 1908, pp. 213–215 and 218)

### "ME A NEPHITE"

Even though there is serious doubt concerning the authenticity of the artifacts found in Newark, Ohio, the Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe and Franklin S. Harris, Jr., use these purported discoveries as proof for the Book of Mormon. In fact, they even use Orson Pratt's translation which contains the word "Nephite":

Near Newark, Ohio, about 1860, an abstract of the Ten Commandments was found engraved in 256 characters on a stone tablet in ancient Hebrew. (Bancroft, 5:94–95) This tablet and another engraved with Hebrew characters are now in a Coshocton, Ohio, museum.

About 1865 a number of Hebrew characters were found buried in mounds near Newark, Ohio, one of which was this expression, buried with one of their ancient dead, "May the Lord have mercy on me a Nephite." (Translated Nephel.) (Roberts 3:56.)

(*Seven Claims of the Book of Mormon*, by John A. Widtsoe and Franklin S. Harris, Jr., 1937, pp. 111–112)

The Mormon writer Josiah E. Hickman also used this discovery and Orson Pratt's purported translation in his book, *The Romance of the Book of Mormon*:

Elder Pratt makes the following comment: "Five years after the discovery of this remarkable memento (the Newark Stone) . . . several other mounds in the same vicinity of Newark were opened, in several of which Hebrew characters were found. Among them was this beautiful expression, buried with one of their ancient dead, 'May the Lord have mercy on me a Nephite.' It was translated a little different—'Nephel.' . . . The Nephites were a righteous people . . . when they were burying one of their brethren in these ancient mounds, they introduced the Hebrew characters signifying 'May the Lord have mercy on me a Nephite.' This is another direct evidence of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, which was brought forth and translated by inspiration some thirty-five years before this inscription was found."

Whether Elder Pratt's interpretation of the inscription is correct or not is **immaterial** for our purposes here. The finds of sacred stones ought to prove of special interest to Latter-day Saints. (*The Romance of the Book of Mormon*, by Josiah E. Hickman, Salt Lake City, 1937, pp. 168–169)

We feel that this is a very important matter, for if Pratt's interpretation is not correct Mormon writers should not use it as evidence for the Book of Mormon. Actually, the word "nephel" appears as word No. 5309 in the "Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary" found in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, and it is defined as follows: "something fallen, i.e. an abortion:—untimely birth." This word is used in Job 3:16: "Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light." The same word is found in Ecclesiastes 6:3: ". . . an untimely birth is better than he." It is also translated "untimely birth" in Psalms 58:8. From this it is apparent that the inscription found at Newark, Ohio, should be translated, "May the Lord have mercy on me, an untimely birth." There is nothing to support the Apostle Pratt's false translation, "May the Lord

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

have mercy on me a Nephite.” This interesting information concerning the inscriptions was published in *The Daily Oklahoman* in 1908:

Another relic found was the image of an infant’s skull. The inscription there, when interpreted, was—“May the Lord have mercy on me, an untimely birth.” In explanation of this infant skull, the Rev. Miller said that it was a custom of the ancient Jews, whenever they had violated a law or precept of their religion which they regarded a grievous offense, to manifest their deep penitence by carving out of stone an infant’s skull and inscribing on the forehead in Hebrew the words above quoted. (*The Daily Oklahoman*, May 3, 1908, as quoted in *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications*, April 1908, p. 210)

In 1866 these statements by Rev. M. R. Miller were printed:

The whole inscription appears to be this: (The Hebrew is then given.) Dr. Illoway gives it as his judgment that the words are Yerachamehu Adonai Nephel, “May the Lord have mercy on him, an untimely birth,” or an abortion. Both Job and David use the word Nephel with this meaning. If I might take the liberty to add one suggestion . . . that the affixed pronoun of the first word be changed to the first person, and then the interpretation will be: “May the Lord have mercy on me, an untimely birth.” . . . We have accordingly, found written in the rock one of the most interesting expressions of humility and contrition. The man feels that he has failed to reach the high mark of human life; that all his life has been a failure; that he once had excellent prospects, but all his promises have proved to be only the blossoms where the fruit fails, and now he leaves it written in the rock: “May the Lord have mercy on me, an utter failure,” a Nephel! (*The Occident*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, May, 1966, p. 65, as quoted in *The Romance of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 167–169)

It would appear, then, that Orson Pratt’s interpretation amounts to nothing but wishful thinking.

### TREE-OF-LIFE

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 date given for the article was July 5, 1965. We obtained *The El Paso Times* for the 5th, but

were unable to find the article. Further research, however, revealed that the article appeared in *The El Paso Times* on July 4, 1965. The article was entitled, “Chiapas Find of Relevance to Document,” and read as follows:

The Book of Mormon, a companion volume of scripture to the Bible in the Latter-Day Saints Church, is purported to be an ecclesiastical and historical record of the American continent translated from gold plates.

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.

In the evaluation of the carving strict adherence was made to a rule laid down by Dr. Alfred L. Kroeber, a non-Mormon authority on the Anthropological Theory and formerly of the University of California. The procedure requires five to ten complex similarities between questioned archaeological sites to prove a historical connection.

The carving is a portrayal of an ancient event concerning the Tree of Life. Six persons are seated by and discussing the tree. The near-east clothing style is clear, as well as are other evidences of Old World origin.

Three name glyphs on the carving have been translated as “Leah,” “Sarah,” 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. Careful research, however, shows that this article cannot be used as evidence for the Book of Mormon. To begin with, this seems to be nothing but old Mormon propaganda rewritten. Long before *The El Paso Times* published this article we were given a sheet, which was printed at the Gila Printing & Publishing Co., Safford, Arizona, which told that “Maurice W. Connell, of the University Archaeological Society” was lecturing “to individuals and groups” in the Bisbee area. Below are some parallels between information which appeared on this sheet and the article in *The El Paso Times*:

Sheet entitled “Near East Type Ancient Carving Found In Mexico”	<i>El Paso Times</i> , July 4, 1965
Archaeologists have conceded the probable existence of such a record, . . .	Archaeologists have conceded the possible existence of such a record, . . .
A large carving unearthed in Chiapas, Mexico, has been successfully interpreted, and presents the first scientifically sound evidence of the Near Eastern origin of its carvers.	A large carving unearthed in Chiapas, Mexico, has been interpreted and offers the first sound evidence of the near-eastern origin of its carvers—. . .

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

<p>Sheet entitled "Near East Type Ancient Carving Found In Mexico"</p> <p>In the evaluation of the carving strict adherence was made to the rule laid down by Dr. Alfred L. Kroeber, a leading non-Mormon authority on anthropological theory. Kroeber's rule, . . . requires only from five to ten complex similarities between questioned archaeological sites, to prove a historical connection, . . .</p> <p>. . . a complicated portrayal of an ancient event concerning the Tree of Life. Six persons are shown seated by the tree and discussing it. Near East-type clothing is plainly shown with other evidences of Old World origin. . . .</p> <p>The three name glyphs on Stela 5 have been translated as "Lehi," "Sariah," and "Nephi," which are three names prominent in the Book of Mormon, . . . study of this carving . . . shows a very detailed and accurate symbolization of a particularly crucial scene in the Book of Mormon, termed "Lehi's Vision in of the Tree of Life." This . . . ranks as one of the most important and astounding finds in the history of archaeology.</p>	<p><i>El Paso Times</i>, July 4, 1965</p> <p>In the evaluation of the carving strick adherence was made to a rule laid down by Dr. Alfred L. Kroeber, a non-Mormon authority on the Anthropological Theory and formerly of the University of California. The procedure requires five to ten complex similarities between questioned archaeological sites to prove a historical connection.</p> <p>. . . a portrayal of an ancient event concerning the Tree of Life. Six persons are seated by and discussing the tree. The near-east clothing style is clear, as well as are other evidences of Old World origin.</p> <p>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.</p>
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From these parallels it is plain that the article from *The El Paso Times* was nothing but a rehash of old Mormon propaganda. 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 of the Church of Christ of Latter-Day Saints," and that one of the missionaries said his sources were articles obtained at the Department of Archaeology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. On the next page is a photograph of the letter from *The El Paso Times*.

The sheet "Near East Type Ancient Carving Found in Mexico," printed at Safford, Arizona, gives some additional information concerning the carving:

Stela 5 was first noticed by the Mexican archaeologist, C. A. Culebro, in 1939. It was examined in 1941 by the Smithsonian Institution and National Geographic expedition. A photograph published in 1941 attracted the attention of Dr. M. Wells Jackman, head of the Department of Archaeology of B.Y.U., who noticed immediately an amazing similarity to the scene from the Book of Mormon. Dr. Jackman headed an expedition to Izapa in 1954 for a detailed examination and the making of a latex cast of the carving. In 1958 Dr. Jackman completed his study of the stone and published his conclusions, which to this date have not been disparaged by non-Mormon archaeologists.

While some Mormon archaeologists have felt that this stone can be used as evidence to prove the Book of Mormon, non-Mormon archaeologists seem to see no connection. In a letter to Marvin Cowan, George Crossete, of *National Geographic Magazine*, stated:

The National Geographic Society along with the Smithsonian Institution sponsored archeological work in

Mexico where "Stela 5, Izapa" was found. Information on Stela 5 has not appeared in the *National Geographic*. No one associated with our expedition connected this stela in any way with the Book of Mormon. (Letter from George Crossette, Chief, Geographical Research, *National Geographic Magazine*, dated April 27, 1965, to Marvin W. Cowan)

M. Wells Jakeman, of the Department of Archaeology at BYU, has been chiefly responsible for the idea that the carving is connected with the Book of Mormon. He stated:

Some years ago there occurred a little-publicized discovery in American archaeology, that now promises to surpass in importance all the other findings made to date in this field of study. This was the unearthing of a great stone monument at the ancient ruined city of Izapa in the State of Chiapas, Mexico. . . (*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico—A Major Archaeological Discovery of the New World*, by M. Wells Jakeman, Provo, Utah, 1958, p. 1)

On page 84 of the same booklet, Dr. Jakeman states:

. . . Izapa Stela 5 is thus the first ancient monument to be discovered as actually recording a specifically Book of Mormon event.

On the next page is a photograph of "Stela 5," or as it is now commonly called, "The Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone."

Paul R. Cheesman, of the BYU, states:

Stela 5, Izapa, found in Chiapas, Mexico, seems to bear similarities to the story in the Book of Mormon and to Mesopotamian tree-of-life representations. Dr. Ross T. Christensen, Professor of Archaeology at Brigham Young University, has this to say regarding the Stela 5, Izapa, discovery:



Stela 5,  
Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico

## NEWSPAPER PRINTING CORPORATION

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**El Paso Herald-Post**  
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EVENING

November 3, 1965

Modern Microfilm Co.  
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Dear Mr. Tanner:

The article "Chiapas Find of Relevance To Document", was published in the July 4, 1965 edition of The El Paso Times.

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.

Further comment would have to come from Mr. Byington, who is now assigned to Albuquerque, N.M., or from the university.

A copy of the article is enclosed.

Yours truly,

*Joseph Rice*

Joseph Rice  
Religion Editor  
The El Paso Times

JR:sm  
Enclosure



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

“... The most direct and striking evidence in support of the Book of Mormon which has yet come forth from the science of archaeology. I do not know who carved this sculpture—whether the artist was a Nephite, a Lamanite, or of some other lineage—but whoever did it was beyond any doubt familiar with the story of Lehi’s vision of the Tree of Life as recounted in 1 Nephi, chapter 8.” (“Archaeology and the Book of Mormon,” *The Instructor*, November 1968, p. 432)

### LEHI, SARIAH, & NEPHI

Notice that the article in *The El Paso Times* stated that “Three name glyphs on the carving have been translated as ‘Lehi,’ ‘Sariah,’ and ‘Nephi,’ prominent names in the Book of Mormon, . . .” We feel that this claim is not based on facts. The idea that Book of Mormon names have been translated from the carving probably stems from some of M. Wells Jakeman’s statements concerning this carving. On December 5, 1959, Dr. Jakeman said:

Incidentally we have here in the Izapa carving, in view of this conclusion, the first actual portrayal of a Book of Mormon event, and the first actual recording of Book of Mormon names, yet discovered on an ancient monument of the New World. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, p. 53)

As we examine Dr. Jakeman’s work we find that he has not actually translated any Book of Mormon name from “Stela 5,” but he has only “symbolically” interpreted some elements on the stone. He states:

We have now seen that two of the six persons shown seated around the Tree of Life in the Izapa carvings are accompanied by identifying name-glyphs of Egyptian or Egyptian-like type, and that these glyphs record the actual personal names of these two—i.e. symbolically, by giving their meaning as the Book of Mormon names Lehi and Sariah. (Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico, by M. Wells Jakeman, p. 38)

The Egyptologist Samuel A. B. Mercer once stated: “Really when men decide to interpret ‘symbolically’ there is no end to what can be done” (*The Utah Survey*, September 1913, pp. 26–27). Dr. Jakeman provides a good demonstration of the very thing Mercer was speaking of, for he goes to great lengths trying to prove the names Nephi, Lehi, and Sariah are in some way recorded on “Stela 5.”

Take, for instance, Dr. Jakeman’s identification of Sariah. He feels that a name-glyph should be found “recording this person’s personal name as the Book of Mormon name Sariah . . .” (Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico, p. 36). He searches the area around this personage, but “No indication of such a glyph can be found in the vicinity of Feature 2.” He does find, however, that “this person wears a headdress that is most unusual for known Mesoamerican art representations,” and he feels that this headdress is “a kind of name-glyph”:

In other words, this crown can be considered as actually a kind of name-glyph (derived from an Egyptian symbol, just as expected), giving the name of the person wearing it as the Book of Mormon name Sariah. (Stela 5, p. 37)

Dr. Jakeman states that this crown “duplicates a certain crown seen in ancient Egyptian representations,” and “identifies the wearer as a queen or princess.” Then Dr. Jakeman states:

... its apparent identification of the person wearing it as not only a woman but a queen or princess is not improbably in further agreement with the Book of Mormon, since the corresponding person of that account, Sariah, may well have come to be regarded as a queen by the people of Lehi (having been the wife of Lehi, their first leader or ruler). Finally, its signification of “princess” closely agrees with the name of this corresponding person Sariah of the Book of Mormon account. For the meaning of the basic part of this person’s name, Hebrew sārāh, is also “princess”! (*Sariah, “Princess of Yahweh”*). (Stela 5, p. 37)

It would appear that Dr. Jakeman had his mind made up that this was Sariah and that he was willing to go to almost any length to prove the point. Dr. Jakeman states that this type of crown “is also the identifying crown of the Egyptian goddess Hathor or Isis, . . .” If this is the case we could just as reasonable state that it is Isis or Hathor. According to Dr. Jakeman’s interpretation, then, the crown could identify the person as Isis, Hathor, a queen or a princess. Since none of these words in Egyptian are pronounced anything like “Sariah” Dr. Jakeman tries to tie into Hebrew. He states that in “Hebrew sārāh, is also ‘princess’!” The reader will notice that the Book of Mormon name is Sariah—not Sarah. So even after all this manipulation, Dr. Jakeman has only come up with a name that is similar. He states that “Sariah” means “Princess of Yahweh,” whereas “Sarah” means just princess.

What we have here, then, is “a kind of name-glyph” which must be interpreted symbolically. We must assume that the headdress is meant to be interpreted as an Egyptian symbol for a princess, but since in Egyptian the word princess is not pronounced anything like “Sariah” we must assume the Egyptian symbol was meant to represent a Hebrew word. And even after all this, we only have the word “Sarah” which means “princess,” whereas what we really need is the word “Sariah” which, according to Dr. Jakeman, means “Princess of Yahweh.” We feel that it would be very difficult to find the word Yahweh (Jehovah) in the pagan headdress worn by Egyptian goddesses, princesses or queens.

We feel that Dr. Jakeman’s identification of the name Sariah is fantastic, and that no translator could approve of such a method for reading a name.

Dr. Jakeman’s identification of the name “Lehi” is anything but a translation from the carving. In fact, Dr. Jakeman himself states that he has found a name-glyph which gives the name of the man as “Cipactónal.” According to “ancient Mesoamerican tradition” he was “the ancestor of the ancient peoples of northern Central America,” Since the Book of Mormon states that Lehi was the ancestor of the

Indians, Dr. Jakeman feels that he is justified in claiming that “Cipactónal” is in reality “Lehi”:

Now in the excellent photograph of the Izapa carving obtained by the Smithsonian Central-American expedition of 1941—before the weathering that has occurred since then and blurred some of the detail—there can be seen a strange hieroglyph above the old bearded man—the hieroglyph you see here in the large drawing reproduction, designated Feature 9, and consisting mainly of two large jaws in side view, or a great cheek. Undoubtedly this is a name-glyph, recording the name of the old bearded man. This, in fact, has proven to be the cipactli or “crocodile” symbol of ancient Mesoamerican hieroglyphics and gives the name of the old bearded man as “Cipactónal,” thus identifying him as the famed old man who, according to ancient Mesoamerican tradition, was the ancestor of the ancient peoples of northern Central America. (Here, of course, is a further important correspondence between the old bearded man of the Izapa carving and Lehi of the Book of Mormon; for Lehi, according to that record, was the ancestor of the ancient peoples of northern Central America!) (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, p. 52)

To be truthful, then, Mormon writers should not state that the name “Lehi” has been read from the carving, but rather that Dr. Jakeman has read the name “Cipactónal,” who he feels is Lehi. Actually, Dr. Jakeman admits that there were several “old men called Cipactónal,” and that for “a final identification the evidence is divided”:

In fact, as a rebus glyph for the name Cipactónal, this cipactli symbol must have had a multiple application. For there were several famous old men called Cipactónal—in Mesoamerican tradition; indeed these names (and their equivalents in the Quiché Mayan traditions of highland Guatemala, Ixpiyacoc and Ixmucané) appear to have meant simply an old couple, an “old man” and “old woman.” . . . The original ancestral couple were likewise held to be gods, as doubtless also the second ancestral couple of the Quiché traditions.) Still another old pair called Cipactónal and Oxomoco are mentioned in the Aztec Annals of Cuauhtitlan, . . . Returning now to the Izapa scene, it is evident that the cipactli glyph held above the old man portrayed here is meant to identify him as one of the famous old men in ancient Mesoamerican tradition called Cipactónal or Ixpiyacoc. And this in turn, surely, identifies the person seated behind this old man and in attendance upon him, holding the cipactli or “Cipactónal” sign above him, as one of the famous old women in ancient Mesoamerican tradition, the wife of Cipactónal or Ixpiyacoc, called Oxomoco or Ixmucané.

But which of the ancient old couples of these names were this old man and woman of the Izapa carving? A partial answer to this question is found in the fact that this scene does not appear to have anything to do with the ancient Mesoamerican calendar, but instead with the symbol of the Tree of Life. In other words, the old couple “Cipactónal” and “Oxomoco” portrayed here were neither the third nor the fourth of those listed above (whose fame lay in their connection with the calendar), but rather were

either the first or the second (who were venerated, instead, as ancient progenitors, an appropriate symbol for whom would therefore have been the Tree of Life).

For a final identification the evidence is divided. Thus on the basis alone of the connection with the Tree of Life, we should have to favor the identification of this Izapa pair as the first old couple of Mesoamerican tradition, the original parents of mankind according to that tradition. For this Tree of Life connection results—as doubtless already noted by the reader—in a striking correspondence to the ancient Genesis story of the Near East connecting the first old couple or original parents of mankind according to that account. Adam and Eve, with the Tree of Life . . . These are differences sufficient to rule out the identification of our Izapa couple as the original “Cipactónal” and “Oxomoco” or original parents of mankind, in so far as this identification is suggested by the general resemblance of the Izapa scene to the Genesis story.

We are left, then, with the identification of this “Cipactónal” and “Oxomoco” of the Izapa carving with the second old couple of ancient Mesoamerican tradition—the “great father” and “great mother” reported to have been the ancestors of the ancient inhabitants of the Guatemala Quiché region after “the flood,” . . . (*Stele 5*, pp. 20–23)

Thus it appears that Dr. Jakeman’s entire thesis regarding the name Lehi rests on a very poor foundation. The reader will also note that Dr. Jakeman’s interpretation requires us to identify Sariah with “Oxomoco.” It is also interesting to note that Dr. Jakeman adds to the confusion regarding the name Lehi by trying to put a Hebrew interpretation on the “name-glyph”:

It has been shown that this feature is the Mesoamerican cipactli glyph and the general name-glyph “Cipactónal,” which identifies the old bearded man as one of the famed old men of Mesoamerican tradition called Cipactónal. . .

But in this earliest known application of the cipactli or “Cipactónal” glyph it may also, more particularly, be a glyph-recording of the actual personal name of this ancestral old man “Cipactónal” portrayed here. Indeed, in view of the correspondence previously brought out between this ancestral personage and the ancestor-prophet Lehi of the Book of Mormon account, and the likelihood noted above that an inscription or hieroglyph to identify him by giving his name would have been placed by the Book of Mormon people with any portrayal they may have made of Lehi, we must conclude that the cipactli glyph here is not only the general name-glyph “Cipactónal,” but more specifically a glyph recording the personal name of this particular old man “Cipactónal”—symbolically, by depicting its meaning—as the Book of Mormon name Lehi.

This in fact is found to be the case. For the meaning of the name Lehi is the jaws—especially the upper jaw—in side view, i.e. “cheek.” And we have already noted that Feature 9, the cipactli glyph held above the old bearded man, mainly depicts a pair of huge jaws (those of the crocodile)—especially upper jaw—in side view, i.e. a great cheek! That is, this glyph is essentially a portrayal of what the name Lehi means. It therefore constitutes—whether intended or not—a symbolic recording of that

name. . . . (It is true that the great teeth, snout, an eye, an elongate eyebrow, and apparently a fore-leg of that animal are also seen in this glyph, i.e. more than called for by the meaning of Lehi's name; but these—or at least the great teeth and elongate eyebrow—were necessary of course to make clear what the cheek was, i.e. that of the crocodile, the most striking and appropriate symbolization of Lehi's name.) (*Stela 5*, pp. 32–33)

Since the Hebrews had a written language, it is certainly strange that they would go to all the trouble to draw this complicated “name-glyph” when they could have just written a few characters in Hebrew. Moreover, the “name-glyph” shows more than just the jaw. We could just as reasonably argue that the teeth, snout, eye, eyebrow, and leg represent names. In fact, the crocodile god Sobk of the Egyptians is sometimes represented by an image of the crocodile which does not seem to show the back legs or tail. We feel, however, that it is ridiculous to put Hebrew or Egyptian meanings on “Mesoamerican” hieroglyphs. If this particular “name-glyph” reads “Cipactónal,” why should we try to say that it means something else in Hebrew or Egyptian?

Dr. Jakeman claims that another “name-glyph” has been found which gives the name Nephi:

In light of this discovery of a hieroglyph apparently recording the name Lehi, what of the possibility of name-glyphs also in the carving above others of the six persons seated around the tree? One such additional glyph has now been found. In 1958 an expedition of the Archaeology Department of Brigham Young University to Central America obtained a latex mold of the Izapa carving. Careful study of the mold, in comparison with the Smithsonian photograph, established the existence in the sculpture of a second name-glyph, . . .

Now this second glyph has been found to be both a Maya and an Egyptian symbol. The name it records—as the name of this large young man—in its Maya use is unknown. But in its Egyptian use it signifies the name Nepri (pronounced “Nep-ree”) or Nepi (a shortened form of the name dating from the time of the New Kingdom). Now the latter form, it will be noted, comes very close to the Book of Mormon name Nephi. In fact, it is identical with that name; for it has been shown that Nepi was pronounced with the *p* aspirated—i.e., as “Nep-hee”—and in consequence is more correctly transliterated Nephi! (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, 1964 Ed., pp. 52–53)

When we examined Dr. Jakeman's reasons for believing that the “name-glyph” could be read Nephi, we were rather astonished. He actually claims that the headdress is an Egyptian glyph representing an Egyptian grain god named Nepri:

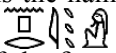
This derivation of Nephi's name from the name of the young Egyptian grain god Nepri or Nepi brings us in turn to a further conclusion. This is that the descendants of Lehi and Nephi in the New World, in any portrayal of Nephi such as in the Lehi Tree-of-Life episode, may well have used—as a convenient name-glyph for identifying him therein—the Egyptian symbol (already at hand and

doubtless known to them) of this young grain god Nepi whose name he bore; i.e.. a representation of a young man wearing ears of grain or a grain plant on his head.

Let us now return to the Izapa carving, to ascertain whether the ancient Izapa artists, in their portrayal of the similar Tree-of-Life scene on Stela 5, included therein a symbol identifiable with this Egyptian grain-god symbol, thereby indicating that the name of the person with the stylus corresponding to Nephi of the Book of Mormon episode was in fact the Egyptian and Book of Mormon name Nepi or Nephi, the name of the Egyptian grain god. . . .

Examining the 1941 photograph of the carving (Plate 3), no separate feature can be discovered near the person with the stylus that could be this expected name-symbol of Egyptian type, connoting the Egyptian-Book of Mormon name Nephi. A clue as to where it might be found, however, is provided by the apparent fact that the name-glyph of the person seated behind and attendant upon the old bearded man, identifiable as an Egyptian symbol, recording the name of this person—a woman—as Sariah (or at least having the basic meaning of that Book of Mormon name), is comprised by her unusual headdress. May not the expected Egyptian name-glyph of the large young man with the stylus, recording his name as Nephi, be likewise found in the unusual headdress he also is shown wearing?

Now the reader has doubtless already observed that this peculiar headdress worn by the person with the stylus—very probably a young man's face in profile with a maize . . . plant rising above it . . .—essentially duplicates the representations of the ancient Egyptian grain god Nepri or Nepi seen in Egyptian art, i.e. a young man's figure with the face in profile and ears of wheat or barley [i.e. grain] rising above it as a headdress or growing out of it. . . . In other words, this headdress is in fact the name-glyph we were expecting to find!—a symbol connected with the figure of the young man with the stylus and identifiable with the Egyptian grain-god symbol, thereby indicating that his name was that of the Egyptian grain god Nepri or Nepi . . . Note that this grain-god headdress does not as might at first be thought—identify the young man of the Izapa carving as the grain god himself, since for this significance the grain plant would have been shown rising immediately above the face of the young man [instead of above another face above his face, that is the actual representation of the grain god]. This leaves only two possibilities: Either [1] this grain-god headdress-glyph identifies the young man as a priest-representative of the grain god, or [2]—the conclusion required here by his detailed correspondence in character and role to Nephi of the Book of Mormon—it signifies that he bore the name of that god, i.e. it is a name-glyph, recording his name as the name of that god. (*Stela 5*, Izapa, pp. 41–44)

We do not feel that any Egyptologist would accept this identification. In Egyptian hieroglyphs the name of the grain god Nepri is written as follows:  If these hieroglyphs were found in the area of the figure on the carving, we would agree that it might be the god Nepri. But since they do not appear, and since the headdress is so unclear, we feel that Dr. Jakeman is not justified in making

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

this identification. Even Dr. Jakeman admits that it is not exactly like the Egyptian headdress:

The fact that this young-man-with-grain-plant-headdress symbol discovered in the Izapa carving and that seen in Maya art differ stylistically and in one or two details from the grain-god symbol of the Egyptians is not significant, since these representations are from ancient peoples widely separate geographically, which makes such differences inevitable between traits of the same origin. (*Stela 5*, p. 44)

As we have shown, Dr. Jakeman admits that the name-glyph is a Mayan glyph, but that “its Maya use is unknown.” He does, however, state that the Mayan people had a “Corn or Grain God” who is represented by this symbol. This is “The God of Corn (God E),” that is mentioned in Sylvanus Morley’s book, *The Ancient Maya*, Stanford University Press, 1947, pp. 225–226:

The third deity in point of frequency of representation in the codices appropriately is the corn-god or the god of agriculture, who occurs 98 times in the three manuscripts. He is always represented as a youth (frontispiece) and sometimes with an ear of corn as his headdress (Plate 29, c). Occasionally this ear is shown sprouting from the glyph for the day Kan, which itself is the symbol for corn in the codices. Kan was also the day of which this god was the patron. Of all the gods represented in the codices this youthful deity shows the greatest amount of head-deformation. Notice his markedly retreating forehead. His name-glyph is his own head, which merges at the top into a high conventionalized ear of corn, surmounted by leaves.

Dr. Jakeman would have us believe that the idea of the Mayan grain god was derived from the Egyptian grain god Nepri:

... the similar young-man-with-grain-plant-headdress symbol in Maya and Aztec art and hieroglyphics represented a grain god as did the Egyptian—who was, moreover, apparently identical to the Egyptian god: This Mesoamerican grain god, besides being symbolized by the figure of a man with a grain-plant headdress, was the personification of growing grain, is always represented as a young man, and had a female counterpart, the grain goddess, exactly like the Egyptian deity. In other words, there was a grain god in the ancient religion of Mesoamerica who conceivably derived from the Egyptian grain god, and whose young-man-with-grain-plant-headdress symbol therefore conceivably derived from the similar symbol of the Egyptian deity; which would be explained by the original use of that symbol in Mesoamerica as a means of recording the name of the Egyptian grain god, Nepri, Nepi, or Nephi, in accord with our interpretation of the headdress of the young man in the Izapa carving. (*Stela 5*, pp. 44–45)

From Dr. Jakeman’s interpretation it would appear that the idea of a grain god and a grain goddess stemmed from the fact that Lehi named his son after the pagan Egyptian grain god Nepri! Hal Hougey makes this interesting observation concerning this matter:

In discussing the etymology of the Book of Mormon name, Nephi, Dr. Jakeman wrote, “It is not likely that Lehi, and Israelite prophet who emphasized the teachings of Moses, would have named his son after this Egyptian animal God Panepi.” Is it any more likely that Lehi would name one of his sons after any heathen god of Egypt, a nation which was a perennial enemy of the Hebrews? Further, it indeed unbelievable that a prophet of God would so thoroughly teach the religious beliefs and customs of heathen Near Eastern cultures to his children, that 750 years later his American descendents can adeptly use this same religious symbolism as an integral part of their art! (*The Truth About The “Lehi Tree-of-Life” Stone*, by Hal Hougey, 1963, p. 12)

The more we examine Dr. Jakeman’s attempts to identify the personages on the carving, the more convinced we are that he has not read a single Book of Mormon name on the stone, and that all of his arguments are based only on wishful thinking.

### CRITICISM FROM WITHIN

In December, 1968, we sent a copy of the clipping from the *El Paso Times* to the Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson. The reader will remember that the clipping contained this statement:

Three name glyphs on the carving have been translated as “Lehi,” “Sariah,” and “Nephi,” prominent names in the Book of Mormon, . . .

After examining this clipping Dee Jay Nelson wrote us the following statement and has given us permission to publish it:

Thank you for the kind letter and the newspaper clipping. I never take much stock in newspaper articles which do not carry by-lines. 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 stela. I have studied the features of the stela 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 Stela 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)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

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 have 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, for instance, does not agree with Dr. Jakeman. Dr. 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:

Jakeman's paper carries trait-list comparison to its logical conclusion . . . Obviously comparison remains a key methodological device in the conduct of research in history and the sciences, but 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, p. 149)

From a statement made on December 5, 1959, it was plain that Dr. Sorenson rejected Jakeman's work on the "Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone":

We have wanted to find Nephi's name or some Egyptian writer or something of this very specific kind. We have wanted to find when Zarahemla burned; we have wanted to find the ashes; we have wanted to find the very roads that Nephi walked over. The point that I would like to make is that it is extremely unlikely that we will find any of this so that we can convincingly lead others to believe that it is what we think it is. (*Book of Mormon institute*, December 5, 1959, p. 25)

M. Wells Jakeman makes these statements concerning Sorenson's rejection of his identification:

The other attack I know of by a Mormon writer has been going on for some time, in fact ever since my correlation of the Izapa sculpture with the Book of Mormon was first published in 1953 ("An Unusual Tree-of-Life Sculpture from Ancient Central America," *Bulletin of the University Archaeological Society*, No. 4, March, 1953, pp. 26–49). This has been mainly the repeated assertion in lectures, by a former student of the archaeology department of Brigham Young University and former faculty member of that institution, that my interpretation is purely a subjective one on my part, and that there is really not enough evidence in the carving itself to establish an interpretation. (In other words, he sides with anti-Mormon writer Hal Hougey, in the

latter's contention . . . that it is impossible for me, being a Mormon, to be objective.)

My reply to this has been, and still is, that a charge of subjectivity is a subjective judgment on the part of this critic himself. For so far as I know, he has not himself ever given Izapa Stela 5—and other ancient art works of Mesoamerica—the long-time study necessary to qualify him as an informed and objective judge in this case.

... .  
The same writer also, in a contribution to the Mormon magazine *Dialogue*, refers to (quote) Jakeman's "pseudo-identifications" of the six persons in the Stela 5, Izapa, carving. That is he rejects, as false, my identifications of these persons with the six persons in the Book of Mormon episode. But he does not give cause for this rejection, . . . Such a casual dismissal of the conclusions of another writer is not the way of a responsible critic, and surely will not be accepted by careful students. (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, November 29, 1967, p. 10)

Another "prominent member of the faculty of Brigham Young University" apparently rejects Jakeman's thesis, for Dr. Jakeman states:

Other than the Hougey booklet, the only written or public pronouncements I know of against my Book of Mormon interpretation of the Izapa sculpture have come from two Mormon writers. These can be answered here briefly.

One of these "attacks from within" is known to me only by hearsay. This is evidently a dittoed leaflet by a **prominent member** of the faculty of Brigham Young University, in which, I am told, he ridicules my interpretation, and which he appears to have distributed privately to some of his friends and students, two or three years ago. Since I have not been able to obtain a copy of this brochure, I am unable to reply to his specific charges. It may be noted, however, that although this BYU critic is competent in several fields of ancient study, the Mesoamerican is not one of them—that is, the field most involved here. Consequently his criticisms in this case, whatever they may be, can hardly be accorded much weight. (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, November 29, 1967, pp. 9–10)

Exactly who this "prominent" member of the BYU faculty is we are unable to say. We do know, however, that there has been a difference of opinion between Dr. Jakeman and Dr. Hugh Nibley, and that Dr. Nibley does not seem to endorse Jakeman's work on the "Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone."

In his book, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, Dr. Nibley made this comment concerning the name "Nephi":

Since BM insists on "ph" Nephi is closer to Nihpi, original name of the god Pa-nepi, which may even have been Nephi. (*Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, by Hugh Nibley, 1952, p. 29)

Dr. Jakeman contests Dr. Nibley's identification:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

... an Egyptian derivation also for the name Nephi has recently been proposed; namely, that it is from “Nihpi,” asserted original name of the Egyptian god “Pa-nepi.” Unfortunately, this particular Egyptian derivation so far suggested is not admissible, for the reason that the name of the god referred to here was not “Pa-nepi” but Panepi (if hyphenated, Pan-epi), of which the original form was not “Nihpi” but very probably Pahun(i)h-epi (“Ox of Epi,” i.e. the “Apis-bull”). It may be added that besides the mistaken etymology given here for the Egyptian name Panepi, another reason for rejecting this particular Egyptian derivation of the Book of Mormon name Nephi is that it is not likely that Lehi, an Israelite prophet who emphasized the teachings of Moses, would have named his son after Egyptian animal god Panepi, the “Apis-bull” (a “Nile-god” of fertility and the animal representative of Ptah, a god of the dead). (*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico*, by M. Wells Jakeman, pp. 39–40)

As we have shown, Dr. Jakeman felt that the name Nephi was derived from the Egyptian grain god Nepri. In *The Case Against Mormonism*, Vol. 2, pp. 73–74, we show that the word Nephi did not come from any Egyptian god, but rather, from the Apocrypha, 2 Maccabees 1:36.

In March, 1953, Dr. Jakeman published some of his preliminary work on “Stela 5.” Four years later Dr. Nibley’s book, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, was published. In this book Dr. Nibley seemed to ignore Dr. Jakeman’s work with regard to “Stela 5,” for he stated:

There is certainly no shortage of ruins on this continent, but until some one object has been definitely identified as either Nephite or Jaredite it is dangerous to start drawing any conclusions. . . . The search must go on, but conclusions should wait. We are asking for trouble when we describe any object as Nephite or Jaredite, since, as Woolley says, “no record is ever exhaustive,” and at any moment something might turn up (and often does!) to require a complete reversal of established views. Aside from the danger of building faith on the “highly ambiguous materials” of archaeology and the “unavoidable subjective” and personal interpretations of the same, we should remember that archaeology at its best is a game of surprises. (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, by Hugh Nibley, 1957 p. 370)

Dr. Jakeman evidently felt that he had been slighted, and in a review of Nibley’s book he stated:

Moreover, in his [Nibley’s] denial of the possibility of ever identifying any particular monument or artifact as Jaredite, Nephite, or ancient Lamanite, the author is evidently unaware of the recent identification of an ancient sculpture unearthed at the ruined city of Izapa in Central America as definitely a monument of the Nephite civilization (see the reviewer’s article “An Unusual Tree-of-Life Sculpture from Ancient Central America” [the Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone]), . . . (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, BYU, March 30, 1957, p. 7)

Even after this rebuke Dr. Nibley still seems unwilling to admit that any inscription has been read. In his latest book, *Since Cumorah*, published in 1967, Dr. Nibley states:

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. (*Since Cumorah*, by Hugh Nibley, Salt Lake City, 1967, p. 243)

In the *BYU Studies* Dr. Nibley wrote:

The deciphering of hieroglyphics has always been a favorite playground for those seeking a shortcut to Faustian celebrity. . . . The most remarkable of these was the learned Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1601–1680), . . .

But what of his work? Of the forty-four learned volumes that came from his pen, nothing remains that is considered to be of the slightest use of anybody! . . . We look in vain for any overall plan, order, or logic to the work as a whole. After careful study, one finally comes to the conclusion that a vain desire for erudition and a truly infantile display of scientific learning were all that guided the pen of Kircher. . . .

The example of Kircher is less significant for the light it throws on Joseph Smith than the warning it provides for the youth of Zion, who have been only too prone to follow Kircher instead of Smith both in their scholarly and their religious procedures. . . . One has seen the same logic applied in our own day to dubious, damaged, scanty, and isolated figures on New World surfaces, which have been duly declared to be Egyptian glyphs and interpreted by the Kircher method, with the added element of phonetic manipulation as the final touch to this intriguing fun-game. It is strange how those who will hastily excuse themselves from sitting down to a brief examination in elementary Egyptian—say five English-to-Egyptian sentences and vice versa—will hold forth with professional assurance on the meaning of Egyptian cryptograms of the most abstruse and difficult sort. Here let Kircher be an example and a warning to us all. (*BYU Studies*, Winter 1968, pp. 172–175)

It is difficult to resist the idea that Dr. Nibley may have been referring to the “Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone” when he made these comments. The carving has certainly been “damaged” and the interpretation of these purported Egyptian glyphs was certainly done by the “Kircher method.”

On September 21, 1962, Dr. Ross T. Christensen made this statement concerning “Stela 5”:

Stela 5 was probably carved somewhere around the time of Christ and has evidently lain exposed to the elements ever since. Consequently, some details of this complex tableau have become very dim. It was fortunate, therefore, that the sun shone at such an angle when I took my color transparencies as to bring many of the details out in sharp relief. I took a series of 19 close-up views, most of them from a distance of three or four feet, and came

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

away with the impression that Dr. Jakeman's drawing—reproduction of the stone was remarkably faithful, although certain minor details will need to be corrected as a result of the photographs. (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, BYU, September 21, 1962, pp. 3–4)

Dr. Jakeman seems to be continually searching for new hieroglyphs or evidence for the Book of Mormon on this damaged carving. For instance, in 1958 he made this statement concerning an area on the right side of the stone:

Weathering or other damage has rendered the design of this element unrecognizable.

This feature, although unrecognizable, corresponds somewhat to the “great and spacious building” that Lehi, at the end of the above quotation from the Book of Mormon, says he also saw in his vision: (1) It is a fairly large element of the carving, thus agreeing somewhat in this respect with Lehi's description of the building he saw as “great and spacious”; (2) it is located slightly beyond the river design from the tree representing the Tree of Life (in fact as far beyond as physically possible), somewhat as the “great and spacious building” of Lehi's vision was on the other side of a river from a tree representing the Tree of Life; and (3) it is apparently located in the air, being high above the earth panel, exactly like Lehi's “great and spacious building” which he describes as standing “as it were in the air, high above the earth.” (*Stela 5*, p. 66)

In the latest statement made by Dr. Jakeman on the Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone we find that he now claims that there is a hieroglyph on the right side of the stone:

I should mention, finally, that a still more detailed study of the Stela 5, Izapa, carving than my 1958 monograph is now nearing completion. This includes some minor corrections in the analysis and interpretation, which bring additional support to my position—and consequently also to the Latter-day Saint claim of the ancient origin of Lehi's vision. Two of these are corrections of interpretations of particular parts of the carving which I merely suggested in the 1958 work, but which Hougey goes out of his way to criticize (p. 14); namely (1) my suggestion that the peaked elements in the left part of the ground panel are a depiction of the tents in which Lehi and his family and friends dwelt in the wilderness at the time of his tree-of-life vision, and (2) my conjecture that the group of broad cuts on the right edge of the monument is a largely obliterated feature of the carving which represented the “great and spacious building” that Lehi saw in his vision on the other side of the river of water.

In this further study, the discovery has been made that the peaked elements actually constitute a hieroglyph, decipherable as having a meaning of great interest in connection with the Lehi tree-of-life story; and that near the group of broad cuts on the right edge of the monument is still another hieroglyph, decipherable as having a meaning which can be exactly rendered as “great and spacious building”! (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, November 29, 1967, p. 9)

It will be interesting to find out what new hieroglyph Dr. Jakeman thinks he sees on the right side of the carving.

### PAGAN ELEMENTS

The idea of the Tree of Life scene is not confined to the New World alone. The ancient Babylonians, Assyrians, and Egyptians were familiar with it. For instance, in *The Bible and Archaeology*, by J. A. Tompson, page 32, we see a Babylonian scene dating back about 1400 years before Lehi was supposed to have left Jerusalem, and in *The Biblical World*, edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer, page 285, we find that in Hazor a scene was found “depicting a winged deity grasping a ‘Tree of Life’ of a type known from Phoenicia.” It was dated between the “eighth and ninth centuries B.C.” August Wunsche states:

Through all religions goes the legend of a Tree of Life which has concealed in it the powers of renewing life and youth. (As quoted by V. Garth Norman, *Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, BYU, April 13, 1963, p. 37)

V. Garth Norman gives us this interesting statement about the Tree of Life scene among the Jews:

The monotheistic, nonidolatrous worship of Israel stood alone in the ancient world of Israel's locality and would account for the lack of monumental sacred tree representations which were so common among Israel's neighbors. However, remains of Jewish synagogues of the Hellenistic period reveal the frequent use of Tree of Life symbols in religious art. (*Fourteenth Annual Symposium*, p. 39)

Dr. M. Wells Jakeman acknowledges that the Tree of Life scene is common throughout the world, but he points out that ‘Stela 5’ is different because it represents a number of things which he feels are peculiar to a dream which Lehi had, which is recorded in the Book of Mormon. We admit that there are some similarities; however, Hal Hougey points out that there are far more parallels to a dream which Joseph Smith's father was supposed to have had (see *The Truth About The “Lehi Tree-of-Life” Stone*, pp. 22–24, or *The Case Against Mormonism*, Vol. 2, pp. 108–112).

As we have shown in *The Case Against Mormonism*, Vol. 2, page 111, Dr. Jakeman admits “. . . that the similarities between Joseph Smith, Sr.'s dream and Lehi's dream of the tree of life found in the Book of Mormon are too many of an undisputed and arbitrary nature—as [Hougey] points out in his booklet, page 24—to allow for any other explanation than that they are connected.” Dr. Jakeman, however, states that Joseph Smith's mother might have misdated her husband's dream, and that it is possible that it occurred after the Book of Mormon was written.



Dr. Jakeman's Drawing of "Stela 5."



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Hal Hougey has done an excellent job of showing the weakness of Dr. Jakeman's case. Mr. Hougey states:

Before considering Dr. Jakeman's interpretation of the Izapa carving, several preliminary observations should be made. First, Dr. Jakeman is the first Latter-day Saint to earn a doctor's degree in anthropology, and with his church looking to him to produce evidence favoring the Book of Mormon story as an historical record of the New World, he is most certainly not a disinterested investigator! To be objective under such circumstances is to be more than human.

.....  
Fifth, as the reader will discover, Dr. Jakeman's explanation makes a mishmash of the carving, for he finds two independent sources involved: Lehi's vision, and the heathen religion and art of various Near Eastern cultures (not Hebrew!). What he cannot with a little imagination fit into one category, he fits into the other. Thus, he has more than doubled his opportunities to make the various details correspond to something. If he were inconveniently limited to Lehi's vision alone, he would be embarrassed by the presence of a number of non-corresponding features. But he has turned this liability into an asset by assigning these features to a Near Eastern origin, and in the process "proves" that the ancestors of the Izapa artist came from the Near East! Even if true, this does not prove the truth of the Book of Mormon record, since such a connection could have occurred under different circumstances. Several non-Mormon anthropologists have suggested the possibility of such a connection. . . .

Sixth, while Dr. Jakeman concentrates on similarities, he ignores or minimizes differences, as the reader of his monographs will observe. Yet a difference may be a stronger evidence against a historical connection than a similarity is for such a connection. (For example, identical age, birthplace, sex, hair color, eyes, height and weight may be evidence in favor of two persons being identical twins, but if one is a Negro and the other Chinese, the one difference nullifies all the similarities!) (*The Truth About The "Lehi Tree-of-Life" Stone*, by Hal Hougey, Concord, California, 1963, pp. 6-7)

On page 13 of the same pamphlet Hal Hougey states:

Dr. Jakeman states that the artists who carved this picture were Nephites, who are described in the Book of Mormon as people faithful to God. Yet, the carving is alleged to have Mesopotamian and Egyptian religious symbols in it, as well as obviously heathen Mesoamerican religious symbols, such as the two-headed serpent and the jaguar mask. The artist who carved these pagan symbols could hardly have been a faithful Nephite.

Dr. Jakeman must have been very disturbed by Mr. Hougey's pamphlet, for on October 14, 1967, he stated:

One lengthy attack has appeared in print. This is a 27-page booklet authored by a non-Mormon writer, Hal Hougey, entitled *The Truth About the "Lehi Tree-of-Life"*

*Stone*, published at Concord, California, in 1963, and since then widely distributed to members of the Latter-day Saint church and to investigators of Mormonism.

I have had a copy of this publication for some years, but have been disinclined to undertake a reply.

This has been for two reasons. First, Mr. Hougey has written his "critique" not as a serious contribution to the interpretation of the Izapa sculpture but as an addition to anti-Mormon literature. (His prejudice is evident throughout—in the title of the booklet itself and on most of its pages. On p. 6, for example, he states that it is impossible for me, being a Mormon, to be objective. But in many other places he rejects my analysis or interpretation merely with an unsupported opinion of his own; and at the end of his booklet he pleads with his prospective Latter-day Saint readers "to leave the falsity of Mormonism." (This is not the way of an objective discussant but of a biased pamphleteer.) Secondly, he reveals himself in several places to be unacquainted with the fields of learning involved, namely Mesoamerican and Near Eastern archaeology. In other words, I do not regard his critique as meriting a reply—or at least as warranting the considerable time required for dealing with all his opinions and assumptions.

.....  
Hougey's second main argument is that I am mistaken in noting non-Israelite Near Eastern elements in the Stela 5, Izapa, carving—Mesopotamian, Egyptian, etc.—as support of my interpretation of this carving as a depiction of the Lehi tree-of-life story. He holds that an Israelitish people such as the Nephites of the Book of Mormon, the descendants of Lehi—who in my interpretation were necessarily the carvers of Izapa Stela 5—would not have included in a sculpture depicting their ancestor Lehi elements of the "heathen religion and art of various Near Eastern cultures not Hebrew," and certainly not "symbols of Near Eastern religions half way around the world, and 750 years earlier." (pp. 7, 12, 13, 19).

My answer to this argument is that such elements are precisely what we should expect to find in such an art work, before its authenticity can be accepted; and that in making this argument Hougey reveals his lack of knowledge of not only Mesoamerican but also Near Eastern archaeology. One reason for this is the fact that archaeological research in the Near East over the last half-century has established beyond any doubt that many elements of the "heathen" religion and art of the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Canaanites, and other ancient peoples of that region had been fully incorporated into the religion and art of the Israelites by the time of Lehi; for example, the concept of the afterlife (a shadowy world under the earth), the sabbath, the tree-of-life symbol itself of our present interest, the cherubim, and the teraphim of the Mesopotamians . . . and the sacred boat (for the Ark of the Covenant), probably some of the religious and moral laws (for the Ten Commandments), and some of the hymns or prayers of the Egyptians. . . . Egyptian writing, Egyptian names, and Egyptian gods were all known to some of

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

the Israelites of the time of Lehi, especially Israelite merchants engaged in Egyptian trade—as probably Lehi, who is indicated in the Book of Mormon to have been an educated and wealthy citizen of Jerusalem with a knowledge of the language of the Egyptians (1 Nephi 1:2). (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, No. 104, November 29, 1967, pp. 3 and 6)

One of Dr. Jakeman's main points is that there are six persons seated under the tree. At first glance it would appear that there are seven; Dr. Jakeman, however, states that the small figure is not a man, but rather a teraphim. This is very interesting, for the Hebrew word teraphim means images, idols, or gods. (See drawing below.)

Cyrus H. Gordon makes this comment concerning the word "teraphim":

Rachel's theft of Laban's gods (Gen. 31:19, 30–35), however, is unmistakably paralleled in the tablet translated above. While they are called teraphim in verses 19, 34 and 35, they are called "gods" in verses 30 and 32, as in the Nuzu tablets. There is no doubt, therefore, that the teraphim were simply idols. (*The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, Volume 2, pp. 25–26)

The Book of Mormon condemns idolatry in very strong terms: "Yea, wo unto those that worship idols, for the devil of all devils delighteth in them" (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 9:37). It was only the unbelievers and Lamanites who worshipped idols. Dr. Jakeman, however, would have us believe that the Nephites used teraphim:

Feature 12: A small standing figure in human form, facing one of the persons seated against the tree. Although much smaller than any of the other human or humanlike figures in the carving, it evidently represents an adult personage . . . Undoubtedly it represents a small **image** of some kind, possibly **an idol**.

This figure may be compared with the teraphim, small ancestor **images or idols** of household **gods**, common in Israelite families from the time of Jacob (see Gen. 31:30–35) to that of Lehi. Its bundled or bound appearance suggests that it may have been an **image** that was carried about, as often also the Israelite teraphim. Although no mention is made in the Book of Mormon account of a teraph being involved in the episode of Lehi's narration of his vision of the Tree of Life, one may well have been,

since Lehi and his family, being Israelites, may have carried teraphim with them in their migration to the New World, and since the setting up of one of these ancestor **images** on this special religious occasion would have been **quite appropriate** (like the making of a burnt offering, also depicted; compare above, discussion of Feature 8). On the other hand, this **image** or **idol** may have been **inserted** here by the Izapa artists merely as a ceremonial object to counterbalance the altar—Feature 8—on the other side of the tree, completing the symmetrical arrangement of this part of the sculpture. (*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico*, p. 30)

On October 14, 1967, Dr. Jakeman stated:

. . . it is a miniature adult figure with a moustache (and possibly a beard) and a turban headdress; in other words, not a seated child but probably a small standing portable **idol** or **image** very much like the teraphim (household **gods** or ancestor **images**) of ancient western Asia. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, November 29, 1967, p. 4)

Hal Hougey made these comments concerning this matter:

. . . we are told that Lehi and his family brought a small teraph, or household god with them across the ocean to the New World! Who can believe that a devout prophet of God would break the Second Commandment? (Ex. 20:4; 2 Kings 23:24) Whoever this figure may be, he is certainly not the character the Book of Mormon describes as Lehi! (*The Truth About The "Lehi Tree-of-Life" Stone*, pp. 12–13)

Dr. Jakeman has even suggested that the image may be a figure representing the Spirit of the Lord:

A small **image** or **idol** (compare the teraphim, small images or idols of household gods, common in Israelite families down to the time of Lehi; though **not** mentioned in the Book of Mormon account, it may have been inserted here as a ceremonial object to parallel the altar on the other side of the Tree, completing the symmetrical arrangement of this part of the sculpture); or a figure representing the "Spirit of the Lord," which appeared to Nephi in the form of a man and revealed to him the meaning of the vision of his father Lehi, . . . (*Bulletin of the University Archaeological Society*, No. 4, March, 1953, p. 45)



Teraphim ↑

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

We do not understand how Dr. Jakeman can even suggest that Lehi's family would have an image or idol, for the Book of Mormon itself contains this statement:

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing in heaven above, or things which are in the earth beneath. (Mosiah 12:36)

We feel that the presence of an image or idol on "Stela 5" shows that these people were idolaters, and it is very difficult to reconcile this with the story of Lehi found in the Book of Mormon.

There are a number of other things which show that the carving was made by pagans. Dr. Jakeman himself is willing to admit that there are "Maya-like elements" in the carving, but he attributes these to the "religious art of the period":

... the passage of time may have introduced **distortion** and **added elements** in the recounting or representation of the vision. The additional Maya-like elements in the Izapa portrayal not occurring in the Book of Mormon account—jaguar mask panel, double-headed serpent, hieratic emblems, altar or incense burner, fish, and birds—do not, therefore, lessen the resemblance, but must be attributed to the conventions of the religious art of the period of the sculpture, dating perhaps long after the time of the vision. (*Bulletin of the University Archaeological Society*, Number 4, March, 1953, p. 48)

Although Dr. Jakeman does not claim that "Stela 5" was carved in Lehi's lifetime, he feels that it dates back to the time of the Nephites:

Finally, the Maya-like elements in this sculpture—e.g. the cipactli glyph (Feature 9), the young-man-with-grain-plant-headress symbol forming the headress of figure 3, the Long-nosed Rain God Mask on the headress of figure 17, the pelicans, and the Two-headed Earth Serpent—generally have an archaic or preclassic rather than classic Maya appearance. A date of around 100 A.D. for the carving and setting up of Stela 5 should not be too far wrong. (*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico*, p. 87)

On December 5, 1959, Dr. Jakeman stated:

... this is the earliest known example of the Tree of Life symbol so far found in the New World—the art style dates it near the beginning of the Christian Era, probably in or close to the second century A.D. You will note, therefore, that it dates back into Book of Mormon—specifically late Nephite-times. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, 1964 Ed., p. 50)

Dr. Jakeman now feels that it is very likely that "Stela 5" was carved "between 100 BC and AD 35" (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, November 29, 1967, p. 4).

Although "Stela 5" does not have a date carved on it, "Stela 2" found at Chiapa de Corzo dates back before the coming of Christ. Michael D. Coe states:

As of the present moment, the most ancient seems to be Stela 2 at Chiapa de Corzo, a major ceremonial centre which had been in existence since Early Formative times in the dry Grijalva Valley of central Chiapas; in a vertical column are carved the numerical coefficients (7.16)3.2.13, followed by the day 6 Ben, the "month" of the Vague Year being suppressed as in all these early inscriptions. This would correspond to December 9th, 36 BC. Five years later, the famous Stela C at the Olmec site of Tres Zapotes in Veracruz was inscribed with (7.)16.6.16.18 6 Eznab. On both of these fragmentary monuments, the initial coefficients are missing but reconstructable. (*The Maya*, by Michael D. Coe, New York, 1966, p. 59)

While M. Wells Jakeman may be correct in dating the carving back to the time of Christ, we feel that there are too many pagan elements in the carving to believe that it was made by those who believed in the God of Abraham. Actually, Dr. Jakeman himself tells us of some of the "Maya-like elements" on the "Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone." Concerning the large personage—No. 17 on his drawing—he states:

As just noted, this figure has a Mesopotamian-like (also Egyptian-like) stance; and seems to have the head of a bird (or to wear a bird's-head mask) like a Mesopotamian (specifically Assyrian) cherub, with a long bill projecting to the tree. It wears an animal skin around the waist (note the tail)—probably a jaguar skin, which is often shown in ancient Maya art as worn by hieratic personages, identifying them as representatives of the Rain or Life God (see also below, discussion of Feature 19); also a bead necklace; and an elaborate headdress, the upper part of which is a mask with a long curled nose like an elephant's trunk—the mask of the "Long-nosed Rain God" of Maya art, again identifying this personage as a representative of that deity. (*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico*, p. 49)

Concerning Feature 19 Dr. Jakeman states:

Feature 19: Two horizontal panels, framing the tree and the rest of the scene above, and containing conventionalized elements of the "jaguar mask." ... In ancient Mesoamerican iconography, the jaguar or jaguar mask seems to have been the oldest and most popular symbol of the Sky, Rain, and Life God ... (*Stela 5*, p. 51)

Dr. Jakeman made this statement concerning Feature 20:

Feature 20: Two fish, hanging head down from the jaguar mask panels. They are probably an additional symbol, with the jaguar mask, that the tree or central feature of the sculpture was connected with the Rain, Water, or Life God, i.e. was the Tree of Life. (In the Maya hieroglyphic books, representations of fish have definitely been interpreted as symbols of "God B" or Chac, i.e. the Rain or Water God aspect of Itzamna or Quetzalcoatl.) (*Stela 5*, p. 52)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Concerning Feature 22, Dr. Jakeman states:

Feature 22: Conventionalized representations of the heads of a two-headed serpent, which appears in Maya symbolic art as a variant of or related to the “Two-headed Dragon,” a monster having the body of a crocodile with a crocodilelike head at each end (the heads, however, with serpentlike jaws and fangs), and which has been identified with the crocodile earth-monster of Aztec symbolism. The heads are elaborately modeled, with bared fangs, and face inward towards the tree. (*Stela 5*, p. 53)

On page 50 of the same pamphlet we find this information:

. . . above the tree itself in these representations is depicted a serpent-headed quetzalbird, essentially a name-glyph of the Mesoamerican Life God as known by the name Quetzalcoatl, i.e. “Quetzal-bird or Precious-feathered Serpent.” (It should be noted here that the original name of this god—the most important deity of the ancient Mesoamericans, whose worship dates back to the Preclassic age—is unknown.)

Dr. Jakeman goes to great lengths in his attempt to fit the pagan elements into his thesis that this is a picture of Lehi’s dream or Lehi relating his dream concerning the Tree of Life. For instance, on pages 63 and 64 of the same book he states:

It is obvious that one of the important action features of the Tree of Life vision of Lehi in the Book of Mormon that ancient artists would have had special difficulty in indicating in a sculptured portrayal of this vision, is the rising of the “mist of darkness” that Lehi mentions in the above quotation, and its causing those people whom he saw commencing in the path that led to the tree, to wander off and be lost. . . .

Before discussing these features, it should be observed that Nephi, in interpreting his father’s vision, uses the plural term “mists of darkness”; and explains that these “mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men” . . . Two hummingbirds, standing on the head and shoulder of the smaller of the two guardian spirit-personages. Strangely, they are depicted as probing into the eye—i.e. evidently piercing or blinding the eyes—of the two-headed serpent or Earth Monster.

Considered by itself, this peculiar feature of the carving has no apparent explanation. In the comparison of the carving with the Lehi Tree-of-Life account in the Book of Mormon, however, it is immediately seen to constitute a most striking correspondence to the above action feature of that account! For no better device could have been hit upon by ancient artists to indicate “mists of darkness” arising or “the fiery darts of the adversary” that fly in the air, blinding the eyes of the inhabitants of

the earth, than that of showing a pair of hummingbirds (which are noted for their brilliant coloring and swiftness of flight—truly fiery darts of nature), high up in the scene or in the air, piercing or blinding the eyes of a figure symbolizing the earth, as seen here in the Izapa sculpture! (Note that although no actual mists or darts are shown, the three other required agreements are provided by this symbolism; i.e., more than one “fiery dart,” the implied appearance of these darts in the air, and their blinding of the earth or its inhabitants.)

Dr. Jakeman would have us believe that this carving was made by the Nephites. We feel, however, that there is every reason to believe that it was made by an idolatrous people. We have never found any mention of the “mask of the ‘long-nosed’ Rain God” in the Book of Mormon, nor does the Book of Mormon mention the “jaguar mask” which Dr. Jakeman states is “the oldest and most popular symbol of the Sky, Rain, and Life God (i.e. Quetzalcoatl or Itzamna . . .)”

In her article, “The Mystifying Maya,” Katharine Kuh states:

There is, of course, little doubt that the ruins seen today are the remains of religious centers. These towering buildings never housed the ordinary citizen. They were consecrated to a pantheon of perplexing gods who demanded constant propitiation from a special priest-noble group, a group that dominated the life of Yucatan’s theocratic city-states. . .

The Olmecs also carved strange votive altars that recall certain Buddha figures from Ceylon, but the connection is probably purely coincidental. And everywhere one encounters the were-jaguar, half-human baby, half-monster—a snarling Olmec obsession. Some anthropologists feel this image was the father of all Mesoamerican rain gods, deities of crucial importance in a land where water was an urgent necessity. In addition, we know the Maya associated jaguars with water, because these animals were agile swimmers and generally hunted near rivers. Earlier, the Olmecs had embroidered this idea by including the watery tears of weeping babyish behemoths. (*Saturday Review*, June 28, 1969, pp. 12–14)

Actually, Stela 5 is only one of a number of pagan carvings found at Izapa. Michael D. Coe gives us this information:

Izapa itself is a very large site made up of over 80 temple mounds of earthen construction faced with river cobbles, just east of Tapachula, Chiapas, . . . While Izapa was founded as a ceremonial centre as far back as Early Formative times and continued in use until the Early Classic, the bulk of the constructions and probably all of the many carved monuments belong to the Late Formative and Proto-Classic eras. The Izapan art style centres upon large, ambitiously conceived but somewhat cluttered

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

scenes carried out in bas relief. Many of the activities shown are profane, such as a richly-attired person decapitating a vanquished foe, but there are also deities, chief among whom is what may be called the “Long-lipped God.” This being has an immensely extended upper lip and flaring nostril, and is surely a development of the old Olmec were-jaguar, the god of rain and lightning. . . .

Izapa, then, is a major centre with some of the features which we consider more typical of the lowland Maya already in full flower—the stela-altar complex, the Long-lipped God who becomes transformed into the Maya rain god Chac, and a highly painterly, two-dimensional art style which emphasizes historical and mythic scenography with great attention to plumage and other costume details. (*The Maya*, by Michael D. Coe, New York, 1966, pp. 60–61)

Sylvanus G. Morley gives this information concerning the gods worshipped by the Mayan people:

The Maya had a large number of gods, though the most powerful and the most frequently invoked were those described in a previous section of this chapter. Probably not more than a dozen deities enjoyed most of the worship, the aid of the others being sought only on special occasions or as specific need for their help arose.

We have seen that originally the Maya religion was relatively simple, a direct personification of the forces of nature, which immediately influenced the lives of the common people—the sun, moon, rain, wind, thunder, lightning, floods, etc. . . . further, that with the introduction of corn culture, the pantheon was enlarged to admit agricultural and fertility deities whose appeasement and continued goodwill now became necessary for the first time . . . Still later, when the Maya civilization began to take shape with the invention of the calendar, chronology, and hieroglyphic writing, during the fourth or third century before Christ, a further expansion of the pantheon became necessary to make room for the new group of astronomic and calendric deities, whose functions were more specialized than those of the older, simpler, and more general nature gods. (*The Ancient Maya*, Stanford University Press, 1947, pp. 256–257)

On page 224 of the same book, Sylvanus G. Morley gives this information:

Chac, the God of Rain, is represented in the codices with a long, proboscis-like nose and two curling a projecting downward from his mouth, . . .

Chac was a universal deity of first importance. . . . Pictures of Chac occur 218 times in the three known codices, . . . Chac was a rain-god primarily, and by association, god of the wind, thunder, and lightning, and hence by extension, of fertility and agriculture.

The rain-god was regarded not only as a single god but also at the same time as four gods—a different Chac for each one of the four cardinal points, each cardinal point having its own special color . . . Chac Xib Chac, the Red Man—Chac of the East; Sac Xib Chac, the White Man—Chac of the North; Ek Xib Chac, the Black Man—Chac of the West; and Kan Xib Chac, the Yellow Man—Chac of the South.

Dr. Jakeman speaks of such elements on “Stela 5” as the “serpent-headed quetzal-bird” (representing the god “Quetzalcoatl”) and the “mask of the ‘long-nosed Rain God’” (representing “‘God B’ of the Maya codices or Chac, the Rain or Water God aspect of Itzamna”). He would have us believe that these features can be related to the God of Abraham, but we feel that they are pagan elements, and that they do not fit the story found in the Book of Mormon. Actually, a “Nationalist Chinese periodical” contained a theory concerning Mayan religion which we feel is far more reasonable than Dr. Jakeman’s idea. In his review of this article, Ray T. Matheny stated:

Another article, “Rain Worship Among the Ancient Chinese and the Nahua-Maya Indians,” is by Dennis Wing-sou Lou. In this study it is first noted that the principal Chinese rain deities were the horned dragon and the mysterious figure of Lei-kung or Lord of Thunder. Other rain deities were the frog, moon, and sun.

In ancient times the Chinese word for dragon was used interchangeably with snake and is found in the Oracle-bone Inscriptions dating to the 17th century B.C. In these oracles, sacrifices were made to the dragon or snake deity for rain. There is a legend of twin snake deities, Fu Hsi and Nu Wa, who were the creators of the Chinese. According to early literature most of the rulers were born of a dragon or under the influence of it.

Four dragons were associated with the four quarters of the earth and the four seasons. One of these dragons represented spring and the east, and was the rain deity in power. This dragon was blue or green and was associated with wood. The southern dragon, or red dragon, represented summer and was related to fire. The autumn dragon was that of the west, it was related to the color white, and was associated with metal or gold. The winter dragon was under the leadership of the “mountain dragon” which was related to the earth and the color yellow.

These dragons were compounded and variable; they could represent a single deity or else four or five deities. The ability of the dragon to change its role and dimension indicates a central omnipotent deity over the entire Chinese pantheon.

The author points out the similarities between the dragon or serpent rain-god of the ancient Chinese and the serpent rain-god of the ancient peoples of Mexico and Central America. He quotes from Quiche-Mayan myths in which the serpent, the god of rain, thunder, and lightning, is involved as one of the creators of the earth. He also cites the Mixtec legend of the puma-snake and jaguar-snake deities who brought forth two sons, one of which took the form of an eagle, and the other the form of a flying serpent. Mr. Lou believes that the Mexican feathered serpent (often depicted in carvings and given the title Quetzalcóatl) is very similar to the Chinese dragon, except for the horns which the feathers replace. He says that the Mexican serpent represents a multiple god who was called “Lord of the Four Winds” or “Four-time Lord,” which symbolizes the four elements; water, air, earth, and fire, and/or the four seasons.

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

In summary the author compares the similarities between the ancient Chinese dragon and the ancient Maya serpent. “Both the dragon and the serpent were the principal and most ancient deities of the cultures. They were similar in form, and were both included in the legend of creation, in which they were regarded as creators or makers. The dragon and the serpent could both be a single deity, or four, or many. Moreover, both the dragon and the serpent were related to the four quarters and the four seasons. When they appeared as four in number, each of them was related to a particular element and was represented by a different color. Finally, the dragons and serpents of the four quarters seemed to be connected with a central force, which was possibly another important deity.”

The most striking example of similarities are between the personified rain-god of the Chinese, called Lei-kung or Lord of Thunder, and the personified rain god of the Mayas most commonly known as Chac.

The Chinese rain deity was portrayed in various forms often associated with the dragon or snake. One peculiar form was a serpentine body with an elephant’s head. The author says the term Lei-kung is a collective one for all the rain gods or gods of thunder. The Lord of Thunder was not a single deity, “but four or five, guarding the center and the four quarters of heaven.” The Lord of Thunder was also associated with the four seasons, four elements, and four colors. “He was pictured on dragons and was regarded as an agricultural god as well as an ancestor or creator.” He was also shown “holding an ax, a chisel, or a torch-like thunderbolt.”

The great rain god of the Mayas, Chac, is generally known as god B of the Codices. He is shown with a long nose, two curving fangs or tongues, a knotted headdress, and often “holds in his hands an ax, or a torch-like thunderbolt, or both . . . Chac was believed to have a human head with a serpentine body as well as an elephant’s head with a serpentine body.”

Chac was associated with the four quarters, had a different name and color for each quarter or cardinal direction, and ruled over the four elements of water, air, earth, and fire.

The author points out the similarities between Chac and the Feathered Serpent representing Kukulcan (Quetzalcóatl), and the fact that many scholars believe that Chac and Kukulcan are the same deity in different forms and under different names.

In conclusion the author believes that the parallels between the widely separated Chinese and Mesoamerican civilizations must have been brought about in one of the following ways: “1. The ancestors of the Maya, and possibly the Nahua as well, may have lived side by side with the rain-worshiping Chinese in ancient China. 2. The cultural traits adapted by the Maya and the Nahua may have been brought from Southeast Asia or China to America, not by a few individual traders or sailors who, through mishap found their way to the New World, but by several large and possibly planned emigrations under effective leadership.” (*UAS Newsletter*, BYU, November 25, 1960, pp. 2–4)

In an article entitled, “The American Civilization Puzzle,” published in *The John Hopkins Magazine*, George F. Carter stated:

Comparison of the art and architecture of Southeast Asia with that of some parts of the Americas led to the discovery of some remarkable parallels. Not only were there truncated pyramids in Cambodia with temples on top of them, just as there were in Yucatan and in Peru, but they were sometimes almost identical down to small architectural details. The dragons on Chou-dynasty bronze vases were duplicated in minute detail in Mayan Indian art. And these details were multiplied. Criticism immediately centered on the fact that the similarities were picked more or less at random over a considerable range of time and space. This has since been met with a vengeance. Heine-Geldern’s latest work names the individual Asiatic city states and points out their art influence in specific times and places in the Americas.

Such thoughts are met with some skepticism. If the people of Southeast Asia actually did such things, why do we have no records of all this? How could such a discovery ever be lost? My reply is to point out that the Norse discovered America about 1000 A.D. and maintained colonies in Greenland until about 1400 A.D. This is in the full light of modern European history. Yet most people are surprised to hear of this, and the effective discovery of America was left to Columbus. Further there is at least one Chinese document that probably refers to a Chinese voyage to America and return.

We do not pretend to know the origin of the Mayan people, but we do feel that the theory of Chinese influence is far more acceptable than the Mormon explanation.

### OTHER PROBLEMS

The reader will note that there are more than six persons shown in the drawing of Stela 5. Dr. Jakeman however, states that the others “appear to be standing in the air and to represent symbolic personages or spirits” (*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico*, p. 15). He states that two of the personages are cherubim, but he has to admit that they are not mentioned in the Book of Mormon story:

Moreover, although the associated features presenting such Near Eastern similarities—namely the guardian spirit-personages facing the tree, the birds seen near and also facing the tree, and the fish have no correspondences in the Book of Mormon account of the Lehi vision, two of them, the guardian spirit-personages, may well have been a part of that vision and included in Lehi’s narration (among “all the words of his . . . vision, which were many,” but skipped over by Nephi in the latter’s summary account), since Lehi must surely have been familiar with them as a standard part of the Tree of Life symbol . . . They may, therefore, be listed as a sixth agreement between the tree in the Izapa carving and the tree seen by Lehi in the Book of Mormon account. (*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico*, pp. 55–56)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

On December 5, 1959, Dr. Jakeman made this statement:

When these several striking agreements as to the six persons are added to those previously brought out—the Assyrian-like cherubim, the river of waters, etc.—there can be little doubt left that the Izapa carving is in fact a portrayal of the Book of Mormon Tree of Life episode. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, BYU, p. 53)

In his pamphlet, *The Truth About the “Lehi Tree-of-Life” Stone*, page 14, Hal Hougey states: “There are no cherubim guarding the tree in Lehi’s vision.” Dr. Jakeman said this in reply to Mr. Hougey:

It is true that these figures, at first thought, do not also constitute a parallel to the tree-of-life symbol in the Lehi story of the Book of Mormon; for there is no mention therein of cherubim guarding or attending the tree. Note, however, that this does not necessarily rule out Lehi’s having mentioned seeing cherubim in his vision guarding or attending the tree in his narration of the vision to his family gathered around. (That is, our admission that they are not mentioned in the Book of Mormon account of the vision is not the same as Hougey’s flat claim, on p. 14, that “there are no cherubim guarding the tree in Lehi’s vision.”) For Lehi’s son Nephi who wrote down his words at this time states that he, Nephi, did not record all that his father spoke of seeing and hearing in his vision (1 Nephi 9:1).

. . . it is at least a good possibility that they were also with this tree in Lehi’s vision and that he spoke of seeing them, even though Nephi does not mention them in his record. Moreover, it must be kept in mind that the descendants of Lehi in the New World, . . . were assuredly familiar with the supernatural beings that guarded or attended the tree of life. . . . And the Nephites were also undoubtedly familiar with the way in which their ancestors in the Old World, the Israelites, were accustomed to portray these beings. . . . It is therefore very likely that in any depiction of the Lehi tree-of-life story which the Nephites may have made in the New World—even if Lehi did not speak of seeing them in his vision—cherubim would have been shown guarding or attending the tree, . . .

Our conclusion, then, must be that—contrary to Hougey—the two large semi-human figures standing (apparently in the air) facing and attending the tree of life in the Stela 5, Izapa, carving are very much in accordance with the claims of the Book of Mormon, and strongly reinforce the correspondence of the tree in this carving to the tree mentioned in the Lehi story found in that work. (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, November 29, 1967, pp. 4–5)

Actually, in Lehi’s vision there would be no need for cherubim to guard the tree, for everyone was welcome to partake of the fruit.

The Book of Mormon states that Lehi’s family, with the exception of Laman and Lemuel, partook of the fruit from the tree (1 Nephi 8:15–18). and they found it to be “desirable above all other fruit.” This is certainly one of the most important parts of the story yet the scene on Stela 5 does

not show any of Lehi’s family partaking of the fruit. Instead, it shows “Lehi” making a “burnt offering.” Dr. Jakeman admits that “such an altar and offering are not mentioned in the Book of Mormon account” of the Tree-of-Life story, but he feels that Lehi may have made an offering “during or preparatory to his telling of his vision . . .” (*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico*, p. 17). As to the fact that none of Lehi’s family are partaking of the fruit, Dr. Jakeman explains that a bird seems to be eating the fruit and that this proves that it was edible:

Feature 16: A bird, apparently eating of the fruit of the tree. This indicates—whether intended or not by the ancient artists—that the fruit of this tree was edible. . . . (It is true that there is no indication in the carving that the fruit of this tree, like that of Lehi’s vision, in addition to being edible was “most sweet” to the taste and “desirable to make one happy,” and very white in color; or of the old man, like Lehi, partaking of this fruit. But these are not significant absences of agreement that nullify the correspondence. For there was hardly any way by which the ancient artists could have indicated in stone that the fruit of this tree was “most sweet,” beyond showing it being eaten, as already by means of Feature 16. Moreover, the rounded bosses representing the fruit may well have originally been painted white as required, which paint, however, would probably have long since been weathered away. Finally, as to Lehi’s partaking of the fruit of this tree, the absence of a portrayal of this can easily be attributed to lack of space and/or the fact that a person corresponding to Lehi—the old bearded man—was already depicted in another act. (*Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico*, pp. 47–48)

There are a number of other serious problems involved in Dr. Jakeman’s interpretation of “Stela 5,” but we feel that the evidence produced here should be sufficient to convince the reader that this carving is pagan and has nothing to do with Lehi’s dream as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

It is interesting to note that over a century ago the Mormons felt that they had found a representation of Lehi’s vision in an Indian manuscript. On March 8, 1845, they published an engraving of it on the front page of their newspaper, *The Prophet*. On the next page the reader will find a rough sketch of the important part of this engraving. These comments concerning the engraving appeared in the same issue of *The Prophet*:

The Tree and the Rod that leads to it, with the company of five seated on the ground, three of them partaking of fruit, while the other two are not, strikes our mind very forcibly of the vision of Lehi, which can be found on the 20th page of the Book of Mormon,—He saw his wife (Sarah) with his two sons (Nephi and Sam) partaking of the fruit, while the other two (Laman and Lemuel) did not.

A query may arise in the minds of some, why that Tree should be represented as **broken** and **falling** with a man’s arms clasped around the trunk of the roots.

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

We can come to no other conclusion, why this tree, which is called the Tree of life or the kingdom of God on earth, should be represented in a broken and fallen state than this:—The Church and kingdom of God was fully organized among the Nephites, (a name that this once enlightened class was designated by,) but along about the fifth or sixth century they went into a state of apostasy, and they were no longer as a people under the protection of heaven. The Lord suffered the Lamanites (the author of the above record) to go to war and prevail against them. They were finally exterminated, and at the time of their over-throw and extermination, there was but one man that adhered to the commandments of God and sought to sustain his kingdom on the earth, (so says the Book of Mormon,) which, we are inclined to believe, is here represented with his arms extended around the tree, at the very time the top is severed and falling to the ground. (*The Prophet*, March 8, 1845)



The Mormon writer Dewey Farnsworth uses this same scene in his book, *Book of Mormon Evidences in Ancient America*, page 17. He claims that it was taken from “Guatemala petroglyphs.” As we have shown already, John L. Sorenson (who was Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Brigham Young University) was very disturbed with Mr. Farnsworth’s book. He made this statement concerning the purported “Tree of Life scene”:

We also are repeatedly shown scenes, said to be of Lehi’s group, from Guatemalan petroglyphs (petroglyph—writing symbol on stone) which are in reality from an Aztec codex on bark paper, from Mexico, dated historically by its text no earlier than A.D. 1200 (the codex is never identified).

What is supposedly a Tree of Life scene shows the tree **cut off**, apparently subject to death (actually this is a well-known Aztec glyph representing a place name). (*Progress in Archaeology*, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1963, p. 106)

## GEOGRAPHY

M. T. Lamb made these statements concerning the Book of Mormon:

We read in the Old Testament far back, three and four thousand years ago, the names of cities—such as Damascus, Jerusalem, Babylon, Nineveh, Samaria, Sycar, Gaza, Tyre and Sidon—we read the names Persia, Egypt, Ethiopia. In the New Testament we find such names as Ephesus, Smyrna, Antioch, Athens, Corinth, Rome—we read of the island of Cyprus and Malta, of the countries of Syria, Italy and Spain—and we pick up our modern school geographies to find all these names more or less full preserved.

The fact is one of the plain evidences of the authenticity and truthfulness of the Bible record. . . .

The very opposite of this proves true of the Book of Mormon, for although we read from it all this list of cities and countries professedly in existence in this country only 1500 years ago, a date at least 300 years later than the latest date in the New Testament, and though we learn, farther, from the same book that the people inhabiting this country have not changed—that the Lamanites of old who remained sole masters of both continents 1500 years ago are the Indians of to-day, yet our readers will examine their geographies in vain to find even one of these old names preserved among the Indian names of today, or the names found upon this continent three hundred years ago when first occupied by Europeans. (*The Golden Bible*, pp. 276–277)

M. T. Lamb gives us a list of “Names of Ancient Cities and Countries” in the New World. They are Carchah, Champoton, Chichen Itza, Chimalhuacan, Chiquimula, Cholula, Culouacan, Hapallanconco, Huehuetan, Hueyxalan, Guatulco, Itzalane, Izamal, Mazatepec, Mayapan, Metlaltoyuca, Mazapan, Nachan, Nimxab, Ococingo, Olman, Quiyahuiztlan, Quemeda, Quauhnauc, Quauhatochco, Tamoacan, Tepeu, Tlaachicatzin, Tlapallanconco, Tlaxicoluican, Tepetla, Tonacatepetl, Totzapan, Teotihuacan, Tlacopan, Toxpan, Tulan, Tulancingo, Txintzurtzan, Tzequil, Xalisco, Xibalba, Xicalanco, Xochicalco, Xumiltepec, Yobaa, Zacatlan, and Zihcohuatl. M. T. Lamb also gives a list of “names of the cities and lands or countries mentioned in the Book of Mormon as existing in this country.” After asking the reader to compare the two lists, Mr. Lamb states:



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Is it not strange, dear reader, that not even one solitary name from the Book of Mormon has been unearthed by all the researches of the past, and that we are left without a solitary evidence of the truthfulness of this Book—on the contrary are brought face to face with the most incontestable and unanswerable evidences of its fraud. For this is not simply a negative testimony to the effect that the names given in the Book of Mormon have not yet been found, after the most careful research by scholars. The testimony is vastly stronger than this: it is that this Mormon list of names never had an existence, in fact—that they are absolutely a myth; and therefore the Book that contains them a fraudulent fiction. . . .

Still stronger, if possible, is the testimony from the names of men. Look among the Jews all over the world today, and you find perpetuated in their families the old Bible names Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, Samuel, David, Solomon, Daniel, and such like. And so, if the Indians are the real descendants of the ancient Lamanites, we should certainly find the greater portion of those old Book of Mormon names of men everywhere perpetuated among the Indian races of to-day. How could it be otherwise? There is no change possible or conceivable by which those old honored names could be entirely obliterated from the race. During the one thousand years of their recorded history as given in the Book of Mormon, the old familiar names of Lehi, Nephi, Laman, Lemuel and others are constantly recurring; they held on to them with reverential pertinacity. If the Book of Mormon were a true record, we should find these names in abundance among various Indian races scattered over both continents. Has any one ever discovered or even heard of, by tradition or otherwise, one Book of Mormon name among the Indians, unless that name were borrowed from the vocabulary of the modern Gentile nations? . . . the conclusion is inevitable: Either, the statements of all the scholars who have during the past three hundred years been patiently investigating ancient American history—the entire traditional history of the various native races in Central America, the testimony of the reserved writings of the ancient Mayas, and the testimony of the Indian names of to-day—are all wrong—or the Book of Mormon is a fable and its list of names a myth. There is no other possible conclusion; no middle ground. Both cannot be true. Either the Book of Mormon or the entire testimony drawn from American antiquities is false. If the one is true, the other cannot be. (*The Golden Bible*, pp. 278–280 and 283)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts seemed to be unable to explain the absence of Book of Mormon names among the American Indians:

It is objected to the Book of Mormon that there nowhere appears in native American languages Book of Mormon names. . . . The absence of Book of Mormon names in the native language, is held to be fatal testimony against the claims of the Book of Mormon by this writer.

One recognizes here a **real difficulty**, and one for which it is quite **hard to account**. It must be remembered, however, that from the close of the Nephite period,

420 A.D., to the coming of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, we have a period of over one thousand years; and we have the triumph also of the Lamanites over the Nephites bent on the destruction of every vestige of Nephite traditions and institutions. May it not be that they recognized as one of the means of achieving such destruction the abrogation of the old familiar names of things and persons? (*New Witnesses For God*, Salt Lake City, 1951, Vol. 3, p. 518)

B. H. Roberts suggests that “the name ‘Nahuas’ and the adjective derived from it, ‘Nahuatl,’ are probably variations of the names ‘Nephi’ and ‘Nephite,’ . . .” He then gives a few other weak parallels, but finally he concludes with this statement:

But after all this is said it is still a matter of **regret** that more of the Nephite names, both of men and countries, have not survived in the native American languages. Still the field of knowledge of American antiquities has not yet been thoroughly explored, and when its buried cities and monuments shall be more thoroughly known all the evidences that can be demanded along these lines will doubtless be produced. (*New Witnesses For God*, Vol. 3, p. 521)

Mormon writers are not only faced with the problem of trying to explain the absence of Book of Mormon names, but they have the additional problem of not being able to identify sites mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The Mormon writer Joseph E. Vincent admitted that the exact location of Book of Mormon sites is unknown:

At one time when I was a member of a ward bishopric, one of the counselors said to me: “Why is it we have accurate maps of Palestine and not of the Book of Mormon Lands? Why do we know so well where Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth are and do not know where Zarahemla, Bountiful, and Cumorah are? Does that mean that actually those places are fictitious as the non-Mormons say they are?” My answer was: “No, they are certainly not fictitious, . . .”

First let us look and see what we do not know about the Holy Land. We do know where Jerusalem was. We know where Herod’s palace and the Temple were. . . . But do we know for sure where Nazareth was? We do not. . . . we do not know where Calvary was, nor where the Holy Sepulchre was. Actually two different sites have been identified as Calvary or Golgotha, and two distinct tombs have been identified as the tomb of Joseph.

Although we have been in continuous contact with the Holy Land, we do not know these very important locations. Is it not easy to understand then, why we do not know the exact location of the Book of Mormon sites when we have actually been out of contact with the Book of Mormon people since Lehi left Palestine in 600 B.C.? We have actually been out of contact with them for 2600 years. You can lose track of a lot of things in 2600 years. (*Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, BYU, April 13, 1963, p. 61)

The Mormon writer J. N. Washburn made these comments regarding the Book of Mormon:

Culminating about 1888, with the publication of the large octave volume, there was a practice of locating, in footnotes, all the major features of the Book-of-Mormon setting. From that time, fortunately, the number of such notes has steadily dropped off until the present edition contains none at all. This shows how careful we in our time are to approach this whole problem, and it is a commendable caution.

....

A yet more deplorable practice has been to attempt to label present-day locations with Book-of-Mormon names. To the best of my knowledge there is not a **single** place—ruin, city, or land—to which we can point and say with certainty and say that it is such-and-such a one in the record. (*The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, by J. N. Washburn, pp. 209–210)

Most members of the Mormon Church probably have no idea of the dilemma a person is faced with if he tries to make a serious study of the geography of the Book of Mormon. The Mormon apostle John A. Widtsoe has admitted, however, that those who have studied this subject are not in agreement, and that often “thousands of miles” separate suggested locations for the same site:

The actual geographical locations of Book of Mormon events and places have always intrigued students of the book. Several volumes and many articles on the subject have been published. The various writers so far have failed to agree. Often the suggested locations vary, with different authors, thousands of miles. An earnest, honest search is being continued by enthusiastic Book of Mormon students. (Statement by John A. Widtsoe, as quoted in *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon*, by Milton R. Hunter & Thomas S. Ferguson, 1950, California, p. 143)

John A. Widtsoe once stated that the Lord might have to give a revelation to settle the disputes among Mormon scholars concerning the geography of the Book of Mormon:

Students are not agreed on the main facts that must form the basis of a Book of Mormon geography. One group believes, as do most of the Church, that the great events recorded towards the end of the Book occurred in or near New York State. Another group, somewhat smaller, believes that the evidence at hand places these events in Middle America. Both views are held to tenaciously by the respective groups.

... Out of the studies of faithful Latter-day Saints may yet come a unity of opinion concerning Book of Mormon geography; or, the Lord may give a revelation that will end all differences of opinion. (*Cumoram—Where?* by Thomas Stuart Ferguson, Missouri, 1947, Forward by John A. Widtsoe)

### HILL CUMORAH

According to the Book of Mormon, two great civilizations—i.e., the Nephites and the Jaredites—were destroyed in battles which took place at the “hill Cumorah.” This is the same hill where Joseph Smith was supposed to have found the gold plates.

The question, of course, arises as to why such an insignificant little hill would be chosen for these two great battles. M. T. Lamb made the following comments concerning this matter:

Mormon is recording the rapid destruction of his people, the Nephites. They have been driven out of all their strongholds in Central America: one after another their principal cities have been taken and destroyed by the victorious Lamanites. Beaten everywhere and rapidly driven northward, Mormon finally writes a letter to the king of the Lamanites, making the following strange request:

“And I, Mormon wrote an epistle unto the King of the Lamanites, and desired of him that he would grant unto us that we might gather together our people unto the land of Cumorah, and there we could give them battle. And it came to pass that the King of the Lamanites did grant unto me the thing which I desired. And it came to pass that we did march forth to the land of Cumorah; and it was in a land of many waters, rivers and fountains; and here we had hope to gain advantage over the Lamanites.”

Now, reader, do you think any sane general of an army would write such a letter as the above to his deadly foe? And if such a letter had been written, do you think such a deadly foe, if in his senses would have consented? Please bear in mind that the Lamanites’ home was in South America, and that the principal possessions of the Nephites, their largest cities, nearly everything desirable as plunder, are found in Central America, while this hill, Cumorah, is located in western New York, from two to three thousand miles distant. Would the Lamanite king be willing to transport an army of several hundred thousand, at least two thousand miles away from his base of supplies, into a sparsely settled country, where provisions were necessarily scarce, for no other reason than to allow his enemy to secure a good position where they “had hope to gain advantage over the Lamanites”?

But again, why do you suppose the good prophet Mormon was so anxious to reach that particular hill Cumorah, so far away from the homes and possessions of his people? Was it really because said hill was a natural fortification, a famous strategic point? Not at all; it is only a little hill, while in reaching that hill he had climbed over hundreds of mountain fastnesses, had marched by scores of magnificent canons or river gorges and other of nature’s hiding places or of Thermopylae passes—a thousand places had been presented that were a hundred times better adapted to the object he had in view: “to gain some advantage over the Lamanites.”

Why then does he ignore all these strong places and march his army a thousand miles away from the mountains to a little hill in western New York that was

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

utterly valueless as a natural barrier against an enemy? Reader, we will whisper the reason. Joseph Smith found his golden plates in this hill Cumorah, and he must needs get Mormon and Moroni up there with their sacred records before these worthies are swept out of existence, or his ancient history will not tally with the modern facts!! (*The Golden Bible; or, The Book of Mormon. Is It From God?* by M. T. Lamb, New York, 1887, pp. 204–206)

The traditional view concerning the hill Cumorah was clearly presented by the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt:

The Lamanites at that time dwelt in South America, and the Nephites in North America.

A great and terrible war commenced between them, which lasted for many years, and resulted in the complete overthrow and destruction of the Nephites. This was commenced at the Isthmus of Darien, and was very destructive to both nations for many years. At length, the Nephites were driven before their enemies, a great distance to the north and north-east; and having gathered their whole nation together, both men, women, and children, they encamped on and round about the hill Cumorah, where the records were found, which is in the State of New York about two hundred miles west of the city of Albany. . . . the nation of the Nephites were destroyed, . . . (*Remarkable Visions*, page 10, as reprinted in *Orson Pratt's Works*, Liverpool, 1851)

The criticism of M. T. Lamb has probably had a great effect upon Mormon scholars. In fact, in the last few years a number of prominent Mormon scholars have decided that the traditional view—i.e., that the hill Cumorah is in New York—must be repudiated. They claim that the Nephites and Lamanites did not inhabit both North and South America as was previously taught, but that they lived in Mesoamerica and that the hill Cumorah must be located near by. Thomas Stuart Ferguson, one of the most prominent writers on the subject of archaeology and the Book of Mormon, has promoted this new theory:

The Valley of Mexico would seem to meet all the requirements to qualify as the Land of Many Waters. Mexico City is located in the Valley of Mexico. Mountains at the southeastern corner of the Valley would seem to meet all factors required of the “hill,” Shim and Ramah-Cumorah. They are the best known mountains in all Mexico. . . .

Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl are magnificent landmarks, known by name for hundreds of miles. As such they would seem to meet the magnitude requirements of Ramah-Cumorah and Shim. Both were landmarks from Jaredite times, even prior to the arrival of the Nephites in the region. See Quotations 4 and 10. The fact that they are referred to as “hills” in the Book of Mormon should not of itself lead us to conclude that they were minor elevations. All mounts, regardless of size, referred to by name in the Book of Mormon are termed “hills.”

A further indication that Ramah-Cumorah may have been a great mountain is the fact that “Ramah” means “high” or “the height.” It is an ancient Semite term. Popocatepetl is 17,887 feet and Ixtaccihuatl is 16,883 feet.

These great mountains, which can be viewed from the present city of Mexico and the nearby lakes, are of such magnitude that the great Jaredite and Nephite armies could easily have been accommodated on their slopes. (*Cumorah-Where?* pp. 42, 46 and 47)

On page 54 of the same book, Mr. Ferguson states:

The gathering of the Nephites at Ramah-Cumorah . . . was the idea of their leader, Mormon. . . . Apparently the location was also well-known to the Lamanite leader for Mormon wrote a letter to the king of the Lamanites and in reply, received express permission to gather the Nephites “by a hill which was called Cumorah, and there give them battle.” We must ask ourselves, was Mormon asking permission to gather his people to a part of the Valley of Mexico in the northern portion of the ancient Nephite domain, or was he asking permission of the enemy to let him gather his forces at a point in what is now western New York? The latter is approximately 3,000 miles from Tehuantepec. (Consider what 3,000 miles was to Old and New Testament people.) It seems reasonable that the Lamanite king might have consented to a battle site as near his ancestral home, to the south of the Narrow Neck of Land, as was the Valley of Mexico. And it would seem reasonable that Mormon would choose the Ramah-Cumorah and hill-Shim area for the battle if the Nephite population centers were near and not insurmountable. These practical and strategic considerations lend much support to the view that Ramah-Cumorah may not have been farther north than the Valley of Mexico.

On page 65 we find this statement:

A common-sense analysis of the record seems to indicate that the Jaredites and Nephites, throughout their entire histories, were restricted to an area in close proximity to a narrow neck of land. If that narrow neck of land were Tehuantepec, it is hardly possible that Ramah-Cumorah could have been 3,000 miles to the north.

Further, the hill in New York is entirely too small to merit the name “Ramah” meaning “height.” It is too small to have played such a great role as was played by Ramah-Cumorah, focal point in the history of two mighty nations of antiquity. It was not large enough to have accommodated the great armies which camped around Ramah-Cumorah.

The Mormon writer Fletcher B. Hammond stated:

Many Book of Mormon scholars assert that the hill Cumorah is in what is now New York state. To justify that assertion disrupts and confuses the entire concept of Book of Mormon geography. To correctly correlate that hill with other countries and places named in the sacred record it must be placed on a map so as to show

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

consistency and harmony in the travels of the Book of Mormon peoples. All of the places and countries named in the record may be consistently assembled on a map which may cover some of the countries now known as Mexico and Central America, This cannot be done if the hill Cumorah is placed on a map in the vicinity of what is now Palmyra, New York. . . . since about 1830 there have been two Hills Cumorah in Mormon literature; but it was not so during the times of the Book of Mormon peoples. It is my aim to show that the Book of Mormon peoples knew but one hill Cumorah, and that it was **not** in what is now New York state. (*Geography of the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City, 1959, pp. 72–73)

Fletcher B. Hammond also stated:

Isn't it bordering on the ridiculous to allege that this great nation, near the end of its existence, migrated in a body to what is now New York just so as to annihilate themselves at and around the hill Cumorah? . . .

No amount of juggling of the Book of Mormon text can place the hill Ramah-Cumorah in what is now New York state. It was somewhere in what is now Central America. Hunter and Ferguson appear to be right in their conclusions on this matter. (*Geography of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 88 and 90)

On page 96 of the same book, Fletcher B. Hammond brings out this interesting point:

It would have been a wonderful undertaking for Mormon to have ferried a whole nation, millions of people and their logistics, across the Mississippi river. If he had done so would he not have mentioned it?

On page 100 we find this statement:

To affirm that the last great battle between the Nephites and the Lamanites took place in the neighborhood of the New York hill Cumorah or the Great Lakes region disrupts and confuses the entire concept of Book of Mormon geography.

On pages 118–119 of the same book, Fletcher B. Hammond states:

How can one be so naive as to try to establish the Book of Mormon hill Cumorah in what is now New York state? . . . after all the evidence is in and weighed with reason, the only proper conclusion to be reached is: the Book of Mormon hill Cumorah was somewhere in what is now Central America or southern Mexico.

On page 140 Mr. Hammond emphatically states:

To put what is now New York state and the great lakes region on a map as part of the land northward violates every description of the land northward as found in the Book of Mormon.

This new idea concerning the location of the hill Cumorah was accepted by so many Mormon scholars that the Mormon Historian Joseph Fielding Smith had to write an article against it. In this article we find the following:

Within recent years there has arisen among certain students of the Book of Mormon a theory to the effect that within the period covered by the Book of Mormon, the Nephites and Lamanites were confined almost within the borders of the territory comprising Central America and the southern portion of Mexico; the isthmus of Tehuantepec probably being the “narrow neck” of land spoken of in the Book of Mormon rather than the Isthmus of Panama.

This theory is founded upon the assumption that it was impossible for the colony of Lehi's to multiply and fill the hemisphere within the limits of one thousand years, or from the coming of Lehi from Jerusalem to the time of the destruction of the Nephites at the Hill Cumorah. Moreover, that the story of the Book of Mormon of the migrations, building of cities, the wars and contentions, preclude the possibility of the people's spreading over great distances such as we find within the borders of North and South America. . . .

This modernistic theory **of necessity**, in order to be consistent, must place the waters of Ripliancum and the Hill Cumorah some place within the restricted territory of Central America, notwithstanding the teachings of the Church **to the contrary** for upwards of 100 years. Because of this theory some members of the Church have become confused and greatly disturbed in their faith in the Book of Mormon. It is for this reason that evidence is here presented to show that it is not only possible that these places could be located as the Church has held during the past century, but that in very deed such is the case. . . . In the light of revelation it is **absurd** for anyone to maintain that the Nephites and Lamanites did not possess this northern land. . . .

In the face of this evidence coming from the Prophet Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, we cannot say that the Nephites and Lamanites did not possess the territory of the United States and that the Hill Cumorah is in Central America. Neither can we say that the great struggle which resulted in the destruction of the Nephites took place in Central America. (*The Deseret News*, Church Section, February 27, 1954, pp. 2–3)

.Joseph Fielding Smith's statement did not end the matter. On March 25, 1964, Fletcher B. Hammond gave an address before the University Archaeological Society at Brigham Young University. This was published in pamphlet form and is not to be confused with his larger book. In this pamphlet Fletcher B. Hammond challenged Joseph Fielding Smith's ideas about the location of the hill Cumorah and even printed part of a letter which Joseph Fielding Smith had sent to him:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

At times some of the General Authorities of the Church frown on attempts to make Book of Mormon geography fit modern maps. However, occasionally, books and other publications appear from time to time. Reference is made to an article captioned: "Where is the Hill Cumorah?" Before commenting on that article permit me to say: that, after thanking me for a copy of my book—*Geography of the Book of Mormon*—the author of the article, under date of September 18, 1959, wrote me in part:

I am sure this will be very interesting although **I have never paid any attention whatever to the Book of Mormon geography** because it appears to me that it is inevitable that there must be a great deal of **guess work**.

(*Geography of the Book of Mormon*—"Where is the Hill Cumorah?" p. 34)

Mr. Hammond finished his pamphlet with this statement:

Therefore when the author of the article in question captioned his article: "Where is the Hill Cumorah?" he should have finally answered: "Some where in Central America."

The Mormon writer Riley L. Dixon sided with Joseph Fielding Smith in this controversy:

The area between the lands of Desolation and Zarahemla, including the northern part of South America, became densely populated land that the Nephites occupied.

Between forty to fifty years before the birth of Christ there occurred an outstanding colonization movement northward; the Nephites occupied parts of the land of Desolation, and then ventured far beyond into what is now the United States and southern Canada. They dwelt in these vicinities for four hundred years prior to their final extinction. . . .

A word of caution is necessary to this generation. Some students have taken upon themselves the privilege of making private interpretations of the Book of Mormon scriptures and have caused a slight division among some of its readers. They teach that the last battles of the Nephites took place in Mexico, that the Hill Cumorah where the plates were hidden was also in Mexico, and that neither the Jaredites nor the Nephites ever peopled the land now known as the United States.

In order to explain the role of the Hill Cumorah of New York State, they further maintain that the plates containing the hieroglyphics which were translated into our present Book of Mormon were moved from the Cumorah of Mexico to the hill near Palmyra now called Cumorah in New York, for the convenience of the Prophet Joseph.

What purpose do these students of the alleged "advanced thought" hope to accomplish? In the first place, it is not within the province of lay or priesthood members to give new information to the Church. This right is reserved only for the prophets of God, the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with the approval of the Council of the Twelve, as a product of divine revelation. It is a sacred privilege, one not to be infringed upon by other men. (*Just One Cumorah*, by Riley Lake Dixon, Salt Lake City, 1958, pp. 11–13)

Mr. Dixon feels that the Nephite may have even made it to Alaska:

It is easy to conceive, also, that some of the Nephite mariners may have steered their crafts farther west and sailed along the Pacific Coast, between San Diego and Anchorage, Alaska. (*Just One Cumorah*, p. 89)

On page 92, footnote 20, of the same book, Mr. Dixon states:

Some contemporary writers have gone to great length to prove that the Nephites never migrated farther north than the confines of Mexico. They place the Hill Cumorah in Mexico, trying to prove that the large bodies of water and rivers described in Heleman 3:3 were in Mexico. This is strange doctrine, for the geography of Mexico does not fit the picture given in the Book of Mormon.

On page 104 of the same book, Mr. Dixon stated:

This division of the lands the author estimates, was at the Isthmus of Panama or somewhere near. Thus the Lamanites and Gadianton robbers conceded to the Nephites all the land on the northern continent, and the Nephites granted to the Lamanites and Gadianton robbers the entire continent of South America.

Mr. Dixon makes this statement on page 155:

The author has screened the Book of Mormon word by word, line by line, verse by verse, and failed to find a single word that would uphold the theory that all the Jaredites and Nephites battles were fought in the southland or that there ever was a Cumorah in Mexico. There is **only one Hill Cumorah**, and that is where the scripture—"the law and the Prophets"—have placed it.

Mr. Dixon's book was reviewed by Clark S. Knowlton, of the BYU Archaeological Society. He stated:

It is the reviewer's opinion that this is not a significant study. The author shows little acquaintance with the vast amount of archaeological and anthropological research carried on in the Americas during the twentieth century. He seems to rely upon such early writers as De Roo, whose

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

opinions are not now taken seriously by professional Americanists. The continued patient and meticulous work of archaeologists today is establishing a picture of the cultures and peoples of ancient America within which the Book of Mormon groups inevitably must be fitted.

Unfortunately, the apparent lack of knowledge of the author with regard to the actual findings of American archaeology and anthropology is common among certain groups of students whose laudable ambition to establish the geography and history of the Book of Mormon peoples is not supported by knowledge of the sciences involved. It is books of this type that have crippled the development of an authentic field of Book of Mormon studies, and have made the scientific world suspicious of the work of serious Book of Mormon students. (Book review by Clark S. Knowlton, *U.A.S. Newsletter*, BYU, No. 80, April 15, 1962, p. 2)

The Mormon writer Fletcher B. Hammond felt that it would have been impossible for the Nephites to have marched to New York:

Note carefully that this “remainder of our peoples”—the aged, the youths, the infants in arms, the pregnant women, the halt and the blind, the sick and infirm, the cripples, the farmers, the mechanics—could not have made this “march” to the New York hill Cumorah. How could Mormon have fed, clothed and moved such a group over thousands of miles? During those four years they were not “marched” but “gathered unto the land of Cumorah.” Not even a Napoleon nor a McArthur would have attempted to “march” such a conglomerant mass of people over thousands of miles over deserts, mountain ranges, marshes, and mighty rivers. Anyway: why do that—just to fight one battle? Can one imagine thousands of Lamanites trailing these Nephites for four years over such obstacles just to fight the Nephites to a finish? The Lamanites were wicked but they were not stupid. They, as well as Mormon, knew that the Nephites had already lost the war—and it needed but one more battle to end it. Why not do all of this in the country where each side could furnish the necessary equipment and provisions of war instead of having to fend for them in the mountains, in the deserts and in the rivers? There was no march of the remaining Nephite nation from Central America to the Hill Cumorah in New York state. (*Geography of the Book of Mormon—Where is the Hill Cumorah?* by Fletcher B. Hammond, pp. 26–27)

Dr. Hugh Nibley, on the other hand, stated:

The Way to Cumorah: It is often claimed that it is quite unthinkable that the Nephites should have met a military threat in Central America by fleeing to western New York. Such hasty pronouncements are typical of much Book of Mormon criticism, building impetuous conclusions on first impressions and never bothering to find out what the Book of Mormon says actually happened. Any schoolboy of another generation, raised on Xenophon and Caesar, would brush such objections aside with a

laugh—apparently these self-appointed archaeologists have no idea of what ancient armies and nations could do and did in the way of marching and retreating. (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, by Hugh Nibley, 1957, pp. 362–363)

In his book, *Lehi in the Deseret and the World of the Jaredites*, Hugh Nibley stated:

Since the Jaredite kings with their migratory armies were constantly on the move in the best Asiatic manner, is there any reason why they should not have covered Asiatic distances? Then why all the fuss about Cumorah? From the Narrow Neck of Land to New York state is a distance that staggers us, but for Juji or Timur it would be a milk-run. . . . when it is broken down into stages the longest route on earth becomes negotiable even to the most primitive means of transportation—in a word distance is no object. (*Lehi in the Deseret and the World of the Jaredites*, p. 226)

Bruce Warren, who has served as Editor of the *University Archaeological Society Newsletter*, made this statement in rebuttal to Dr. Nibley:

The off-hand statement (p. 226) that it would have been merely a “milk run” for the Jaredites to journey from Panama (the author seems to follow the old “Panama” theory of Book of Mormon geography) to the New York region, is hard to accept in view of the actual distances and obstacles in the way of easy or rapid foot travel—mountains, jungles, rivers, and deserts—involved in such a journey. (*Progress in Archaeology*, p. 94)

Hal Hougey makes this interesting observation concerning the division among Mormon archaeologists:

Today, Latter-day Saints are divided over this matter of Book of Mormon geography. Among those adhering to the classic interpretation are McGavin and Bean, and Dewey Farnsworth in his *Book of Mormon Evidences in Ancient America*.

The new view called the “Tehuantepec” theory, is favored by Mormon anthropologists at Brigham Young University, and is finding some favor in the church leadership. As informed Latter-day Saints have become aware that the classic view is untenable in the light of modern archeological knowledge, they have had to search for a new explanation of Book of Mormon geography. Actually, B. H. Roberts had some misgivings about the classic view as early as 1909 (*New Witnesses for God*, III:502–503), and suggested that the events of the Book of Mormon might be restricted to Mesoamerica, with the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in southern Mexico as the “narrow neck of land.” This explanation makes it less difficult to harmonize the descriptions of the terrain and the Jaredite and Nephite civilizations in the Book of Mormon with the archeological data, and has therefore been accepted by the Mormon anthropologists at BYU in recent years. (*Archeology and the Book of Mormon*, p. 12)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, Professor of Archaeology at BYU, has repudiated the idea that the Nephites and Lamanites filled both North and South America:

I am sure most of you are already aware that we have an abundance of information within the text itself for defining rather closely the area of the Book of Mormon civilizations. It is now no longer in question that this area was the comparatively small part of the New World which is now referred to as Mesoamerica—central and southern Mexico and northern Central America. There are, in fact, over 600 statements in the record of geographic significance, which pin its area down rather definitely to this relatively small part of the New World. It is possible even to go so far as to indicate the approximate location of some of the main cities, on the basis of their placement in the record in relation to certain coast lines and topographic features. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, p. 47)

Joseph E. Vincent, a Mormon archaeologist, claims that if a person sincerely studies the Book of Mormon he will find all the Book of Mormon lands within a small area:

Now in conclusion, what can we do about the Book of Mormon geography? Should we sit still and listen to the traditional views of all Indians being Lamanites and of the Book of Mormon peoples roaming back and forth between northern United States and South America?

Or are we going to read the Book of Mormon and come to our own conclusions? . . .

In conclusion, let me reiterate that if a sincere student of the Book of Mormon will conscientiously read and study the Book itself and will plot out all the locations mentioned, disregarding “off-the-cuff” remarks of the early Church leaders, he will find that all Book of Mormon lands lie within a five or six-hundred mile radius and that this area could not possibly extend from Chile to New York. (*Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, Brigham Young University, 1983, pp. 67–68)

In a map on page 69 of the same booklet, Joseph E. Vincent states:

On last word—the Hill Cumorah. Some identify it with the hill in New York (later named Cumorah) in which the Plates were found, whereas the majority (including the Mormon archaeologists and those who study the internal evidence of the Book itself) place it in Mesoamerica, roughly as it is shown in this map. The latter group feel that those who insist that it is located in New York lack the faith in a God who, if he can reveal and cause the translations of the Plates could certainly arrange for their transportation at the proper time from the Hill Cumorah in Mexico to New York.

E. Cecil McGavin and Willard Bean defended the traditional view, but they stated that the new theory was so popular that some footnotes had been deleted from the Book of Mormon:

In recent years there has been a tendency among certain students of the Book of Mormon to orientate Book of Mormon cultures far to the south. Many students of the subject are convinced that the three colonies that came to America had their existence in Central America and Mexico. They are thought to have lived within a radius of a few hundred miles of Zarahemla, never pushing northward many miles, certainly not thrusting out their branches as far north as the Great Lakes along our Canadian border. . . .

Most students who accept this theory do not consider the Hill Cumorah in western New York as the hill where the gold plates were originally deposited, nor the area immediately south of the Great Lakes as the site of the Jaredite and Nephite battlefields. This theory leads to the assumption that Moroni buried the gold plates in a hill in Middle America known as Cumorah. After Joseph Smith’s family moved to Palmyra, New York, it is thought that the Angel Moroni took the plates from the Hill Cumorah in Central America and deposited them in the largest hill near the Smith homestead in western New York. This hill where they were finally concealed was named Cumorah in honor of the original hill far to the south where they were first deposited.

For many years the Book of Mormon carried footnotes explaining that “the land of many waters,” “the large bodies of water,” “Ripliancum,” etc., had reference to the Great Lakes, while Ramah and Cumorah were the identical hill, near Palmyra, New York.

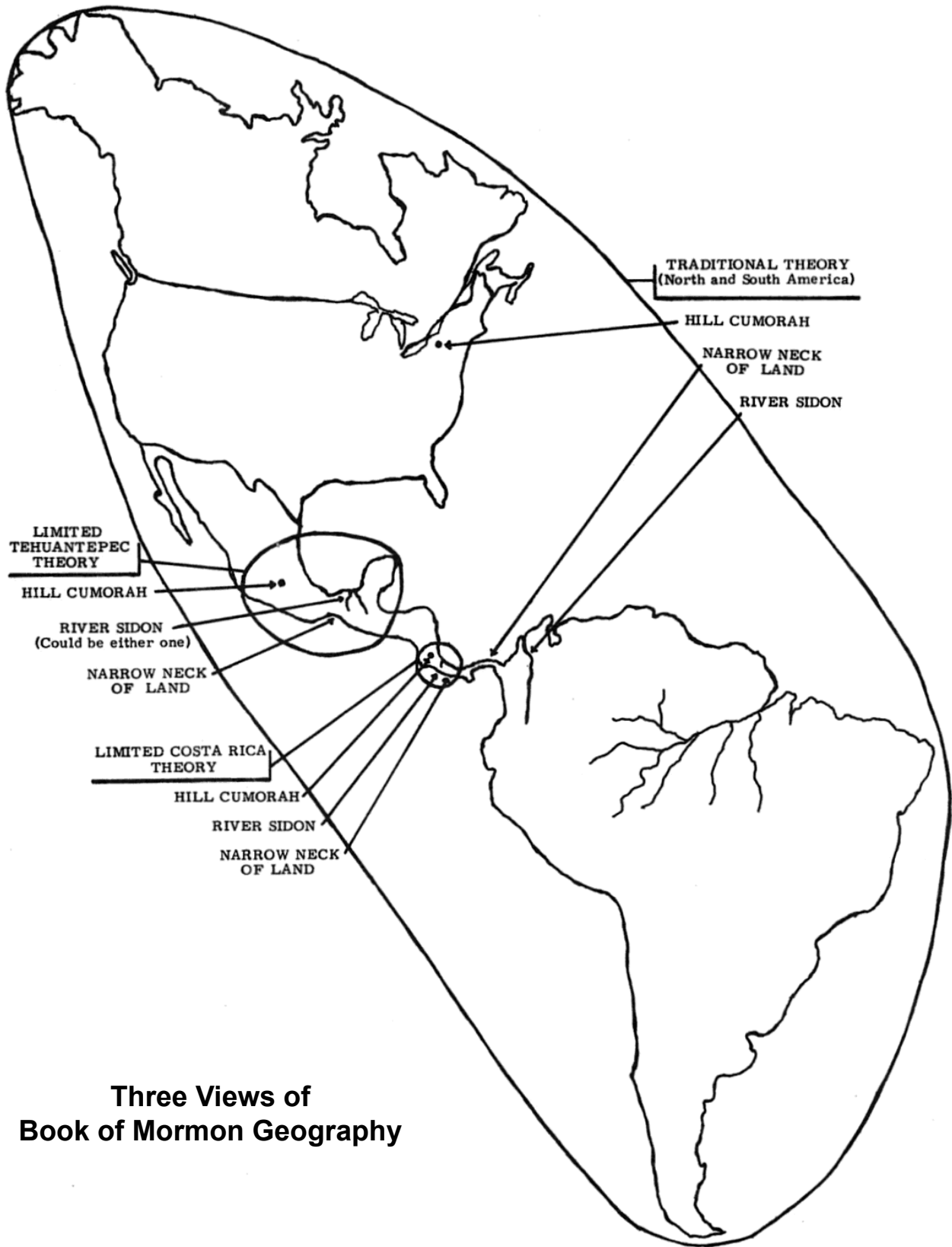
Because of the popularity of the new theory which places all Book of Mormon races far to the, south, these explanatory notes have been eliminated from recent editions of the volume.

The following pages are a plea in defense of the old theory—the interpretation of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Orson Pratt, and a countless number of the Authorities of the Church. It is our humble opinion that there is no occasion to fling aside the old interpretation and accept the new, thus restricting the Book of Mormon races to the restricted confines of Central America. (*The Geography of the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City, 1949, Preface)

The Book of Mormon itself certainly gives the impression that the Nephites and Lamanites occupied both North and South America, In Helaman 3:8 we read:

And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east.

The 1888 Edition of the Book of Mormon contained footnotes which explained that the “sea south” was the “Atlantic, south of Cape Horn.” The “sea north” was explained to be the “Arctic, north of North America.” The “sea west” was supposed to be the “Pacific,” and the “sea east” was the “Atlantic” (Book of Mormon, 1888 Edition, page 434). In modern editions of the Book of Mormon these footnotes have been deleted.



**Three Views of  
Book of Mormon Geography**



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

On May 7, 1960, the Brigham Young University Archaeological Society published this statement in their newsletter:

*A View on the Location of Cumorah.* By Sidney B. Sperry, director of graduate studies in religion at BYU, Honorary Member of the UAS, and author of *Our Book of Mormon*. Dr. Sperry was trained in Old Testament languages and literature at the University of Chicago and in the Holy land and has written extensively on scriptural subjects, particularly in the fields of the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon.

His recent studies in the latter field have convinced him that a careful examination of the “Limited Tehuantepec” theory of Book of Mormon geography is necessary. Those who still maintain the “general New World” theory, thus placing the hill Cumorah . . . in western New York state, will be hardpressed to sustain their views, in the light of certain passages which have lately come to his attention . . . (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, No. 66, May 7, 1960, p. 3)

Dr. M. Wells Jakeman states that there are several theories concerning the geography of the Book of Mormon but that the “Tehuantepec” theory has been accepted by almost all those who have studied the geography of the Book of Mormon:

When we attempt to identify this internal relative geography with some actual part of the New World, we find several theories advocated. The long-popular view among readers of the Book of Mormon as to its area has been what may be termed the “general New World identification,” in which the entire American continent is considered the area of development of the Book of Mormon civilizations, with the main land-northward division of the Book of Mormon area all North America, the main land-southward division all South America, and the connecting isthmus or “small neck of land” the Isthmus of Panama. . . . two more recent theories restrict the area to some middle part only of the New World. One of these, which may be called the “limited Panama identification,” retains the Isthmus of Panama as the “small neck of land,” and identifies Central America (rather than the whole continent of North America) as the “land northward” and northwesternmost South America (Colombia and Ecuador, rather than all that continent) as the “land southward,” . . .

The other of these more restricted interpretations, which may be called the “limited Tehuantepec identification,” abandons Panama as the “small neck of land” or central isthmus feature of the Book of Mormon area and instead identifies as this feature the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in southern Mexico, . . . This “Tehuantepec” area is therefore now accepted by nearly all students of the geography of the Book of Mormon as the area of that account, at least on the basis of agreements in physical geography. (*Progress in Archaeology*, pp. 82–84)

The Mormon writer Walter M. Stout seems to agree that the geography of the Book of Mormon must be limited to a small area, but he feels that Costa Rica is the correct area:

How I settled on Costa Rica is a long story. I had drawn an imaginary map, harmonizing fifty or more points, and spent many weeks trying to fit it into some country. I tried Colombia, on the Magdalena River, Panama, Spanish Honduras, on the Ulua River, Guatemala, and Southern Mexico, on the Rio Usumacinta River, and tried to fit the Isthmus of Tehuantepec into it, but this country is all backwards. The Book of Mormon does not describe it. The narrow places are North and South, when according to the Book of Mormon, they should be East and West. I tried Florida, New York and Lower California. I skipped over Costa Rica. Nothing caught my eye. I was discouraged and about to give up. Then one night I went to a show where the March of Time had something to do with Central America, and I was attracted to Costa Rica and Nicaragua. They resembled my imaginary map. I went to work on it, and right away it began to fit. . . .

Geography of the Book of Mormon will some day become one of the strongest outside evidences of the Book of Mormon. (*Harmony in Book of Mormon Geography*, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1950, pp. 2–3)

Mr. Stout does not accept the Isthmus of Panama or the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as the small neck of land mentioned in the Book of Mormon:

Other points to consider are: The isthmus of Panama is a long neck of land. It does not seem to answer this description. It doesn’t have an east and west sea, neither does the isthmus of Tehuantepec.

The only one answering all the descriptions is in Costa Rica. (*Harmony in Book of Mormon Geography*, p. 22)

Mr. Stout claimed that he “tried to fit the land of Cumorah into New York,” but it would not work. According to his maps (pages 4–7), Mr. Stout has decided to locate the hill Cumorah in Costa Rica!

Dr. Nibley has contested the idea that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is the small neck of land mentioned in the Book of Mormon:

To call the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, one hundred and thirty miles wide, a “narrow passage” is of course out of the question. (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, p. 360)

In rebuttal to Dr. Nibley’s statement, Dr. M. Wells Jakeman stated:

. . . this is **not** out of the question at all. Although the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, in its present width of 130 miles, may be considered too wide to be described as a “small neck of land” or “narrow passage” in the absolute sense, in the relative sense—i.e. in comparison with the land areas on either side—it does fit these terms (and probably did even more in ancient Book of Mormon times, as there is evidence of a considerable regression of the sea on each side since those times)—else why do geographers designate it as an isthmus? (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, Number 40, March 30, 1957, pp. 10–11)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Ross T. Christensen, Associate Professor of Archaeology at Brigham Young University, made this statement concerning this matter:

The terrain of Tehuantepec, fits the requirements of the “narrow neck of land” much more satisfactorily than does that of Panama. . . . The Isthmus of Panama, however, presents a very difficult terrain: dense jungle superimposed upon a rugged mountain range extending the entire length of the republic.

There is, to be sure, one apparent disadvantage in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec: it seems too wide to be the “narrow neck of land.” There may be a good explanation for that, however, for the Coatzacoalcos and other rivers of this isthmus must have unloaded enormous deposits of silt over the past 1500 years, without reasonable doubt widening it beyond what it was in Book of Mormon times. It must have been much narrower, then. (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, BYU, July 7, 1960, p. 3)

In trying to reconcile the story in the Book of Mormon with the width of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, G. Stuart Bagley states:

The idea that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec might be the narrow neck that separated the Land Northward from the Land Southward (Alma 22:32, Helaman 4:7) has been advocated by a number of students. The air-line distance between Coatzacoalcos on the Gulf of Mexico and Union on the Gulf of Tehuantepec is about 120 miles. The narrow neck is said to be “only the distance of a day and half’s journey for a Nephite.” It is fortunate that it says “day and a half’s journey,” because this makes the meaning clear that a day meant from dawn to dawn or sunset to sunset, and not from dawn to dusk as might otherwise be interpreted. A day and a half implies the time from dawn of one day to dusk of the following day, while a day could mean either twelve or twenty-four hours, and we would not know which. Certainly we are justified in assuming that a day and a half means approximately thirty-six hours.

We do not know how far a Nephite could travel in thirty-six hours, but we would expect him to possess the stamina and ability of modern athletes. If he were trained for courier duties in wartime, he would be well-fitted, no doubt, for quick journeys of a hundred miles or more. A parallel can be drawn from the feat of a Tarahumara Indian who ran from Chilhuahua, Mexico, to El Paso, Texas, carrying a torch to light the fire that started the Sun Carnival in 1948. Pedro Paseno covered the 235 miles in 45 hours. At this rate he could have gone 187 miles in a day and a half, or 125 miles in one day. (*Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, BYU, April 13, 1963, p. 79)

The Mormon writer J. N. Washburn states that “there is but one river mentioned in the Book of Mormon, but it is mentioned many, many times, nearly thirty” (*The Contents, Structure & Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, p. 240). George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl state:

RIVER SIDON: One of the most important places in Nephite history for four or five hundred years was the River Sidon. It was their great highway, more to them than the Mississippi is to this country or the Thames is to England. (*Book of Mormon Geography, The Lands of the Nephites-The Jaredites*, by George Reynolds & Janne M. Sjodahl, Salt Lake City, 1957, p. 51)

C. Stewart Bagley states, “Identification of the Sidon river is necessarily one of the most important phases of our research” (*Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, p. 77). Even though Mormon writers have spent a great deal of time on this subject, they are not united concerning the location of this river, George Reynolds stated that the river Sidon is “known today as the Magdalena” (*A Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon*, p. 633). Fletcher B. Hammond wrote:

Many Book of Mormon scholars think Unumacinta could have been Sidon of the Book of Mormon. There is no evidence that it is not. Its general course argues in its favor. That entire country for the last 1500 years has been subject to much geological change, as we shall see later, and Unumacinta, of today, may not in all respects fit Sidon of 400 A.D., yet it could be a modification of that river. (*Geography of the Book of Mormon*, Fletcher B. Hammond, p. 12)

Ross T. Christensen stated:

. . . Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, has identified—and you may find this discussed in various issues of the *Newsletter* (22.03, 34.01, 40.0)—the Usumacinta River as the Sidon of the Book of Mormon. Others have proposed the Grijalva, but this seems unsatisfactory to me. (*Newsletter & Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, January 13, 1969, p. 5)

Joseph E. Vincent tells of the problem he faced with the river Sidon when he tried to make a map of Book of Mormon lands:

The way I set up my map was this—and I agree that this method is definitely not above reproach. The archaeology department of B.Y.U. has thought that the Rio Usumacinta was the River Sidon, while members of the New World Archaeological Foundation have felt that it was the Rio Grijalva. Since the two rivers are actually close together, I chose a line between the two and set it up as the River Sidon. (*Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, p. 65)

It would appear, then, that there is serious division among those who study the geography of the Book of Mormon. Dr. Daniel H. Ludlow made this interesting observation:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

I think that as Latter-day Saints we have asked for some of the criticisms that we have received concerning some of the claims that we have made for the Book of Mormon. All of our claims cannot be right. When you get three different claims concerning something related to the Book of Mormon, and these claims do not agree, then all of them cannot be right. That does not mean that even any of them are right. The possibility is—at least it exists—that all of them are wrong. At least, if you have three different and separate claims, two of them have to be wrong, and only one of them can be right; and there is the possibility that all three of them could be wrong.

Yesterday afternoon I was preparing some material for my Book of Mormon sections for next quarter, when we go into the books of Mosiah and Alma. I was interested in the geography of the Book of Mormon. I pulled down three commentaries and books on the Book of Mormon and read three theories of Book of Mormon Geography. In the books, they were even stated as more than theories. Two of the three books even had maps. One of them showed the Book of Mormon lands entirely in South America. One of them showed the Book of Mormon lands entirely in Central America. One of them showed the Book of Mormon lands in Central America and the rest in North America. Now, not all three of these can be right. Therefore, it seems to me that in these areas where we are not one hundred per cent sure, it would be best not to make the claim, rather than later on have to retract that claim. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, BYU, p. 22)

The Mormon writer Paul R. Cheesman made these statements:

The geography of a country always helps us to understand its people better. Evidently it was not considered of prime importance to the writers of the Book of Mormon, however, since sufficient detailed information is not provided for us to determine with certainty the location of the areas or cities of the history. This should not discourage continuous study in this field, since future findings may help to establish the geography and thus clarify some aspects of the Book of Mormon.

There are those who believe that there are two Hill Cumorahs. Their theory is that the hill on which Mormon fought the last battle with the Lamanites is not the same hill in which Joseph Smith found the gold plates. Advocates of this theory establish their analysis primarily from the internal evidences of the Book of Mormon. Others conclude that there is only one Hill Cumorah, and that the place where Joseph Smith and Moroni met was the same place Mormon and Moroni visited in the fifth century. There is no official Church view.

Some say the “narrow neck of land” is Panama, and others the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico. (*The Instructor*, November 1968, p. 429)

In an address delivered March 25, 1964, Fletcher B. Hammond stated:

. . . it is practically impossible to point to any Book of Mormon land and say, unequivocally, here is that land. . . the Gentiles have not yet received the Book of Mormon by faith—or for any other reason—and until they do accept that book as scripture, it appears that empiracle facts will not be allowed to come forth as evidence of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. . . it is next to impossible to make the geography of the Book of Mormon fit modern maps. (*Geography of the Book of Mormon—“Where is the Hill Cumorah?”* p. 7)

In his larger book, Fletcher B. Hammond stated:

Where in Central America is there a country that well resembles the countries, the cities, and the places mentioned in the Book of Mormon? The answer must be: There is no present country in Central America, or elsewhere, patterned after the Book of Mormon lands. The only conclusion that can be drawn from all of this discussion is that the entire face of the land of Central America has been changed since the destruction of the Nephites about 400 years after the crucifixion of Christ. . . It appears that most, if not all, of the landmarks and monuments named in the Book of Mormon have been obliterated for a good and **wise purpose**.

In the 109th Annual Conference Report at page 128 and 129 Antoine R. Ivins is reported to have said:

Now if we go into Mexico and Central America, and into our own United States, and, by scraping aside the earth which has accumulated over the centuries, expose to view a consecutive and true story of this people which would bear out in all its major details the story of the Book of Mormon, what a simple thing it would be. But it would lose in my mind, one of its greatest values. . . I believe that God **purposely covered up these things** that when the Book of Mormon should come to light in this generation it would have to be accepted on faith. . . Faith to me is the greatest thing in life, and God purposely, I believe, **covered up** in antiquity the history of this people and the story of the Book of Mormon, so that when it should come to light it would have to rest upon faith, a faith that could be given to us only by God Himself. . .

It seems that the Lord has changed the Book of Mormon lands since the extinction of the Nephites so that no one can say: Here is the “narrow neck of land”; here is the narrow strip of wilderness; here is the river Sidon; here is the hill Cumorah in Central America; here is the hill Shim in the land of Antum; etc.; etc. If such places could be ascertained with certainty, knowledge of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon would come without faith; and that kind of knowledge is static. . . He is keeping from this generation all facts possible that would produce knowledge of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon without the exercise of faith. Knowledge that comes after the exercise of faith always produces happiness; knowledge that is thrust upon us may not. (*Geography of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 122–126)

### CONCLUSION

In this study we have shown that Mormon writers have made some fantastic claims about archaeology supporting the Book of Mormon. When these claims are put to the test, however, they are found to be very weak. Charles A. Shook made these comments concerning this matter:

In the Old World the archaeologist has little difficulty in arriving at a conclusion as to the general character of the ancient religions. The idols, the altars, the temples, the religious paintings and the hieroglyphical inscriptions of Egypt and Assyria leave him with no doubts as to the idolatrous character of the ancient religions of those countries. It requires but a passing glance for him to see that they did not partake of the distinctive features of Judaism and Christianity. But the evidences in Egypt and Assyria show no more conclusively that the old religions were not Judaism and Christianity than do those of America. Here, too, the idols, the temples, the altars, the religious paintings and the hieroglyphical inscriptions all testify to the idolatrous character of the ancient worship. There is not a figment of evidence to sustain the theory that the builders of Copan and Quirigua were monotheists, or that the builders of Chimu, in Peru, and Cholula and Teotihuacan, in Mexico, were Jews and Christians. I shall now put before the reader a number of reasons based upon the archaeology of the country, for believing that the ancient Americans were all pagans and idolaters.

1. We infer the heathen character of the ancient religions of America from the utter absence on this continent of both Jewish and Christian antiquities.

Although the Book of Mormon declares that as soon as the Nephites had become fully settled in Peru they built

a temple "like unto Solomon's," and that afterwards they erected "temples," "sanctuaries" and "synagogues," "after the manner of the Jews," the Mormon archaeologist has never been able to point out the remains of a single Jewish religious edifice on the continent. Neither has he been able to point out a single religious structure that bears evidence of ever have been used in Christian worship. . . . No archaeologist that I have ever heard of whose writings are considered authoritative, mentions the finding of a single Jewish or Christian temple, altar, painting or inscription. With one accord they all declare that the ancient inhabitants of those countries were pagans and idolaters. It will not do to claim that the ravages of time and of the warlike Lamanites have completely obliterated every trace of these structures, for, considering the widespread extent of these faiths and the length of time in which they were held, this would be next to impossible. Egypt and Assyria, too, have had their wars, and time and the elements have affected their ruins, but, nevertheless, enough data remain for the archaeologist to determine without difficulty the character of their worship, the names of their gods and many of their religious ceremonies and beliefs. If the ancient Americans were Jews and Christians, will the Mormon Church kindly tell us where the archaeological proof of it is to be found? (*Cumorah Revisited or "The Book of Mormon" and the Claims of the Mormons Re-examined from the Viewpoint of American Archaeology and Ethnology*, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1910, pp. 444-446)

Although Mr. Shook asked this question in 1910, Mormon archaeologists are still unable to furnish any real proof that the Nephites ever existed.

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## APPENDIX

Just as we were preparing to print this booklet, we learned that the Summer 1969 issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* contained some very important material concerning archaeology and the Book of Mormon. Because this material is relevant to this study we have decided to add this Appendix. We will also include a few other items that have come to our attention.

### ONLY BAAL

On pages 22–25 of this booklet, we gave information concerning the Phoenician inscription found at Paraíba, Brazil. Dr. Cyrus H. Gordon has now written an article for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. In this article Dr. Gordon states that the original stone has not yet been located, and that there are two Paraibas in Brazil. He claims that “Estanislau Vera, a jurist in Rio de Janeiro, . . . reappraised the internal and external evidence and concluded that the nineteenth century scholars had not found the site for this simple reason that they were searching in the wrong Paraíba” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, p. 66).

On pages 67–68 of the same issue, Dr. Gordon made it plain that this text was written by a pagan people:

The language of the Brazil text is more akin to Judean Hebrew than to Sidonian Phoenician. This is not surprising for a Canaanite dialect emanating from Ezion-geber (in Edom but on the fringe of Judah) where Israelites had been the sea-faring partners of Phoenicians for over four centuries (i.e., since the days when Solomon and Hiram I embarked on joint overseas trading missions). The text mentions Baal and human sacrifice, both of which ring true for pagan Canaanites and their errant Jewish neighbors (against whom Prophets inveigh). . . . There may have been Hebrews aboard, but it cannot as yet be proved from the inscription itself. The Canaanite speech-community embraced both Yahwists and Baalists. The text mentions Baal but not Yahweh.

This statement clearly shows that this text can not be related to the Nephites mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MYTHS

Dee Green, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Weber State College, has also written an article for *Dialogue*. This article is very critical of “Book of Mormon

archaeologists.” It is very significant because Mr. Green studied archaeology at Brigham Young University. The following statement concerning him appeared in the *University Archaeological Society Newsletter* on October 15, 1963: “Dee F. Green, who graduated from BYU with the MA degree in archaeology in 1961 and is a *UAS* general officer . . . conducted excavations in southern Mexico . . . [and] was the field supervisor of excavations at the Nauvoo Temple site during the summer of 1962, . . .” On November 15, 1961, this statement concerning some of Mr. Green’s work appeared in the *U.A.S. Newsletter*: “All in all, Mr. Green’s report is very good and reflects the fine training he has received.” In 1953–54 he served as Assistant Editor of the *U.A.S. Newsletter*, and in 1958–61 he served as Editor. Thus we see that Mr. Green was deeply involved in archaeological work at Brigham Young University. In his article for *Dialogue*, Dee F. Green states:

Those volumes which most flagrantly ignore time and space and most radically distort, misinterpret, or ignore portions of the archaeological evidence are the popular Farnsworth volumes. Also inadequate, from a professional archaeologist’s point of view, are the well intentioned volumes by Milton R. Hunter and a number of smaller pamphlets and works by various authors. . . .

New World - Old World comparisons have been less popular but equally fraught with problems. The best known examples are the two volumes by Nibley which suffer from an overdose of “Old Worlditis.” In Near Eastern philology and history, Nibley has no peers in the Church—and probably few outside it—but he does not know New World culture history well, and his writing ignores the considerable indigenous elements in favor of exclusively Old World patterns. . . . Having spent a considerable portion of the past ten years functioning as a scientist dealing with New World archaeology, I find that nothing in so-called Book of Mormon archaeology materially affects my religious commitment one way or the other, and I do not see that the archaeological **myths** so common in our proselytizing program enhance the process of true conversion. . . .

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists. Titles on books full of archaeological half-truths, dilettanti on the peripheries of American archaeology calling themselves Book of Mormon archaeologists regardless of their education, and a Department of Archaeology at BYU devoted to the production of Book of Mormon archaeologists do not insure that Book of Mormon archaeology really exists. If one is to study Book of Mormon archaeology, then one must have a corpus of data with which to deal. We do not. The Book of Mormon is really there so one can have Book of Mormon studies, and archaeology is really there so one can study archaeology, but the two are not wed. At least they are not wed in reality since no Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern topography. Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any location for that matter) were or are. It would seem then that a concentration on geography should be the first order of business, but we have already seen that twenty years of such an approach has left us empty-handed. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, pp. 74, 76, 77 and 78)

In a footnote on page 77 of the same article, Dee F. Green stated:

With the single exception of Ross T. Christensen, no individual ever educated in the former BYU Archaeology Department considers himself a Book of Mormon Archaeologist. In fact, most of those who graduated have not pursued careers in anth[r]opology nor its sub-discipline archaeology, and those few of us who have become professionals have consistently found our early BYU training highly inadequate and the points of view expressed there largely uninformed and sterile.

### NIBLEY ATTACKS JAKEMAN

On page 41 of this booklet we quoted Dr. M. Wells Jakeman as stating that a “prominent member of the faculty of Brigham Young University” had privately distributed a leaflet in which “he ridicules my interpretation” of “Stela 5.” After quoting Dr. Jakeman’s statement we made this comment.

Exactly who this “prominent” member of the BYU faculty is we are unable to say. We do know, however, that there has been a difference of opinion between Dr. Jakeman and Dr. Hugh Nibley, and that Dr. Nibley does not seem to endorse Jakeman’s work on the “Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone.”

The recent issue of *Dialogue* makes it clear that Dr. Nibley did write a leaflet against Jakeman’s interpretations. Dee F. Green quotes Dr. Nibley as saying:

Science does not arrive at its conclusions by syllogisms, and no people on earth deplore proof demonstration by syllogism more loudly than real archaeologists do. Yet Mr. Jakeman’s study is nothing but an elaborate syllogistic stew. The only clear and positive thing about

the whole study is the objective the author is determined to reach. With naive exuberance, he repeatedly announces that he has found “exactly what we would expect to find.” Inevitably there emerges from this dim and jumbled relief exactly what Mr. Jakeman is looking for. (Dr. Nibley’s review of Jakeman’s publication on Stela 5, as quoted in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, p. 75)

Dee F. Green states that this review was “privately distributed.” It would be interesting to know all of the contents of this review.

However this may be, it is now quite obvious that Dr. Nibley does not accept Jakeman’s work on “Stela 5,” and it becomes even more difficult to resist the idea that Dr. Nibley may have been referring to the “Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone” when he stated: “One has seen the same logic applied in our own day to dubious, damaged, scanty, and isolated figures on New World surfaces, which have been duly declared to be Egyptian glyphs and interpreted by the Kircher method, with the added element of phonetic manipulation as the final touch to this intriguing fun-game. . . . Here let Kircher be an example and a warning to us all” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1968, p. 175).

Dee F. Green, who was deeply involved with the Brigham Young University Archaeological Society, has also come out against Dr. Jakeman’s work:

A final warning should be issued against Jakeman’s Lehi Tree of Life Stone, which has received wide publicity in the Church and an over-enthusiastic response from the layman due to the publication’s pseudo-scholarship. The question which should really be asked about Izapa Stela 5 is “Did the artist or artists have Lehi’s vision in their minds when the stone was sculptured?”, a question which, I submit, cannot be answered short of talking with the artist. The next question, then, is what are the probabilities that the artist had Lehi’s vision in mind when he carved the stone. I don’t know the answer to that one either, but then, neither does Jakeman, and his publication is more of a testimony as to what is not known than [than?] to what is known about Stela 5. As Nibley pointed out in his own inimitable style, Jakeman errs at every turn in the publication. The basis of Jakeman’s evidence is his own hand-drawn version from a photograph of the stone. He makes unsupported assumptions about the canons of ancient art; he fumbles over elements of the dream which are not included and items on the stone which have no place in the dream; he displays ignorance of his linguistic data and most unfortunately reverses the scholarly method by presenting his data with a rash of “evidently,” “probably,” “appears,” and “apparently”—but offers his conclusions as unarguable facts. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, pp. 74–75)

### BOUNTIFUL FOUND?

In 1954 Dr. M. Wells Jakeman stated that the city of Bountiful had “very probably been found”:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Research in the geography of the Book of Mormon and this Mesoamerican area has now reached the stage of direct archaeological testing of specific cite locations of the Record. One of these is that of the city of Bountiful, . . . it is not going too far to state that this famous Book of Mormon city, has in fact, very probably been found. Final certainty for this important claim must, of course, await the results of further explorations at the ruined city of "Aguacatal." (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, August 23, 1954, pp. 4 and 6)

In the January 28, 1956, issue of the same publication, we read the following:

The story of the 1954 expedition . . . was told by Dr. Jakeman . . . It was undertaken in quest of an important ruined city which his many years of study of Book of Mormon geography indicated should be there. In company with expedition-member José Davila, he traversed much of the Usumacinta River by Cayuco or dugout canoe. Because of the dense forest, however, the explorers found it necessary to examine the actual locality of the expected ruins from the air. . . . To their great disappointment, however, the very place where the ruins should have been was filled by a great mass of jungle-covered hills. No ruins could be seen. The expedition returned an apparent failure.

Upon arrival in Utah, however, the photographs were developed and studied; and it was then discovered that the "hills" were in reality rows of great ruin-mounds of an ancient city, previously unknown to archaeology! . . . In view of this important discovery (double important because of the very large size of the ruined city and because it was found exactly at the spot previously determined upon from the geography of the Book of Mormon), several return expeditions, besides the present one, are planned for further exploration of the site, including aerial reconnaissance and mapping, test-trenching to determine its actual period of occupation, and large-scale excavations at key points. (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, Number 32, January 28, 1956, p. 2)

In the *U.A.S. Newsletter*, Number 46, December 17, 1957, we find this statement: "Aguacatal has been identified by Dr. Jakeman, on the basis of evidence in the Chronicles as well as archaeological evidence, as almost certainly the city Bountiful of the Book of Mormon . . ." The June 4, 1958, issue of the "Newsletter" reported that Dr. Ross T. Christensen was going to lecture "on 'Uncovering the Ancient Walled City of Bountiful.'" In the July 16, 1958, issue of the "Newsletter" we find this statement:

Dr. Jakeman is presently preparing a special window display featuring the excavations being conducted by BYU at the ancient walled city of Aguacatal, Campeche, Mexico (identified as Bountiful of the Book-of-Mormon). (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, Number 51, July 16, 1958, p. 2)

On July 1, 1959, the "Newsletter" contained this statement:

Digging the Ruins of Bountiful. The city Bountiful of the Book of Mormon, an important walled city and

military center of the first century BC and the place of appearance of the resurrected Christ to the surviving Nephites following the cataclysm incident to his crucifixion, is a location of key importance in Book of Mormon geography. To discover its exact location should make it possible in turn to identify the river Sidon, locate the Nephite capital Zarahemla, and eventually work out the entire scheme of Book of Mormon geography. . . .

In 1948 Dr. M. Walls Jakeman, chairman of the BYU Department of Archaeology, located a ruined city now called Aguacatal in western Campeche, in the southern Gulf Coast region of Mexico, which exactly met the qualifications for identification as this city Bountiful of the Book of Mormon . . . (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, Number 59, July 1, 1959, pp. 4-5)

Mormon archaeologists have done a great deal of work at Aguacatal, but they have been unable to prove that it is the city Bountiful. In fact, Dee F. Green states that their own work proves that it is not Bountiful:

After excavating at Aguacatal in 1961 and conducting the only study yet made of the artifacts end data recovered, Ray Matheny, then a graduate student at BYU, privately demonstrated that Aguacatal is **not Bountiful**. The *UAS Newsletter* has never recognized Matheny's contribution. Jakeman has also identified the site of El Cayo on the Usumacinta River in Southern Mexico as Zarahemla. Others who have visited the site find it too small, and some preliminary archaeological testing shows its main occupation to be too late in time for such an interpretation. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, p. 73, footnote 4)

We find these comments on the same page of this article:

While most L.D.S. archaeologists agree very broadly with Jakeman in identifying Mesoamerica as the region in which Book of Mormon events most likely transpired, attempts to arrive at closer identification have been hampered by Jakeman's failure to publish his long-awaited geography of the Book of Mormon. Jakeman's core ideas with regard to Book of Mormon geography were known over twenty years ago. Nothing new has come out of L.D.S. scholarship since then except for one **abortive** attempt to identify the Book of Mormon city Bountiful, a few wildly speculative suggestions by such individuals as José Davila, and a modicum of knowledgeable and reasonable but private correspondence be Sorenson, Lowe, Warren, and others. Furthermore, the University Archaeological Society (now the Society for Early Historic Archaeology), which provides the house organ for the Jakeman position, has consistently refused to conduct a symposium on Book of Mormon geography, despite the fact that such a symposium has been suggested to its officers a number of times by a number of people in the past ten years. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, p. 73)

### GIGANTIC WHEELS

On page 11 of this booklet we state that the Book of Mormon claims that the Nephites had “chariots,” but so far archaeologists have not found any in the New World. Mormon writers, of course, would like to prove that the wheel was known in the New World. Paul Cheesman, for instance, points out that “many miniature models of wheeled vehicles have been found,” but he admits that “no counterparts in the larger, more practical design have been discovered as yet.” Dr. Cheesman suggests, however, that large wheels may have been made of wood and that “they probably would have decomposed by now” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1968, p. 188).

On page 154 of his book, *Book of Mormon Evidences in Ancient America*, the Mormon writer Dewey Farnsworth tells of toys that have wheels which were found in “cemeteries of Ancient America.” On page 155, however, he has a photograph of four gigantic “wheels” that are made “of stone.” The Mormon writer Jack H. West must be referring to these “wheels” or some that are very similar when he states:

Some scientists said, “Well yes, we grant that this child’s toy in an ancient grave does show that they understood the use of the wheel, but this is just a toy. We cannot believe, nor will we believe, that they used them for anything but toys, until we see something a lot larger.” Then one day on the shores of Lake Titicaca . . . Scientists found some ancient wheels that were “larger,” and how! I was up in that country, . . . I saw ruins all the way. On page 94 of Farnsworth’s book, we see four **giant** wheels. Stretching, I can reach seven feet; add two more feet to that and you will have the diameter of each of these wheels—**nine feet** in diameter, **sixteen inches wide** on the tread of the wheel. The stone is extremely hard, I am told. . . .

Scientists have reconstructed, with the help of these wheels, a conveyance which they think resembles the ancient wagons or transportation units. Now we begin to see why they were so careful to give stability to their roadbeds, so that they could carry tremendous weights over these roads. We learn that they carried weights up to 300 **tons** with apparent parent ease, over great distances and over rugged mountains. (*Trial of the Stick of Joseph*, Extension Publications, Brigham Young University, p. 77)

Mr. West would have us believe that these “ancient wagons” carried up to 300 **tons** (600,000 **pounds**) with “apparent ease,” and that they traveled great distances over “rugged mountains.” We feel that this is rather fantastic. Mr. West states that these wagons were pulled by horses, but we feel that it would take a great deal of power just to keep these gigantic stone “wheels” in motion.

Actually, we do not know what these huge stones were used for; we do know, however, that the ancient inhabitants of the New World were familiar with the circle. Round

calendar stones have been found in the New World. Milton R. Hunter includes a photograph of a round calendar stone on page 89 of his book, *Christ in Ancient America*, Vol. 2.

The stones mentioned by Mr. West do not have axles in them, and while there are holes in the center of the stones they are square instead of round. Mr. West gives this reason for the square holes:

A strange thing is seen—square holes for the axles instead of round holes. . . . Scientists believe the ancients used a wood stronger than our iron-wood for axles, and spacers between the two pairs of wheels; and the axles were square on the ends to fit snugly into the square axle holes, and then rounded and greased in the center. Some of the extremely strong ancient rope (and they were the best ropemakers in the world) was then looped around the axles to form a rope cradle in the middle. Then away they would go with loads up to 300 **tons**, the wagons being pulled by horses. (*Trial of the Stick of Joseph*, page 77)

Dr. Paul R. Cheesman does not seem to accept the idea of such gigantic wheels for he states: “No large utilitarian wheels have been found to date in pre-Columbian America. However, many wheeled toys have been found; and usually toys are made to resemble the real thing” (*The Instructor*, November 1968, p. 430). The entire article which Dr. Cheesman wrote for the *BYU Studies*, Winter 1969, pages 185–197, is devoted to “The Wheel in Ancient America,” yet he does not mention these gigantic “wheels.” Dee F. Green made these interesting comments:

Finally, I should like to lay at rest the myth that by scurrying around Latin America looking for horses and wheels we can prove the Book of Mormon. The mention of the wheel in the Book of Mormon and finding wheeled toy vehicles in Mexico is not proof of the Book. The mention of horses in the Book of Mormon and finding petroglyphs of horses (especially the ones with Spanish saddles) carved on stone in the southwestern United States is not proof of the Book. (*Dialogue*, Summer 1969, p. 78)

### “DEFORMED ENGLISH”?

Charles A. Shook gives some interesting information concerning the “Anthon Transcript”—i.e., a copy of the characters from which Joseph Smith was supposed to have translated the Book of Mormon. He stated:

I challenge the Mormon Church to make good the claim that they have flaunted before the Christian public for seventy-five years, that the “Caractors” are Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyrian and Arabic, and demand that until they do they refrain from using Anthon’s purported statement further. . . .

To the inquiry of Mr. Bays, Pres. James B. Angell, of the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor, replied as follows: “I have submitted your letter and inclosure to our professor of Oriental languages, who is more familiar with



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

the subjects raised by your question than I am. He is a man of large learning in Semitic languages and archaeology. The substance of what he has to say is:

“I. The document which you enclose (the ‘Anthon Transcript’] raises a moral rather than a linguistic problem. A few letters or signs are noticeable which correspond more or less closely to the Aramaic, sometimes called Chaldee language; for example, s, h, g, t, l, b, n. There are no Assyrian characters in it, and the impression made is that the document is fraudulent.”

In answer to the letter of Mr. Bays, Charles H. S. Davis, . . . author of “Ancient Egypt in the Light of Recent Discoveries,” and a member of the American Oriental Society, . . . wrote: “I am familiar with Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyrian and Arabic, and have considerable acquaintance with all the Oriental languages, and I can positively assert that there is not a letter to be found in the fac-simile submitted that can be found in the alphabet of any Oriental language, particularly of those you refer to; namely, Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyrian and Arabic.

“A careful study of the fac-simile shows that they are characters put down at random by an ignorant person—with no resemblance to anything, not even shorthand.”

Dr. Charles E. Moldenke, of New York, said to be “probably the best Egyptian scholar in the country,” replied to Mr. Bays from Jerusalem, Palestine, December 27, 1896, as follows: “Your letter dated November 23 I have just received. I will try to answer your questions as far as I am able. I believe the plates of the Book of Mormon to be a fraud.

“In the first place, it is impossible to find in any old inscription, ‘Egyptian, Arabic, Chaldaic and Assyrian’ characters mixed together. The simple idea of finding Egyptian and Arabic side by side is ridiculous and impossible.

“In the second place, though some signs remind one of those of the Mesa Inscription, yet none bear a resemblance to Egyptian or Assyrian.” (*Cumorah Revisited*, Cincinnati, 1910, pp. 527–531)

Charles A. Shook sent the “Anthon Transcript” to the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. On January 28, 1908, he received a letter in which the following statements appear:

Dear Sir—Your letter of January 15th has been referred to Dr. I. M. Casanowicz, of the Division of Historic Archaeology, who states that the characters regarding which you make inquiry are neither Egyptian nor Chaldaic, Assyrian nor Arabic; and they have not been found on any American monument or manuscript. The slip on which the characters are represented is returned herewith. (*Cumorah Revisited*, p. 535)

On pages 535, 538 and 539, of the same book, we find these statements by Charles A. Shook:

If the “Caractors” are not Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyrian and Arabic, and have not been found engraved on the monuments or inscribed in the manuscripts of

ancient America, the honest and intelligent reader can come to no other conclusion than that they are frauds, which have been presented to the public in order to deceive, and frauds, too, which were not beyond the ability of a Smith and a Harris to execute. . . .

Instead of “Reformed Egyptian” many of the “Caractors” are deformed English, as any one will observe who will compare them with English letters, figures and signs. I have counted thirty-six different characters in the fac-simile, some of them occurring more than once, which are either identical with, or which closely resemble the English. Figure 21 will illustrate this. [see illustration at right] The fact is that Joseph Smith, in drawing the transcript, employed different kinds and styles of English letters, changing a few of them to make the imposture less observable. Latter-day Saints are very quick to see a resemblance between the “Caractors” and the letters in the Maya and Egyptian alphabets of Le Plongeon; will they be as

quick to see the similarity between the “Caractors” and the English? If similarity proves anything, it proves that the transcript is a bold, bare forgery and one not above the ability of a Smith or a Harris to execute. (*Cumorah Revisited*, by Charles A. Shook, Cincinnati, 1910, pp. 535, 538 and 539)

The reader will remember that we have a photograph of the “Anthon Transcript” on page 15 of this book. On the same page we stated that three Egyptologists have recently examined the “Anthon Transcript.” One felt that the characters resembled demotic. Another felt they looked like abbreviated hieratic, and the third stated that they were nothing but “doodlings.”

We feel that Charles A. Shook’s suggestion that the characters are nothing but “deformed English” should at least be considered as a possibility in any study of the “Anthon Transcript.”

### QUETZALCOATL CRUCIFIED?

Charles A. Shook gives this interesting information concerning Quetzalcoatl:

Another very absurd theory is that which identifies our Lord with Quetzacoatl, the Aztec god of the air.

Mormon Caractors	English Characters
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
0	0
206	206
i	i
ii	ii
iii	iii
iv	iv
v	v
vi	vi
vii	vii
viii	viii
ix	ix
x	x
xi	xi
xii	xii
xiii	xiii
xiv	xiv
xv	xv
xvi	xvi
xvii	xvii
xviii	xviii
xix	xix
xx	xx
xxi	xxi
xxii	xxii
xxiii	xxiii
xxiv	xxiv
xxv	xxv
xxvi	xxvi
xxvii	xxvii
xxviii	xxviii
xxix	xxix
xxx	xxx

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Kingsborough is the most prominent advocate of this opinion. He claims that in a certain piece of ancient sculpture work, discovered in Mexico by Mons. Dupaix, this god is represented as wearing a crown of thorns, that in a bust now preserved in the British Museum he holds in his hand a fan and a sickle, and that in the Borgian manuscript he is represented, pictographically, as dying upon a cross between two reviling thieves. Putting these evidences together, he decides that the Americans knew of the crucifixion of our Lord upon the cross of Calvary.

On the supposed representation of the crucifixion of Quetzalcoatl, as given in the Borgian manuscript, he says: "In the fourth page of the Borgian manuscript, he seems to be crucified between two persons, who are in the act of reviling him; who hold, as it would appear, halts in their hands, the symbols, perhaps, of some crime for which they were themselves going to suffer."—Quoted in *Book of Mormon Lectures*, p. 239. He says further that in the seventy-second, seventy-third and seventy-fifth pages, as well as in the fourth page, of this manuscript, are paintings "which actually represent Quecalcoatle crucified and nailed to the cross."

The Mormons have eagerly seized these quotations, with others from the same author, and give them wide publicity as proving that the ancient Americans knew of the crucifixion of Christ. . . . Says Elder John Taylor: "The story of the life of the Mexican divinity, Quetzalcoatl, closely resembles that of the Saviour; so closely, indeed, that we can come to no other conclusion that that Quetzalcoatl and Christ are the same being." . . . While Mormon writers make good use of his [Kingsborough's] statements, they are very careful that the public shall not see the figures from the Codex Borgianus, which Kingsborough claims are representations of Quetzalcoatl crucified. In 1888 a prominent Josephite elder went to the Cincinnati Exposition, where a set of Kingsborough

was on exhibition, and copied a number of extracts from it . . . But why did this elder, after he had put himself to so much trouble to see a set of Kingsborough's "Mexican Antiquities," not sketch, or have sketched, the figures which the latter claims represent the crucifixion scene of Quetzalcoatl? The reason is obvious. He knew full well that a glance at these pictographs would forever destroy the force of Kingsborough's claim with every unbiased reader and the Book of Mormon would lose some highly valued evidence.

Although Kingsborough's work is very rare . . . I have succeeded in locating three sets: one in Cambridge, Mass.; another in the library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, at Madison, and still another in the library of the Field's Museum, Chicago. Through the kindness of the librarian of the last-mentioned institution, I was permitted to sketch the figures on pages 4 and 75 of the "Borgian Codex." . . . I ask the reader to examine carefully the drawings given, and then to decide for himself how much of truth there is in the claim that they represent a crucifixion scene. (*Cumorah Revisited*, pp. 404–407)

Below we present Charles A. Shook's drawings. The one to the left he labeled: "Figure 12. *Quetzalcoatl Crucified*. Page 4, Borgian Codex." The drawing to the right he labeled: "Figure 13. *Quetzalcoatl Crucified*. Page 75, Borgian Codex."

It is hard for us to see how these pagan drawings can be related to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Mormon writers, however, are still appealing to Kingsborough's statements concerning the "Borgian Codex" (see *Christ in Ancient America*, by Milton R. Hunter, Vol. 2, p. 265, and *Book of Mormon Evidences in Ancient America*, by Dewey Farnsworth, pp. 45 and 93).

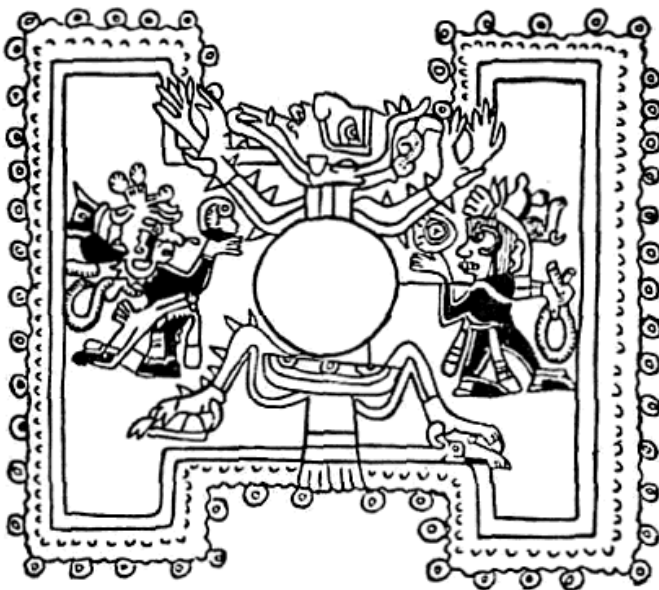


Figure 12. *Quetzalcoatl Crucified*. Page 4, Borgian Codex.



Figure 13. *Quetzalcoatl Crucified*. Page 75, Borgian Codex.

## APPENDIX NO. 2

Since printing this book in 1969, a number of important things relating to the Book of Mormon and archaeology have come to our attention. For instance, Thor Heyerdahl has been successful in crossing the Atlantic in a papyrus boat. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for July 13, 1970 reported:

BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS (AP)—Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl arrived in Bridgetown aboard a papyrus boat Sunday, ending a 3,200-mile voyage to prove the ancient Egyptians could have crossed the Atlantic. . . . it marked the end of an historic voyage that began May 17 when they set sail from Safi, Morocco. . . .

The 55-year-old explorer sought to prove that the Egyptians could have crossed the Atlantic in similar papyrus vessels 4,000 years ago, long before the voyage of Columbus.

The *Deseret News*, Church Section, July 18, 1970, contained these statements:

Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, former head of the department of archeology at Brigham Young University, said the Heyerdahl crossing “demonstrates the possibility of such a crossing,” as described in the Book of Mormon.

President Harold B. Lee, first counselor in the First Presidency, termed the crossing “interesting.” “It’s better if we don’t beat our own drum,” he said. It is “better for outsiders to do the commenting” concerning any parallels found in the voyages.

Actually, the idea that the ancient inhabitants of America came by boat was believed by many people in Joseph Smith’s day. In 1823 the *Palmyra Herald*, published in Joseph Smith’s neighborhood, printed the following statements:

The first settlers of North America were probably Asiatics. . . . The Asiatics, at an early period, might easily have crossed the Pacific Ocean, and made settlements in North America. . . . The descendants of Japheth might afterwards cross the Atlantic, and subjugate the Asiatics, or drive them to South America. (*Palmyra Herald*, February 19, 1823)

In his book, *American Antiquities*, published in 1835, Josiah Priest stated that “different races of men, as Polynesians, Malays, Australasians, Phoenicians, Egyptians,

Greeks, Romans, Israelites, Tartars, Scandinavians, Danes, Norwegians, Welsh and Scotch, have colonized different parts of the continent” (*American Antiquities*, Albany, N.Y., 1835, p. iv). Josiah Priest goes on to give the following information:

If the Romans may have found this country, they may also have attempted its colonization, as the immense square forts of the west would seem to suggest.

In 1821, on the bank of the river Desperes, in Missouri, was found, by an Indian, a Roman coin, and presented to Gov. Clarke. This is no more singular than the discovery of a Persian coin near a spring on the Ohio, some feet under ground; . . . (*American Antiquities*, p. 52)

The triune cup . . . deposited in one of the museums at Cincinnati, affords some probable evidence, that a part, at least, of the great mass of human population, once inhabiting the valley of the Mississippi, were of Hindoo origin. (*Ibid.*, p. 56)

. . . from the west coast of Africa there is a constant current of the sea setting toward South America, so that if a vessel were lost, or if an eastern storm had driven it far into the ocean or South Atlantic, it would naturally arrive at last on the American coast. . . . the Egyptians, under the direction of Necho, their king fitting out some Phoenicians with a vessel, or fleet, with orders to sail from the Red sea, quite around the continent of Africa, . . . if we cannot allow the Egyptians to have visited South America and all the islands between, on voyages of discovery. . . . we are ready to admit that they may have been driven there, by an eastern storm; and, as favoring such a circumstance, the current which sets from the African coast toward South America, should not be forgotten. . . . The trade winds sweep westward across the Atlantic, through a space of fifty or sixty degrees of longitude, carrying every thing within their current directly to the American coast. . . .

Kentucky itself, where we think we have found the remains of an Egyptian colony, or nation, as in the case of the works and catacomb at Lexington, is in latitude but five degrees north of Egypt; so that whether they may have visited America on a voyage or exploration, or have been driven on the coast against their will, in either case, it would be perfectly natural that they should have established themselves in that region. (*Ibid.*, pp. 117–119)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

... the Persians ... for aught that can be objected, traversed the globe, planted colonies, perhaps even in America, as the coin, which lay so deep beneath the surface of the earth, would seem to justify; which was truly a Persian coin of copper. (Ibid., p. 181)

Thus transported by winds, waves and stress of weather, man has found all the islands of all the seas. In the same way may have arrived persons from Africa and Europe, Australasians, Chinese, Hindoos, Japanese, Burmans, Kamskatdales and Tartars on the coasts of America, in the first ages. (Ibid., p. 280)

... Egyptians, Phoenicians and individuals of other nations of that age unquestionably found their way to South America, and also to the southern parts of of [sic] North America, from the east, and also from the west, across the Pacific, in shipping. (Ibid., p. 331)

We know that Joseph Smith was familiar with Priest's *American Antiquities* because he quotes from it in the *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, pages 813–814. Another work by Priest, *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, was available in Joseph Smith's neighborhood prior to the time the Book of Mormon was "translated." This book quotes extensively from Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*. Over thirty pages are devoted to "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, p. 297). In the *Case Against Mormonism*, Vol. 3, pages 91–93, we present evidence that seems to show that Joseph Smith borrowed from Priest in writing his Book of Mormon.

### Still No Nephites

During the last few years there have been a number of claims concerning migrations to America. Karl E. Meyer gives this information:

Take Alexander von Wuthenau's book ... The author, a lecturer at the University of the Americas in Mexico City, soberly argues that the whole Family of Man is depicted on pre-Columbian pottery, suggesting that Semites, Africans and Japanese all reached the New World long before Columbus.

Not long ago, the mere suggestion would have been met with patronizing academic scorn. ...

Many scholars are still resolutely hostile to the notion of alien influences, but the air of dogmatic dismissal is gone. The possibility is reluctantly accepted that Africans, Mediterraneans and Orientals may have sailed here before Columbus, ...

The whole controversy forms a curious epilogue to a debate that began when Western explorers first encountered the Sun Kingdoms of the Americas. ... Spanish friars in Mexico and Peru rejoiced to hear tales of fair-faced and bearded gods who had supposedly come to the New World long ago from far away. Clearly these must be the Holy

Apostles. And the Indians were manifestly the lost tribes of Israel. ... As early as 1607 a book was published ... in which Fray Gregorio Garcia spaciouly claimed, "The Indians proceeded neither from one ... part alone of the Old World, or by the same road, or at the same time; some have probably descended from the Carthaginians, others from the lost Atlantis, from the Greeks, from the Phoenicians, and still others from the Chinese, Tartars and other groups."

Until recently, scholars dismissed this as monkish moon drift. Two generations of research had established a consensual view—that the aboriginal stock of the Americas derived from Asiatics who migrated across the Bering Strait beginning around 15,000 B.C. or earlier. They dispersed through the Americas, and their descendants, without un-American help, created the high civilizations the Spaniards found. ...

A major breakthrough came ... on the humid coast of Ecuador. There, at a site called Valdivia, archaeologists found incised pottery dating to around 3200 B.C. ... its style uncannily resembled pottery made in the same period in Japan, a place from which favorable winds and tides could send a stray fishing raft to Ecuador.

That such a lengthy, involuntary trip was possible had already been proved by Thor Heyerdahl, who had sailed 4,300 nautical miles on the open Pacific on Kon-Tiki (and duplicated the feat on the Atlantic to show that the Egyptians might have reached Mexico). ... The Valdivia potsherds have removed the notion of trans-Pacific contacts from the realm of conjecture to the firmer terrain of arguable fact. This does not mean that the diffusionists (as proponents of such contacts are known) have carried the field. Awkward anomalies remain. Why, for instance, was the true wheel unknown in ancient America? The only wheels so far discovered have been on children's toys in Mexico. If Old World pilgrims reached these shores, how could they have failed to communicate so obvious an invention to the Indians? (Diffusionists reply that the cheapness of human labor and the lack of draft animals meant that there was no need for the wheel in the New World—an argument I find unconvincing.) (*Life Magazine*, October 16, 1970, p. 12)

William F. Albright, a noted archaeologist, made this statement in a letter dated January 4, 1971:

Now, I would not for a moment doubt that there were involuntary visitors to the New World long before Columbus. I am perfectly willing to accept the certain movements across the Behring Strait and the Aleutian Islands and the recently demonstrated probability of derivation of a unique Ecuadorian pottery type from Japan very early. It is very likely that there were other visitors to Middle and South America from Pacific islands and highly probable that there were visitors from Europe and North Africa at many different periods. In such matters, one swallow does not make a summer, and there is certainly no evidence for any wholesale migration. Such evidence may turn up, and one very striking parallel was pointed out by me quite a number of years ago.

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

But we still do not have decisive evidence anywhere for any massive penetration. (Letter from William F. Albright, dated January 4, 1971)

The Mormon scholar Carl Hugh Jones states that the Japanese pottery may create a “new problem” for Mormon archaeologists:

In order to get the Valdivia pottery-makers from the west side of the Pacific to the east, Meggers and Evans suggested that one or more involuntary voyages were made by Jomon fishermen who, caught at sea by severe storms, were swept northeastward into the eastward flow of the Kurshio or Japanese current and then southward by wind and current 8000 miles to the coast of Ecuador. . . . there is ample evidence to support the statement that there was contact between Japan and Ecuador about 3000 BC. . . . If the professional archaeologist is now willing to let a boatload of Japanese reach the New World around the time of the rise of the ancient American civilizations, he may also be willing to accept boatloads of Mesopotamians and Israelites.

However, if the Jomon and the Book of Mormon peoples survived a voyage to the New World, so possibly did others. So now there is a new problem to contend with: we must identify and separate the landings made by Book of Mormon peoples from those of others. We can no longer state that any sudden appearance of traits of advanced culture, such as pottery, can be attributed entirely to the arrival of the Jaredites or Lehites. Thus the picture of the New World origins long held by Latter-day Saint students of archaeology—i.e., that the early hunters and gatherers came from Siberia by way of Bering Strait but the ancient civilizations developed entirely from the Book of Mormon colonies that came from the Near East in transoceanic migrations—must now be modified. We must now accept the probability that there were other transoceanic voyagers to the New World bringing with them ideas and artifacts from other advanced cultures of the Old World. . . .

To a Latter-day Saint, the Valdivia-Jomon transpacific-contact theory makes the problem of the origin of the ancient civilizations of the Americas more complex, but at the same time offers a validity test which can be used to confirm Book of Mormon connections, once they become apparent. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, Brigham Young University, September 8, 1969, pp. 5–6)

Mormon archaeologists have spent a great deal of time and money searching for the Nephites, but it has all been in vain. The *Brigham Young University Alumnus* for August 1970 contained the following:

In what has been observed as one of the most incredible archaeological expeditions of the Twentieth Century, the Brigham Young Academy Expedition left on that brisk April morning in 1900 . . . headed for the far-off jungles of Mexico, and Central and South America some 6,000 miles away. . . .

Purposes of the Expedition centered around three areas, according to an article . . . by Dr. Ross T. Christensen, professor of anthropology and archaeology at BYU:

(1) To gather **archaeological evidence bearing upon the claims of the Book of Mormon**; (2) to collect

scientific specimens for the Academy’s museum (in existence since 1892); and (3) to assemble information of use for LDS proselyting and colonizing activities. . . .

In January, 1902, they were called home, with their return journey taking them to Havanah and then to Galveston, Texas, on the S. S. Yucatan, . . .

Dr. Christensen points out in his article that the last two objectives of the Expedition were fulfilled. But, because the study of American archaeology was in its infancy at that time, gathering evidence upon the claims of the Book of Mormon **did not materialize**. (*Brigham Young University Alumnus*, August 1970, pp. 4 and 5)

From 1948 to 1961 the Department of Archaeology at Brigham Young University sent “five archaeological expeditions to Middle America,” but since no evidence for the Nephites has been found interest has declined. Ross T. Christensen states:

(1) Since the attachment of the New World Archaeological Foundation to BYU in 1961 there has existed no departmental program of field research in Mesoamerica. While individual faculty members may obtain their own grants and make their own arrangements—as individuals—no field program organized by the Department as such and directed to the solution of specific Book of Mormon problems has been possible.

(2) The archaeology of the Scriptures, which once occupied the center of the picture, indeed was the very purpose for which the Department was created in the first place, now seems to be only a peripheral field. This great study, for which Elder Widtsoe and President McDonald had such high hopes and which from 1946 to 1959 occupied first place in the hearts of faculty and students alike and elicited such enthusiasm from them, has now been relegated to the position of simply a private research interest on the part of two of the Department’s five faculty members. . . . it cannot be said that BYU now officially supports through its archaeology department any kind of research program in the archaeology of the Scriptures. In other words, even though the Department’s original assignment in this field has never been explicitly annulled, still **no genuine official support is now forthcoming**. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology*, Brigham Young University, June, 1970, p. 8)

On pages 65–67 of this booklet we show that Dee Green, who was Editor of the “Newsletter” on archaeology published at Brigham Young University, has turned on the Department of Archaeology and declared that the “first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists.” He attacks Dr. Jakeman’s interpretation of the Lehi Tree of Life Stone and his identification of the ruined city of Aquacatal as the city Bountiful. Dr. Jakeman made these statements in reply:

With the correctness of the historic-archaeological approach to the Book of Mormon accepted by most LDS writers . . . there seems to be no reason why it should not some day result in a scientific decision as to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon account of ancient America.

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Nevertheless, in recent years some LDS writers have rejected this approach, or denied the existence of a legitimate field of Book of Mormon archaeology. And they have indicated their determined opposition to the program of teaching and research in this field carried on in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology of BYU and by the Society for Early Historic Archaeology. . . .

The latest published statement of this position is an article in this year's (1969) summer issue of the journal *Dialogue*, . . . by Dee F. Green, . . . now an assistant professor of anthropology at Weber State College, Ogden, Utah.

This is, in the first place, a flat rejection of the traditional historic-archaeological approach to the Book of Mormon (in Prof. Green's terminology the "geographical-historical" approach); and Book of Mormon archaeology is pronounced "largely useless, even a delusion," in fact a "myth." . . . Mesoamerica . . . is now accepted by most LDS archaeologists as the area of the Book of Mormon . . . there is possible some general archaeology of the Book of Mormon which can be very important for its claims respecting the history of its particular area and period in the New World, and which some day may lead us to the location of its specific sites in that area. (Indeed the eventual archaeological identification of specific, Book of Mormon sites must be considered one of the exciting possibilities of Book of Mormon archaeology, in view of the great success of the field of biblical archaeology in locating specific biblical sites.)

Second, Prof. Green argues that the "geographical-historical" (i.e. historic-archaeological) approach must be abandoned because it has been "largely sterile" of results—because "twenty years of such an approach have left us empty-handed." This of course—as he admits—is a matter of opinion. But in order to make this claim, he is obliged to ignore nearly all the many important discoveries which have been made in Book of Mormon archaeology, . . . Prof. Green warns his readers against "Jakeman's Lehi Tree of Life Stone," and dismisses it with a few contemptuous remarks.

Indeed he strives throughout his article to prejudice his readers against everything written by those who have adopted the historic-archaeological approach to the Book of Mormon, and especially against the Department of Archaeology of BYU (before it became the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology) and the Society for Early Historic Archaeology, which he holds most guilty of promoting what he considers the "delusion" and "myth" of Book of Mormon archaeology. . . .

In his effort to establish the claim that nothing of significance has so far resulted from the program in Book of Mormon archaeology at BYU, Prof. Green directs his attack especially upon the writer, his chief villain. . . .

Another failure of the writer in the field of Book of Mormon archaeology, according to our critic, is an "abortive attempt to identify the Book of Mormon city Bountiful." This is a premature judgment. The project of archaeological identification referred to has **never been terminated**; for a **number** of ancient sites in the district fixed upon (on the basis of references in the Book of Mormon itself and confirmatory and supplementary data in the early historical accounts from Mesoamerica) are **still good candidates** for this identification.

One more charge must be answered here. . . . our critic asserts that our drawing of the ancient tree-of-life sculpture . . . is not accurate. The fact is that no claim has been made by the writer that this drawing is completely accurate. Even the drawings made by the "unbiased draftsmen" Prof. Green mentions—insinuating that the writer was biased when he made his drawing—are not completely accurate. In deed total accuracy in the reproduction of this sculpture is not possible, because of the weathering and other damage it has suffered, causing dimming and even obliteration of some details. . . .

(Prof. Green, in his attempt to discredit the writer's interpretation of Stela 5, Izapa, also mentions the plaster reproduction of this sculpture in the BYU archaeology museum, and states that it "has been altered by Jakeman after his interpretations." The impression this statement will make on some readers is that the writer did, indeed, dishonestly alter the cast of the sculpture for some ulterior purpose. The facts are that the cast was not altered insofar as any change in the features, but only that their background was somewhat lowered by scraping in order to give them more prominence, as found necessary for the benefit of viewers because of the very low relief of the sculpture.) (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, Brigham Young University, December 1, 1969, pp. 3–5)

### Adam's Altar

Bruce R. McConkie, of the First Council of the Seventy, gives this information: "The early brethren of this dispensation taught that the Garden of Eden was located in what is known to us as the land of Zion, an area for which Jackson County, Missouri, is the center place" (*Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City, 1966, p. 20). It is claimed that Joseph Smith even found the remains of an altar which was built in the days of Adam. Bruce R. McConkie stated: "At that great gathering Adam offered sacrifices on an altar built for the purpose. A remnant of that very altar remained on the spot down through the ages. On May 19, 1838, Joseph Smith and a number of his associates stood on the remainder of the pile of stones at a place called Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 21). The Mormon people certainly believed Joseph Smith's statements concerning the land of Zion. The Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt stated: "Adam-ondi-ahman, the Valley of God, where Adam dwelt, was located about fifty miles north of Jackson County, in the State of Missouri. The Lord has revealed to us that Adam dwelt there towards the latter period of his probation" (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 16, p. 48). Joseph Smith even gave revelations concerning this subject. In the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 116, we read:

**Revelation** given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, near Wight's Ferry, at a place called Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri, May 19, 1838, wherein Spring Hill is named by the Lord:

**Adam-ondi-Ahman**, because, said he, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet.

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

In the *Doctrine and Covenants* 107:53 we read:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-on-di-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

Reed Peck stated that Far West, Missouri, was believed to be “the spot where Cain killed Abel” (*Reed Peck Manuscript*, p. 5). John D. Lee gave this information:

Adam-on-Diamond was at the point where Adam came and settled and blest his posterity after being driven from the Garden of Eden. This was revealed to the people through Joseph Smith, the Prophet. The Temple Block in Jackson County, Missouri, stands on the identical spot where once stood the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden they traveled in a northwesterly course until they came to a valley on the east side of Grand River. There they tarried for several years, and engaged in tilling the soil. On the east of the valley there is a low range of hills. . . . On the top of this range of hills Adam erected an altar of stone, on which he offered sacrifice unto the Lord. There was at that time (in 1838) a pile of stone there, which the Prophet said was a portion of the altar on which Adam offered sacrifice. Although these stones had been exposed to the elements for many generations of time, still the traces remained to show the dimensions and design of the altar. After Adam had offered his sacrifice he went up the valley some two miles, where he blessed his posterity and called the place the Valley of Adam-on-Diamond, which, in the reformed Egyptian language, signifies Adam’s Consecrated Land. (*Confessions of John D. Lee*, photomechanical reprint of 1880 Ed., pp. 91–92)

Chapman Duncan gives this interesting information:

I think the next day (after arriving the night before) he (Joseph) said to those present, Hyrum Smith, Bishop Vincent Knight, myself and two or three others, “get me a spade and I will show you the altar that Adam offered sacrifice on.” . . . We went forty rods north of my house. He placed the spade with care, placed his foot on it. When he took out the shovel full of dirt, it bared the stone. The dirt was two inches deep on the stone I reckon. About four feet or more was disclosed. He did not dig to the bottom of the three layers of good masonry well put wall. The stone looked more like dressed stone, nice joints, ten inches thick, eighteen inches long or more. We came back down the slope, perhaps fifteen rods on the level. The Prophet stopped and remarked that this place where we stood was the place where Adam gathered his posterity and blessed them, and predicted what should come to pass to later generations. The next day he returned to Far West. (*Hyrum Smith—Patriarch*, by Pearson H. Corbett, Salt Lake City, 1963, pp. 174–175)

Benjamin F. Johnson stated: “. . . after a few days, the Prophet accompanied us to this spot, and pointed out those rocks as the ones of which Adam built an altar and offered sacrifice upon this spot, where he stood and blessed the multitude of his children, . . .” (*My Life’s Review*, Independence, Mo., 1947, p. 36). Edward Stevenson made this statement:

I was with the Prophet Joseph Smith sixty miles northeast of Liberty jail in 1838, less than one year before he was imprisoned there. We were standing with others on the hill Adam-On-di-Ahman. The Prophet said, pointing to a mound of stones:

“There is where Father **Adam built an altar** when he was driven from the Garden of Eden and offered up sacrifice unto the Lord.”

He further said that the Garden of Eden was in or near Independence, the center stake of Zion. I thought it a great privilege to be at that time with the Prophet, and to hear his words regarding the mound and pile of rocks laid up at so early a period of the world’s history. (*Reminiscences of Joseph the Prophet*, by Edward Stevenson, 1893, p. 40)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts made this statement concerning the altar in a footnote in the *History of the Church*:

When the altar was first discovered, according to those who visited it frequently, it was about sixteen feet long, by nine or ten feet wide, having its greatest extent north and south. . . . Such was the altar at “Diahman” when the Prophet’s party visited it. Now, however, it is thrown down, and nothing but a mound of crumbling stones mixed with soil, and a few reddish boulders mark the spot which is doubtless rich in historic events. It was at this altar, according to the testimony of Joseph Smith, that the patriarchs associated with Adam and his company, assembled to worship their God. (*History of the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 40)

John H. Wittorf has found a number of references to Adam’s altar:

Chronologically speaking, the first reference to an altar used by Adam is dated in late June or July 1838. Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal a conversation with Abraham O. Smoot on May 12, 1883. Cowley summarizes Woodruff’s journal account as follows:

President Smoot said that he and Alanson Ripley, . . . came across a stone wall in the midst of a dense forest of underbrush. The wall was laid in mortar or cement. When Joseph Smith visited the place and examined the wall he said it was the remains of an altar built by Father Adam and upon which he offered sacrifices after he was driven from the Garden of Eden. He said that the Garden of Eden was located in Jackson County, Missouri. The whole town of Adam-on-di-Ahman was in the midst of a thick and heavy forest of timber and the place was named in honor of Adam’s altar. The Prophet explained that it was upon this altar where Adam blessed his sons and his posterity, prior to his death (Cowley, pp. 545–546).

This event probably constitutes the discovery of the “altar,” as Ripley and Smoot first found it during the surveying of the site. . . .

A second account of a conversation with Smoot on the subject of the “altar” has recently been published by Dyer. . . . Smoot said:

The songs to be sung during the conference may be selected by the Stake Superintendent. If there are several schools in the place where the conference is held, it is well to divide the exercises among them; and if there are too many schools for each one to have an opportunity, then let three or four schools take part at one conference and other schools at the following conferences.

Arrangements should be made by the stake and ward superintendents in regard to these department exercises; for instance: That one school furnish a theological-department exercise, another a primary-department exercise and so on, as in your wisdom will make the conference most interesting.

We submit these suggestions to you and trust they may aid you in the preparation of a suitable program for your annual Sunday school conference.

Very truly your brethren,

*John M. Whitaker,      Geo. Q. Cannon,  
Gen. Secretary,      George Goddard,  
Karl G. Maeser,  
Gen. Superintendency of Sunday Schools.*

TOMMY: "Pa why do they always say, 'counting noses' when they talk about counting a crowd?"

Mr. Figg: "It started at political meetings, my son. You can see a politician's nose when there is not light enough to distinguish anything else."

LITTLE BROTHER: "Can't you walk straight, Mr. Mangel?"

Mr. Mangel: "Of course I can. Why do you ask?"

Little Brother: "Oh nothin', only I heard sister say she'd make you walk straight when she married you. And mamma said she'd help her."

#### ADAM'S ALTAR AND TOWER.

I READ a letter in the *News* of November 12th, 1895, from B. F. Johnson of Mesa City, Arizona, and am pleased with his statement of facts as related in the Doctrine and Covenants and in the Bible.

Adam's Altar, which was mentioned, I have visited many times. I sat upon the wall of stone and reflected upon the scenes that had taken place thousands of years ago right where I was. There were the rocks that Father Adam used. I looked for marks of tools upon the rocks, but found none, not knowing then the command of God that there should be no mark of tool upon the rocks of an altar upon which sacrifices were to be offered to Him.

The wall of rock that was in sight and rising above the ground about thirteen inches, was laid as accurately as any wall nowadays, and was five or six feet long. One end showed the corner and end wall enough to prove that it ran back into the hill; the other end of the wall was covered with earth, and I do not know that the visible end was the real end. Dirt had naturally washed and worn down so as to cover the body of the altar.

One day while sitting on the wall and devoutly thinking of the use that had been made of that place, I got a naturally-sharpened stick and dug into the earth that covered the altar and found charcoal quite plentiful. I scraped back the earth into the hole and said "Peace to the ashes."

Perhaps those coals, I thought, were from wood burned by Father Adam, and perhaps that altar had been used by men of God hundreds and thousands of years after him.

I felt sure, however, that the rocks were the identical rocks that he placed

there, for Joseph said, "That altar was built by our Father Adam and there he offered sacrifice."

The man who showed me the altar was with Joseph when he discovered it. He said that when within a rod or two of the place Joseph stepped quickly ahead of the little company of men who were with him, and, standing upon the altar, told them what use had been made of that spot and who built it.

The rocks that were visible showed indisputable signs of having been burned with fire. I have hunted for rocks around there of that kind, but found none. There were plenty of other kinds not far distant.

After Joseph the Seer had stood upon that memorable spot and told his brethren many things that had taken place there and in the valley just below, while Adam dwelt in that locality, they traveled on up into the prairie beyond. About half a mile or between a quarter and a half of a mile, just in the edge of a grove of timber, they came to a little elevated spot of earth, like a knoll or slight hill, the earth of which was thickly dotted with cobble stones.

"Here," the Prophet and Seer said, "Adam built a tower, from the top of which he could see all the surrounding country, and this knoll is formed of its remains."

I want my friends, and in fact all people, to understand that Joseph Smith could see events that transpired and people who lived hundreds or thousands of years ago as if they were then before his eyes.

My father's house stood about two hundred and fifty yards from that altar, on the bottom land of Grand River, in the valley of Adam-on-Diahman.

When Alanson Ripley surveyed a part of the farming land around the settle-

ment, I was flagman, and the spot of ground designated as the place of Adam's Tower came within that survey.

Our late president, A. O. Smoot, was flagman when Brother Ripley surveyed the town plat.

In connection with the historical part of the Bible, stating that the altar was about one hundred miles from the Garden of Eden, from which Adam was driven, I recollect that it is eastwardly from the Garden, and also that after the Lord had made Adam He planted a garden eastwardly in Eden, where He placed Adam and gave him directions how to manage affairs.

It appears that their emigration was all from the west to the east, and, according to the words of the Prophet Joseph, mankind in that age continued to emigrate eastwardly until they reached the country on or near the Atlantic coast; and that in or near Carolina Noah built his remarkable ship, in which he, his family, and all kinds of animals lived a few days over one year without coming out of it.

Where was that place from which the Lord went east to make that very nice garden? He no doubt took Adam to a better country than they occupied at first, and who knows but they were on some of these western deserts, or in these mountains?

The travels of this Church have been from the very beginning the reverse direction from the "course of empire" both of the Jaredites and Nephites while marching to their last struggle.

According to the Bible and the words of Joseph Smith, we have emigrated in exactly a reverse course also from the first people on the earth. What direction will we travel next if we ever emigrate?

*O. B. Huntington.*

A photograph from *The Juvenile Instructor*, November 15, 1895. O. B. Huntington speaks of Joseph Smith's statement concerning Adam's Altar and Noah's Ark.



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

... I helped excavate around the base of the altar, some 2 or 3 feet deep, and from 6 to 8 feet in length, which was sufficient to thoroughly satisfy us that the foundation of the wall was still there ... I heard Joseph say that it was the remains of an altar built by Adam; and that he offered sacrifice on it, and called his family and blessed them there (Dyer, pp. 173–174).

Both Smoot and John Taylor agreed that the location was “on the point of the hill that formed a curvature” and “commanded a beautiful view of the country.”

Sometime in July or August, Henele Pikale visited Adam-ondi-Ahman. As he later noted in his recollections: I visited Diahman [*sic*] in Davies [*sic*] County, and in company with the Prophet and others went to see Adam’s altar. It was in timber, and where the stones came from, of which it was made, I have no idea, ... (Pikale, p. 38).

... In his journal John Lyman Smith recorded his recollections of Adam-ondi-Ahman, writing of a particular cliff:

... the ground seems to have dropped off from twenty to thirty feet, ... It was called the Grand river bottoms and varied in width from one to two miles. ...

About a quarter of a mile down the road, ... was a copse of trees and bushes, in the center of which was a raised stone work, ... This place was where the Prophet Joseph said Adam offered sacrifices and blessed his children. I looked upon this as a sacred spot, and often used to hide there when strangers passed along the road. (John Smith, pp. 1–2)

... Benjamin F. Johnson ... wrote a detailed account of his experiences as a boy at Adam-ondi-Ahman for the *Juvenile Instructor*, in which he also makes reference to the “wall” or foundation of the “altar”:

The wall of rock that was in sight and rising above the ground about thirteen inches, was laid accurately as any wall nowadays, and was five or six feet long. ... I got a naturally-sharpened stick and dug into the earth that covered the altar and found charcoal quite plentiful ...

Perhaps those coals, I thought, were from wood burned by Father Adam, and perhaps that altar had been used by men of God hundreds and thousands of years after him.

I felt sure, however, that the rocks were the identical rocks that he placed there, for Joseph said, “That altar was built by our Father Adam and there he offered sacrifice.” ... (Huntington, 1895, pp. 720–721).

... I was fortunate in locating a journal of Arnold Reiser ... Under the date of October 4, 1899, Reiser wrote: Brother Oliver B. Huntington called on me and gave me some good instructions. He said that I had seen the Altar of Adam and that he knew it was not on top of the hill but a few yards below, perhaps 50 yards. He said it had been made manifest why Adam should build the altar on a side hill. It was that he could kill the Bullock and let the blood run down on the altar as well as to have the bullock above so that he could place it upon the altar to offer it as an offering or sacrifice.

.....

Others who have left reports of “Adam’s Altar” include Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Stephen Markham, Luman Shurtliff, and John Pulsipher.

It may therefore be considered established that Joseph Smith in 1838 did point out certain stone structures, or remnants of stone constructions, as having been associated with the patriarch Adam. Since Huntington indicated that the stone wall of the “altar” associated with the antediluvians appeared to run back into the hill, there is a possibility of recovering a portion that is still intact. The identification of skilled stone construction, possibly in conjunction with cement or mortar, dating to an archaeological “pre-Mound Builder” horizon, would undoubtedly be regarded as significant even by non-Mormons.

The references to sherds in the general area, and to “charcoal quite plentiful” at the “altar” site itself suggest the desirability of placing these in a proper archaeological context.

Elder Dyer recently noted that the Church is thinking of erecting a bureau of information at Adam-ondi-Ahman in the near future. It would be an interesting and worthwhile project to undertake an archaeological reconnaissance of the area before it becomes too accessible to tourists and souvenir-seekers, who have long since removed the original stones at the top of Tower Hill, and before construction destroys, or at best, confuses, the stratigraphic situation. Since the Church owns much of the property referred to in the journal accounts, there should not be too much of a problem obtaining permission for reconnaissance and test-digging. The recent work at Nauvoo and the Temple Site at that historic spot indicates the current interest of the Church in elucidating the past. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology*, Brigham Young University, April 15, 1969, pp. 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7)

We doubt very much that the Mormon leaders will make any serious effort to save what remains of “Adam’s altar.” If they really believe Joseph Smith’s statements, however, they should be anxious to have archaeologists work on this project.

Since Joseph Smith believed that man originated in the New World, it was only natural that he would teach that Noah built his ark in America. Charles L. Walker relates that “the Prophet Joseph” told “Dimic B. Huntington while his books were being mended, that Noah built the Ark in the Land where South Carolina is now ...” (“Diary of Charles L. Walker,” typed extracts, December 5, 1891, p. 43). Milton R. Hunter, of the First Council of the Seventy, gives this information:

There is no uniform belief among Christian scholars and members of various churches as to the geographical location of the Garden of Eden. The majority of people outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, however, claim that it was located somewhere in the Mesopotamia Valley or in western Persia. The reason for this viewpoint is that the Bible mentions four rivers. ... the conclusion has been reached that the names that are attached today to those geographic places must be the same names that were attached to the same spots in the days of Father Adam; and, therefore, Eden must have been located in western Asia. Those arriving at the foregoing conclusions fail to take into consideration the fact that

during various ages in history a certain name may be attached to several different geographical spots. As people migrate from one country to another, they carry with them names of places and objects which were dear to them. . . .

Where then in the world are there four rivers that flow together, making one? The Mississippi River and its tributaries fit well with the description given in Genesis and in the Book of Moses. Among the principal rivers that flow together in the upper Mississippi Valley are the Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Illinois.

As a result of modern revelation, Latter-day Saints believe that the Garden of Eden was located in America, in the present state of Missouri. . . . President Brigham Young declared:

In the beginning, . . . the Lord commenced His work upon what is now called the American continent, where the Garden of Eden was made. In the days of Noah, in the days of the floating ark, He took the people to another part of the earth; the earth was divided, and there He set up His kingdom.

In March, 1832, the Lord made His first mention in latter days of “Adam-ondi-Ahman.” Six years later (July, 1838), He pointed out to the Prophet that Adam-ondi-Ahman was “the land where Adam dwelt.” . . . it is certain that the Garden of Eden was located in America, in what today is known as the state of Missouri and probably the adjacent region. (*Pearl of Great Price Commentary*, by Milton R. Hunter, Salt Lake City, 1964, pp. 107–109)

While it is possible to maintain that there were two Ethiopias and two Assyrias, it is strange that Joseph Smith never attempted to explain this in his “inspired translation” of the Scriptures. In the *Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Moses 3:13–14, it would seem that the Lord is speaking of the Ethiopia and Assyria that Moses knew, rather than an Ethiopia and Assyria in America, when He states:

And the name of the second river was called Gihon; the same that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

And the name of the third river was Hiddekel; that which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river was the Euphrates.

However this may be, Joseph Smith’s idea that the Garden of Eden was located in America and that Noah built his ark in the New World was held by some of his contemporaries. Josiah Priest’s book, *American Antiquities*, contains this interesting information:

We have also attempted to show that America was peopled before the flood; that it was the country of Noah, and the place where the ark was erected. (*American Antiquities*, Preface, p. iv)

The celebrated antiquarian, Samuel L. Mitchell, late of New-York, with other gentlemen, eminent for their knowledge of natural history, are even of the opinion, that America was the country where Adam was created. In a letter to Governor De Witt Clinton, in which this philosopher argued the common origin of the people of America, and those of Asia, he says:—“I avoid the opportunity which this grand conclusion affords me, of stating that America was the cradle of the human race;

. . . I thought it was scarcely worth while to inform an European, that in coming to America he had left the new world behind him, for the purpose of visiting the old.”—*American Antiquarian Society*, p. 331.) . . . the suggestion, of Prof. Mitchell, has absolutely no data whatever. If but a tradition favoring that opinion were found even among the Indians, it would afford some foundation; . . .

It is not impossible but America may have been the country where Noah built his ark. . . . if we imagine it was erected in North America, or some where in the latitude of the state of New York, or even farther west, the current of the deluge would have borne it easterly. . . . as far as to Ararat, . . . the country where Noah was born may as well be supposed to have been America, as any other part of the earth; . . . we come to a conclusion, that here, perhaps, in the very state of New-York, the miraculous vessel was erected, if America have not the honor of being the country where Adam was created, as is believed by some, it has, nevertheless the honor, as we suppose, of being the country where the ark was erected. (*American Antiquities*, pp. 135–137)

Josiah Priest’s book may have given Joseph Smith some of his ideas concerning Adam and Noah, for we know that he quoted from it in the *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, pages 813–814.

At any rate, it is hard to believe that Adam’s altar could have survived for thousands of years after passing through a flood which swept Noah’s ark from America to the Old World.

### Kinderhook Plates

On pages 25–31 of this book we discussed the Kinderhook plates. The reader will remember that these plates were made to trick Joseph Smith. Smith claimed that he “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).

When one of the original Kinderhook plates was rediscovered the Mormon publication, *Improvement Era*, carried an article which stated that research revealed that false statements had been made concerning the Kinderhook plates and that the “plates are now back in their original category of genuine.” In 1965, however, George Lawrence, a Mormon physicist, examined the plate and found that “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. “Mr. Lawrence submitted his study to the BYU Archaeological Society, but since they seemed reluctant to print it he allowed us to make public some of his research (see pages 28–29 of this book). Mormon scholars will eventually have to come to grips with this problem, and John A. Wittorf has made a move in this direction. Although he still wants to maintain Joseph Smith’s reputation as a translator, he cites George Lawrence’s study and discusses the implications if the plates “are ultimately demonstrated to be fraudulent”:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

. . . a report of a physical examination of the plate in 1965 by George M. Lawrence, a Mormon physicist. contained the conclusion that:

“The plate is neither pure copper nor ordinary brass. 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. The characteristics of the inscription grooves can be reproduced in great detail using the simple acid-wax technique, contrary to the judgement of the engravers.”

In view of present archaeological evidence, neither brass nor bronze appears to have been known in North America until European times. It is thought that the first bronze in the New World was probably made in Bolivia about AD 700. Native copper was the principal metal known to the Hopewellians, and in its use they were remarkably skilled. Silver, meteoric iron, and gold were also known, but appear to have had only limited use. In light of the known use of metal in North America, brass or bronze plates in an Illinois mound, bound together with what was reported to be a rusted iron ring, should be regarded with suspicion. However, this would not preclude the possibility of their having been brought into North America from elsewhere.

An analysis of the metal content of the extant plate would be necessary before definite conclusions could be made. This would involve destruction of some of the metal, but with the sophisticated techniques of chemical and physical analysis available today, such as spectrographic and neutron activation methods, the amount of metal needed would be minimal. . . .

Joseph Smith’s behavior with regard to the Kinderhook Plates is quite interesting when viewed in perspective. He made no attempt to purchase these artifacts on behalf of the Church, as he did in the case of the papyri from which the Book of Abraham was translated; he forwarded no specific claims for the plates with respect to the Book of Mormon, although he evidently approved of John Taylor’s *Times and Seasons* editorial on the plates as evidence for the authenticity of the Book; and he left no indication that he was planning to utilize them for the production of another work of scripture as the *Quincy Whig*, with its headline “Material for Another Mormon Book,” apparently expected him to do.

Accepting the find as genuine, Joseph had facsimile drawings of the plates made, presumably for future study. The **brevery of his translation** of “a portion of the plates” precludes the possibility that—if the plates are ultimately demonstrated to be fraudulent—his abilities as a translator of ancient scripts and languages can be called into question. His interpretation may have resulted from the recognition of resemblances between several characters on the plates and those on the Egyptian papyri, with which he had been laboring. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology*, Brigham Young University, October 1970, p. 7)

If Joseph Smith had not been murdered in June of 1844 it is very possible that he might have published a “translation” of the Kinderhook plates. On May 22, 1844, just a month before his death, the *Warsaw Signal* published the following statement about these plates: “Jo. had a facsimile taken, and engraved on wood, and it now appears from the statement of a writer in the *St. Louis Gazette*, that

he is busy in translating them. The new work which Jo. is about to issue as a translation of these plates will be nothing more nor less than a sequel to the Book of Mormon; . . .” It is certainly possible that the Church Historian’s office has Joseph Smith’s unpublished work on the Kinderhook plates.

However this may be, we feel that Joseph Smith’s work on the plates casts serious doubt upon his ability as a translator of “ancient scripts and languages.” He definitely stated that he “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, p. 372). Now, in order to obtain this much information from the plates it would have been necessary to have translated quite a number of the characters, and a man who could make such a serious mistake with regard to the Kinderhook plates is just the type of man who would pretend to translate Egyptian papyri which he knew nothing about. Since Joseph Smith’s “translations” of both the Book of Abraham and the Kinderhook plates are concerned with descendants of Ham, it is obvious that he had the Negro question in mind.

Bruce Owens, another Mormon scholar, has been able to shed some additional light on the Kinderhook plates. Mr. Owens wrote to the Smithsonian Institution concerning these plates, and on November 14, 1968, he received a letter in which the following appeared:

I would suggest that you consult *Picture-writing of the American Indians*, by Garrick Mallery in 10th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, Washington, 1893, particularly pp. 759–67.

In case this is not readily accessible I will quote what seems to be most pertinent. In speaking of the Kinderhook plates, Mallery says (p. 760), speaking about them, that they were “. . . reported to bear a close resemblance to Chinese. This resemblance seemed not to be extraordinary when it was ascertained that the plate had been engraved by the village blacksmith, copied from the lid of a Chinese tea-chest.” (Letter from George Metcalf, Museum Specialist, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, dated November 14, 1968)

Mr. Owens became interested in the idea that the characters might have been “copied from the lid of a Chinese tea-chest,” and submitted the facsimiles of the Kinderhook plates to scholars. On January 10, 1969, he received this letter from Charles T. Sylvester, of the Embassy of the United States of America, Taipei, Taiwan:

I am sorry that I took so long to answer your letter of November 18, however, it took us a little time to find someone qualified to answer your questions.

According to Professor Li Hsueh-chih of Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University the language on the inscriptions which you sent is that of the LO tribe that lives in Yunnan Province in the southwest of mainland China. Unfortunately, Professor Li said that he could identify the writing but could not read the inscription and the only man he knows of that can is Professor Chang K’un, an expert on languages of China’s minor tribes. Unfortunately we have not been able to locate Professor Chang. (yet)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

On March 19, 1969, Bruce Owens received a letter from Kun Chang, Department of Oriental Languages, University of California, Berkeley. In this letter we find this statement: "The inscriptions enclosed seem to be the ideographs used by the Lolo tribes in Yunnan." The Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson also feels that "the script is indeed that of the Lo tribe" (Letter dated August 1, 1969), but he has not been trained to actually read this language.

It is very likely that the men who made the Kinderhook plates had access to a tea-chest. According to Joseph Smith's mother, her husband received a tea-chest before they moved to Palmyra: ". . . the only thing which had been brought for Mr. Smith from China was a small chest of tea, which chest had been delivered into his care, for my husband" (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith*, by Lucy Smith, Liverpool, 1853, p. 50).

### Dr. Gordon's Work

During the last few years Mormon scholars have taken a great deal of interest in the work of Cyrus H. Gordon, chairman of the Department of Mediterranean Studies at Brandeis University. *The Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, published at BYU, September 1970, page 9, made this statement concerning Cyrus H. Gordon: "Dr. Gordon's academic training covered Semitic, classical, and Indo-Iranian languages and culture. Since 1931 he has spent more than seven years in the Near East, engaged principally in archaeological excavation and exploration. In the 1950's he became a controversial figure over his demonstration that the spoken language of the ancient Cretan hieroglyphic and Linear A scripts was West Semitic."

The reader will remember that Dr. Gordon was the man who announced that the Phoenician text reported to have been found at Paraiba, Brazil, was authentic (see pages 22–25 of this book). Recently Dr. Gordon stated that an inscription found at Bat Creek, Tennessee, is written in ancient Hebrew characters.

In 1969 Cyrus H. Gordon wrote an article for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, and in October 1970 the *Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.* contained these statements:

The Society's Twentieth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures was held on the BYU campus . . .

Dr. Cyrus H. Gordon, chairman of the Department of Mediterranean Studies at Brandeis University and well-known Semitic scholar, was the featured speaker during the morning session. This year's event was thus the first time an outside speaker of international reputation has been added to the symposium program.

From statements published in the *Deseret News* it would appear that Dr. Gordon is trying to gain favor with Mormon scholars:

In archaeology, if two points of mutual interest tie in from different parts of the world, then that's a fact establishing the relationship of the two areas or periods.

That's what Dr. Cyrus H. Gordon, . . . told the 20th annual symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures at Brigham Young University Oct. 10.

Dr. Gordon was emphasizing that if it takes only one point of contact to make a fact, then the Book of Mormon has a thousand points in its favor.

"I am speaking academically and am not qualified to speak on the Book of Mormon itself. If I were to do that I would study it for three years before commenting. But there are many points in archaeology in its favor," he said. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, October 17, 1970)

This is certainly a strange statement to be coming from a non-Mormon scholar. We feel that if Dr. Gordon really believed that the Book of Mormon might be true, he would immediately begin a serious study of it. If the Book of Mormon were true, it would be the very key to understanding the ancient ruins in the New World—the very ruins Dr. Gordon is so interested in.

Although Dr. Gordon's statement concerning the Book of Mormon is very ambiguous, he has made some definite statements concerning the Paraiba text and the Bat Creek stone. We feel that these matters are important, and therefore we will discuss them in the pages which follow:

### Paraiba Text Criticized

It has now been over two years since Dr. Gordon announced that he believed the Paraiba text was genuine, but his arguments have not convinced some of the most noted scholars. William F. Albright, of Johns Hopkins University, made this statement in a letter written December 7, 1970:

The Paraiba find on which Cyrus Gordon gained so much publicity has been shown by Johannes Friedrich of West Berlin and Frank Cross of Harvard, writing in the scholarly review *Orientalia* (Rome, 1968), to be an unqualified forgery from the time of Dom Pedro, Emperor of Brazil, when Oriental studies gained a brief popularity in Brazil, owing to the Emperor's great interest in them. (Letter from William F. Albright, December 7, 1970)

Dr. Albright is considered to be one of the world's greatest archaeologists and has had a great deal of experience with the Phoenician language. In *The Biblical World*, page 451, we find this statement about Dr. Albright: "Considerable progress has been made in the study of Phoenician writing in recent years through the discovery of numerous ancient inscriptions and through the meticulous study of these inscriptions. Outstanding in this field of endeavor in the United States has been the work of William F. Albright and his students."

The reader will note that Dr. Albright states that Johannes Friedrich also rejects Dr. Gordon's work on the Paraiba text. Friedrich should certainly know something about this subject, for on page 450 of *The Biblical World* we read: "Harris' grammar superseded Schröder's work as the standard introduction to Phoenician and held the field exclusively until the publication in 1951 of Johannes Friedrich's *Phonizisch-punische Grammatik*." Unfortunately, Friedrich's work on the Paraiba text is not printed in English.

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Dr. Albright also stated that Frank Cross rejects the purported inscription. Frank Moore Cross, Jr., is considered to be one of the top authorities on the Dead Sea Scrolls. He is “Hancock Professor of Hebrew and other Oriental Languages, and Chairman of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures at Harvard University.” Although the article by Cross concerning the Paraíba text is written for scholars, there are some portions that are of interest to the general reader:

Nearly a century ago, in 1874, . . . the youthful director of the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, published . . . the copy of an inscription in Phoenician supposedly found . . . in northeastern Brazil. The text recorded (as we might anticipate in a Phoenician inscription from Brazil) the sensational story of Sidonians circling Africa . . . and in the case of one ship, being blown off course to land on the distant shore of the new world . . .

Neto was commissioned to publish the inscription . . . The Instituto Historico had received the copy of the inscription from the hand of Cândido José de Araujo Viana, Marquês de Sapucaí . . . Sapucaí in turn received the copy of the inscription in a letter signed with the name Antonio Alves da Costa. Here the trail ends. Neto at first assumed that the inscription existed and was authentic, and busily set about learning Phoenician to prepare himself for its publication. . . . he energetically began a search for the author of the letter sent to Sapucaí, for the site of the discovery, and for the stone. Despite tireless efforts, he failed totally in his efforts to identify Sr. Costa. The stone on which the inscription putatively was inscribed was never found, and the site of the discovery in Paraíba was never located. Neto continued to defend the authenticity of the inscription during the year following . . . But in 1874, . . . Neto came to question the genuineness of the text, and later finally repudiated it for what it was, a hoax. . . . the sensation was more or less forgotten.

In 1968 Professor Cyrus H. Gordon has put the inscription back in the headlines. . . . he argues for the authenticity of the inscription. . . .

One of the striking and suspicious aspects of the inscription is its clarity. Every letter appears to be clear in Neto’s copy, and every letter form is known either in inscriptions extant in 1870 or in standard charts of the Phoenician script in mid-nineteenth-century publications. These marvelous facts require the presumption on the part of one who argues for the authenticity of the text that the inscription was in a perfect state of preservation and that the draftsman who copied the original was either knowledgeable in Phoenician or incredibly accurate. Such circumstances are exceedingly rare in the real world of Northwest Semitic epigraphy. . . .

I believe it will be worthwhile to examine the setting in which the drama of the Paraíba affair was played out. Dom Pedro II, emporor of Brazil, was a brilliant monarch . . . He attended some five hundred seances of the Instituto during his reign, including the first occasion upon which Neto lectured on his Phoenician text. . . . Sapucaí was a distinguished statesman as well, and Dom Pedro’s right hand in the development and administration of cultural and educational affairs. . . .

Dom Pedro, among his many interests, was himself a dilettante of Oriental studies, notably of Hebrew and Arabic. . . .

The year of the discovery of the Phoenician text, 1872, coincided, remarkably enough, with the return of Dom Pedro II from the Orient where he had toured Syria-Palestine as well as Egypt and Asia Minor. Moreover, it was a season of monumental forgeries, as is normally the case after spectacular discoveries. . . . one must admit, I believe, that the setting, in time and place, was propitious for the creation of a forgery. Unfortunately, we can only speculate about the motivation of the forger. Apparently he was not after money since he never came forward with a stone. Most likely he played a vicious joke on the “great men” of the Instituto, requiring a genuine or imagined hurt or rejection. . . .

We have dealt above with some of the external facts relating to the origin of the inscription and its general content. These data are damning. However, the most devastating evidence of the spurious character of the inscription is found in the detailed language of the text, in its orthography, and above all in its script. . . .

Close analysis of the language of the Brazilian text has revealed that it is a concoction of classical Phoenician and Neo-Punic, Biblicisms and Hebrew forms including tenses, conjugations, syntax, and lexical features not found in Phoenician, and formations in imitation of Late Punic or Neo-Punic. It combines plain blunders with even more revealing errors based on (1) false etymologies of nineteenth-century scholarship, (2) false readings of the nineteenth century and (3) the use of early speculations on the Punic of the Poenulus. . . . The elements of Hebrew and Phoenician used were never available at a single time and place in antiquity, neither in sixth-century Sidon nor sixth-century Ezion-geber. They were available in nineteenth-century Brazil. . . . In other words, the text represents no one period either in Phoenician or in Hebrew orthography, and is impossible to place in the sixth century B.C.—or in the tenth century B.C. or in the Roman era. The only explanation of its combination of styles and eras of orthography is to attribute the inscription to the nineteenth century of the Christian era. . . .

The so-called Paraíba inscription is a pathetic mishmash of linguistic forms, of spellings and of scripts of various dates and places patched together from nineteenth-century handbooks. Nothing in the inscription, including many of its blunders, was unavailable in the scholarship of the eighteen-fifties or -sixties or from uninspired guesses. It was not a bad job of forgery for its day. Fortunately, the advance of Phoenician studies, especially our knowledge of the historical typology of the Canaanite dialects, Phoenician and Hebrew orthography, and the Phoenician scripts have advanced so far beyond the level of the forger’s day that we can dismiss the Brazilian text once for all as a plain fraud. (*Orientalia*, Rome, 1968, Vol. 37, Fasc. 4, pp. 437, 438, 439, 440, 442, 453, 454 and 460)

In reply to Cross, Dr. Gordon stated: “Basically the attitude of scholars toward the Brazil text is conditioned by their awareness of the historical problem as a whole. Cross would dismiss the ‘text once and for all as a plain fraud’ but I have every reason to disagree with his estimate of the situation” (*Ibid.*, p. 463).

In an earlier article Cyrus Gordon admitted that the person who submitted the text has not been identified:

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

The person who submitted the copy of the text to the Instituto Historico has never been identified. He may well have been some antiquities dealer in quest of a free and publicized evaluation to increase the price of his merchandise. Of course, once the cry of “forgery” is raised, the object has no market and may be lost or destroyed. . . . The Emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro II, albeit an amateur, enjoyed the reputation of being the nation’s only Semitist. Since Brazil had no one really competent in oriental studies, the Emperor and Netto turned to Renan for guidance. Renan, who had seen only a few phrases excerpted from the text (and grossly misinterpreted some of them!), condemned it as a fake in a letter to Dom Pedro written at Sevres, Sept, 6, 1873 . . . From that moment Netto was doomed to ridicule which ruined his life. Half-crazed from public humiliation, he tried to extricate himself by publishing his *Lettre à Monsieur Ernest Renan*, . . . in which he claims that ten years earlier (1875) he wrote letters to the five [all still unidentified!] people in Brazil capable of composing such a text in 1872. One of the replies seemed to match the handwriting of the letter that accompanied the facsimile sent on Sept. 11, 1872. To make sure he had really trapped the villain, he wrote another letter to him and the handwriting of the new reply convinced Netto. Netto was not a handwriting expert and none of the documents are now in the Instituto Historico or Museu Nacional. Gossip has variously named the alleged forger as Dom Pedro II, as His Majesty’s secretary Ferdinand Koch, and more recently as Netto himself. The present article demonstrates that since no nineteenth-century scholar including Renan knew enough to fabricate the text, no culprit in Brazil could have done it. (*Orientalia*, Vol. 37, Fasc. 4, pp. 425–426, footnote 1)

In 1969 Cyrus Gordon stated that there are two Paraíbas in Brazil and suggested that the stone had been sought in the wrong Paraíba. He stated that “the findsite is now being sought in the southern Region of Paraíba . . .” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, p. 66). We understand that a reward has been offered, but the original stone has not been located. The fact that Dr. Gordon has not even been able to locate the name of the “person who submitted the copy of the text to the Instituto” casts further doubt upon the authenticity of the stone.

In the translation of the Paraíba text we read: “We are Sons of Canaan . . . We set (sacrificed) a youth for the exalted gods and goddesses in the nineteenth year of **Hiram**, our mighty king. We embarked from Ezion-Geber into the Red Sea and voyaged with ten ships. We . . . were separated by a storm . . . and we were no longer with our companions. So we have come here, . . .” (see complete translation on page 23 of this book). Now, it is very interesting to note that Josiah Priest suggested the same idea about forty years before the stone was reported to have been discovered:

It should be recollected that the fleets of king **Hiram** navigated the seas in a surprising manner, . . . and in some voyage out of the Mediterranean, into the Atlantic, they may have been driven to South America; where having found a country, . . . founded a kingdom, built cities, . . . (*American Antiquities*, Albany, N.Y., 1835, p. 253)

The Paraíba text states: “We were at sea together for two years around the land belonging to Ham (Africa) but

were separated by a storm . . .” Frank Cross makes these comments concerning this matter: “The circumnavigation of Africa related follows the route and timetable of the event described by Herodotus. As in Herodotus I account, a flotilla of Phoenician ships set out from a Red Sea port to sail southward around Africa. They sailed two years (a remarkably long time even in Phoenician barks). In the third year the Phoenicians sailed past the pillars of Heracles and came to Egypt” (*Orientalia*, Vol. 37, Fasc. 4, pp. 440–441).

The writings of Herodotus were well known long before the Paraíba text appeared. Josiah Priest, writing in the 1830’s, spoke of “Herodotus” (see page 116), and on pp. 116–117 he tells of the circumnavigation of Africa:

. . . the Egyptians, under the direction of Necho, their king fitting out some Phoenicians with a vessel, or fleet, with orders to sail from the Red sea, quite around the continent of Africa. . . . if we cannot allow the Egyptians to have visited South America, . . . we are ready to admit that they may have been driven there, by an eastern storm; . . .

Josiah Priest states that characters resembling Phoenician writing were found in South America (see page 121), but he did not claim that anyone was able to translate them. He did, however, claim that a Greek inscription had been found and translated:

“In the month of December, 1827, a planter discovered in a field, a short distance from Mount-Video, is sort of tomb-stone, upon which strange, and to him unknown, signs or characters were engraved. . . .”

The planter caused . . . the stone slab, . . . to be removed to Mount-Video, where, in spite of the effect of time, Greek words were easily made out, which, when translated, read as follows:—“During the dominion of Alexander, the son of Philip, king of Macedon, in the sixty-third Olympiad, Ptolemaios”—it was impossible to decipher the rest, on account of the ravages of time on the engraving of the stone. . . .

From this it is quite clear, says the editor of the *Cabinet of Instruction and Literature*, from which we have extracted this account, vol. 3, p. 99, that the discovery of this monumental altar is proof that a co[n]temporary of Aristotle, one of the Greek philosophers, has dug up the soil of Brazil and La Plata, in South America.

It is conjectured that this Ptolemaios, mentioned on the stone, was the commander of Alexander’s fleet, which is supposed to have been overtaken by a storm at sea, . . . and were driven on to the coast of Brazil, . . . where they doubtless erected the above mentioned monument, to preserve the memory of the voyage to so distant a country; . . .

The above conjecture, that Ptolemaios, . . . was one of Alexander’s admirals, is not well founded, . . . (*American Antiquities*, pp. 47–48)

Now we have no objection to the idea that Phoenicians may have made it to the New World, but we feel that the Paraíba text may be “too good to be true.” In *Newsweek*, May 27, 1968, page 68, we find this information: “Gordon F. Ekholm at The American Museum of Natural History, a specialist in pre-Columbian archeology, believes the text is too pat. ‘It says just what someone who wants to believe the Phoenicians crossed the Atlantic would want it to say,’ he comments.”

The same article in *Newsweek* stated that “Ladislav Netto, . . . did visit the plantation and copied the inscription.”

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

This information is not correct, for Frank Cross states: “The stone on which the inscription putatively was inscribed was never found, and the site of the discovery in Paraíba was never located.” Dr. Gordon admits that the “person who submitted the copy of the text to the Instituto Historico has never been identified.” All Netto ever had was a piece of paper with Phoenician characters on it, and there is no real evidence to show that there ever was an actual stone in Paraíba. When all the evidence is considered, we find that all we really have to go on is the fact that Dr. Gordon feels that the script could not have been forged in the nineteenth century. Many scholars disagree and some feel that Dr. Gordon is becoming overzealous in his attempts to establish contacts between the Old and New Worlds.

According to the *Deseret News*, Church Section, October 17, 1970, Dr. Gordon has also claimed the the Kensington stone is authentic: “He has been doing a lot of work on the so-called Kensington stone. He is convinced it is true and that Scandinavians came into Minnesota via waterways long before Columbus.” William F. Albright completely disagrees with Gordon on this issue: “This is all very much like the famous Kensington Stone—now in the Smithsonian and claimed by a Scandinavian resident of Minnesota to have been dug up and then interpreted by some alleged specialist in runic characters as an inscription buried by Swedes in Minnesota in the fourteenth century A.D., to be excavated by their descendants in the twentieth century. All the experts in Scandinavian runic have disowned the inscription and insist on its being a forgery” (Letter by William F. Albright, dated December 7, 1970). In *Antiquity* for March, 1968, we find these statements concerning the Kensington Stone:

And who would have thought, so many years after the publication of Wahlgren’s masterly book *The Kensington Stone*, . . . that the issue (or should one say myth-issue?) of the Minnesota petroglyph would come up again? But it has.

The Kensington Stone, . . . walks again. Dr. O. G. Landsverk and Mr. Alfred Monge have recently published a book entitled *Norse Mediaeval Cryptograph in Runic Carvings*; . . . These authors claim that the mistakes or mis-spellings which occur in the Kensington Stone and which caused scholars to doubt its authenticity, were really not mistakes at all but part of a code which not only gave the date of the runestone, namely 1362, but also the names of the author (Harrek) and the carver (Tollik). Here we go! The Kensington Stone is authentic and so are other runestones in America! There is apparently one near Byfield in Massachusetts and here the date is 24th November 1009—483 years before Columbus discovered America. But the main burden of the Landwerk-Monge argument rests on three runestones discovered in the state of Oklahoma which were dated, they aver, 1012, 1015 and 1022. Minnesota always seemed an odd place to find proofs of the Vikings in America, especially in the midst of modern Scandinavian settlers. Oklahoma sounds odder still, but not to Landsverk and Monge. (*Antiquity*, Cambridge, England, March 1968, pp. 2–3)

In his attempt to prove Phoenicians were in America

before Columbus, Dr. Gordon appeals to the work of the Mormon archaeologist John L. Sorenson:

There are dozens of parallels whose number and weight preclude our dismissing them as coincidence. They include child sacrifice, the offering of the leader’s child in time of national danger, and the religious self-infliction of wounds to cause bleeding. For these and about 200 other parallels (documented for both the New World and the ancient Near East), see John L. Sorenson, “The Possibility of Near Eastern-Mesoamerican Culture Contact” to be published by University of Texas Press . . . (*Orientalia*, Vol. 37, Fasc. 4, pp. 427–428)

Dr. Sorenson has prepared an article for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, in which he shows parallels “known between the cultures of the Near East and Mesoamerica.” This is a very interesting piece of work. Although the Mormon archaeologist Ross T. Christensen feels that Dr. Sorenson has produced a valuable study, he laments the fact that the parallels do not provide more support for the Book of Mormon:

However, despite the title of Dr. Sorenson’s *Dialogue* article, “Ancient America and the Book of Mormon Revisited,” he does not really come to grips with the problem of testing the historical claims of the Nephite record. Perhaps every one of his clear-cut parallels could quite as easily be explained as the result of contact from **some other Near Eastern people or peoples than those told about in the book for example the Phoenicians . . .** Actually, some of his correspondences seem to date to the last few centuries before the coming of the Spaniards, hence seem to have little bearing on Book of Mormon claims.

But, although the former BYU archaeologist may not have gone far enough in his study, it is nevertheless a very valuable one. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, Brigham Young University, January 12, 1970, p. 2)

The Mormon archaeologist M. Wells Jakeman made these interesting comments:

But for scientific authentication of the Book of Mormon account, similarities between the ancient American and ancient Near Eastern civilizations are not enough. These can be explained more easily in other ways than by bringing the Book of Mormon into the picture, with its miracles and other troublesome claims. Thus all such similarities which are not merely accidental can be explained as the result of migrations to the New World of non-Book of Mormon groups from the same Near Eastern peoples from which the Book of Mormon groups are indicated to have come. And many such corresponding culture traits are already known—or will surely be found—to have characterized other Near Eastern peoples besides those ancestral to the peoples of the Book of Mormon. In fact a Phoenician colonization of the New World, first seriously proposed by Zelia Nuttall and recently again by other scholars including Cyrus Gordon, would **explain most if not all the Near Eastern similarities** that have so far been noted. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, December 1, 1969, p. 6)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Some of the parallels listed by John L. Sorenson seem to fit a pagan people like the Phoenicians much better than they would a Jewish or Christian people like the Nephites were supposed to be.

### Bat Creek Stone

On October 19, 1970, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published the following:

NEW YORK—A Brandeis University professor said Sunday evidence has been discovered that Jews fleeing Romans in the Middle East came west and discovered America 1,000 years before Columbus.

Cyrus H. Gordon, professor of Mediterranean Studies at Brandeis, said the evidence is an inscription found in a burial mound in Tennessee in 1885.

The inscriptions [*sic*], he said, was found on a stone under one of nine skeletons in the mound, but when the inscription was photographed and published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1894, it was printed upside down and its significance went unnoticed. The stone is at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington.

Last August, Gordon said, Dr. Joseph D. Mahan Jr., of the Columbus Georgia Museum of Arts and Crafts, sent a photograph of the inscription to Gordon . . .

Upon studying the inscription, Gordon said, he discovered that its five letters are in the writing style of Canaan, the “promised land” of the Israelites somewhere between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean.

The fifth letter of the inscription, Gordon said, corresponds to the style of writing found on Hebrew coins of the Roman period. He translates the inscription to read “for the land of Judah.”

“The archeological circumstances of the discovery,” Gordon said, “rule out any chance of fraud or forgery and the inscription attests to a migration of Jews . . . probably to escape the long hand of Rome after the disastrous Jewish defeats in 70 and 135 A.D.” . . .

In eastern Tennessee, for example, Gordon said, there is a group of people known as the Melungeons, who are neither Indian nor Negro, who are Caucasian but not Anglo-Saxon. They are, Gordon indicated, descendants of Mediterranean people and they believe that they came to the New World in ships about 2,000 years before Columbus.

Gordon said the inscription was found in a burial mound at Bat Creek, Tenn., in 1885 by Cyrus Thomas, who worked with the Smithsonian.

“Various pieces of evidence point in the direction of migrations from the Mediterranean in Roman times,” Gordon said. “The cornerstone of the historic reconstruction is at present the Bat Creek inscription because it was found in an unimpeachable archeological context under the direction of professional archeologists working for the prestigious Smithsonian Institution.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 19, 1970)

The following is a photograph of the Bat Creek stone.



Since Dr. Gordon claimed that Hebrew characters were inscribed on this stone, we felt that we should do some research with regard to its authenticity. We wrote to the Smithsonian Institution, and on December 4, 1970, we received the following letter from George E. Phebus, Museum Specialist, Department of Anthropology: “The enclosed summary on the ‘Bat Creek Stone’ presents the Department of Anthropology’s current view on the problem. Research is continuing on the artifact and a more definite statement may be available at a later date. A photograph of the stone will be mailed to you in a few days.” The “summary” reads as follows:

#### Bat Creek Stone

USNM Arch. #134902, inscribed stone, 1g. 11.5 cm.  
- wd. 5.2 cm.

Provenience: Bat Creek Mound (Tipton Mound #3), skeleton #1, Loudon Co., Tenn.

History: Excavated during the Smithsonian Mound Exploration Program under the direction of Professor Cyrus Thomas and the field supervision of J. W. Emmert. Discovered in 1885 and accessioned into the Museum in 1889 and reported in the Bureau of American Ethnology Twelfth Annual Report, 1890–91, published in 1894, p. 394, fig. 273.

Identification: In the BAE Report, Thomas identified the inscription with an early 19th century Cherokee alphabet. Current research by Smithsonian Anthropologists neither confirms nor denies Thomas’ identification. A more recent Semitic interpretation of the inscription has not been verified by Smithsonian Scientists.

In the report published in 1894 we find these statements concerning the discovery of the stone:

Mound 3 was of small size, measuring but 28 feet in diameter and 5 feet in height. Some large sassafras trees were standing on it, and the owner, Mr. Tipton, stated that he had cut trees from it forty years ago, and that it had been covered by a cluster of trees and grapevines as long ago as the oldest settler in the locality could recollect. At the time the excavation was made there was an old rotten stump yet on the top, the roots of which ran down to the skeletons. It was composed throughout, except about the skeletons at the bottom, of hard red clay, without any indications of stratification. Nothing of interest was discovered until the bottom was reached, where nine skeletons were found lying on the original surface of the ground, surrounded by dark colored earth. These were disposed as shown in Fig. 272. No. 1 lying at full length with the head south,



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

and close by, parallel with it, but with the head north, was No. 2. On the same level were seven others, all lying close side by side, with heads north and in a line. All were badly decayed. No relics were found with any but No. 1, immediately under the skull and jawbones of which were two copper bracelets, an engraved stone, a small drilled fossil, a copper bead, a bone implement, and some small pieces of polished wood. The earth about the skeletons was wet and the pieces of wood soft and colored green by contact with the copper bracelets. The bracelets had been rolled in something, probably bark, which crumbled away when they were taken out. The engraved stone lay partially under the back part of the skull and was struck by the steel prod used in probing. This stone is shown in Fig. 273. The engraved characters on it are beyond question letters of the Cherokee alphabet said to have been invented by George Guess (or Sequoyah), a half-breed Cherokee, about 1821. (*Bureau of American Ethnology Twelfth Annual Report*, 1894, pp. 392–393)

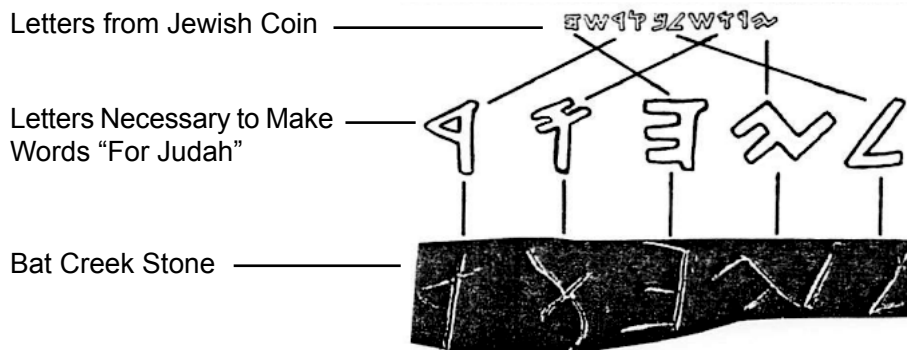
Cyrus H. Gordon made this statement concerning the characters on the stone: “Cyrus Thomas published the inscription upside down and presumed it to be Cherokee, although the writing bears no resemblance to the Cherokee syllabary. It remained for Dr. Mahan to turn the published photograph of the inscription upside down and see that the characters were in the ancient script of Canaan” (Letter by Cyrus H. Gordon, dated October 18, 1970). *Newsweek Magazine* for October 26, 1970, page 65, reported that “The inscriptions on that stone had been identified 85 years ago as those of the Cherokee Indians, but Mahan—who knows Cherokee—refused to accept that finding.”

We submitted a photograph of this stone to a noted Semitist who is “at home in all varieties of Semitic writing from the earliest times on down.” This man claimed that there is “no stage of script in Hebrew or Aramaic to which these letters can belong as far as they are preserved.” Unfortunately, we feel that this answer was dictated more by a prejudice against Dr. Gordon’s work than by a careful examination of the stone in question. Our research seems to show that the characters are Semitic, although this does not necessarily mean that the inscription is genuine. We do not feel that it is right to judge the Bat Creek stone on the basis of Dr. Gordon’s work on the Paraiba text or his endorsement of the Kensington stone. We must agree with the Mormon writer Welby W. Ricks, when he states that the “facts should govern the case—not the case govern the facts. Therefore, each finding in the New World of writing

in an Old World script should be investigated according to the facts and judged on its own merits.”

When we first read of Dr. Gordon’s work on the Bat Creek stone, we wondered how he could possibly derive five words—i.e. “for the land of Judah”—out of only five characters. Although the ancient Hebrews wrote only the consonants, it would still require about eight characters to write these five words. We wrote to Dr. Gordon and asked him to explain how he translated the inscription. He sent a photocopy of a letter which explained this matter to our satisfaction: “. . . the inscription would mean ‘for (the land of) Judah’” (Letter dated October 18, 1970). From this it is clear that the literal translation would be “for Judah.” The words “the land of” are added in to make the translation more understandable. We can accept this, for if a person said he was going “to Idaho;” we would understand him to mean that he was going “to (the State of) Idaho.” In an article published a few months later, Cyrus Gordon gives the reading as simply “for Judah”: “This inscription, which contains a clear sequence of five letters meaning ‘for Judah,’ . . .” (*Argosy*, January 1971, p. 24).

Although the word “Judah” is usually written in the Bible with five characters, in some instances it is only written with four (יהוה). The word “for” is written with only the one Hebrew character Lamed (ל). From this the reader can see that the words “for Judah” can be written with just five characters (להיהוה). The characters we have used above are the type found in modern printed Hebrew Bibles. In ancient Hebrew these letters appear somewhat different (ל יהוה). Dr. Gordon claims that the characters resemble those found on Jewish coins minted between 70 A.D. and 135 A.D. Fortunately, the *Biblical Archaeologist* for May, 1963, pages 38–62, published an article by Baruch Kanael which contains a great deal of information on Jewish coins and also many photographs of coins. We have found this article very helpful to our research. In his book, *The Coins of the Jewish War of 66–73 C.E.*, page 152, Leo Kadman has copied an inscription which throws a great deal of light on the Bat Creek stone. The inscription translates “Jerusalem is Holy,” but it contains all of the letters to make the words “for Judah.” Below we have reproduced the inscription taken from the Jewish coin, and then we have drawn the characters necessary to make the words “for Judah” in a larger size so that we could compare them with the five characters which Cyrus Gordon has translated from the Bat Creek stone.



## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Our conclusions are as follows: (1) The inscription is written in ancient “Canaanite” characters. Cyrus Gordon’s suggestion that they resemble characters on Jewish coins is very tempting, but we must also consider the fact that similar characters were used by other people such as the Phoenicians and Moabites. The acknowledgement that the characters are “Canaanite,” of course, does not necessarily mean that the inscription is genuine or that the stone was inscribed in ancient times.

(2) Dr. Gordon’s statement that the inscription was originally printed upside down is correct (see *Bureau of American Ethnology Twelfth Annual Report*, 1894, p. 394).

(3) The translation of the five characters offered by Cyrus Gordon seems reasonable. The first three characters are very clear. They are (reading from right to left): Lamed, Yod and He. The fourth character resembles Waw, but it could possibly be Tau. The last letter could very well be Daleth, but it also resembles Aleph. In his letter dated October 18, 1970, Dr. Gordon stated that the identification of the last letter might be open to some question and this could possibly change the translation somewhat: “The text consists of five Canaanite letters, the first four of which are unambiguous. The fifth resembles *aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet, as it is written in many periods, or a *daleth*, the fourth letter of the alphabet, as it sometimes appears on Hebrew coins of the Roman period. If the fifth letter is read as *aleph*, the inscription would mean “belonging to Jehu.” However, the fourth letter is a waw, the sixth letter of the alphabet, in a form limited to the Hebrew coins, particularly those of the two rebellions against Rome, in 66–70 A.D. and 132–135 A.D., respectively. Therefore, it is likely that the final letter is to be taken as *daleth* and the inscription would mean ‘for (the land of) Judah.’”

Although one Semitist claimed that he could make no sense out of the inscription, we consulted Joseph A. Fitzmyer of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. He admitted that the characters looked like Hebrew writing and that Gordon’s translation was possible, but was not convinced that the inscription was genuine:

You wrote to me some time ago about Cyrus Gordon’s claim, based on an alleged inscription found in a burial mound called Bat Creek in Loudon County, Tennessee. . . . It contains a line of characters that look like very early Hebrew writing, at least for the most part. The first two letters are unclear. They are followed by a dot (seemingly), then by *ly*, then what seems to be a *h* (but its stance is quite wrong for the period to which the other letters belong). This is followed by a letter that is not very good for a *w* at any period; and this in turn by what is a poorly formed *d*. I can see how Gordon could force it to mean *I Yhw'd*, “to (or for) Judah.” . . .

However, though I admit that the line of letters looks like very ancient Hebrew forms, it must be admitted that the stance of most of them is off. It looks to me like some unskilled person’s attempt to write something that he did not understand. This makes me very skeptical about the genuinity of the inscription. . . . much more investigation is needed before I shall be convinced of Gordon’s claims. I hope that

this answers your question of some time ago. (Letter from Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago, dated January 19, 1971)

We also consulted Frank Moore Cross, Jr., of the Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. His brief reply seems to indicate that he considers the inscription a forgery, although he is willing to admit that it is an imitation of Canaanite script: “I have examined this. Add it to the list of pseudo-Canaanite.”

Cyrus Gordon claims that he consulted two other scholars and that they agreed with him concerning the meaning of the inscription:

A few weeks after I first received the photograph from Dr. Mahan, I had a visit from the noted archeologist, Dr. Benjamin Mazar, of Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Without describing its origin, I showed the inscription to him, and he read off the first three letters, the *lamed*, *yod* and *he*, without hesitation, and then we discussed the other letters and soon agreed on them. Then I told him of the Tennessee origin, and he was amazed, but accepted its validity without question. When I showed it to Dr. David Neiman, of the Boston College Theology Department, he read the whole thing right off correctly. (*Argosy*, January 1971, p. 27)

The reason many scholars are skeptical of the inscription found at Bat Creek is that there have been so many forgeries in the past. Even before Joseph Smith’s time many people were hoping that ancient Hebrew writing would be found in the New World. A number of the Mormons studied Hebrew in Ohio, and there were many groups which broke off from the main body of the Church who were interested in proving that the Jews were once in America. By 1885—the year the Bat Creek stone was discovered—a large number of people, both Mormons and non-Mormons, were searching for evidence that there had been a migration from Canaan. The reader will remember that the “Holy Stones of Newark” were found in a mound in Ohio in the 1860’s (see pages 32–33 of this book). The stones were inscribed with Hebrew characters, but they are now believed to be forgeries. In the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, April 1908, page 218, we read: “It might be added in closing that many other stones have been found in various mounds bearing alleged inscriptions which the respective finders claim are evidences that the Mound Builders, whoever they were, had a written language. But in almost every instance these so-called findings are proven to have been unauthentic or of such a dubious environment as to have no value as proof.”

The Kinderhook plates, made to trick Joseph Smith, were also planted in a mound in Illinois (see pages 25–31 of this book). James Jesse Strang, who had been a follower of Joseph Smith before his death, left the Church and claimed to find some plates in a hill in Wisconsin. The Mormons, of course, believe these plates are forgeries (see *The Case Against Mormonism*, Vol. 2, pages 18–21).

Denis Brogan gives this interesting information concerning some “records” found in Arizona (these may be the same records mentioned on pages 20–21 of this book):

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

My favourite story of the mythology of American discovery was the discovery in 1927 in Arizona, then a less populous state than it is now, of the records of a Roman-Jewish colony near Tucson. The colonists were Jews who had fled from Jerusalem in AD 70, and had, for some obscure reason, kept their records in the language of their conquerors. Arizona tourist agencies and chambers of commerce welcomed this discovery. After a couple of months, someone wrote in to the *New York World*, pointing out that all the Latin quotations in the inscriptions came from the pink section of *Le Petit Larousse*. For some reason or other, this killed the Arizona discovery. (*Antiquity*, Cambridge, England, March 1968, pp. 17–18)

The reader will remember that a stone was found near Los Lunos, New Mexico, “the face of which was carved with a Hebrew-like inscription” containing extracts from the Ten Commandments (see pages 19–20 of this book). Welby W. Ricks, who was President of the University Archaeological Society at Brigham Young University, helped conduct an investigation of this stone and concluded:

... I am fully convinced that the Ten Commandments stone found near Los Lunos, New Mexico, **is a fraud**. Its age does not go back into ancient times. It is probably from thirty to fifty years old, perhaps even dating to as late as March 13, 1930! (*Fifteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, Brigham Young University, 1964, pp. 94–100)

On page 18 of this book we stated that a set of gold plates inscribed with “mixed Anthon Transcript and Maya-like characters” was reported to have been found a few years ago. Archaeologists at Brigham Young University, however, denounced these plates as forgeries: “From a preliminary investigation, then, it would appear that these gold plates from Mexico are **forgeries**, and that **a serious fraud** has been committed, . . .” (*University Archaeological Society Newsletter*, January 17, 1962, p. 4).

Because of the many forgeries committed in the past, scholars are very cautious with regard to the Bat Creek inscription. *Newsweek Magazine*, October 26, 1970, page 65, stated that Gordon’s endorsement of the inscription did not “immediately overcome the skepticism of many prominent archeologists, for there have been too many similar stones and artifacts uncovered and later proved to be fraudulent not to make other scientists suspicious.”

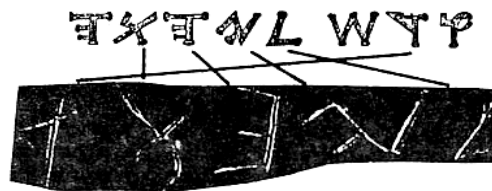
Just before Cyrus Gordon made his announcement concerning the Bat Creek inscription, he made the following statements:

Anything that upsets the basic tenets of standard opinion (in all fields, including the most exact sciences) tends to be branded as spurious, or simply disregarded, by the Establishment to put off the day of reckoning . . .

There are, of course, plenty of faked antiquities; just as there is no dearth of counterfeit currency. There is no merit in being duped by fakes; but neither is there any in blind skepticism. (*Manuscripts*, Summer 1969, Vol. XXI, No. 3, p. 159)

While some scholars might be prejudiced against Dr. Gordon’s work because of his endorsement of the Paraiba text, they must admit that in this case there is an actual stone which can be examined and other tests that can be performed.

Although we have stated that the letters on the stone are from the ancient “Canaanite” script, the stone could have been inscribed in modern times. The Moabite Stone, discovered in 1868, contains characters that are very similar to the ones found on the Bat Creek Stone, and both stones appear to have dots to separate words. Adam Clarke, who lived in Joseph Smith’s time, published a drawing of ancient Hebrew characters which resemble those found on the Bat Creek Stone (see comparison below). The letters read “Holiness to the Lord,” and are found in *Clarke’s Commentary*, Vol. 1, page 450.



Jewish coins were known and discussed a long time before the Bat Creek inscription came to light. In his book, *The Coins of the Jewish War of 66–73 C.E.*, Leo Kadman gives this information:

The question as to which coins were issued during the Jewish-Roman war of 66–73 C.E. has been a matter of controversy for almost two centuries.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, an ardent discussion arose over whether the silver shekels and the bronze coins inscribed with ancient Jewish letters were genuine at all. During the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, however, the problem was to determine when these coins had been struck and by whom: were they to be attributed to the Hasmonean dynasty, or to the time of the Jewish-Roman war? (*The Coins of the Jewish War of 66–73 C.E.*, p. 8)

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century a great number of books appeared, . . . Bayer summed up the evidence against the attempts to consider the ancient Jewish coins falsifications. His views were accepted by all serious numismatists of his time. Eckhel incorporated the ancient Jewish coins in his famous standard work *Doctrina numorum veterum* (Vol. III, 1794, pp. 455–498) and the genuineness of ancient Jewish coins in general was never again doubted.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a new wave of interest in Jewish numismatics arose, following the publication of many hitherto unknown types of coins, . . . The problem now centred on the attribution of the coins with the ancient Hebrew script to the various periods of Jewish history. (*Ibid.*, p. 43)

In January 1874 an earthen pot with a lead seal was discovered near Jericho. It contained some 100 Jewish Shekels from the first to the fourth year and a gold seal with a gem on which wheat ears were engraved. Most of the Shekels were sold on the market. (*Ibid.*, p. 80)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

. . . the number of surviving Jewish Shekels is very limited. No more than 400 specimens are listed in the main museums and private collections and the number of genuine Shekels existing today hardly exceeds 500. . . .

Since these very rare Shekels were in great demand and consequently very expensive, the high prices fetched for them stimulated forgeries, and counterfeit Shekels became rather common among collectors and dealers. . . . Fortunately, the many peculiarities of genuine Shekels make it possible to recognize forgeries without too much difficulty. . . . Most of the forgers overlook at least some of the many epigraphic peculiarities of the genuine Shekels, familiar to every expert. Even the false Shekel of year two produced by the famous Hofrat Becker of Offenbach, perhaps the greatest and most gifted of all counterfeiters, who flourished at the beginning of the XIX century, is therefore easily detected. (*Ibid.*, pp. 115–116)

From the information above it must be admitted that the characters on the Bat Creek Stone could have been copied from Jewish coins or other inscriptions known before 1885. Dr. Gordon, however, maintains that it would have been impossible for anyone to have forged the inscription since the stone “came from an unrifled tomb, excavated under the supervision of archeologists”:

This inscription, . . . is not only the oldest text ever uncovered in North America, but—more importantly—it is the first time a Mediterranean inscription has been found anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, in its original site with all the original objects connected with it in place. Other clues like this have been found, but always separated from their original locations. This tends to make them suspect in the eyes of archeological experts. . . . the evidence in the published report, makes it appear that the tomb could not have been of a recent time. (How long does it take for a tree’s roots to penetrate five feet and grow thick enough to create an obstacle?) I would say that Thomas’s interpretation of the text came about simply because he was brainwashed by the theories of the day. . . . One thing was abundantly clear: that any forgery or fraud was absolutely ruled out because the stone came from an unrifled tomb, excavated under the supervision of archeologists. (*Argosy*, January 1971, pp. 24–26)

While we must agree that the stone was found “under the supervision of archeologists,” we do not feel that this “absolutely” rules out fraud or forgery. It does add a great deal of weight to the discovery, however. We know that the archaeologists could not have been involved in making the inscription on the stone because they identified it as Cherokee and allowed it to be published upside down. This does not, however, rule out the possibility that someone else made the inscription and planted it for the archaeologists to discover. This type of deception was practiced at Glozel, France. Dorothy Garrod gives this information:

A great many people have forgotten about Glozel: . . . The affair started in 1924, . . . A young farm boy at Glozel, near Vichy, was ploughing with his oxen, and the oxen fell into a hole which turned out afterwards to be a glassmakers’ furnace. This was a genuine medieval glassmakers’ furnace of a type well known in France. . . . The local schoolmaster,

M. Clément, became very interested in Glozel and he urged on the farm boy, whose name was Emile Fradin, and lent him books with illustrations of various archaeological objects. Fradin now began to produce strange things which didn’t fit in at all with what had been found before. All this finally came to the notice of M. Salomon Reinach, the very distinguished director of the Musée des Antiquités Nationales at St-Germain. . . . he was impressed with the things he had seen, some of them very curious: he began to encourage the boy and to feed him material intended to awaken his interest, but which instead had the effect of launching him on a career of organized forgery. Soon he began to produce clay tablets inscribed with pseudo-Phoenician characters, and copies of bone artifacts such as Magdalenian harpoons. . . .

It is not too difficult to understand why the Glozel discoveries had such an impact on the public in France at the time. A number of eminent people had, rather surprisingly, allowed themselves to be taken in by it all: they had talked and written about it and brought it to the notice of the public. There was Salomon Reinach, and Lhote, and Esperandieu—all members of the Institut, and then Professor Déperet, the noted geologist of Lyon. . . . the Glozel affair provoked the learned world to battle. It is very difficult now, well over 40 years after . . . to see how members of the Institut allowed themselves to be taken in, but they did, and when the opposition developed, they got more and more furious. . . . by now the controversy about Glozel was hot, and it was decided to appoint an international commission of archaeologists to go to the spot and examine the site, to study the objects found. . . . There had already been a lot of excavation: any notable person, particularly if introduced by Salomon Reinach, could have his own plot in which to dig and we were shown Esperandieu’s trench and Professor Déperet’s trench and the trench of the King of Romania. We chose the spot for our trench, . . .

On the first day of our excavations we found absolutely nothing, and that was characteristic of anyone’s digging at Glozel because, of course, the hoaxers had not yet had time to furnish our hole with the necessary finds: indeed they did not know that first day where we were going to dig. But on the second day finds began to appear, typical Glozelian objects. We found a little round piece of bone with scratches of Glozelian characters on it, and then we found one of the famous tablets. These tablets of clay were not big, they were quite soft, and had on them extraordinary scratches in which Phoenician letters alternated with various meaningless signs—the whole making up what were referred to as “inscriptions.” And it is worth noting that even the most devoted Glozelians had not themselves been able to read any of these “inscriptions.” It was however noted that the Phoenician alphabet used on the Glozel tablets was the same as that on the sarcophagus of Eshmunaza in the Louvre. This was a fairly late form of Phoenician writing: a book about it had been lent to young Fradin.

There was a kind of pocket of dark earth in the trench and at the bottom of this pocket we saw something that obviously looked like a rectangular slab or a tablet. We investigated and found that this object was not very hard—as none of the tablets was. We thought that the last thing we must do in our agitation was to spoil this find: we decided that as Fradin was used to moving these things he had better dig it out himself, which he did. He lifted it out on a spade and carried it away through the crowd amid cries of “Make way, make way!” The crowd was delighted and thought

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

that at last the authenticity of Glozel had been proved. There could now be no doubt since the Commission had actually made a find of a tablet *in situ*. . . . we had noticed in the section of our trench the pocket of dark earth in the general greyness. We noted that the tablet lay at the bottom of this pocket and that a stone had been placed on top to flatten it down—a rectangular stone of about the same size as the tablet. Some of us thought this was very suspect. . . . The question arose as to whether things were altered overnight. The tablet had obviously been put in from above, and the round stone as well—the latter probably through a slit. That would have been quite easy to do without tampering with the face of the section. . . .

The Société Préhistorique de France decided that the only thing to do was to have a police inquest at Glozel. This had to be kept extremely quiet so that no one, especially young Fradin, knew what was happening. The president of the Society, Monsieur Félix Regnault, went down to Glozel, and got in touch with the Préfet at Moulins. Five policemen and a commissionaire proceeded to the Fradins' farm, took the inhabitants completely by surprise, searched the premises and found unfinished tools and Glozelian objects, including inscribed tablets of clay drying in the rafters of a barn. (*Antiquity*, September 1968, pp. 172–176)

One of the greatest frauds ever committed was the Piltdown hoax. The Piltdown man was supposed to be a missing link between apes and men. Ruth Moore states: “Until Oakley came along with his flourine test, it was generally assumed that Piltdown man—thought the first to achieve the full intelligence of modern man—went back to a period of about one million years ago” (*Man, Time, and Fossils*, by Ruth Moore, New York, 1961, page 426). On pages 373–375 of the same book, Ruth Moore states:

One night in 1953, following an anthropological meeting in London, Oakley and two fellow scientists, Sherwood L. Washburn of the University of Chicago and J. S. Weiner of Oxford University, decided to have another look at the puzzling Piltdown fossils. As Weiner examined the peculiar way in which the teeth in the jaw were worn, a disturbing suspicion arose in his mind. No teeth worn down by human usage were ever worn down as those were.

“It could mean only one thing,” he said with incredulity and yet with recognition. “Deliberately ground-down teeth.”

Through a sleepless night Weiner faced the devastating corollary this summoned up. The bones must have been deliberately placed in the pit. . . .

The British Museum did not wait. It announced that Piltdown man was a fraud. One of the greatest hoaxes in scientific history had been perpetrated, and the startling story made headlines all around the world. . . .

“Each time a new line of investigation was applied it confirmed what all previous evidence had established,” said Weiner. “The two Piltdown men were forgeries, the tools were falsifications, the animal remains had been planted. The skill of the deception can hardly be underestimated, and it is not at all difficult to understand why forty years should have elapsed before the exposure. It needed all the new discoveries of paleontology to arouse suspicion, and completely new chemical and X-ray techniques to prove the suspicion justified.” (*Man, Time, and Fossils*, pp. 373–375)

It is certainly hard to understand the motives of the people who commit such forgeries. The Mormon scholar John H. Wittorf gives this interesting information concerning a mound in Ohio:

The Enon mound appears not yet to have been scientifically examined. Some caution will have to be exercised in interpreting any finds, however, if credence may be given to a letter to *Science* magazine in 1893:

“Near Enon, in Clark County, Ohio, is a well-known artificial mound, commonly called ‘Prairie Knob,’ while the level tract on which it is situated is called ‘Knob Prairie.’ A former pupil of mine informed me that when he was a boy his grandfather sunk a shaft in the centre of the mound down to the underlying black soil, without finding any thing of consequence. The old gentlemen was disappointed not to say disgusted, to find this cherished landmark . . . so utterly barren. He thereupon determined, in the generosity of his heart, that future explorers should not go unrewarded. He therefore deposited in the hole a miscellaneous collection of stone implements, pottery, shells, old bones, etc., such as he imagined a properly constructed mound ought to contain. This done, he carefully refilled the shaft, and restored the mound to its former appearance.

“Imagine the sensation that such a find as this is likely to make when brought to light by some enterprising mound explorer of the twentieth century!” (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, October 1970, p. 2)

One thing in favor of Dr. Gordon’s contention that the Bat Creek Stone is authentic is the fact that nobody seemed to notice that the inscription was written in the “Canaanite script” at the time. It seems likely that a person who would go to all the trouble to forge the stone might have found some way to point out to the archaeologists that they were wrong about the identification of the script. On the other hand, it might be argued that a person involved in such a forgery might have a difficult time pointing this out without making the archaeologists suspicious. Then, too, there was a period of nine years between the time the stone was first discovered and the time the photograph of the stone was printed upside down. During this interval the person could have died or lost interest in the project. Also, we cannot be absolutely certain that someone did not try to show the archaeologists they were wrong with regard to the script. Cyrus Gordon originally felt that Dr. Mahan was the first person to recognize the script, but he was informed that someone had made the discovery a few years before:

The obstacles that may beset the way of progress were strikingly shown to me again a few weeks ago, after I had given a lecture on the subject of the Bat Creek Stone. An author telegraphed me that she had actually discovered the upside-down photograph of the stone in the Report back in 1964, had recognized the letters as being early Phoenician, and had even identified some of them correctly. She is Dr. Henriette Mertz, a Chicago patent lawyer, and she reported the existence of this incredible find in a book entitled “The Wine-Dark Sea” which she published at her own expense six years ago. She deserves credit for identifying the script of the stone, even though

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

the discovery went unnoticed and had to be found all over again by Dr. Mahan. (*Argosy*, January, 1971, p. 27)

While we do not agree with Dr. Gordon that fraud or forgery are “absolutely ruled out,” we must admit that the circumstances of this find are certainly more impressive than many other discoveries which have been reported.

In a letter dated October 18, 1970, Cyrus Gordon stated that the inscription “attests a migration of Jews from the Near East, probably to escape the long hand of Rome after the disastrous Jewish defeats in 70 and 135 A.D.” He also stated that the stone “appears to be the most prized personal object that expresses the person’s identity, the thing that is most precious to him. He felt something special about this stone, expressing what we may call an ethnic identity. He was in the midst of strange peoples, far from home. And his own country had come to a terrible end, crushed by the ruthless legions of Rome” (*Argosy*, January, 1971, page 26). Now, even if we were to assume that the Bat Creek Stone is authentic, it does not necessarily prove that the person who owned it was a Jew or that there was a migration of Jews to America in ancient times. In this regard it is interesting to note that Joseph Smith owned some genuine Egyptian papyri, and it has been suggested that he may have given some fragments of this papyri to the Indians. Jay M. Todd, a Mormon writer, states:

During the Indians’ stay, . . . the Prophet may have given them either pages from the *Times and Seasons*, which featured Book of Abraham facsimiles, or perhaps some actual papyrus fragments or both. . . . the Prophet may have wished to give the Indians a personal token, something of value or of antiquity to demonstrate his affection and bond with them. (*The Saga of the Book of Abraham*, p. 280)

Now, if some of the papyrus was discovered in a grave with an Indian, a person might assume that the Indian was really an Egyptian. Such a conclusion, however, would be entirely incorrect.

From his article in *Argosy*, it appears that Dr. Gordon is not certain whether the Bat Creek Stone originally came from America or from the Old World: “Then the geologists will tell us the geographical spread of the actual stone on which the inscription was carved. I would like to know whether it was made here or in the old country” (*Argosy*, January 1971, p. 27). If the stone was inscribed in the Old World it could have been brought here and obtained by the Indians after the time of Columbus, or the Indians could have found it in some ancient shipwreck. A great deal depends on when the stone was actually deposited in the mound. The archaeologist Cyrus Thomas felt that the burial was made sometime after 1821, but Dr. Gordon maintains that

the tomb could not have been of a recent time. (How long does it take for a tree’s roots to penetrate five feet and grow thick enough to create an obstacle?) I would say that Thomas’s interpretation of the text came about simply because he was brainwashed by the theories of the day, . . . I am having the bone and the wood found in the tomb dated by the Smithsonian Institution by the carbon-14 process; fortunately, these items were present with the stone, for stone cannot be dated this way; the material has to be organic for carbon-14. (*Argosy*, January 1971, p. 27)

We have written to Smithsonian Institution for the results of the carbon-14 tests; but, unfortunately, they have decided not to make these tests. Nevertheless, they indicate they are doing some research with regard to the artifacts. In a letter dated January 15, 1971, George E. Phebus, Supervisor, Processing Lab., Department of Anthropology, made these comments:

Current research on the “Bat Creek Stone” is continuing. To date, the brass bracelets have been analyzed and the results are not favorable to Dr. Gordon’s interpretation. The statement in *Argosy* that certain associated artifacts will be C-14 dated is in error. To do so it would require the complete destruction of these specimens and that is not desirable. Besides, a C-14 date would relate only to the burial and not necessarily date the stone. (Letter from George E. Phebus, Smithsonian Institution, dated January 15, 1971)

Cyrus Gordon feels that archaeological research will reveal additional evidence that Jews were in Tennessee about 2,000 years ago:

But there was a community of Near Eastern visitors in Tennessee almost 2,000 years ago and they had a written language. . . . These fellows must have been a small, but I think an influential, minority, . . . we want to go back to Tennessee to dig. Where there was one inscription there must be others. . . .

The Bat Creek Stone cannot be unique; there must be more where this one came from. It is almost like some seemingly unique animal; there must have been more like it around somewhere, or else it could not be born. (*Argosy*, January 1971, pp. 26–27)

In support of his ideas Dr. Gordon appeals to the fact that Roman and Hebrew coins have been found in America: “In the 1820’s, John Haywood, . . . gathered material for his book . . . Haywood describes Roman coins found in Tennessee and the adjacent states. Moreover, on 17 April 1967, the New York Yiddish newspaper *The Day-Jewish Journal* ran an article on Hebrew coins of the Bar Kokhba Rebellion (the second Jewish rebellion in 132–135 A.D.) found by farmers around Louisville, Hopkinsville and Clay City, Kentucky.”

We do not feel that the presence of Hebrew coins in America provides a great deal of evidence that the Jews were in America in ancient times. The reader will remember that Josiah Priest reported that an Indian found “a Roman coin” in Missouri and that “a Persian coin” was discovered “near a spring on the Ohio, some feet under ground; . . .” (*American Antiquities*, p. 52). Since people save ancient coins, they could have come to America in recent times. The Jewish coins were, of course, struck in the Old World by the Jews, but when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem the “soldiers ran through the streets plundering, burning and killing” (*The Coins of the Jewish War of 66–73 C.E.*, p. 38). On page 80 of the same book we find the following: “What was left of the Shekels and the other money fell into the hands of the Roman soldiers. They, however, were not interested in the Shekels as coins (which were of no use to them) but only in their silver bullion. And so the Shekels were melted down or hacked into pieces to be sold to the the traders by weight. . . . On the other hand, the Roman soldiers were not interested at all in the bronze Prutot, which were entirely worthless to them. So they left them on the spot

or took a few as souvenirs to their future garrisons.” On page 43 of the same book, we find this information: “Specimens of Shekels were also brought from Palestine by Christian pilgrims of the Middle Ages and given to the treasuries of churches and monasteries; . . .” Thus we see that ancient Hebrew coins might be found in almost any part of the world.

At any rate, Dr. Gordon’s conclusions with regard to the Bat Creek inscription and the Hebrew coins found in America cannot be used to support the claims of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon states that the Nephites and Mulekites came over to America about 600 B.C., and it never mentions anyone coming from Jerusalem after that time. Dr. Gordon, however, would have us believe that the Bat Creek inscription is related to script found on Jewish coins dated “between 70 A.D. and 135 A.D.” He also states that “coins of the Bar Kokhba Rebellion, 132–135 A.D., have been found” in America. Now, since these coins were originally made in Palestine during the Bar Kokhba Rebellion, this would plainly show that they could not have been brought to the New World prior to 132–135 A.D. Therefore, if a person accepts Gordon’s ideas concerning the coins, he is forced to the conclusion that the “Near Eastern visitors in Tennessee” were not Nephites. The Mormon archaeologist John L. Sorenson makes it very clear that the Nephites could not have had coins:

For example, can we expect to locate Nephite coins as “proof” of their presence? The answer is no. In the first place the Book of Mormon, thank goodness, never mentions coins—only money. (“Coins of the Nephites” occurs only in a chapter heading inserted in the course of publishing the scripture.) Coins were NOT in use in Palestine for generations after Lehi departed; the Old Testament “shekel” was a weight unit for measuring money, not a coin, and the Nephite money was almost certainly the same. No authentic “coin” has ever been found in America under convincing circumstances, and some reported finds can be shown to be either fakes or otherwise unbelievable. Here, then, is another “specific” shoal for us to crack up on. In fact, the lack of coins is precisely what we should expect if the Nephites came from Palestine very near 600 B.C. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, 1964 Ed., p. 26)

If the Mormons were to accept Cyrus Gordon’s claim that there were “Near Eastern visitors in Tennessee almost 2,000 years ago” it could actually weaken their case for the Nephites. For instance, if there is any relationship between the language or customs of the Hebrews and the Indians (as the Mormons claim), Dr. Gordon’s theory could explain this, and there would be no need for the Nephites mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The Mormons claim that a “White and Bearded God”—i.e., Quetzalcoatl—appeared to the Nephites, and that this was in reality “the appearance of the resurrected Lord to the ancient Americans” (*Christ in Ancient America*, p. 48). If Gordon’s theories were to be accepted, however, Quetzalcoatl might be nothing more than a Jew who fled from the Romans after the death of Christ.

The Book of Mormon states that “there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord” (2 Nephi 1:6). Dr. Gordon, however, feels that there were many visitors: “It isn’t only the Phoenicians, or Canaanites, or Minoans, or Greeks, or Romans—there have been many, many people who have been visiting

America since the earliest times. In fact, our earliest visitors apparently were the Japanese from the Island of Kyushu. Pottery of a very early type has been discovered on the coast of Ecuador, associated with a carbon-14 date of about 3,000 B.C.” (*Argosy*, January 1971, p. 27). Cyrus Gordon feels that the “Near Eastern visitors in Tennessee” were only a “small, but I think an influential, minority, . . .” (*Ibid.*, p. 26). He states that the Bat Creek inscription is the “cornerstone” of his theory, because “it was found in an unimpeachable archaeological context under the direction of professional archaeologists working for the prestigious Smithsonian Institution” (Letter dated October 18, 1970). He admits, however, that “Dr. Mahan ransacked the scientific literature from beginning to end in order to find such an inscription” (*Argosy*, January 1971, p. 27).

Now, if the Book of Mormon were a true history, we would expect to find hundreds, if not thousands, of inscriptions written in Hebrew or reformed Egyptian, The reader will remember that in 1958 Thomas Stuart Ferguson, a Mormon scholar who founded the New World Archaeological Foundation, stated that digging should continue at an “accelerated pace” and that “Eventually we should find decipherable inscriptions in modified (reformed) Egyptian, in a modified or pure Hebrew or in cuneiform, referring to some unique person, place or event in the Book of Mormon” (*One Fold and One Shepherd*, page 263). On December 2, 1970, we had the opportunity to ask Mr. Ferguson if any such inscription had been found. He indicated that nothing had been found. Although he believed the Bat Creek inscription was written in Hebrew, he felt that it had nothing to do with the people mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

It would appear, then, that there is still no proof that the Nephites ever existed. The situation remains the same as it was when Dr. Hugh Nibley wrote these words:

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 . . .

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. . . . Nephite civilization . . . 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*, 1967, pp. 243–244)

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Mormon scholars have continued to do research with regard to the Anthon Transcript, i.e., the characters which were supposed to be copied from the gold plates (see pages 12, 13, 14, 15 and 69 of this book), but so far no one has been able to translate it. The Mormon scholar Carl Hugh Jones recently made these comments regarding the Anthon Transcript:

At the present time **no interpretation of the text is offered**. . . there may be some type of alphabet embedded within the Anthon Transcript. . . .

If the records of an ancient Book of Mormon people were written using an alphabet, modern scholars should be able to translate the 224-word text of the Anthon Transcript. . . . (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, Brigham Young University, September, 1970, p. 6)

The Mormon scholar Stanley B. Kimball made these comments concerning the Anthon Transcript:

It is beyond the scope of this paper to say much about the characters. Over the years, however, suggestions and attempts have been made to indicate and prove that the characters are some form of Egyptian, Meso-American, or even Phoenician. The strongest argument that can be made for the ingenious and pioneering efforts of those who favor the Egyptian origin of the characters is the definite resemblance of the RLDS transcript characters to Egyptian characters. But this does not prove that the transcript is authentic, that the characters make connected thought, or are Egyptian. (Indeed, twelve, almost half of our English-Latin characters, appear in the Cyrillic alphabet, but this fact never has given and never will give anyone insight whatsoever into or understanding of Russian, Serbian, or Bulgarian.) Also it must be pointed out that there are so many variant, hieratic, and demotic characters that the affinity of many other writing systems with Egyptian could probably be proved.

If the case for the transcript characters' being Egyptian to origin appears less than absolute, it is, nonetheless, infinitely stronger than any of the other arguments. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, p. 350)

Dr. Kimball, however, states that "Many books had been published by 1828 containing facsimiles of Egyptian characters . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 334). We have indicated earlier that Joseph Smith might have copied the characters from some book available at the time.

The reader will remember that Joseph Smith quoted Harris as saying he "presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor

Charles Anthon; and that Anthon "stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian." Later he "went to Dr. Michell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation" (*History of the Church*, by Joseph Smith, Vol. 1, page 20). Stanley B. Kimball frankly admits that "Whatever they said respecting the correctness of the translations cannot be taken too seriously" (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, page 335). Dr. Kimball also made these comments concerning this matter:

It is entirely possible, of course, that they said nothing at all about the translation, but only remarked that the transcription was correct, for in 1828 neither Anthon, Mitchill (nor anyone else in the world for that matter) had seen much translated from the Egyptian. It is not difficult to understand how a man of Harris' background could have mistaken transcription for translation. Perhaps Harris was so intent on fulfilling a scriptural prophecy that he heard only what he wanted to hear. . . .

In the case of Dr. Mitchill, aside from the above mentioned facts that he was in his youth a student of the classics and had at least a reading ability of several languages, no other possible evidence of a competence in Egyptian studies has come to light. . . . a ten-page bibliography of his writings indicates he never published anything regarding any language. It appears then that Mitchill could have given Harris only a very superficial opinion regarding the transcript. . . . (*Ibid.*, pp. 335-336)

Dr. Kimball goes on to show that Anthon had a book by the Egyptologist Champollion, but he has found no evidence that Anthon was able to translate Egyptian. He goes on to state:

Such is the story of the Harris-Anthon-Mitchill encounter. In spite of the limited ability of Anthon and Mitchill (or anyone else in the world at that time) to pronounce judgment on the transcription, and despite the ridicule of Anthon regarding the story of angels and the destruction of Anthon's certificate, Harris was sufficiently convinced to go into debt and devote his full time to the support of the young prophet. . . .

As far as the truthfulness of the Harris statements concerning what occurred, we have no evidence whatsoever beyond his character. Richard L. Anderson . . . has proved . . . that during his "almost 40 years' residence in Palmyra he was admired for his integrity. . . ."

. . . this author does not think the incident had any great practical value—especially when we conclude, as we must, that the opinions of Anthon and Mitchill were not conclusive in any way. (*Ibid.*, pp. 337, 339 and 340)