

# NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

by Hugh Nibley

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## PART I

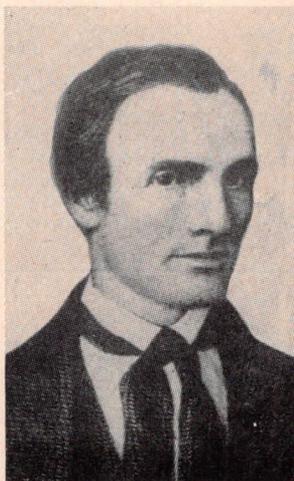
### SOME STANDARD TESTS

IN THE short time since the appearance of two series of articles in the ERA under the titles *Lehi in the Desert* (1950) and *The World of the Jaredites* (1951-2),<sup>1\*</sup> a number of important discoveries and significant studies have come forth, bringing new and surprising light to the study of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. By a fortunate coincidence, the new materials are particularly pertinent to answering the objections of those critics of the Book of Mormon who have found the above-named studies hard to accept. But before we take the cover off, we must remind the doubters of certain responsibilities.

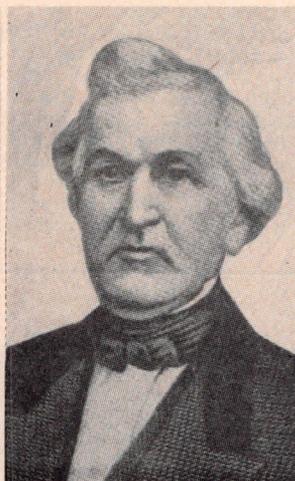
It would seem that those who would attack the Book of Mormon are now forsaking the dangerous ground of tangible and objective evidence to set up their artillery on the eminence of moral and philosophical superiority. Their arguments are of a sweeping and general kind and suffer from the fatal weakness of overlooking entirely the well-established rules of textual criticism. Since these rules seem to be virtually unknown to many, yet have a vital bearing on the problem of the Book of Mormon, a few words illustrating their application are not only in order but also long overdue. So the discoveries must wait until we have settled some preliminary points.

One of the best-established disciplines in the world is the critical examination of written texts to detect what in them is spurious and what is genuine. The revival of learning came with the discovery of quantities of ancient documents resurrecting the glories of classical antiquity, but not one of these manuscripts was an

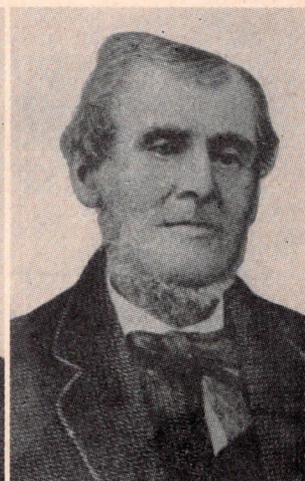
\*Numbers refer to bibliography at end of instalment.



Oliver Cowdery



David Whitmer



Martin Harris

### THE THREE WITNESSES TO THE BOOK OF MORMON

original; all without exception were copies of copies. For four hundred years the main business of "scholarship" has been to produce from the materials at hand texts which would most closely correspond to the lost originals, sifting the true from the false by a strenuous and exacting discipline.<sup>2</sup> With the accumulated wisdom and technical experience of centuries it should be possible in our day—as it should have been in Joseph Smith's—to give the Book of Mormon the full treatment. It seems strange that such a controversial book should never have been subjected to a systematic application of the rules of textual criticism. That may be because textual critics are very few and have always thought they have had more important work at hand, but whatever the reason, the fact is that all criticism of the Book of Mormon in the past has been suspiciously superficial.

To illustrate this claim and not to undertake a thorough investigation at this time, let us briefly apply to the Book of Mormon the main rules

put forth by Friedrich Blass in his classic work on hermeneutics and criticism, which remains the "standard work" on the subject.<sup>3</sup> The rules given by Blass are all obvious enough to experience and reflection, but every one of them is a stumbling block to the superficial critic, and they have all been scrupulously avoided by those attacking the Book of Mormon.

To begin with, says Blass, "We have the document, and the name of its author; we must begin our examination by assuming that the author indicated really wrote it." You always begin by assuming that a text is genuine.<sup>4</sup> What critic of the Book of Mormon has ever done that? One can hear the screams of protest: "How unscientific! How naive! How hopelessly biased!" Yet to the experience of the centuries Blass adds perfectly convincing reasons for his shocking rule. It is equally biased to accept or reject a text at first glance, but still one must assume at the outset that it is either spurious or genuine if one is to make any progress.

As Jacoby, the foremost authority

on Greek historical writing, observes, "No great historical writing was ever produced *sine ira et studio*"—in other words, without partiality—one must take a stand on something if one is to lift or move anything. An open mind is not a mind devoid of opinions, but one that is willing to change opinions in the face of new evidence. If we must assume something about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon at the outset, why not assume that it is false, as its

a lucky coincidence, devoid of any real significance. But if I assume that it is true, then any suspicious passage is highly significant and casts suspicion on the whole thing, no matter how much of it is right.

Whoever refuses to accept the original claim of a document's origin, "is under obligation" says Blass, "to supply in its place a credible explanation" of its origin. In doing so, he warns us, we must be on our guard against "assuming the existence of forgers

hypothesis is to be put aside without hesitation in favor of the simple appeal to the actual remains of the writer."<sup>6</sup>

Even in explaining mistakes and blunders in a document, we are told, fraud is always the last theory to turn to, for forgery "must always be based on the assumption that we are dealing with vicious jugglers and coiners, to whom the critic, whenever it suits his interest, imputes a degree of cunning equal to his own. In reality such a breed of forger is simply a product of fantasy, a race of spooks with which the critic peoples his world, and which are at his disposal when and as he wants them, taking every form, like Proteus, which occasion demands, appearing now as stupid idiots and now as incredibly sly deceivers. Before the sober eye these ghosts vanish."<sup>7</sup>

Now is not this sly but ignorant forger who never existed the very image of the "Joseph Smith" who is now being put forward as the only possible explanation for the Book of Mormon?

The critics who think they have at last found a plausible explanation for the book have simply fallen into the oldest booby trap of all, the one which the critic, according to Blass, must avoid before all others as the easiest but silliest solution of the problem.

But how can we be certain about anything in criticising the Book of Mormon? To this Blass gives us the answer: the nearest we can get to certainty, he says, is when we have before us a *long, historical* document, for it is "improbable in the highest degree, and therefore to be regarded at all times as inadmissible . . . that any forger coming later (than the pretended date of authorship) can have the knowledge and diligence necessary to present any *quantity* of *historical* data without running into contradictions." In this, the one sure way of detecting a falsifier, according to our guide, "is by those things which he cannot well have succeeded in imitating because they were too trifling, too inconspicuous, and too troublesome to reproduce."<sup>8</sup>

In *Lehi in the Desert* we said: "The test of an historical document lies, as we have so often insisted, not in the story it tells, but in the casual details that only an eyewitness can have seen." It is in such incidental and inconspicuous details that the



Sheet gold ornament over ten inches long from Vasca, Peru.

critics regularly do? Because, says Friedrich Blass, once you assume that a document is a fake no arguments and no evidence to the end of time can ever vindicate it, even if it is absolutely genuine. Why is that? Because "There can be no such thing as an absolutely positive proof."<sup>5</sup> The only certainty lies in the negative; for example, if we know for sure that a crime has been committed by a woman, the negative fact that he is *not* a woman completely exonerates any suspect; but on the other hand the fact that one is a woman proves neither guilt nor innocence. The reader cannot produce absolute proof that the dollar bill in his pocket is genuine; it may look all right even to the trained eye and still contain minute evidence of counterfeiting which escape the expert; but if there is anything obviously wrong with it, we then have absolute proof that it is counterfeit. We can never prove absolutely that the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be; but any serious proven fault in the work would at once condemn it. If I assume the Book of Mormon to be fraudulent, then whatever is correct in it is merely

who are at one moment so clever and adroit as to imitate the writing of Plato or Demosthenes with deceptive skill, and in the next moment are so idiotic and stupid as to let themselves get caught red-handed in the most colossal blunders. Nor is the existence of forgers of genius believable, nor of highly gifted writers who are at the same time completely uninformed, such as those to whom the *Phaedo* and the gospel of John have been attributed. All this sort of thing represents no true cause, and any explanation that requires such an



Thin sheet gold mummy mask from Peru.

Some insight can be gained through a cursory look at the two departments already discussed as well as that of the summer camp movement. It is difficult to give a true picture of the development of any organization. Who was the one responsible for each facet of the association is likewise difficult to ascertain. In Church work the chief beauty is the united effort that brings about the desired results. The YWMIA is part of the Church. Wards, stakes, and general boards have worked unceasingly to fulfil President Young's urgent request when the association was formed: "I wish our girls to obtain a knowledge of the gospel for themselves." Each worker has added her bit to the perfecting of the plans. Where to draw the line and give credit is almost impossible. The united thinking of many may have impelled one person to a sudden flash of inspiration, but the preliminary thinking and the constant prayers of the entire membership insured the correctness of the planning.

Since the organization of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association in November 1869, the constant purpose behind each activity, each lesson, each organization has been to help "the young daughters of Israel to get a living testimony of the truth." Classes have been organized, activities introduced—all to the end that the young women of the Church may find increased happiness here and hereafter by building their lives securely on the foundation of the gospel.

## New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study

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Book of Mormon shines. Blass, then, notes that when these details occur in considerable numbers (as they certainly do in the Book of Mormon) we can confidently assume a genuine text, and, above all, when the large numbers of details fit together and prove each other, we have the strongest proof of all, for difficulties increase not mathematically with the length of a document, but geometrically.

Speaking of the Jaredites, the author has said: "Incidentally, I find the parallels between the Jaredites and the early Asiatics very impressive, but taken together their value increases as the cube of their number. In the Book of Ether they are woven

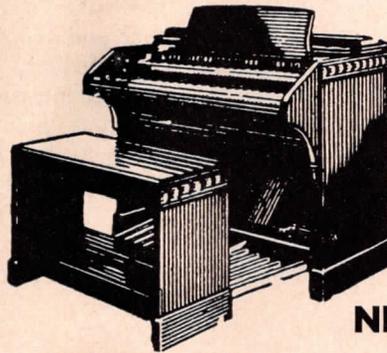
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into a perfect organic whole, a consistent picture of a type of society the very existence of which has come to be known only in recent years."<sup>9</sup> For Blass this is the final test.

A principle on which Blass lays great emphasis is that "whatever lies outside the usual and familiar" is to be regarded as "incredible."<sup>10</sup> Hence the sly, stupid forger must go out the window. But what about Joseph Smith's story? Does that lie in the province of the usual and familiar?

If it is totally "outside the usual and familiar" course of events for an ignorant rustic to produce a huge and elaborate book, that proves that he didn't write it; but then we are "under obligation to supply a credible explanation" of who did. Recently clergymen have been making much of the claim that Sidney Rigdon was the man. The claim is ridiculous—Rigdon himself would have shouted it from the housetops were it true—but even if that were so where does it get us? The fabulous forger has

## On Harvesting too Soon...

Richard L. Evans

IN DAYS of restlessness and of uncertainty, sometimes people (all people, including young people) are disposed under pressure to make shortsighted decisions—decisions that seem attractive at the moment, but which may imperil future prospects; decisions that may seem to come closer to what is wanted right now, but at the risk of placing a permanent penalty upon the future. In the lives of many young men and women this is a season of decision: whether to return to school or stay with what seems at the moment to be temptingly profitable employment; whether to abandon preparation and seize a short-term gain or to forego some things now and lay the foundations for a more solid future. There are figures that could be placed before us which show that it is unquestionably costly to sell the future short. There are figures to show that an adequate period of preparation pays in material terms as well as in service and satisfaction. No doubt there are individual circumstances which justify postponing preparation, which justify a quick harvest for a specific purpose. But too short a growing season, harvesting too soon, cuts short the total long-time return. There is some feed in the field as soon as the first green shoots show themselves, but there is greater yield when one cultivates, and waters, and waits. This nation, this generation needs prepared people, and every young person needs to be solidly prepared for the future. It sometimes means self-denial; it means some waiting; it almost always entails some sacrifice, some resourcefulness, some postponing of desired things to complete a period of preparation. But the years pass quickly, and the sacrifices, hard though they seem, are soon over; and for those who have made them, there is the promise of reward and of greater service and satisfaction. With a long look at life, the temptations to take a quick return should be placed in proper perspective. And to those who may be hesitating to complete their preparation, let this be said: Don't let the season for plowing and planting pass without plowing and planting—lest there should be a short harvest.

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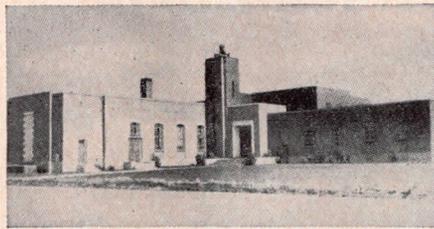
merely changed his name. As if one were to say, "They claim that a man named Jones dug the Grand Canyon. Preposterous! It was a man named Brown!" In a word, *who* in 1830 could have written the Book of Mormon?

Joseph Smith's own story of the book's authorship certainly lies far "outside the usual and familiar," and we have every right to ask for special proof of it. This he obligingly supplies when he puts the book in our hands and asks us how *we* explain it. Books of Mormon do not occur at all "in the usual course of events." Therefore, we have every right to doubt the book's existence, except for one thing: We have the book. The only alternative to Joseph Smith's explanation is to assume, paraphrasing Blass, the existence of a forger who at one moment is so clever and adroit as to imitate the archaic poetry of the desert to perfection and supply us with genuine Egyptian names, and yet so incredibly stupid as to think that the best way to fool people and get money out of them is to write an exceedingly difficult historical epic of six hundred pages. Endowed with the brains, perseverance, and super-human cunning necessary to produce this monumental forgery, the incredibly sly genius did not have the wit to know, after years of experience in the arts of deception, that there are ten thousand safer and easier ways of fooling people than by undertaking a work of infinite toil and danger which, as he could see from the first, only made him immensely unpopular. This is the forger who never existed.

According to Blass, there has never been a clever forgery. Some forgeries have been very successful, but that always required the willing co-operation of dupes and salutary neglect of critics. A classic illustration of the principle is furnished by an experience of the Arab poet Khalaf al-Ahmar, by whom, according to Nicholson, "the art of forgery was brought to perfection" in the eighth century A.D. After the scholars of Basra and Kufa had accepted his work as genuine for many years, the imposter, grown old and penitent, confessed to them that the verses he had palmed off on them as genuine writings of the ancients were really his own compositions. To this honest but belated admission, the scholars gave the astonishing reply that they preferred to regard the documents as genuine, pompously

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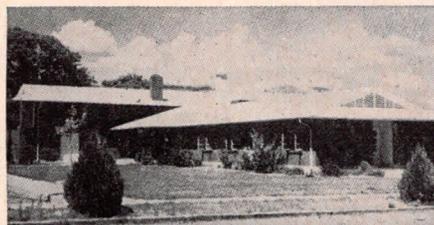
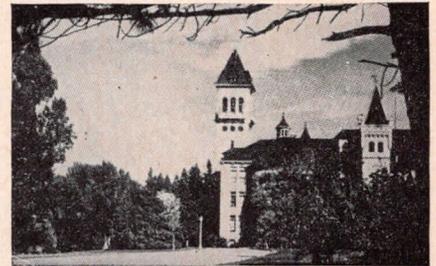
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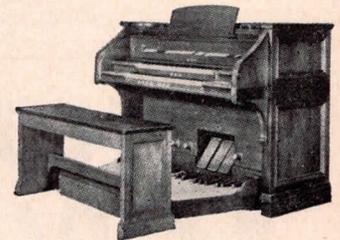
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declaring, "What you said then seems to us more trustworthy than your present assertion."<sup>10a</sup> They believed the forgery because they were determined to, and from many other cases it is clear that the numerous forgeries of the Arab poets were successful not because they were cleverly done, but because of the ignorance, gullibility, and above all the eagerness of the schoolmen to accept them. As late as the nineteenth century German scholars were still studying as the genuine work of a Greek poet an adroit imitation composed by the celebrated Joseph Scaliger: and yet the document that fooled them was not even a forgery, for Scaliger had actually signed his name to it! If no forgery can stand without the will to believe it, on the other hand, once that will is present, no forgery is too clumsy to be acceptable to the experts.

This point is further illustrated in recent studies on the false Isidorian Decretals, the most famous and influential of all forgeries. It is agreed among experts that whoever produced this celebrated cornerstone of papal power could only have succeeded in the ruse by being "strong enough to prevent any investigation of its origin and hence the discovery of the fraud."<sup>11</sup>

(To be continued)

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<sup>2</sup>The best available treatment in English of the nature and rules of textual criticism is to be found in the introductions of the five volumes (especially see volumes I and V) of A.E. Housman's *Manilius* (Cambridge Univ., 1937).

<sup>3</sup>Friedr. Blass, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, Section ii (pp. 149-295) *Einleitende und Hilfs-Disziplinen*, being Vol. I of Iwan von Müller's *Handbuch der kl. Altertumswissenschaft* (Munich, 1892).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>9</sup>*Lehi in the Desert*, etc., p. 257. Blass, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 294,

<sup>10a</sup>R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of The Arabs* (N.Y.: Scribners, 1907), p. 134.

<sup>11</sup>Joh. Haller, *Niklaus I. und Pseudoisidor* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1936), pp. 158 f.

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# NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

by Hugh Nibley

PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

## II

### SOME STANDARD TESTS

THERE has been some disagreement as to who the guilty parties were, but none as to their methods. Haller has argued that it was Pope Nichols I who, finding the new document useful to his purposes, insisted that it had reposed in the Roman archives since early Christian times.<sup>12\*</sup> The celebrated Hincmar accepted the document as genuine, and "When we remember how often clever specialists have let themselves be fooled, it is not surprising that Hincmar was one of the first to accept the Isidorian fraud in spite of its sudden appearance out of nowhere." The point to notice, however, is that Hincmar, sympathetic though he was with the document, could not be fooled for long: He soon began to doubt, and as he studied the text, his doubts increased until finally within a few years he had proved to himself and others that it was beyond a doubt a forged document.<sup>13</sup> Yet though the Decretals were held in suspicion all over France, the pope was able to check criticism by a shrewd appeal to self-interest, showing the irreverent clergy that they had made full use of the forgery when it suited their interests.<sup>14</sup> In the 17th century the Jesuits were still defending the pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, but their only argument was that it was a sin of supreme presumption to question or lay irreverent hands on a holy document, that it is sacrilegious to question what the Church has accepted—a claim to immunity which has become fundamental to the modern Catholic defense. Forgers cannot afford to risk examination. But Joseph Smith to the day of his death placed the Book of Mormon in the hands of all who could do him

the most harm if anything about it could be in any way suspected.

It might be objected that there may be any number of forgeries so clever that they have entirely escaped detection and so are ignorantly accepted by us as genuine. This may be so—and we will never know the answer, but the fact that all known forgeries have turned out to be clumsy ones that only succeeded because their public wanted them to succeed, makes the super-forgery hypothesis exceedingly improbable. The Book of Mormon cannot be attacked on that ground, since it was never, to say the least, a popular book, and thousands of cunning people would have given a great deal to be able to discredit it with unanswerable proofs; considering the circumstances of its production and publication it must be, if a fraud, one of the clumsiest and most obvious of frauds ever produced.

But is *forgery* the proper word to use at all? Might not the author of the Book of Mormon have been weak and foolish rather than vicious; might he not have written a long book simply because he was too naive to know how dangerous that sort of thing was? Geniuses are often quite naive and combine immense ability with hopeless irresponsibility. After all, no one would accuse Chatterton of being depraved—yet he did fool people. To which the answer is that Chatterton's forgeries were very obvious and only fooled romantic critics who were very ignorant of early English or determined to accept the wonderful new finds. The author of the Book of Mormon was not naive: He could not have written such a long book without having given it much thought, and that he dares then to put it into our hands shows that he is very sure of himself. To follow Blass, a forger can be sure of himself for two reasons only: either because he is too utterly silly to know

what he is up against or because he is immensely clever. As to the Prophet, the man who was clever enough to overcome the difficulties presented in writing the Book of Mormon, was certainly capable of recognizing that those difficulties existed. He cannot have overcome them unconsciously without a slip in book after book, no matter how foolishly confident he may have been; there are some things which even irresponsible geniuses cannot do. The author of the Book of Mormon was neither shallow nor naive. But an intelligent forger is not going to risk a long forgery at all when a short one will do just as well, nor is he going to publish and circulate permanent evidence of his crime among the general public who would be far more willing to accept him without it! A silly man *could* not have composed the Book of Mormon, and a clever man absolutely *would* not have!

Are there then no skilful but innocent forgeries? Must we take a hard, uncompromising stand? Cannot Joseph Smith have been a religiously sincere quack? Willrich, noting that it has been popular practice to designate forgeries as "inventions" or "free compositions" to avoid the ugly word, assures us that if the *purpose* of any writing is to deceive, it is a forgery. Thus for all their pious purpose, the letters attributed to Hellenistic rulers in Josephus are forgeries, dishonest documents invented to furnish proof that the Jews had formerly been honored by the great ones of the earth.<sup>15</sup> "We must designate as a forgery any document that claims, without justification, to be genuine, even though the claim may be a comparatively harmless one."<sup>16</sup> In discussing the forgeries of the famous Lanfranc of Canterbury, Bohmer writes: "Is it possible and permissible to consider such a high official and

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\*Numerals refer to bibliography on page 1003.

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such a devoted priest as a sly forger?" The answer is, Yes! "It can be proven that the Archbishop when it suited his purpose had not the slightest scruple against taking crooked paths when it appeared that he could not reach his goal by straight ones."

"Whoever knows and understands the men of the Middle Ages, how many of them, though excellent bishops, abbots, clerics, and monks by the standards of the time, practised falsification of documents—Hincmar of Rheims, Adalag of Marburg-Bremen, Frederick of Salzburg, Pilgrim of Passau, Thietmar of Meresburg, Pope Calixtus II, Wilibald of Stablo, Abbot Giselber of Laach—will answer with an unqualified affirmative" the question, "could Lanfranc have been a common forger?"<sup>17</sup>

Joseph Smith was either telling the truth or he was a criminal—not just a fool—and no sentimental compromises will settle anything. It is base subterfuge to refuse to apply the fair tests which the Prophet himself freely invited and which will just as surely condemn him if he is lying as they will vindicate him if he is telling the truth.<sup>18</sup>

(To be continued)

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<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 181 f.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 182 ff.

<sup>15</sup>H. Willrich, *Urkundenfälschung in der hellenistisch-jüdischen Literatur*, Heft No. 21, N.F., in *Forschungen zur Religion u. Literatur des Alten u. des Neuen Testaments* (1924), pp. 3f.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>Heinr. Böhmer, *Die Fälschungen Ezbischofs Lanfrancs von Canterbury* (Leipzig, 1902), being VIII, i, of *Studien zur Gesch. d. Theologie u. Kirche*, p. 126.

<sup>18</sup>This is the usual classification. Frd. Leist, *Urkundenlehre* (Leipzig, 1893) divides his whole book into external, internal characteristics of documents; this differs slightly from external vs. internal evidence, the former being information coming from outside, the latter information contained entirely in the document itself.

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## Fritos RECIPE OF THE MONTH

### FRITOS MACAROONS

24-30

2	tbsps.	Shortening
1/2	cup	Sugar
2/3	cup	Coconut
1/2	tsp.	Baking Powder
1/4	tsp.	Salt or less
3/4	cup	Rolled or Quick Oatmeal
2	cup	FRITOS Corn Chips crushed slightly
2		Eggs

#### Directions:

Beat eggs well and mix with oatmeal. Let stand while creaming the sugar and shortening. Combine the two mixtures and add coconut, FRITOS corn chips, baking powder and salt. Drop by spoonfuls, or shape into walnut size balls, and spread on baking sheets. Bake 15 minutes in moderate oven at 350 degrees F.

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A MEALTIME TREAT THAT'S HARD TO BEAT!

# NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

by Hugh Nibley

PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

## PART 3

**E**VIDENCE for the authenticity of documents falls into three categories, internal, external, and circumstantial.

To summarize, let us list some of the most tangible evidences for the Book of Mormon.

1. *Internal Evidence:* Imagine that a Book of Mormon has been dropped from a helicopter to a man stranded on a desert island, with instructions to decide on its reliability. On the first page the man would find a clear statement of what the book claims to be, on the following pages a story of how it came into existence, and finally the testimonies of certain witnesses. Here are three astonishing claims—all supernatural. Has the man on the island enough evidence in the contents of the book alone—no other books or materials being available to him—to reach a satisfactory decision? By all means. Internal evidence is almost the only type ever used in testing questioned documents; it is rarely necessary to go any farther than the document itself to find enough clues to condemn it, and if the text is a long one, and an historical document in the bargain, the absolute certainty of inner contradictions is enough to assure adequate testing.<sup>19\*</sup> This makes the Book of Mormon preeminently testable, and we may list the following points on which certainty is obtainable.

1. The mere existence of the book, to follow Blass, is a powerful argument in favor of its authenticity. Without knowing a thing about LDS Church history, our stranded islander can immediately see that someone has gone to an enormous amount of trouble to make this book. Why? If the author wishes to deceive, he has chosen a strange and difficult way to do it. He has made the first move; he has magnanimously put into our hands a large and laborious text; in the introductory pages of that text, he

gives us a clear and circumstantial account of what it is supposed to be and invites us to put it to any possible test. This is not the method of a man out to deceive. We must credit him with being honest until he is proved otherwise.

2. Before he has read a word, our islander notes that the book in his hand is a big one. This is another strong argument in its favor. A forger knows that he runs a risk with every word he writes, for him brevity is the soul of success and, as we have seen, the author of such a long book could not have failed to discover what he was up against before he proceeded very far. In giving us a long book, the author forces us to concede that he is not playing tricks.

3. Almost immediately the castaway discovers that the Book of Mor-

mon is both a religious book *and* a history. This is another point in its favor, for the author could have produced a religious book claiming divine revelation without the slightest risk had he produced a *Summa Theologia* or a *Key to the Scriptures*. If one searches through the entire religious literature of the Christian ages from the time of the Apostles to the time of Joseph Smith, not one of these productions can be found to profess divine revelation aside from that derived through the reading of the scriptures. This is equally true whether one inspects the writings of the apostolic fathers, of the doctors of the Middle Ages, even the greatest of whom claim only to be making commentaries on the scriptures, or more modern religious leaders who, though they claimed enlightenment, spoke



Much study and care went into the preparation of this "ancient Hebrew inscription" near Los Lunas, New Mexico, yet a cursory glance was enough to reveal the crisp freshness of the newly-cut letters. Numerous other flaws appeared upon closer inspection. To anyone not determined to accept this inscription as genuine, it furnishes an interesting illustration of the pains to which people will go to produce a convincing-looking antique, and the impossibility of doing so without immense and laborious preparation. Yet such a forgery as this would be infinitely easier to get away with than one of Book of Mormon proportions.

\*Numbers refer to bibliography at end of each instalment.

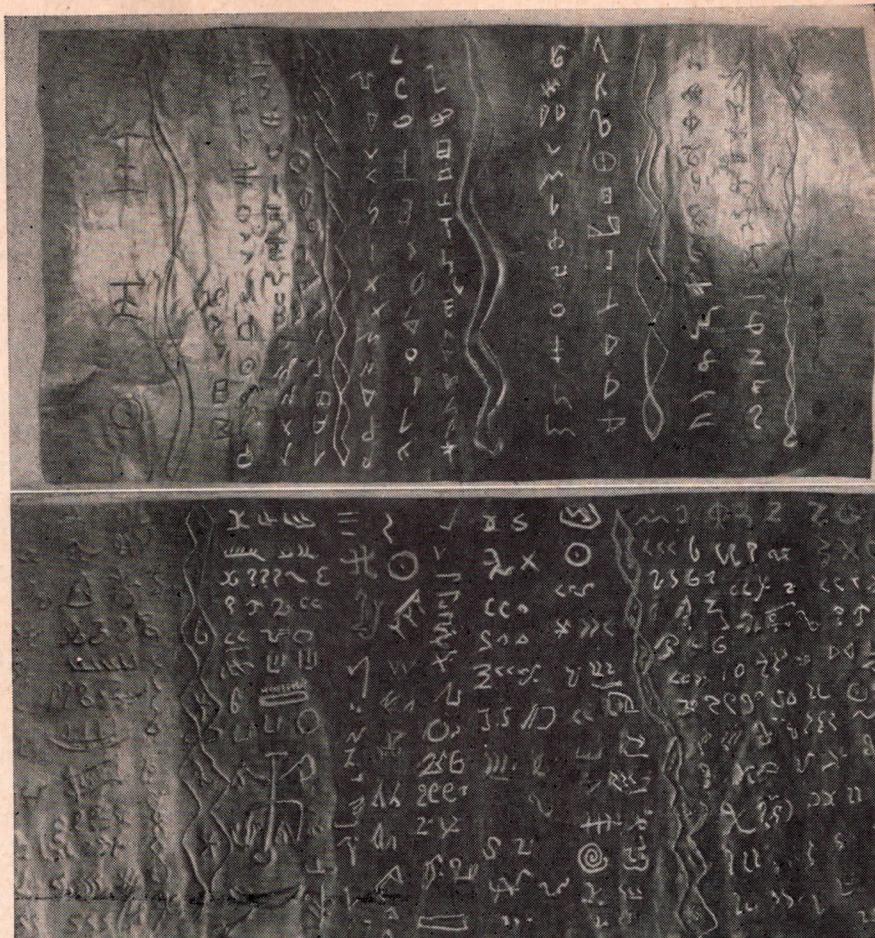
only as the scribes and Pharisees of old who, though they could quote and comment on scripture on every occasion, never dared to speak as one having authority. This writer never falls back on the accepted immunities of double meaning and religious interpretations in the manner of the Swedenborgians or the schoolmen. This refusal to claim any special privileges is an evidence of good faith.

4. Examining the book more closely, the islander is next struck by its great complexity. Doesn't the author know how risky this sort of thing is? If anyone should know, he certainly does, for he handles the intricate stuff with great understanding. Shysters may be diligent enough in their way, but the object of their trickery is to avoid hard work, and this is not the sort of laborious task they give themselves.

5. In its complexity and length lies the key to the problem of the book, for our islander, having once read Blass, remembers that *no* man on earth can falsify a history of any length without contradicting himself continually. Upon close examination all the many apparent contradictions in the Book of Mormon disappear. It passes the sure test of authenticity with flying colors.

6. Since the author must in view of all this be something of a genius, the lonely critic begins to study his work as creative writing. Here it breaks down dismally. The style is *not* that of anyone trying to write well. There is skill of a sort, but even the unscholarly would know that the frequent use of "it came to pass" does not delight the reader, and it is not biblical. Never was writing less "creative" as judged by present day standards: there is no central episode, no artistic development of a plot; one event follows another with equal emphasis in the even flow of a chronicle; the author does not "milk" dramatic situations, as every creative writer must; he takes no advantage of any of his artistic opportunities; he has no favorite characters; there is no gain in confidence or skill as the work progresses, nor on the other hand does he show any sign of getting tired or of becoming bored, as every creative writer does in a long composition: the first and last books of the Book of Mormon are among the best, and the author is going just as strong at the end as at the beginning. The

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According to Blass, there has never been a clever forgery. Much energy and ingenuity went into the production of these copper rolls, purportedly found in a cave near Luntun, Arizona, yet it was instantly apparent upon examination that they are modern fabrications. The rolls were strips of modern roofing copper of standard composition and width. There was no sign of aging or patination, though clumsy attempts had been made to achieve the effect with acid. By introducing a confusion of symbols from a number of ancient alphabets, the forger only made his trickery more apparent. Every slip required a dozen tricks to cover it up, and every one of those tricks produced a dozen more slips.

claim of the "translator" is that this book is no literary creation, and the internal evidence bears out the claim. Our critic looks at the date of the book again—1830. Where are the rich sentimentality, the incurable romanticism, and the lush but mealy rhetoric of "fine writing" in the early 1800's? Where are the fantastic imagery, the romantic descriptions, and the unflinching exaggerations that everyone expected in the literature of the time? Here is a book with all the elements of an intensely romantic adventure tale of faraway and long-ago, and the author turns down innumerable chances to please his public!

7. For the professional religionist, what John Chrysostom called "the wise economy of a useful deception," i.e. religious double talk, has been ever since his day a condition of survival and success. But there is none of this in the Book of Mormon. There are no plays on words, no rhetorical

subtleties or tricks, no reveling in abstract terms, no esoteric language or doctrine to require the trained interpreter. This is not a "mystic" text, though mysticism is the surest refuge for any religious quack who thinks he might be running a risk. The lone investigator feels the direct impact of the concrete terms; he is never in doubt as to what they mean. This is not the language of one trying to fool others or who has ever had any experience in fooling others.

8. Our examiner is struck by the limited vocabulary of the Book of Mormon. Taken in connection with the size and nature of the book, this is very significant. Whoever wrote the book must have been a very intelligent and experienced person; yet such people in 1830 did not produce books with rudimentary vocabularies. This cannot be the work of any simple clown, but neither can it be that of an able and educated contemporary.

(Continued on following page)

## NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

(Continued from preceding page)

9. The extremely limited vocabulary suggests another piece of internal evidence to the reader. The Book of Mormon never makes any attempt to be clever. This, says Blass, is a test *no forger can pass*. The Achilles' heel of the smart impostor is vanity. The man who practises fraud to gain an ascendancy and assert his superiority over others cannot forego the pleasure of enjoying that superiority. The islander does not know it, but recent attempts to account for Joseph Smith claim to discover the key to his character in an overpowering ambition to outsmart people. Why then doesn't he ever try to show how clever he is? Where are the big words and the deep mysteries? There is no cleverness in the Book of Mormon. It was not written by a deceiver.

10. Since it claims to be translated by divine power, the Book of Mormon also claims all the authority—and responsibility—of the original text. The author leaves himself no philological loopholes, though the book, stemming from a number of nations and languages, offers opportunity for many of them. It is a humble document of intensely moral tone, but it does not flinch at reporting unsavory incidents not calculated to please people who think that any mention of horror or bloodshed should be deleted from religious writing.

II. *External Evidence*:—Our islander has been rescued by a British tramp steamer. Burning with curiosity, he jumps ship in London, rushes to Great Russell Street, and bounds up the steps of the British Museum three at a time. He is now after *external* proofs for the Book of Mormon. He may spend the next forty years in the great library, but whatever external evidence he finds must fulfil three conditions:

1. The Book of Mormon must make clear and specific statements about certain concrete, objective things.

2. Other sources, ancient and modern, must make equally clear and objective statements about the same things, agreeing substantially with what the Book of Mormon says about them.

3. There must be clear proof that there has been no collusion between the two reports, i.e., that Joseph Smith could not possibly have knowledge of the source by which his account is

being "controlled" or of any other source that could give him the information contained in the Book of Mormon.

The purpose of our studies on Lehi and the Jaredites was to supply information that fulfilled these three conditions, and the purpose of the present articles is to supply yet more evidence of the same type. In criticizing such information one might classify the various items as (1) positive, (2) possible, and (3) doubtful evidence of authenticity. As positive proof, we might accept the evidence

of such authentically Egyptian names as Paanchi, Manti, and Hem, or such freakish Jaredite customs as keeping kings in comfortable imprisonment all their days, for these things are clearly described in the Book of Mormon, well established in the secular world, yet known to no one at the time the Book of Mormon came forth. As possible but not positive proof we have a good deal of evidence from the New World; the hesitation to accept this proof as final comes from the inability or reluctance of our secular experts

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### *Altering Attitudes*

*Richard L. Evans*

THERE is a profound thought in these words of William James: "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind." This is one of the great discoveries of any generation—or of any individual—and in one sense it is simply a restatement of the principle of repentance. There are times when most of us have need to alter our attitudes. There are times when the stubborn set of a mind or of a heart will drive people apart when they should come closer—and when without some honest change of attitude, there would be little possibility of improvement. Sometimes misunderstandings settle into stalemated situations because neither party will change the set of his jaw, the set of his heart, the set of his thoughts—because neither will alter his attitude. Granted that there may be grievances (and remembering also that no one is perfect), there still must be some honest altering of attitudes, some giving by someone in some degree if resentments are ever to be resolved, if personal relationships between estranged people are ever to be improved. A person may sincerely feel that it is not his place to make the first move. He may feel that it is not his place to go halfway—or any part of the way. He may sincerely feel that the fault lies wholly somewhere outside himself. But someone has to move. Someone, sometime, has to break the heartbreaking deadlocks of opposing personalities if they are ever again to be compatible. Someone has to do something if what shouldn't be is ever to be as it should be. Someone must make some move if misunderstandings are not forever to remain. To repeat the words of William James: ". . . human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes. . . ." Where something should be done, let false pride be pushed aside; let people who should not be apart move toward one another; let repentance enter the picture; let men make the most of life by honestly altering false attitudes.

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# Priesthood

authorized. They are to make full preparations for stake quarterly conferences in their respective stakes, and, under the direction of the visiting General Authority, conduct the conference sessions. And at all times they are to be subject to directions from the First Presidency and the other General Authorities.

## STAKE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD MEETINGS AND PRIESTHOOD LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

It is the policy of the Church for the stake presidencies to direct a two-hour combined monthly stake Melchizedek Priesthood meeting and priesthood leadership meeting in each stake. Exceptions to this rule are made only with the consent of the General Authorities in cases where scattered conditions in stakes make it advisable to hold these meetings no oftener than once each quarter. This monthly meeting affords the stake presidency an opportunity to meet with the priesthood quorums and transact such business as is necessary in the best interest of the priesthood program and activity of the stake; however, it should be kept in mind that this meeting does not replace the monthly quorum meetings. (See *Ibid.*, pp. 37-41.)

## STAKE AND FOREIGN MISSIONARY WORK

One of the important responsibilities of stake presidencies is to organize and direct stake missionary work and push forward vigorously that program. Stake presidents select and recommend to the First Presidency stake mission presidents who are set apart by one of the General Authorities. However, the counselors to the stake mission presidents are set apart by stake presidencies. Stake missionaries, recommended by bishoprics, are called into the service by stake presidencies, and they are to see that the missionaries are released from all other Church duties so that they may devote their full church-service time to the missionary cause. It is also

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the responsibility of stake presidencies to further the missionary program in foreign fields.

## SELECTING PERSONNEL FOR STAKE WORK

Since bishops of wards and their counselors, as well as all other stake and ward officers, are accountable to the stake presidency, the stake presidency has the right to select any person in the stake and assign him or her to do stake missionary work or to any other job. It is desirable that the stake presidency consult with the bishopric of the ward concerned when selections of persons to do stake work are made; however, bishoprics should recognize the fact that they are accountable to the stake presidency and should readily submit to the desires of their superior officers. By so doing unity will prevail throughout the stakes of Zion among the priesthood holders and officers. This will result in progression and strength in the cause of building the kingdom of God.

## USE OF HIGH COUNCILS BY STAKE PRESIDENCIES

Stake presidents are advised to make extensive use of their high

councils in supervising the various organizations and activities of their stakes. By so doing marked progress and efficiency in all the organizations of the stake will be attained; and this will result in the Saints' adhering more closely to the commandments. It is a known fact that people will readily respond to good leadership that knows in which direction it is going; and the First Presidency and its associates look to the stake presidencies to supply that leadership.

## APPRECIATION EXPRESSED TO STAKE PRESIDENCIES

The General Authorities express deep appreciation to all the stake presidencies throughout the Church for your diligent and faithful services to the cause of righteousness, and we encourage you to continue to perform your duties and to magnify your callings to the best of your abilities, endeavoring to have every organization within your stake bounds function as near to perfection as possible. If these things are done, the Saints will live more closely to the requirements of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church will continue to grow in strength, power, and righteousness. Thus, a great and marvelous work will be accomplished.

## NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

(Concluded from page 32)

to come to an agreement regarding just what they have found. Until they reach a consensus our condition number two above remains unsatisfied and the issue unsettled. Finally there are doubtful bits of evidence put forth as proof, but which were better left alone. Thus while the Book of Mormon says that mountains rose and fell during the great earthquake, the presence of the Rocky Mountains does not prove a thing, since the Book of Mormon does not pretend for a moment that mountains were never formed at any other time or in

any other way. Such "evidence" only does harm.

(To be continued)

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<sup>10</sup>Thus Housman, *op. cit.*, I, lxxv: "Now where all mss give nonsense and are therefore corrupt, those mss are to be preferred which give the worst nonsense, because they are likely to be the the least interpolated." Cf. *ibid.* V, xxxiiiiff.

<sup>20</sup>This aspect of the Book of Mormon is the subject of a thesis written by Mr. Robert K. Thomas at Reed College in 1947.

<sup>21</sup>Franklin S. Harris, Jr., *The Book of Mormon Message and Evidences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1953).

# NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

by *Hugh Nibley*

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## PART 4

*Circumstantial Evidence:* Entirely apart from the contents of the Book of Mormon and the external evidences that might support it, there are certain circumstances attending its production which cannot be explained on grounds other than those given by Joseph Smith. These may be listed briefly:

(1) There is the testimony of the witnesses. (2) The youth and inexperience of Joseph Smith at the time when he took full responsibility for the publication of the book—proof (a) that he could not have produced it himself and (b) that he was not acting for someone else, for his behavior at all times displayed astounding independence. (3) The absence of notes and sources. (4) The short time of production. (5) The fact that there was only one version of the book ever published. This is most significant. It is now known that the Koran, the only book claiming an equal amount of divine inspiration and accuracy, was completely re-edited at least three times during the lifetime of Mohammed. This brings up (6) the unhesitating and unchanging position of Joseph Smith regarding his revelations, a position that amazed Eduard Meyer more than anything else. From the day the Book of Mormon came from the press, Joseph Smith never ceased to spread it abroad, and he never changed his attitude towards it. What creative writer would not blush for the production of such youth and inexperience twenty years after? What imposter would not lie awake nights worrying about the slips and errors of this massive and pretentious product of his youthful indiscretion and roguery? Yet, since the Prophet was having revelations all along, nothing would have been easier, had he the slightest shadow of a misgiving, than to issue a new, revised, and improved edition, or to recall the book altogether, limit its circulation, claim it

consisted of mysteries to be grasped by the uninitiated alone, say it was to be interpreted only in a "religious" sense, or supersede it by something else. The Saints who believed the Prophet were the only ones who took the book seriously anyway. (7) There has never been any air of mystery about the Book of Mormon; there is no secrecy connected with it at the time of its publication or today; there is a complete lack of sophistry or policy in discussions of the Book of Mormon; it plays absolutely no role in the history of the Church as a pawn; there is never dispute about its nature or contents among the leaders of the Church; there is never any manipulating, explaining, or compromise. The book has enjoyed unlimited sale at all times. (8) Finally, though the success of the book is not proof of its divinity, the type of people it has appealed to, sincere, simple, direct, highly unhysterical and non-mystical, is circumstantial evidence for its honesty. It has very solid supporters.

The reader, using Franklin S.

Harris, Jr.'s<sup>21</sup> excellent new collection of materials, might add to these lists at his leisure. When one considers that any one of the above arguments makes it very hard to explain the Book of Mormon as a fraud, one wonders if a corresponding list of arguments against the book might not be produced. For such a list one waits with interest but in vain. At present the higher critics are scolding the Book of Mormon for not talking like the dean of a divinity school. We might as well admit it, the Victorian platitudes are simply not there, but what a fatal blow to the Book of Mormon it would be if they were!

## NEW DISCOVERIES

Until the year 1947 all ancient texts in the possession of our schools and libraries were such documents as had survived by accident. Ancient writers knew and hoped their words would be copied, as we learn from the Roman poets, but no one expected that the very paper or leather on which he was writing would survive the ages. Perhaps the most remarkable type of accidental preservation in modern times has been that of the *genizas*. *Genizas* were windowless rooms or bins connected with ancient synagogues; into these bins were thrown all old worn-out books of scripture to await a time when they could be burned with proper reverence, for since such texts contained the name of God they could not be thrown into common trash heaps or burnt with ordinary junk. Being windowless—and having little or no ventilation, the *genizas* were occa-



The photograph above shows the mountainous terrain west of Aqaba. It was through such country as this that Lehi and his people probably passed on their journey through the wilderness.

sionally walled up and forgotten, and so their precious contents—Hebrew biblical texts of many centuries ago—were preserved in safe obscurity while the Bible texts in continued use were altered again and again by various learned committees through the centuries.<sup>22</sup> The rediscovery of some of these *genizas* has shown to just what extent our Hebrew Bible has been corrupted through the years; the scholar, Paul Kahle, who has made the study of the old *geniza* texts his lifework, has been at particular pains to emphasize certain points of textual criticism which other scholars habitually overlook. One of these is the principle, which should be apparent enough, that there is only one way in which the purity of a text can possibly be preserved through long periods of time, and that is to conceal the text completely from the eyes of men. For years the experts have thought their rules could resur-

Apocrypha as described in Section 91 of the Doctrine and Covenants (1833): “. . . There are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly;

“There are many things contained therein that are not true, which are interpolations by the hands of men.

“And whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom.” (D. & C. 91:1-2, 5.) The habit of scholars right down to the present has been to accept or reject apocryphal works completely, and only since the momentous discoveries beginning in 1947 has the correctness of the Lord’s evaluation in Section 91 become fully apparent. The new documents have shown, for example, that such Apocrypha as *Jubilees* and the *Testament of the XII Patriarchs* while full of interpolations are nonetheless among the most valuable and authentic sources we have for the understanding of early Christianity.

for the present we are left to speculation.<sup>24</sup> In this, however, we may enlist the aid of a document related to the scrolls, the apocryphal Assumption of Moses (as preserved in a Latin copy of the sixth century) in which Moses before being taken up to heaven is instructed by the Lord to “seal up” the covenant: “Receive this writing that thou mayest know how to preserve the books which I shall deliver unto thee: and thou shalt set these in order and anoint them with oil of cedar and put them away in earthen vessels in the place which he made from the beginning of the creation of the world.” The purpose of this hiding, we are told, is to preserve the books through a period of darkness when men shall have fallen away from the true covenant and would pervert the truth.<sup>25</sup> In his *Chronicon*, in which Eusebius often displays a really remarkable intimacy with genuine ancient sources (e.g., Berossus and Sanchthoniathon) we learn that Noah was ordered in his day “to inscribe in writing the beginning, middle, and end of everything, and to bury the records in the city of Sippar.”<sup>26</sup>

Here we see that there was actually an ancient tradition in Israel, according to which one dispensation would hide up records to come forth in another. Now the newly found Dead Sea scrolls not only show marked affinities with the assumption of Moses, but the peculiar manner of their preservation is also exactly that prescribed to Moses: they were found in specially-made earthen jars, wrapped in linen which was “coated with wax or pitch or asphalt which proves that the scrolls were hidden in the cave for safe preservation, to be recovered and used later again.”<sup>27</sup> By whom? The peculiar method of storage also indicates very plainly that the documents were meant for a long seclusion, for the purpose of such treatment of documents is explained in the Moses text, and to lay a roll away with the scrupulous care and after the very manner of entombing an Egyptian mummy certainly indicates a long and solemn farewell and no mere temporary storage of convenience.

At any rate, we now have proof both of the tradition and practice in Israel of hiding up holy documents as the only means of conveying them in their purity to the men of another and a distant age. With this, one of

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The above photograph is taken from Aqaba looking east over the plains.

rect ancient texts in their purity, and to this day Westcott and Hort’s *New Testament in the Original Greek* is still widely used, though we now know that we shall probably never get a text of the New Testament “in the original Greek,” and it is being seriously questioned whether the original language of the New Testament was Greek at all! Only within the last few years has the true force of I Nephi 14:26 become apparent: “. . . and they are sealed up to come forth in their purity, according to the truth which is in the Lamb, in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel.” Unless documents are actually thus “sealed up,” they invariably suffer the fate of the

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To return to our original theme, the texts that have turned up with such dramatic suddenness in the last few years,<sup>23</sup> as if a signal had been given, are the first ancient documents which have survived not by accident but by design. They were hidden away on purpose, to be dug up at a later date. It is naturally assumed that during a time of danger for the sect that produced the texts, certain members in authority stored the scrolls away secretly for safe keeping until they could be used again. The intention of the hidiers may become known when some of the missing scrolls (which are still being held back by people who took them secretly from the caves) are examined, but

## New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study

(Continued from page 89)

the great stumbling blocks of Joseph Smith's story is removed, and the Book of Mormon appears as an established type of document.

One of the most interesting things about the Book of Mormon, however, was not its hiding but its metallic format. By now the discovery of writings on plates of precious metal, once the hardest thing to swallow in Joseph Smith's story, has become almost a commonplace in the Near East.<sup>28</sup> In 1950 was announced the discovery, in a greatly eroded bronze (or "brass") vessel found in the Beritz Valley, of some silver-lead plates, rectangular, 4.5 by 5 centimeters, quite thin, and entirely covered with Semitic characters, 22 lines of them, pressed into the metal with a hard, sharp object. The plates are thought to be from the late Hittite period, i.e., from about Lehi's time.<sup>29</sup> At the same time this find was announced, Dupont-Sommer described two newly-discovered sheets of gold and silver, bearing a Hebrew-Aramaic inscription of curious nature and mentioning the God of Israel. The script dates the documents from about 200 A.D. So the fabulous plates that were buried by an ancient prophet are beginning to find themselves in respectable company, and just where they should—in ancient Israel.<sup>30</sup>

(To be continued)

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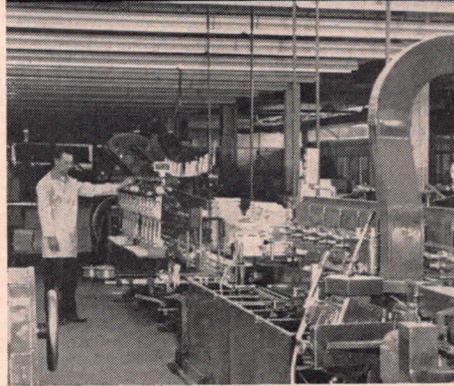
(Continued on following page)

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## New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study

(Continued from preceding page)

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## The Place of Prayer In a Modern World

(Concluded from page 83)

who were sustained by it. If our  
prayers, like theirs, are based on faith  
in and knowledge of the true God of  
heaven, if they are the product of a  
constant communion with him, and  
if our lives are living expressions of  
our righteous desires, then our  
prayers will be answered and we will  
be sustained by them. The conflicts  
between prayer and the wisdom of  
the world will disappear, and we shall  
receive the testimony of the Spirit that  
God lives and that he hears and an-  
swers our prayers.



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THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

# New Approaches to BOOK OF MORMON Study

by Dr. Hugh Nibley

PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

## PART 5

THE great argument of those who have steadfastly refused, in the face of a rising flood of evidence, to accept the antiquity and authenticity of the new Scrolls, has been that the language they contain is totally out of keeping with the language that should have been used by Jews of such an early period. Here we have pre-Christian Jews talking like the New Testament: "Echoes of New Testament thought and phraseology are clear in the Scrolls; especially those having apocalyptic associations . . ." says J. H. Roberts.<sup>31</sup> But "New Testament thought and phraseology" have always been supposed at divinity schools to be the product of a gradual and rather late evolution of the Christian community, and have no business at all appearing in pre-Christian Jewish texts! Christian language is familiar enough in old Jewish apocalypses and other texts, but "hitherto perplexed exegetes faced with such texts have usually found in them the interpolations of Christian copyists. But now . . . thanks to the *Habakkuk Commentary* (one of the scrolls), such excisions which could formerly be understood are now no longer to be tolerated; these 'Christological' passages, taken as a whole, henceforth seem to be of the greatest worth, and to continue to reject them without examination as being of Christian origin would appear to be contrary to all sound method."<sup>32</sup> The author of these words notes that "it is now certain—and this is one of the most important revelations of the Dead Sea discoveries—that Judaism in the first century B.C. saw a whole theology of the suffering Messiah, of a Messiah who should be the redeemer of the world." We even find

in the scrolls clear indication of three persons in the Godhead.<sup>33</sup>

Years ago Hermann Gunkel pointed out that a full-blown gospel of redemption and atonement was in existence among the pre-exilic Jews, but this claim, so jarring to the prevailing schools of theology which would only accept an evolutionary pattern of slow and gradual development, was strenuously resisted by the experts.<sup>34</sup> The discovery of the Scrolls has changed all that: "Now that the warning has been given," writes Dupont-Sommer, "many passages of the Old Testament itself must be examined with a fresh eye. Everywhere there is a more or less explicit question of an Anointed One or of a prophet carried off by a violent death. . . ." <sup>35</sup> It is that scholar's

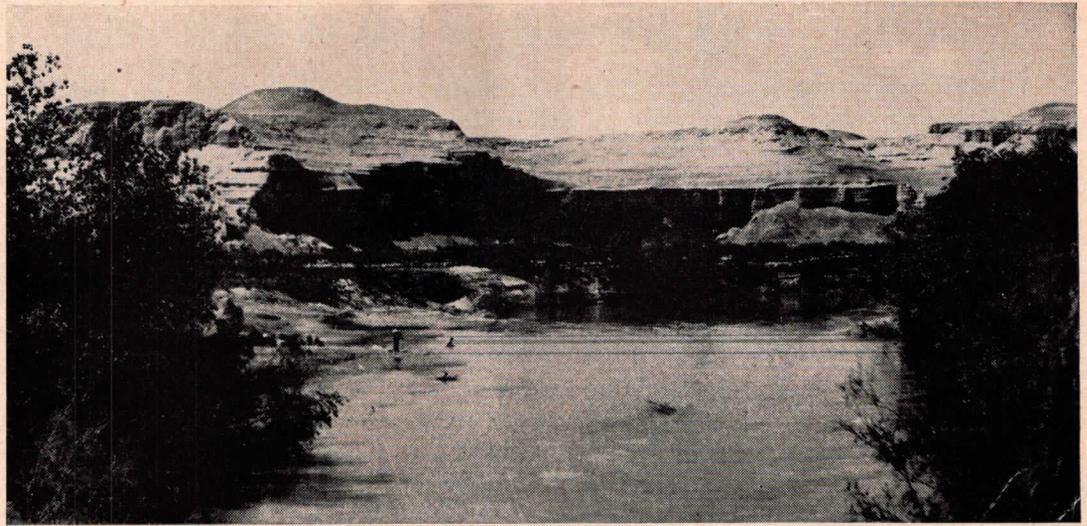
theory that a certain Master of Justice, mentioned in the scrolls as the head of a sect of the Essenes in the first century B. C., was the original pre-Christian inspiration for the Messiah idea. Yet the numerous and ubiquitous references to the Messiah in the Old Testament as in the Apocrypha claim to go back not only to pre-Christian times, but far beyond the first century B. C. as well. So if Dupont-Sommer will not tolerate the business of glibly attributing whatever in those writings betrays a Christological tone to "the interpolations of Christian copyists," neither may he attribute the same passages to interpolations of men living after the Master of Justice. The Messianic theme belongs to the oldest traditions in the world.<sup>36</sup>

The bearing of this on the Book of Mormon should be at once apparent. The words of an Alma, a Nephi, or a Helaman are replete with "echoes of New Testament thought and phraseology," just as the scrolls are; yet those prophets are all supposed to have lived long before Christ. The New Testament flavor of so much of the Book of Mormon has been until now the strongest single argument against its authenticity. Men trained in sectarian seminaries have leaned back in their armchairs and pointed to Book of Mormon phrases that according to them could have come only from a Christian—and a late Christian—environment: *ergo*, Joseph Smith had simply worked his own



Port Said, one of the gateways to the Middle East.

The River Jordan, in Palestine. It was in caves in country such as this that the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.



religious conceptions into the book, grossly ignorant as he was of the crass anachronisms they represented. An excellent example of this type of criticism appeared quite recently in the leading Jewish newspaper, *Vorwaerts*. Speaking of the Book of Mormon, a critic writes:

It is full of citations from the Old and New Testaments. . . . The small number of people who have tried to read the book declare that it is dreadfully dull; in it are found quotations from Shakespeare and other English poets. That is one of the very comical things about the book. According to the book itself, it is written in the Egyptian language of some thousands of years ago; yet in it are cited excerpts from the New Testament, a much later document, or from wholly modern poets.<sup>37</sup>

We shall deal with Shakespeare presently. As for the "other English poets," their identity remains a secret locked in the bosom of the editors of *Vorwaerts*. Since "reformed Egyptian" was being written long after New Testament times, the charges of anachronism on linguistic grounds are worthless. But the basic issue is one which is being fought out furiously today, and the apple of discord is not the Book of Mormon but the Scrolls.

That New Testament language and thought cannot possibly have been familiar to the ancient Jews is a fiercely defended axiom in some schools. Less than a year ago Solomon Zeitlin declared of the Scrolls, "The entire story of the discovery may be a *hoax*," and even if it were not, still the Scrolls "have no value for the history of the Jewish people, of the development of their ideas, or literature, or language. The so-called Manual of Discipline is a conglomeration of words. The Hebrew text makes no sense . . . it undoubtedly

was written by an uneducated Jew of the Middle Ages."<sup>38</sup> How strangely like the conventional criticism of the Book of Mormon this reads! Yet here we have to do with texts which the ablest scholars of our time have declared to be not only genuine, but also the most important discovery ever made in Biblical archaeology! How is such disagreement possible among the doctors in the face of so much evidence? Paul Kahle has discoursed at length on the incredible stubbornness and self-will of the best religious scholars when they make up their minds on a subject. One expert now decides that the Scrolls are a Kurdish production of the twelfth century A.D.<sup>39</sup> On what does he base this remarkable deduction? On certain details of literary style! But what of the other evidence, such as the fact that "not a single medieval manuscript exhibits the same script as the Scrolls"?<sup>40</sup> That is simply ignored. The scholars who maintain that the Scrolls are medieval "accord preferential treatment to the evidence supplied by the . . . literary and linguistic relations between the Scrolls" and other medieval documents, according to Teicher, while on the other hand "the archaeologists and palaeographers . . . set *their* feet on what they consider to be the firm ground of their palaeographic and archaeological evidence and reject airily the literary and linguistic evidence."<sup>41</sup> As an illustration, "to maintain, as Dr. Weis does, that 'the examination of the Habakkuk Scroll suggests that it was written about the year 1096 by an Isawite or a Judganite,' is, in view of the archaeological and palaeological evidence alone, simply impossible."<sup>42</sup>

It is because it has been judged in the light of certain fundamental preconceptions about the nature of Jewish and Christian history that the Book of Mormon has been held to be a mass of crude anachronisms. Today the finding of the Scrolls shows these fundamental preconceptions to have been quite false: "Everything is now changed," writes Dupont-Sommer, "and all the problems relative to primitive Christianity—problems earnestly examined for so many centuries—all these problems henceforth find themselves placed in a new light, which forces us to reconsider them completely. . . . It is not a *single* revolution in the study of biblical exegesis which the Dead Sea documents have brought about; it is, one already feels, a whole cascade of revolutions."<sup>43</sup> Recently a leading English liberal clergyman has declared that in order to support the accepted viewpoints he and his fellows have been under constant strain "of having to contort his (Christ's) message, ignoring a considerable portion of it and making unwarranted deductions from other parts, to suit our preconceptions"; the confession of this folly and the acceptance of literal interpretations in place of what he calls the "liberal, ameliorist, social-gospel" view, "gives a sense of relief, of illumination, of enlargement."<sup>44</sup>

Such changing points of view, largely the result of the new discoveries, are very significant for Book of Mormon study. Their immediate result is to show for the first time on what extremely flimsy groundwork criticism of the Book of Mormon has rested in the past. Recently the

(Continued on following page)

## NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

(Continued from preceding page)

writer has been taken to task for dealing somewhat roughly with the conventional commentators on Ezekiel. It is therefore with considerable complacency that he can now point to W. A. Irwin's very recent study on Ezekiel research between 1943 and 1953, in which that scholar after a thorough investigation can announce that in spite of the diligence and number of the researchers, "not a single scholar has succeeded in convincing his colleagues of the finality of his analysis of so much as *one* passage!"<sup>45</sup> Though the experts propound wildly varying views—some having Ezekiel flourishing in Palestine in 400 B.C., while Messel dates his call, with great exactness at 593 B.C.—none of them bothers to submit the evidence for his claims: "It is unfortunate," says Irwin, after a careful survey of the whole field, "that none of these scholars argued his position. We concede readily that they had weighty reasons for their views, but as matters stand, they have given only opinions, when the situation cries aloud for assembling of evidence and for close-knit argument."<sup>46</sup> Every Ezekiel scholar, according to Irwin, follows "the method that is far too frequent in Old Testament criticism, that of presenting a plausible story as final evidence in a case, when in reality it is not evidence at all."<sup>47</sup> The result of this is that "as soon as one pushes beyond the general admission of spurious matter in the book, and seeks to identify it, he is at once plunged into confusion and chaos not one whit relieved through these years. Still worse, there is no clearly emerging recognition of a sound method by which to assault this prime problem. Every scholar goes his own way, and according to his private predilection chooses what is genuine and what is secondary in the book; and the figure and work of Ezekiel still dwell in thick darkness."<sup>48</sup> Can we expect the Book of Mormon to enjoy unprejudiced and objective criticism when such treatment is accorded the Bible?

Any "Christological" elements in the Book of Mormon must have taken their rise not merely in pre-Christian times but in that world to which the Nephites must ultimately trace all their Israelitish traditions, the Jeru-

salem of 600 B.C. Now there is much to indicate that that period was one of those times when great emphasis was being laid on the Messianic doctrine.<sup>49</sup> One leaving Jerusalem at that time would take with him a powerfully prophetic religion, undamaged by the centuries of learned exposition and rationalization which were to make the Jewish religion a product of schools and committees.<sup>50</sup> The whole treatment of the Messianic tradition and the mission of Israel in the Book of Mormon is of a piece not with the demonstrations and *sententiae* of the doctors nor with the flights of the mystics, but with the systematic and traditional exposition which we find in the Scrolls and Apocrypha. Both in the Old World and the New we are led into a pool of common ideas and terms centering about the Messianic concept.

"In every age," writes Guerrier, discussing parallels in early Christian papyri, "and especially where religious matter is concerned, there has circulated in a more or less extensive area (of the Near East) a certain fund of ideas and formulas, exact or inexact, which have been employed everywhere, and it is not always easy to discover their origin." As a result, he says, we find parallels everywhere, without being able to trace them to any single doctrine or document as a source; for example, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, though pre-Christian and non-Christian, is thoroughly typical of genuine early Christian writing.<sup>51</sup> We need not be surprised if striking but common ideas cannot be run down to their sources, for from the very beginning borrowing has been general and universal in the East: "as soon as a book was completed, its life ended. . . . There was no idea in those times of authorship. . . . a book was nobody's property. It belonged to everyone."<sup>52</sup> Texts far more ancient than the Scrolls, now read with a new understanding, show us how all through the ages the same ideas and even the same expressions have been current with regard to an expected Messiah.<sup>53</sup> But in particular there have always been special groups of pious people, separating themselves from the main body of Israel to prepare in a most particular way for the coming

of the Lord, and thereby incurring the mockery, wrath, and persecution of the society as a whole, under the leadership of conservative priests.<sup>54</sup> This situation is indicated in the Scrolls and also in the Lachish letters, which are contemporaneous with Lehi.<sup>55</sup> It is tersely and finely described in the Book of Mormon as well: "Our father Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem because he testified of these things. Nephi also testified of these things, and also almost all of our fathers, even down to this time; yea, they have testified of the coming of Christ, and have looked forward, and have rejoiced in his day which is to come." (Helaman 8:22.) Here we are told that the situation in the Old World persisted in the New World, and what the Book of Mormon describes—pious separatist groups living in a religion of expectation, suffering persecution and moving into the "wilderness" from time to time under inspired leaders, who often visit royal courts and cities on dangerous missionary assignments—is precisely the picture that is beginning to emerge in the Old World.

With the finding of the Scrolls it becomes apparent that large sections of the Book of Mormon (e.g., in Jacob, Alma, Helaman, etc.) are actually specimens of a very peculiar literary style that would be exceedingly difficult to forge at any time. It is still too early for a definitive study of the problem, and the whole question of ancient *non-Biblical* literary types in the Book of Mormon has hardly been scratched. But the first step in such an investigation has already been made by capable researchers who have attempted to expose the Book of Mormon as a typical modern American fabrication. Now it takes no great genius to discover that the Book of Mormon first appeared in western New York in the early nineteenth century: that is a given quantity. What the literary savant must show us is that it is a *typical* production of its environment—that there were many, many other writings just like the Book of Mormon being produced in the world of Joseph Smith. If that is asking too much, let the experts furnish but *one* other example of such a book. It will not do merely to point to any text

(Continued on page 170)

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

## NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

(Continued from page 150)

using "thee" and "thou," or to any work that mentions the lost tribes or a possible Hebrew origin for the Indians or ancient wars and migrations—what we must have is a book that is something like the Book of Mormon, which resembles it in form and structure, and not merely in casual and far-fetched parallels of detail such as abound in all literature. It is not enough to observe that "Lehi" sounds like "Lehigh" or that a man was murdered on the shores of Lake Erie in Joseph Smith's day—nothing is proved by such silly parallels. The Bible will not do, either, for the Bible was not written in western New York in the early nineteenth century. If we can find a book written in imitation of the Bible, that will do for our point of departure—but even for such a book we search in vain.

The Book of Mormon like the Bible is an organic whole. We are asking the literary experts to produce just one modern work which resembles it as such. There are, we believe, plenty of *ancient* parallels, but if the Book of Mormon is a fraud, a cheat, a copy, a theft, etc., as people have said it is, we have every right to ask for a sampling of the abundant and obvious sources from which it was taken. Smith's *View of the Indians* is no more like the Book of Mormon than a telephone directory. All attempts to find contemporary works which the Book of Mormon even remotely resembles have been conspicuous failures. So it has been necessary to explain the book as a work of pure and absolute fiction, a non-religious, money-making romance. But one need only read a page of the book at random to see that it is a religious book through and through, and one need only read the title page of the first edition to see that it is given to the world as holy scripture, no less. Here we come to the crux of the whole matter.

The whole force and meaning of the Book of Mormon rests on one proposition: that it is true. It was written and published to be believed.

People who believe the Book of Mormon (and the writer is one of them) think it is the most wonderful document in the world. But if it were not true, the writer could not imagine a more dismal performance.

There is nothing paradoxical in this. As Aristotle noted, the better a thing is, the more depraved is a spurious imitation of it. An imitation nursery rhyme may be almost as good as an original, but a knowingly faked mathematical equation would be the abomination of desolation. Curves and equations derive all their value not from the hard work they represent or the neatness with which they are presented on paper, but from one fact alone—the fact that they speak the truth and communicate valid knowledge. Without that they are less than nothing. To those who understand and believe that  $E = mc^2$ \* that statement is a revelation of power; to those who do not understand or believe it (and there are many!) it is nothing short of an insolent and blasphemous fraud. So it is with the Book of Mormon, which if believed is a revelation of power, but otherwise is a nonsensical jumble. "Surely," wrote Sir Richard Burton, "there never was a book so thoroughly dull and heavy; it is as monotonous as a sage-prairie."

It will be said that this merely proves that the greatness of the Book of Mormon lies entirely in the mind of the reader. Not entirely! There are people who loathe Bach and can't stand Beethoven; it was once as popular among clever and educated people to disdain Homer and Shakespeare as barbaric as it is now proper to rhapsodize about them in great books clubs. Different readers react differently to these things—but they must have something valid to work on. We are not laying down rules for taste or saying that the Book of Mormon is good because some people like it or bad because others do not. What we are saying is that the Book of Mormon, whatever one may think of it, is one of the great realities of our time, and that what makes it so is that certain people believe it. Its literary or artistic qualities do not enter into the discussion: It was written to be believed. Its one and only merit is truth. Without that merit, it is all that non-believers say it is. With the merit it is all that believers say it is. And we must insist on this

truism because it supplies a valuable clue to the authorship of the book.

(To be continued)

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<sup>32</sup>Dupont-Sommer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 95.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>34</sup>Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>36</sup>H. Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des Neuen Testaments* (1903). Though Gunkel became the founder of a "school," the consensus went against him, and in his latest book, *Christian Beginnings*, Burkitt writes (p. 27): "Christians have been too apt in the past to assume that there already existed among the Jews a fairly definite and uniform conception of the Messiah who was expected to come. That indeed is a notion presupposed in many Christian documents . . . but it is not borne out by a study of Jewish literature." If anything, conventional Jewry has been opposed to the idea, but the Scrolls and sects among the Jews show it flourishing among the more pious element all along.

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<sup>40</sup>Zeitlin, "The Hebrew Pogran and the Hebrew Scrolls," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, XLII (1952), p. 146f.

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<sup>42</sup>J. L. Teicher, "The Dead Sea Scrolls—Documents of the Jewish Christian Sect of Ebionites," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, II (1951), p. 69.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>45</sup>Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 96.

<sup>46</sup>F. A. M. Spencer, in *The Church Quarterly Review*, CXXVI (1938), p. 18.

<sup>47</sup>W. A. Irwin, in *Vetus Testamentum*, III (1953), p. 62.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>51</sup>Von Gall, *op. cit.*, pp. 65ff., 164ff.

<sup>52</sup>The process of "intellectualizing" the message of the prophets is well illustrated by the Talmud, see Chap. XIII of M. Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud* (Chicago, 1894).

<sup>53</sup>L. Guerrier, in *Patrologia Orientalis* IX.3, p. 148f.

<sup>54</sup>E. Chiera, *They Wrote on Clay* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 133.

<sup>55</sup>*Supra*, n. 36 and following note below.

<sup>56</sup>For an extensive study of these groups, Robert Eisler, *Iesus Basileus ou Basileusas* (Heidelberg, 1930), II, Sections V-X.

<sup>57</sup>Jeremiah seems to have been the leader of the opposition to the government party, to judge by the Lachish Letters; see sources cited in *Lehi in the Desert*, pp. 5-13.

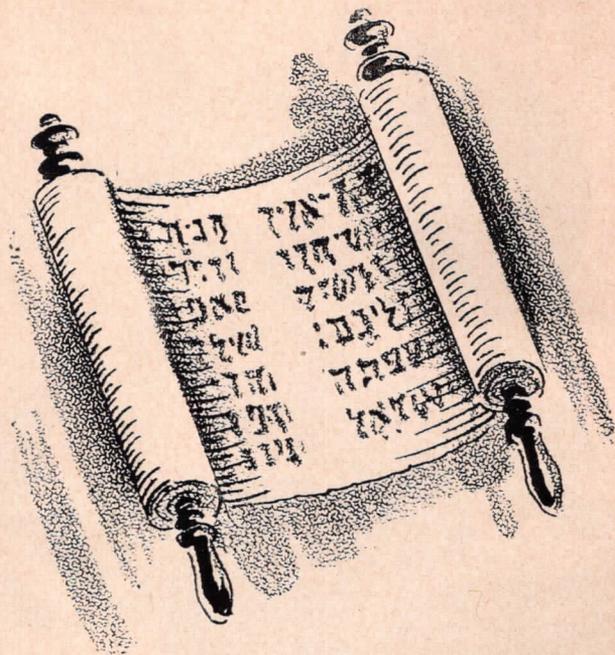
\*Einstein equation:  
E = energy in each particle of matter  
m = mass or weight of matter  
c = the speed of light  
2 = the squaring of the number.

# New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study

by Dr. Hugh Nibley

PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Part 6



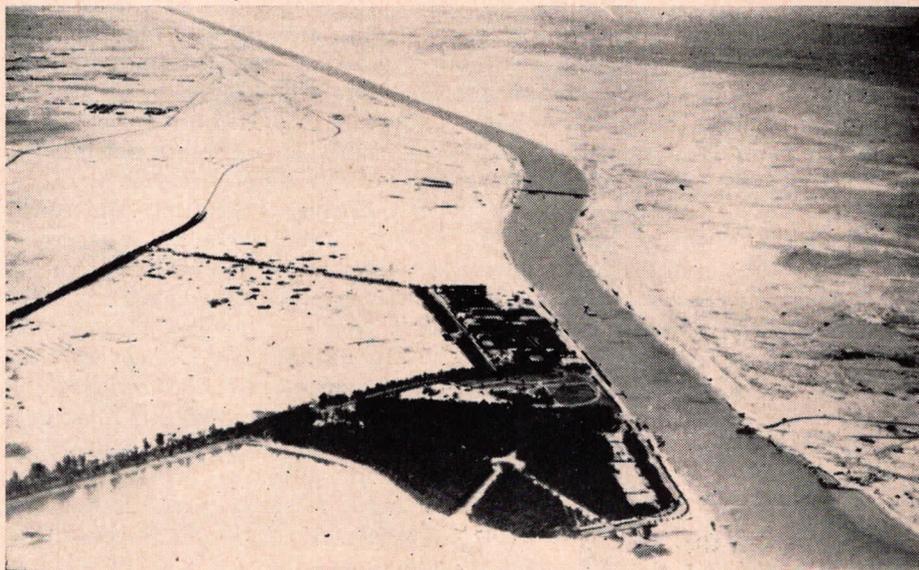
JOSEPH SMITH wanted only one thing of the Book of Mormon—that people should believe it. The story never sold well and only made trouble for the “author.” Those who believed he was a prophet would have believed him just as much without the Book of Mormon. His enemies would have had far less against him—the Book of Mormon might even be called his undoing. From the day he received the plates it gave him only trouble and pain.

But leave Joseph Smith out of it. Whoever wrote the Book of Mormon wanted before all else that people should believe in it. But what could any impostor gain by that? A deceiver would want people to buy the book, and would write a book that would sell—what concern of his whether anyone *believed* it or not? That rules out anyone but Joseph Smith as the author, for his case only was strengthened by such belief. As for a minister such as Spaulding or Sidney Rigdon producing it, that is completely out of the question once we appreciate the immense emphasis laid by the Book of Mormon itself on being believed, for what greater outrage or deadlier risk could a minister of the gospel run than that of forging scripture? Did Spaulding’s heirs ever think of the terrible crime with which they were charging him? They asked the world to imagine the venerable divine in the presence of his attentive loved one reeling off a recitation of his own composition which, if not genuine, could only be the grossest blasphemy!

Again, we are forced back onto the old dilemma. Joseph Smith was either the fantastic, preposterous, implausible (jinni) genie his enemies describe—perpetrating the most monstrous crimes ever conceived by man with a clear countenance and sunny disposition, performing prodigies of labor for no reward but danger and contempt, engineering the most fiendishly cunning, criminal operations completely without motive—or else he was telling the truth. There is no middle way, for the Book of Mormon was given to the world as scripture, to be believed in the most literal sense. It is that aspect of it which gives us the key to the book’s authorship. One can imagine all sorts of

things, but one cannot imagine any inhabitant of this planet composing just this type of book in the nineteenth century. It is to other ages that we must turn for the prototypes of the Book of Mormon.

Among the Scrolls is a great “Hymn of Thanksgiving,” a literary composition of real merit yet one which contains hardly a single original line! “These songs are as if woven from quotations from the Old Testament. . . . The style closely imitates that of the Psalms and other poetic writings of the Old Testament. Biblical reminiscences abound . . . quotations shine out at every moment.”<sup>56</sup> This poetry illustrates the use of set and hallowed expressions



The historic town and port of Suez is two miles north of the southern terminus of the Suez Canal.

in religious writing to convey ancient and eternal ideas: the employment of stereotyped phrases is not a sign of mental weakness here, but actually of artistic skill. If the Book of Mormon actually comes from the Old World religious milieu with which it identifies itself, it also should resort often to set and accepted forms of expression, and the last thing we should expect to find in it would be gropings for original means of expression. And this is what, to the distress of modern literary critics, we do find.

An interesting phenomenon, announced by D. W. Thomas in 1950, supplies an important commentary on the Old World background to the Book of Mormon. It can be shown from the Lachish *ostraca* (discovered in 1935 and, up until the finding of the Scrolls, "the most important find ever made in Biblical archaeology"), "that our Hebrew Bible bears upon it the stamp of the dialect of Judah current about the sixth century B.C."<sup>57</sup> This can only mean that *our* text of the Old Testament comes from about the time of Lehi and closely resembles the Bible he used—for otherwise the details of the particular dialect of his time and place could not possibly predominate in the text. That being the case, the close—though not slavish—adherence of Old Testament quotations in the Book of Mormon to the style of our own Bible need not be regarded as a suspicious circumstance. If the least be said for it, this is a fortunate coincidence for the Book of Mormon, for though of course it does not prove the correctness of the book, it does prove that the Nephite scripture is not guilty of anachronism when it quotes the prophets in words that seem to be taken from our own version of the Bible.

The Book of Mormon passage most often attacked as evidence of fraud is the statement in Ether that "... faith is things which are hoped for and not seen." (Ether 12:6.) The natural impulse is to detect in the verse an obvious distortion of Hebrews 11:1, but wouldn't Joseph Smith while translating the Book of Mormon have had the same idea? A basic principle of textual criticism is that impostors always avoid *obvious* pitfalls, and when they make crude blunders, it is because of ignorance and oversight—but the Prophet was

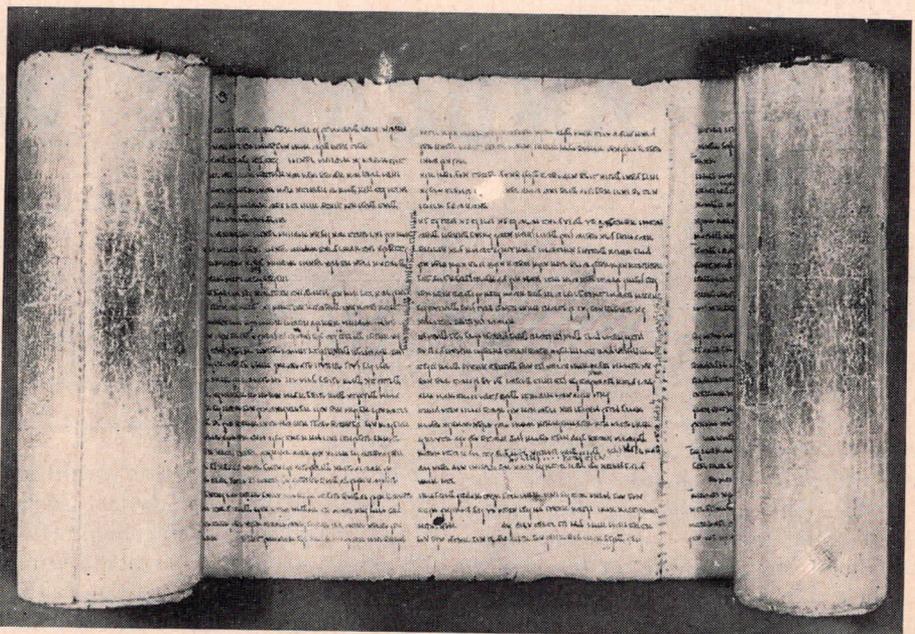
APRIL 1954

not ignorant of the scriptural parallel, nor can he have overlooked it. "There is nothing easier," says Blass, "than to argue from contacts and resemblances that a text is spurious," and he reminds us that, since parallel passages are *extremely* common in literature, to view even close parallels as a proof of fraud is a very uncritical practice.<sup>58</sup> In the present case, however, it is hard to see how Moroni could have avoided speaking like Paul, since they are both discussing the same limited concept from the same traditional point of view. In the chapter in which the passage occurs, the word *faith* is used no fewer than twenty-six times, for this is Moroni's great treatise on faith. What word did he use? Surely the classic *amn* was the root, for it is used in all Semitic languages as in Egyptian to express the basic ideas of "faith," (1) loyalty or firmness, and (2) expectation.<sup>59</sup> Both these ideas are clearly expressed in the best-known of all Semitic words, our own "Amen."<sup>59</sup> This is rendered in the Septuagint by *genoito*, a simple optative expressing hope: "May it come to pass!" Faith, in the direct and concrete language of the Semites, is *something* hoped for: the Arab has no abstract word for "faith" as we do, but instead uses a number of terms all meaning "something in the mind," "something imagined or wished."<sup>60</sup> What else could Moroni have said if he used any Semitic (or Egyptian)

word for *faith*, except that it was the things we hope for?

If faith is the keynote of Moroni's whole commentary on the Book of Ether, it is also the keynote of the Messianic religion, which was before all things a religion of hope. We have noted above that the Scrolls, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament speak a common language wherever they have "apocalyptic associations." The Book of Hebrews, aside from being the most baffling and mysterious piece in all the scriptures, is also the most apocalyptic, and the eleventh chapter is the nucleus of the whole thing; it runs, in the Apocryphal tradition, through the list of the "elders" of each of the ancient dispensations—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Christ, showing how each lived by faith and so received things from heaven. In the same way, Moroni reviews the world's history in terms of faith, showing that men must live by faith in the hope for things to come. And in the same way all the Apocrypha, a huge and very ancient literature—far older than Paul or Moroni—treat of this, their standard theme.<sup>60a</sup> Since all these writers have the same conception of history, religion, and politics, is it surprising that they should have the same ideas about faith, the cornerstone of the whole doctrine? The Scrolls and Apocrypha are just beginning to show us what the Book of Mormon describes so fully and so

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The Isaiah Scroll, found by Bedouin during the summer of 1947 in a cave near the north end of the Dead Sea.

## NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

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well—the complete engrossment of the righteous folk of Israel in a religion of expectation.

The only rival of the “faith-is-things-which-are-hoped-for” passage as a target for critics is Lehi’s description of himself as one “. . . whose limbs ye must soon lay down in the cold and silent grave, from whence no traveler can return.” (II Nephi 1:4.) This is the passage—the lone passage—that has inspired those scathing descriptions of the Book of Mormon as a mass of stolen quotations from “Shakespeare and other English poets.” Lehi does not quote Hamlet directly, to be sure, for he does not talk of “that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveler returns,” but simply speaks of “the cold and silent grave, from whence no traveler can return.” In mentioning the grave, the eloquent old man cannot resist the inevitable “cold and silent,” nor the equally inevitable tag about the traveler—a tag so inevitable that not only Shakespeare but also Lehi’s own contemporaries made constant use of it!

Long ago Friedrich Delitzsch wrote a classic work on the Babylonian and Assyrian, i.e., the common Near Eastern, ideas about death and the beyond. And what was the title of his book? *Das Land ohne Heimkehr*—“The Land of No Return.”<sup>61</sup> In the story of Ishtar’s descent to the underworld, the lady goes to the *irsit la tari*, “the land of no return,” (where *tari* may be the same root as that used in our own “re-turn,”), she visits “the dark house from which no one ever comes out again,” and travels along “the road on which there is no turning back.”<sup>62</sup> Someone is plagiarizing like mad, for these are the most obvious variations on the Hamlet theme—even more obvious than Lehi’s! Recently Tallquist has made a thorough study of Sumerian and Akkadian names for the world of the dead; conspicuous among these are “the hole, the earth, the land of no return, the city of no return, the path of no turning back, the road whose course never turns back, the distant land, the steppe, the desert, etc.”<sup>63</sup> Shakespeare should sue. In *Lehi in the Desert* we had occasion to note more than once that Lehi loved poetic discourse and high-flown speech, was

proud of his sound literary education, and was much given to recitation. Since custom sanctioned and expected the use of such terms as he employed in speaking of the grave, it is hard to deny him the luxury of speaking as he was supposed to speak. Especially significant is the fact that the ideas to which the aged Lehi here gives such moving expression by no means reflect either his own, (or Mormon’s, or Joseph Smith’s!) ideas as to what the after-life is really like. That shows that he is indulging in a strictly conventional and normal bit of educated eloquence, as old men are wont to. If he had a weakness for paraphrasing Hamlet’s soliloquy when speaking about death, so did all his contemporaries!

Speaking of Lehi’s poetry, we should not overlook the latest study on the qasida, that of Alfred Bloch, who distinguishes four types of verse in the earliest desert poetry: (1) the *ragaz*-utterances to accompany any rhythmical work, (2) verses for instruction or information, (3) elegies, specializing in sage reflections on the meaning of life, and (4) *Reiselieder* recited on a journey to make the experience more pleasant and edifying.<sup>64</sup> Lehi’s qasida, (I Ne. 2:9-10), as we described it in *Lehi in the Desert*, conforms neatly to any of the last three of these types, thus vindicating its claims to be genuine. The same verses may also be described as *saj*, a type of “rhymed prose,” according to Nicholson, “which . . . originally had a deeper, almost religious significance as the special form adopted by poets, soothsayers, and the like in their supernatural revelations and for conveying to the vulgar every kind of mysterious and esoteric lore.”<sup>65</sup>

The most characteristic mark of Apocryphal literature is the constant use of stereotyped imagery—the tower, the vineyard, the kingdom, etc.—to convey familiar and venerable ideas. This same characteristic is conspicuous in Book of Mormon writers of the early period, i.e., those who were educated in the Old World or were brought up by those who were. Lehi himself is much given to allegorical discourse and his dreams are full of striking imagery; but to his son Jacob goes the prize for the longest and most involved parable in

the book. It has to do with repeated visits of the lord of an estate to his vineyard and reminds us that Deissmann showed that the *Parousia* of a governor or estate-owner, a term employed in New Testament times and in the Apocrypha to describe the visits of the Lord to this earth, is not of Christian origin at all. Both the word and the institution are a conspicuous part of the economy of the Near East throughout ancient times,<sup>66</sup> but this was not known until Deissmann’s studies in the present century.

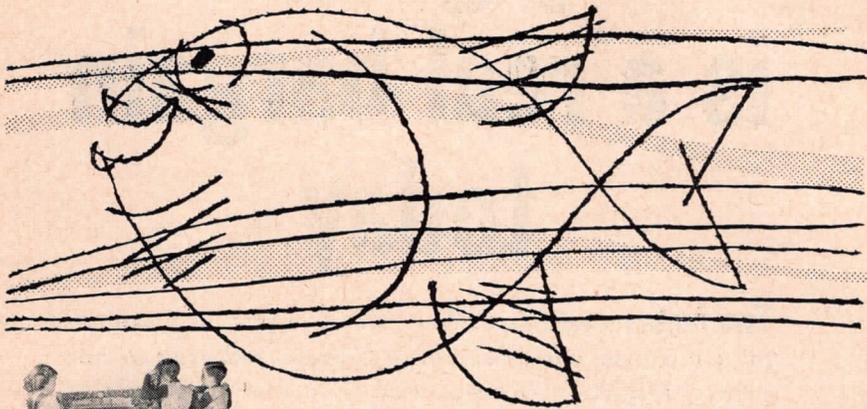
Another Book of Mormon custom on which the discovery of the Scrolls has thrown brilliant light is what might be called the cult of the banner. A text designated by the modern title of “The Rule of Battle for the Sons of Light” shows that the Jews shared with other people of antiquity “a mystical conception of war,” according to which the carnage of the battlefield was “a sacred act” surrounded by definite ritual.<sup>67</sup>

The document in question contains special instructions for the Children of the Covenant on the marshalling of the hosts for war: “On the great ensign placed at the head of all the army shall be inscribed: ‘Army of God’ together with the name of ‘Israel and Aaron’ and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. On the ensign of the thousand group shall be inscribed: ‘Wrath of God, full of anger, against Belial and all the people of his party, without any survivors.’ On the ensign of the hundred group shall be inscribed: ‘From God comes the energy to fight against all sinful flesh.’” Other inscriptions are given for the other military units, all of them more or less lengthy and proclaiming some inspiring principle or program to guide the hosts, and there are special inscriptions for entering battle, engaging in battle, and returning from battle.<sup>68</sup>

The flag is an Asiatic invention,<sup>69</sup> and there is a very ancient legend of how in the beginning when Iran was under the rule of the serpent, a blacksmith named Kawe put his leather apron upon a pole, and “that was the flag of Iranian independence, which, under the name of *dirafsh-i-kawiyani* (Flag of Kawe) remained the national standard down to the time of the Arab conquest.” To lead

(Continued on page 248)

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**New Approaches to Book  
of Mormon Study**

(Continued from page 246)

the nation under its new flag of liberation the hero Threataona was raised up in the mountains.<sup>70</sup> This Threataona is a doublet of King Cyrus, founder of the Persian nation, who holds such a high and holy place in Jewish tradition that he is next to Solomon alone the holiest of kings.<sup>71</sup>

Turning now to the Book of Mormon, we read how "... it came to pass that he (Moroni) rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole. . . . and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat, (and he called it the title of liberty).” All who followed Moroni on that occasion entered into a solemn covenant, and once Moroni gained the upper hand, "... whomsoever . . . would not enter into a covenant to support the cause of freedom . . . he caused to be put to death.” (Alma 46:12-13, 35.) The surprising savagery and peculiarly Old-World concepts of "liberty" are matched perfectly in the special instructions to leaders in the "Rule of Battle" Scroll. These leaders are priests, whose duty before the battle is to turn towards the enemy, denounce them as a "congregation of wickedness," and formally dedicate them to destruction. Their song of triumph, "woven entirely of biblical texts," has a fierce and Asiatic ring: "... bring the riches of the nations into Thy dwelling! And may their kings serve Thee, and may all Thine oppressors prostrate themselves before Thee, and may they lick (the dust) from Thy feet!"<sup>72</sup> However harsh and unsympathetic Moroni's character may appear to the modern reader, he is a true child of ancient Israel.

The parallels between the Nephite and Old World practices deserve comment. The case of Kawe is not beside the point here, for it has long been recognized by all scholars in the field that there are numerous and clear affinities between old Persian traditions and Jewish eschatological lore—and Kawe is at the heart of the religion of the Magi, his banner being the holiest symbol of their

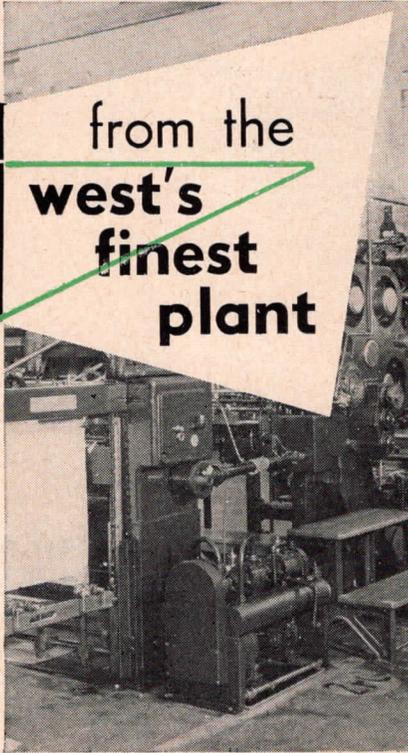
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priesthood.<sup>73</sup> The identity of Kawe with Cyrus, the darling of the Jewish doctors, is enough in itself to justify referring to his story. The fact that we are dealing with false priesthoods does not obscure the significance of traditional institutions: (1) the garment as a banner, (2) the long sermonizing inscription on it, (3) the idealistic program of liberation proclaimed by the banner, (4) the ritual condemnation of all opponents to death as children of darkness. These are now known to be widespread concepts in the ancient world, but the discovery is recent.<sup>74</sup> What makes the Book of Mormon version particularly significant is the fact that Moroni himself draws the dramatic idea of the "title of liberty" directly from the Old World pool when he attributes the inspiration of the banner not to his own invention but to the teachings of the ancient Jacob, Lehi's son, who, as we have just noted, was steeped in Old World lore and tradition, and when he informs his followers that they are following in the footsteps of their ancestor Joseph in rending their garments even as his garment was rent. (See Alma 46:24.) It is clear that the whole episode of the flag of liberty was consciously carried out in the spirit of the ancients, and that story, which might have been taken as pure fantasy up until about five years ago, is now substantiated by the discovery of the "Rule of Battle" Scroll.

The position of First Nephi on things Egyptian receives confirmation from day to day. In 1949 Couroyer published a study in which he pointed out many notable parallels and a few points of contrast between Egyptian and Israelitish literature insofar as they deal with the subject of the Way of Life, a theme of great prominence in both literatures and a common bond between them.<sup>75</sup> Lehi, it will be recalled, was obsessed, dreaming and waking, by the concept of life as a way and a journey. Recently A. Mallon has declared that there is evidence for close and continual contact between Egyptian and Hebrew culture not only in Hebrew and Egyptian names (the proper names in the Book of Mormon are split about half and half) but also in the peculiar role that dreams played among both peoples.<sup>76</sup> The long duration and remarkable constancy of relationships

(Continued on following page)

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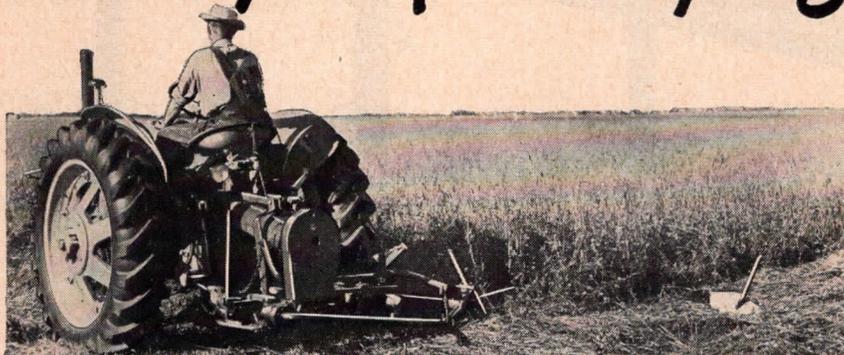
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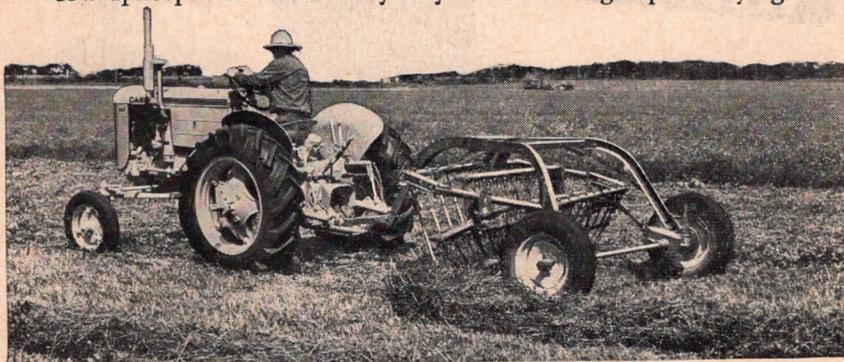


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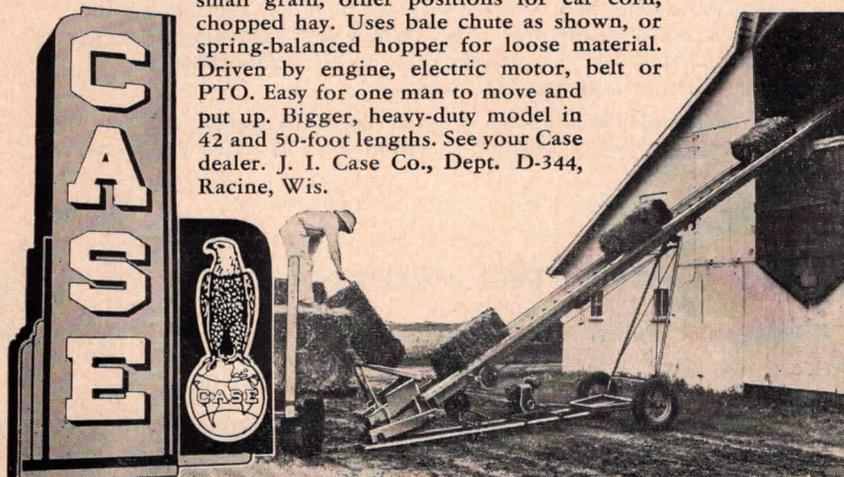


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## New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study

(Continued from preceding page)

between Egypt and the Hebrews becomes plainer every day. Very recently Rowton has shown how the Exodus followed upon a period of Semitic domination in Egypt, and argued that what prevented the occupation of Palestine by the Children of Israel was an Egyptian occupation of that country.<sup>77</sup> So we find the people of these two cultures constantly trespassing on each other's lands.<sup>77</sup> In his latest work, V. Gordon Childe describes the nature of the normal bond between Egypt and Palestine: "Native Giblete clerks were apparently trained in Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. In exchange for the cedars of Lebanon and perhaps olives and dyes, the Gibletes received and adopted elements of Egyptian civilization, including writing and all that that implied, as well as manufactured articles and corn. They remained a friendly but independent civilized community."<sup>78</sup> Long and intimate ties of commercial and cultural rather than political and military nature are what is indicated by recent excavations, and that is precisely the background of Lehi's world as the Book of Mormon describes it.

(To be continued)

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<sup>77</sup>D. Winston Thomas, in *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1950, p. 4. Both quotations are from Thomas.  
<sup>78</sup>Blass, *op. cit.*, p. 292.  
<sup>79</sup>A. E. Silverstone, "God as King," *Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society*, XVII (1932), p. 47, on the Rabbinical interpretation of AMEN, with Mes-sianic connotations.  
<sup>80</sup>The oldest Semitic version of Hebrews 11:1, the Syriac, employs the word *haimanutha*, from the conventional AMN root.  
<sup>81</sup>When Paul himself speaks of Apocryphal matters, his writing "is nothing but a tissue of ancient prophetic formulas, borrowed ready-made," according to Denis Buzy, "L'Adversaire et l'Obstacle," *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, XXIV (1934), p. 409.  
<sup>82</sup>F. Delitzsch, *Das Land ohne Heimkehr. Die Gedanken der Bab.-Assyrer ueber Tod und Jenseits* (Stuttgart, 1911).  
<sup>83</sup>P. Jensen, *Assyrisch-babylonische Mythen und Epen* (Berlin, 1901), p. 50.  
<sup>84</sup>Knut Tallquist, "Sumerisch-Akkadische Namen der Totenwelt," *Studia Orientalia*, V. iv (Helsingfors, 1934), pp. 3, 15f.  
<sup>85</sup>A. Block, "Qasida," in *Asiatische Studien*, iii-iv (Bern, 1948), p. 116.

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THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

## New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study

(Continued from page 250)

<sup>65</sup>R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (N. Y.: Scribners, 1907), p. 74.

<sup>66</sup>G. A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (N. Y.: G. H. Doran Co., 1927), pp. 369-373. The idea is not of Hellenistic origin, for it is familiar in Egyptian literature where Pharaoh brings joy to the lands through which he takes his royal tours, letting his countenance shine (*wbn*) on each in turn, just as his father Re makes the rounds (*shenen*) of the universe with his inspecting eye that gives both dread and joy to all beholders. The concept is even more conspicuous in Asia, where "the monarch moves like the beneficent sun in a tireless round among his people." The theme is treated by Nibley, in *Western Political Quarterly* IV (1951), 241f.

<sup>67</sup>Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, pp. 79ff.

<sup>68</sup>Nibley, "The Stick of Joseph and the Stick of Judah," *THE IMPROVEMENT ERA*, January-May, 1953.

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<sup>72</sup>Huart & Delaporte, *op. cit.*, pp. 330, 359, 379.

<sup>73</sup>Nibley, *Western Pol. Quart.* IV, 230-5, 244-7.

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<sup>75</sup>A. Mallon, "Les Hebreux en Egypte," *Orientalia*, III (1921), pp. 68ff.

<sup>76</sup>R. P. B. Couroyer, "Le Chemin de Vie en Egypte et en Israel," *Revue Biblique*, LVI (1949), 392-411.

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<sup>78</sup>M. B. Rowton, "The Problem of the Exodus," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1953, 46-60.

<sup>79</sup>V. Gordon Childe, *What Happened in History* (Pelican Books, 1950), p. 141.

## Melchizedek Priesthood Softball

(Concluded from page 218)

the senior Aaronic Priesthood members and the non-members have shared the benefits of this captivating program. Many have joined the Church as a result of their initial activity as members of ward softball teams. Here, it is certain, is an excellent rehabilitating force which will bless and benefit the lives of all male members of the ward. In the interest of projecting this force into the lives of all who need and will benefit from it, stake presidencies and ward bishoprics are charged by the general priesthood committee with direct responsibility for the success of the program.

## From Where We Are

Richard L. Evans

SCARCELY does it seem possible, but a twelfth part of the year has already past. More suddenly and sooner than we suppose, it will be spring. More suddenly and sooner than we suppose, it will be summer. And soon again the summer will have passed, and soon again we shall be looking at the closing of the calendar, and, soon again we shall be asking ourselves: Where has it gone, and what have we done with it? And with a twelfth part of the year past, it is not too soon to ask ourselves how we have done with our determination to be better than we have been, to do better than we have done. We are all imperfect. We all have problems. We all wish some things were different. In this life it isn't often (if at all) that anyone finds what could be called a flawlessly ideal situation. But if something hasn't changed that should have changed, if something hasn't happened that should have happened in the month of irreplaceable time through which we have so swiftly moved, it may be because we have somehow supposed that the new face of the calendar would do something of itself without our doing something of ourselves. Time does much in its mellowing influence, in its blessed healing process, in its leavening and leveling—but for us time doesn't do much but deteriorate unless we do some things for ourselves, unless earnestly we endeavor to improve our past performance. Perfecting is a process—and neither character nor conditions are altogether made over all at once. The Lord God has given us the truths, the plans, the purposes, with life and intelligence and the material things of earth to work with (with people and with problems and saving principles). And by beginning here, we can go on from where we are, and begin to come closer to where we would wish to be—always remembering that the only place we can start from is where we are—and there is no time sooner than now. Blessedly, in the swiftly moving scenes of the swiftly moving months there is nowhere we cannot begin to go from here—if we will—with repentance and work and the faith to begin to bring things about.

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# New Approaches to BOOK OF MORMON Study

by Dr. Hugh Nibley

PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

PART 7

AT PRESENT the problem of the original language of the Book of Mormon is one which seems to be stirring considerable interest in some quarters. It would be a very difficult, and perhaps a useless task to separate possible Egyptian elements in the Book of Mormon from the Hebrew elements. For one thing, Egyptian influence is now known to have been far stronger in Hebrew itself than we hitherto supposed,<sup>79</sup> so that when we think we are dealing with a Hebraism, it might well be an Egyptianism as well, and who is to say whether the Egyptian flavor of the text is not actually stronger than the Hebrew? Such speculations are a waste of time however, in view of Mormon's declaration that his people have altered the conventional ways of writing both Egyptian and Hebrew to conform to their own peculiar manner of speech, i.e. both the writing and the language had been changed, so that the prophet can state that none other people knoweth our language. (See Mormon 9:32-34.) Nephite was simply Nephite, as English is English, whatever its original components may have been.

Why all this concern, then, about the language or languages of the Book of Mormon? If we had the original text, which we do not, and if we could read it, which we cannot, any translation we might make of it would still be inferior to that which we have given, as we claim it was, by the gift and power of God. If we had the original text, scholars would be everlastingly squabbling about it and getting out endless new and revised translations, as in the case of the Bible. In fact, if our English text of the Book of Mormon came to us in any other way than by revelation it would be almost worthless! For members and investigators could ask of every verse: "But how do we know it is trans-

lated correctly?" A revealed text in English is infinitely to be preferred to an original in a language that no one on earth could claim as his own. It frees the members and leaders of the Church as it frees the investigating world from the necessity of becoming philologists or, worse still, of having to rely on the judgment of philologists, as a prerequisite to understanding this great book. At the same time it puts upon the modern world an obligation to study and learn from which that world could easily plead immunity were the book in an ancient language or couched in the labored and pretentious idiom that learned men adopt when they try to decipher ancient texts.

To the question, "What was the original language of the Book of Mormon?" The real answer is: it is English! For the English of the Book of Mormon comes by revelation, and no one can go beyond revelation in the search for ultimate sources. Let us, then, rejoice in the text we have and

not attempt to reconstruct it in Hebrew or Egyptian so that we can then analyze and translate what we have written!

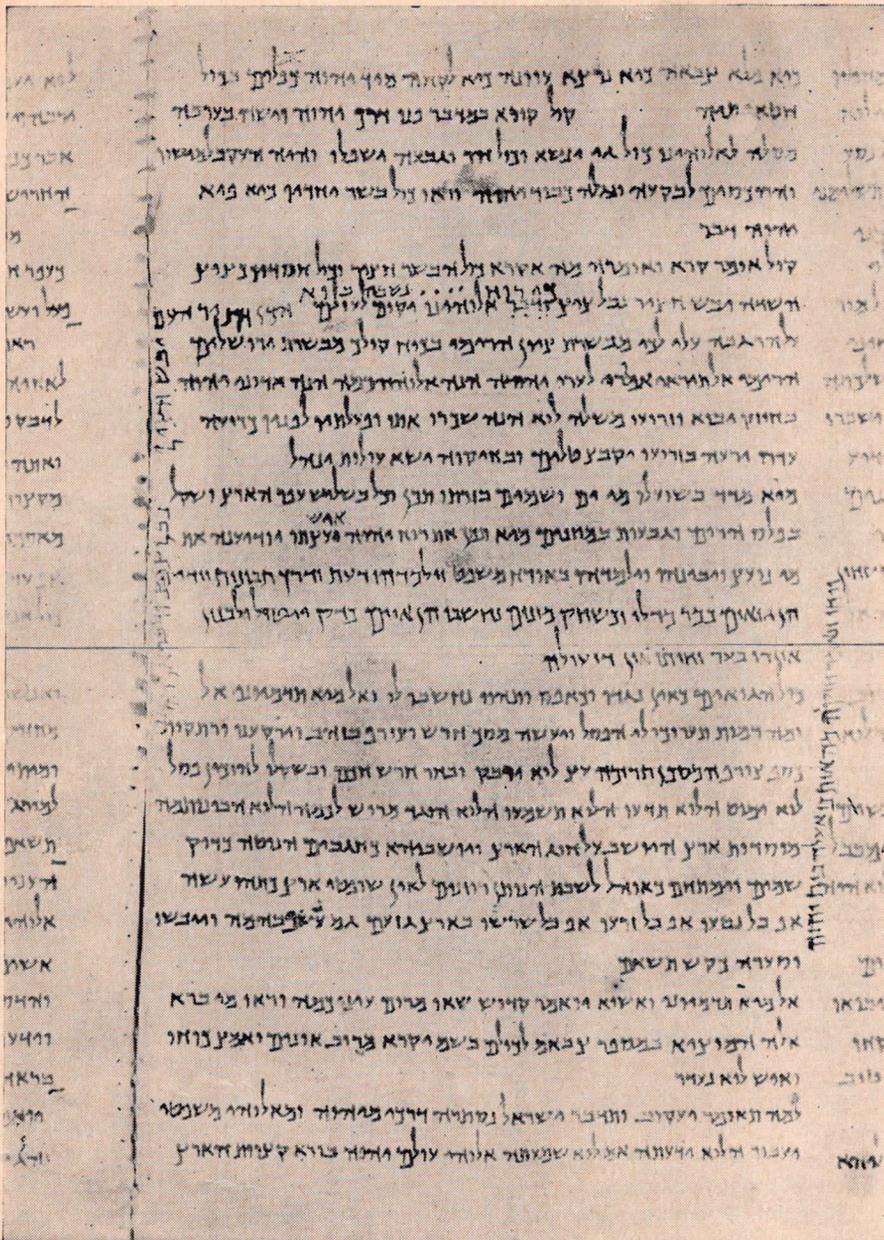
Yet, lest anyone charge the Book of Mormon with claiming to be beyond criticism, it supplies us with a goodly number of untranslated words that still await the attention of the philologist. There are the proper names, divided, as we have already noted, almost equally between Egyptian and Hebrew, which is what we would expect in view of Nephi's and Mormon's remarks about both languages being used and corrupted by the Nephites. In regard to Hebrew names, D. W. Thomas in 1950 confirmed our own observation in *Lehi in the Desert* (p. 33), that "the strong tendency (of Book of Mormon names) to end in *-iah* is very striking, since the vast majority of Hebrew names found at Lachish end in the same way, indicating that *-iah* names were very fashionable in Lehi's time."

Thomas notes that a "striking" peculiarity of Hebrew names in the age of Jeremiah is "the many personal names which end in *-iah*."<sup>80</sup> The same authority observes that the Lachish fragments prove the language of Zedekiah's time to have been classical Hebrew of a type which "aligns itself more especially with . . . the Book of Jeremiah," thereby vindicating the long-questioned accuracy and antiquity of the Biblical records that purportedly come down to us from the time of Lehi.<sup>81</sup>



—Photograph by John C. Trever. Courtesy, "The Biblical Archaeologist."

The Isaiah Scroll, one of the priceless documents found by the Bedouin of Palestine, is being examined by Dr. John C. Trever, director of the Department of the English Bible for the International Council of Religious Education. These Scrolls are in possession of Athanasium Yeshue Samuel (right), of the Syrian Metropolitan.



—Courtesy "Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research."  
A reproduction of a page from the Isaiah Scroll.

A well-known peculiarity of Book of Mormon names is that a very large percentage of them end in -m or -n. A glance at a name-list will show that mimmation is overwhelmingly favored for Jaredite names, while nunnation is the rule for Nephite and Lamanite ones. Within the past year, Jirku has declared that it is now known for certain that mimmation was still current in the Semitic dialects of Palestine and Syria between 2100 and 1800 B.C., when the nominative (the subjective) case singular still ended in -m.<sup>82</sup> From Egyptian and Hittite records it is now clear that the dialects of Palestine and Syria dropped this mimmation in the first half of the second millennium B. C. This old -m ending is preserved in the Bible only

in a few pre-Hebrew words used in incantations and spells: *Teraphim*, *Sanwerim*, *Urim*, and *Thummim*.<sup>83</sup>

It is significant to Latter-day Saints that the last two words are not, as has always been supposed, Hebrew plural forms, but are archaic words in the singular. This means that the conventional attempts to determine the nature of Urim and Thummim from classical Hebrew are worthless and, as Jirku points out, that Urim and Thummim stands for two single implements or objects, and not for a multiplicity of things.

To judge by proper names in the Book of Mormon, the language of the Jaredites was related to a pre-Hebrew mimmated language that has left its

marks in a few very old and holy words in the Old Testament.

On no point have we been more often assailed since the appearance of the "Lehi" articles than our liberal use of the word *Jew* to describe Lehi and his contemporaries. A Jew is a member of the tribe of Judah, it is true, but that is not the whole story. The name is applied by experts today to any citizen of the ancient Jewish state or of Jerusalem, no matter what his tribe; to any inhabitants of Judaea, no matter what his tribe, religion, or citizenship; to anyone accepting the Jewish religion, no matter what his family background; to anyone descended from a family that had once practised that religion, no matter what his present religion. The subject has recently received full treatment at the hands of Professor Solomon Zeitlin, whose conclusions may be helpful. The term *Hebrew*, according to Zeitlin, is never applied to the Israelites either in the Law or the Prophets.<sup>84</sup>

After the exile the people were called Judaeans, only rarely Israel, and "later the name *Israel* disappears, and that of *Jews* takes its place entirely." In the time of Josephus, all inhabitants of Judaea, whether Jews or not, were called Judaeans, and in the Second Commonwealth all proselytes were also called Judaeans (*Jews*).<sup>85</sup> At that time the country itself was called *ha-eretz*, "the Land," as it is today, and the people were never called either Hebrews or Israelites. "The term *Jews* was applied in Egypt to the inhabitants who settled there and followed the same religion as the inhabitants of Judaea," regardless of ancestry or country of origin.<sup>86</sup> "When Paul was in Judaea," says Zeitlin, "he called himself a Judaeans . . . while when he was in the Diaspora he called himself a Hebrew or Israeli, as the people (*Jews*) of the Diaspora did."<sup>87</sup> Since the Christians called themselves Israelites from the beginning, the Jews in order to combat their claims readopted the name of Israel, which they have employed freely to the present time.<sup>88</sup>

Throughout history, the determining factor of what makes one a Jew has always been some association with the geographical area of Judaea, and since ". . . Lehi . . . dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days" (1 Ne. 1:4), the best possible designation for him is *Jew*,

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## NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

(Continued from page 309)

regardless of his ancestry. Nephi's formula, "the Jews who are at Jerusalem," makes it perfectly clear that he was acquainted with other settlements of Jews, and in his use of the term one may detect an undeniable feeling of detachment, if not of hostility, towards those city Jews. The Lachish Letters distinguish between the Jews of the country and the Jews of the city, and this distinction is also found in Nephi's account.

In Omni 15, we read that ". . . the people of Zarahemla came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon." Though this agrees with II Kings 25:7 and Jeremiah, scholars have doubted it. "Before the Chaldaean army laid siege to Jerusalem," according to Albright, "the Jewish King died or was assassinated, and his young son, Jehoiachin, went into exile in his place."<sup>89</sup>

It is with considerable surprise the experts now learn that in the Babylonian lists of prisoners brought to Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem "Jehoiachin is called 'the son of the king' of Judah," instead of king. While, according to Thomas, "it is possible that this is a mere scribal error," Weidner "suggests that the designation . . . may have been deliberately chosen, the Babylonians regarding Zedekiah as the legitimate king of Judah."<sup>90</sup> Along with that, it is notable that in the Book of Mormon Zedekiah plays absolutely no role at all, all government and dirty work being left, apparently, entirely to "the elders of the Jews." This view is substantiated in a new book by Hoelscher, who shows Zedekiah as a helpless puppet in the hands of "the potentates at the court, who now appear as sworn enemies of the Prophet whose predictions of disaster they regard as treasonable."<sup>91</sup> The prophet in question was Jeremiah, whom Lehi supported, thereby incurring the wrath of the same "elders" who attempted to liquidate him as well as Jeremiah. Hoelscher tells us that Jeremiah met with the weak king "in secret interviews," vainly attempting to persuade him to give up the fatal alliance with Egypt.<sup>92</sup> The decision of policy in "secret interviews" is exactly what we meet with in First Nephi, where the

elders hold their councils in the deep of night. The "hysteria and gloom" that reigned in Lehi's Jerusalem are further reflected in an Aramaic letter discovered at Saqqarah in 1942 and dating from the time of Jeremiah: King Adon appeals to Pharaoh for aid in the very same terms that his ancestors used in calling upon Egypt in the Amarna age, centuries before: "The armies of the King of Babylon have come, they have reached Aphek . . . do not forsake me."<sup>93</sup>

The Babylonian lists of prisoners to which we have just referred contain, along with the Jewish names, a respectable proportion of Egyptian names. This is what we find in the Book of Mormon name list as well, but the resemblance goes farther, for the Egyptian names in the Old World list show, according to D. H. Thomas, that it was popular at the time to name children after famous Egyptian rulers of the past.<sup>94</sup> If the reader will consult our section on "Strange Names" in *Lehi in the Desert*, he will discover that a surprisingly large number of Egyptian names found among the Nephites were those of early Egyptian kings and heroes. The legendary first king of Egypt was Aha, whose name means "warrior," and, significantly enough, in the Book of Mormon this name is bestowed by a Nephite commander-in-chief on his son. Other royal and hero-names in the Book of Mormon are Himni, Korihor, Paanchi, Pakumeni, Sam, Zeezrom, Hem, Manti, Nephi, Zenoch. Zeniff is certainly cognate with Arabic Zaynab, best-known from the Latinized name of Zenobia, next to the Queen of Sheba the most famous woman of the East.

The Babylonian captive-list also includes Philistine, Phoenician, Elamite, Median, Persian, Greek, and Lydian names—all sweepings of a campaign into Lehi's country.<sup>95</sup> The variety of name-types in the Book of Mormon is thus well substantiated. Another list of names showing the same variety of national types as the Babylonian and Book of Mormon rosters is the much earlier Tell Ta'annek list, in which the element *bin* is prominent, e.g. Bin-da-ni?-wa (cf. Book of Mormon Abinadi), as well as the -zi-ra and -andi combinations, the latter interpreted as East Canaanitish.<sup>96</sup>

Lehi's life in the desert receives

new illustration steadily with new studies and explorations in the sand. In a recent study, Shalem has shown that the best evidence for the stability of climatic conditions in the East is the Bible itself; Shalem claims that man himself has been the main factor in changing the climate of Palestine from time to time, and notes that there has been a "capital change" of climate in that country as a result of the return of the Jews to the Land in our own time. Yet even while he pleads for the scriptures as the best guide to the understanding of the problem, this investigator passes by the words of the prophets in silence.<sup>97</sup>

As if they had not done enough already, our invaluable Scrolls supply the best explanation to date for Lehi's peculiar fondness for the desert. As a merchant and a Manassite he cannot have escaped something of a desert background, but how do his exploits on the sand fit with his status as an orthodox Jew? From the Scrolls we learn that there existed among the Jews certain groups distinguished for their piety, prophetic zeal, and annoying insistence on a literal and not-too-distant coming of the Messiah. The Apocrypha teach us that such groups and such teachings were not confined to any one period of Jewish history but run like a scarlet cord through its whole texture. "Almost all our fathers," says Nephi, the son of Helaman, "testified of the coming of Christ, and have looked forward, and have rejoiced in his day which is to come."

Now the Scrolls teach us that such holy men and their followers were wont to organize themselves in "encampments," actually living "outside the towns in desert regions," where "they lived if not actually in tents at least in very simple dwellings. They thus avoided the corruption of the towns and once again realized the ideal of the nomad life handed down in the oldest of Israel's traditions."<sup>98</sup> As Israel of old, they were deliberately escaping from the wicked world to the air of the desert, carrying out in the life of the tent dwellers a symbolism which the Latter-day Saints preserve to this day when they speak of the "stakes" and the "center stake" of Zion. The earliest Arabic commentary on government is a poetic exposition in which, according to

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THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

## NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

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Noeldeke, we find not a brief for kingship but the "truly Arabic" concept of a free society in which the best rule by consent of all the governed:

No people are well off without proper leadership;  
And there are no leaders when the more ignorant rule.

As the tent cannot be set up without poles,  
And the poles cannot stand without the tent-stakes round about,

Even so, when both poles and stakes cooperate,

In that day has been achieved the goal which before

Was only partly attained.<sup>90</sup>

(To be continued)

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<sup>79</sup>Thus Albright, following Gardiner notes that the recently discovered Chester Beatty Papyri prove the Song of Songs to be of Egyptian origin, W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press), p. 21.

<sup>80</sup>D. W. Thomas, in *Palest. Explor. Quart.*, 1950, p. 2.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup>A. Jirku, "Die Mimation in den nordsemitischen Sprachen und einige Bezeichnungen der altisraelitischen Mantik," *Biblica*, XXXIV (1953), pp. 78f.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>84</sup>Solomon Zeitlin, "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel: a Historical Study," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, XLIII (1953), 367, it is

used only in connection with slaves or with foreigners (non-Jews).

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 368.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 369f.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 371.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 374f.

<sup>89</sup>W. F. Albright, "A Brief History of Judah from the Days of Josiah to Alexander the Great," *Biblical Archaeologist*, Feb. 1946 (IX.i), p. 2.

<sup>90</sup>D. W. Thomas, in *Palest. Explor. Quart.*, 1950, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup>G. Hoelscher, *Geschichtsschreibung in Israel* (Lund, 1952), p. 193.

<sup>92</sup>See *Lehi in the Desert*, pp. 112f.

<sup>93</sup>D. W. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 8. The remarkable resemblance of this to the Amarna letters, upon which Thomas comments, justifies occasional use of Amarna material to illustrate the Book of Mormon, notably with regard to proper names.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

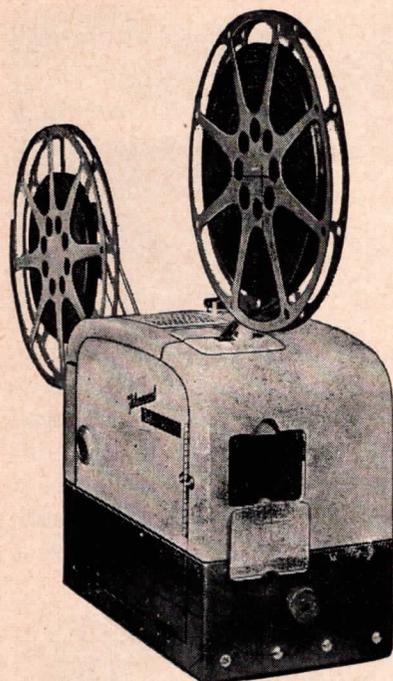
<sup>95</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>96</sup>A. Gustavs, "Die Personennamen in den Tontafeln von Tell Ta'annek, I," in *Ztschr. des Dt.-Palästina-Vereins*, 50 (1927), and 51 (1928), pp. 191, 198, 207. There are 9 Subaraean, 5 Asia Minor (Hittite), 1 Egyptian, 1 Sumerian, 1 Iranian, 1 Kossaeen, 1 Indian, 10 Akkadian (Babylonian), 21 Canaanitish, 2 Amorite, and 5 Arabic (Aramaic?) names, *ibid.*, pp. 209f.

<sup>97</sup>N. Shalem, "La Stabilité du Climat en Palestine," *Revue Biblique*, LVIII (1951), 54, 74.

<sup>98</sup>Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>99</sup>Th. Noeldeke, *Delectus Veterum Carminum Arabicorum* (Berlin, 1890), p. 4, with note.



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## THE FACE OF KITTY FRANKLIN

(Continued from page 324)

any more. He brings liverwurst sandwiches to eat for lunch almost every day. Sometimes he wrinkles his forehead when he listens, like he is thinking real hard. He is a good top spinner. His nose is kind of long but seems to come to a sudden stop. . . ."

These youngsters! What devastating observers they were! It was, by and large, Miss Barlow couldn't help but think, good, clean fun, with the chips falling where they might. Only, of course, the presence of Kitty Franklin made it different. It would only be natural for her to be extra sensitive about things.

Now it was Ellie Winters who was reading her essay. "Sam Leland is a good ball player and can hit the ball far. He wears a heavy red sweater with a hole at the elbow. He spills the ink from his inkwell sometimes. Miss Barlow scolds him because he doesn't write too good and

is sloppy about things. I think his father is a fireman or something. . . ."

More than half of the essays had been read, now. Sooner or later she'd have to call on Joe Woodlin. It occurred to Miss Barlow that it would be best not to wait until the very end to call on Joe. For one thing, that in itself might call attention to it, might make sweet little Kitty feel more self-conscious than ever.

Marilyn Johnson was reading now: "Susie Goldson is almost my best friend. She goes to camp for two weeks in the summer. Her folks are pretty rich and live in a kind of big brick house. They have a big collie dog. Susie isn't so smart in school, but she is good about sharing her lunch. She got something in her eye the other day. She can't seem to understand fractions. . . ."

Miss Barlow always had had the feeling that there was something just

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THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

# New Approaches to

# BOOK OF MORMON

## Study

by Dr. Hugh Nibley

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PART 8

THE LIFE of the tent-dwellers which Lehi and Ishmael effected was not the way of the Bedouin renegade, but the traditional choice of seekers after righteousness. Lehi's concern to keep his people from degenerating into Bedouins is thoroughly typical of an attitude illustrated in Jawad Ali's new two-volume *Arabs before Islam*, the first work of the kind to appear in Arabic. That author notes in his opening lines that the term *Jahiliyah*, "time of ignorance," is used to describe the pre-Islamic Arabs not because of their ignorance of Islam, but because of their low cultural level: "They were nomadic tribesmen, living in ignorance and sloth, having no contacts with the outer world, and keeping no records."<sup>100</sup> This state of things has always been regarded as utterly abominable by the cultivated Arab, (as it was by Lehi), proud though he is of his desert heritage: the danger of degenerating into a desert tramp is a real and constant one, and the only way of combating it—by *adab*, a thorough training in the poetry of the fathers, and by the keeping of records—has been an obsession with the high-minded men of the desert throughout their history.<sup>101</sup>

In the summer of 1953 a copy of the eighth book of Hamdani's *Al-Iklil* came into the author's possession from the library of the late J. A. Montgomery, one of the great Arabists of our time. Here is the key to one of Lehi's most wonderful dreams, for this book of the *Iklil* is devoted to describing the early castles of Arabia, "great and spacious buildings" which "stood as it were in the air, high above the earth," filled with proud and finely dressed people who held the wandering Bedouins in contempt. The imagery is Nephi's, but it might have been taken right out of Hamdani: "And the castle of Ghumdan," he writes of one of the most famous,

"had twenty stories of upper chambers, one above another. There is disagreement as to its height and breadth, for some say each of its walls measured a thousand by a thousand (a "great and spacious house" indeed!), while others say it was greater, and that each of its (20) stories was ten cubits (15 feet) high. And the poet Al-Aösha says:

And never was there a more splendid assemblage of people  
Than the people of Ghumdan when they gathered.

But dire calamity befell them,  
Even as a wailing woman who has been utterly bereft.<sup>102</sup>

Numerous other accounts of this and other castles are cited but the moral is always the same: the magnificent gathering in the great and spacious building high above the earth is doomed to the destruction reserved for the haughty and the wicked. If no evidence for the provenience of the Book of Mormon existed except the 8th chapter of First Nephi, that alone would be quite adequate to establish its oriental origin beyond a doubt. Indeed there is but one objection to its claims of authenticity, and that is a far-fetched story that a certain young man once told about an angel.

The reader may find in our above translations of Arabic poets ample proof of the claim that the greatest verses of those artists cannot be made into anything remotely resembling good literature in English and still preserve a trace of their original form or content. To judge the Book of Mormon as a literary work, therefore, is the height of folly. Nicholson notes that the very best oriental poetry contains "much that to modern taste is absolutely incongruous with poetic style. Their finest pictures . . . often appear uncouth or grotesque, because without an intimate knowledge of the land and people it is

impossible for us to see what the poet intended to convey, or to appreciate the truth and beauty of its expression."<sup>103</sup> One is constantly coming upon strange little expressions that recall the Book of Mormon. Thus the non-Biblical "white and delightsome" of the Book of Mormon is the exact equivalent of the Arabic *al-hasan wa'lbiyah*—a very early expression,<sup>104</sup> while the designation of the sea by the earliest Arab poets as "the ocean spring" or "fountain," immediately recalls the term used by Lehi's wanderers, "the fountain of the Red Sea," and solves a knotty problem with a single cut.<sup>105</sup>

A recent study by Rosenblatt on oaths bears out well what we said about the episode of the swearing of Zoram. Among both Arabs and Jews, says Rosenblatt, "an oath without God's name is no oath," while "both in Jewish and Mohammedan sources oaths by 'the life of God' are frequent."<sup>106</sup> So Nephi's "as the Lord liveth" is strictly correct.

The whole picture of the racial and linguistic composition of the human race in the Jaredite era at the dawn of history has in our own day undergone such a complete alteration that those theories so stoutly defended in the 1920's and 1930's as the final verdict of scientific objectivity now appear almost pitifully biased. As Pittioni pointed out in 1952, a "sociologically oriented evolutionism" has so thoroughly preconditioned the thinking of the experts, who have "unconsciously and unquestioningly assumed a point of view sprung directly from the natural-science orientation of nineteenth-century cosmology," that they address themselves to the problem of origins with the implicit conviction that they already know exactly how everything happened!<sup>107</sup> So ingrained is this child-like faith in the infallibility of the

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## New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study

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evolutionary rule of thumb, that it has enabled our colleges in the West to dispense almost entirely with libraries, and to offer large numbers of impressive courses in ancient life and culture without ever feeling the disquieting urge to consult original sources: why bother to read hard books when evolution gives you an easy answer to everything?

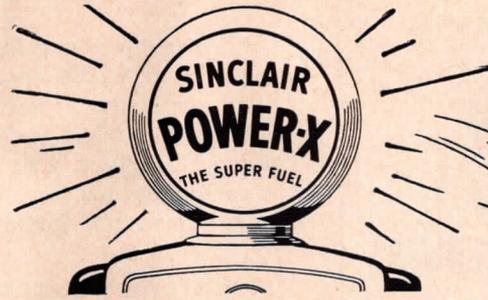
Every new discovery tends to substantiate the theory of a primary radiation of peoples from the "Jaredite country" in the northern reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates. It is to that area that archaeologists have now turned for the solution to the problem of world-civilization. Whether or not Jarmo, east of the Tigris in northern Iraq, is actually the oldest village in the world, as was announced in 1951 (and Braidwood estimates its age at only six-thousand—not sixty-million—years),<sup>108</sup> it certainly lies at the center of a series of radiating zones that embrace ruins of the same type that rival it in antiquity. The most ancient cities in the world are not strewn about the earth in haphazard fashion, but give every indication of spreading from a single center.<sup>109</sup>

The same tendency to converge towards a single point on the map has marked the study of linguistic origins during the last decades. The identification of exotic central and even eastern Asiatic languages as members of our own linguistic family was followed at the end of the 1920's by the surprising discovery that the mysterious Hittite was cousin to such homely western idioms as Latin and Welsh. Within the last year or two archaeologists claim to have filled up the gap between the Indo-European and the Turanian languages; if that is so, almost all of Europe and Asia will turn out to be speaking variations of a single tongue.<sup>110</sup> In 1952 Carnoy announced that Etruscan, which has baffled researchers for centuries, belongs to a very early wave of Indo-European migration into the west, a wave which brought in with it such strange "Pelasgian" languages as Lydian and Lycian, and that Etruscan's closest relative is the thoroughly western Hittite.<sup>111</sup>

Along with this amazing predominance of "our own people" in times

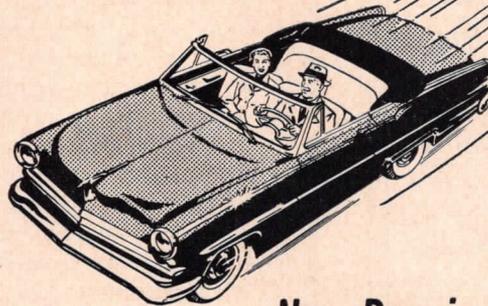
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## NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

(Continued from preceding page)

and places at which any suggestion of their presence a few years ago would have excited gales of contemptuous laughter, goes the newly-won conviction that the great civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia did

not originate in those lands at all. At present the experts are meditating and arguing about the peculiar circumstance, that writing was introduced into both areas suddenly and first appears in both places in an

(Continued on page 450)

## A Favor for Themselves

Richard L. Evans

WE OFTEN see the familiar picture of parents and teachers pleading with young people to improve themselves, to learn their lessons, to make the most of their lives. And because of this sincere anxiety on the part of parents, young people may sometimes assume that they are doing teachers or parents a favor by learning their lessons, by improving their lives. In one sense this is true. It is true that much of the measure of a parent's success and satisfaction is found in the soundness and happiness and success of his children. It is true that much of a teacher's success is found in the lessons that his students learn. But in another sense, it is a peculiar paradox that parents or teachers should so much, so long, so patiently have to plead with young people to make good use of their lives—for every effort they make, all the knowledge they acquire, every lesson they learn is for their own everlasting advantage. And in doing what they should do and in learning what they should learn, they are doing a favor for themselves. Leaving for the moment the matter of prodding and persuading young people, may we look briefly at another side of the subject: Sometimes we may think that we have done someone else a special favor if we live according to law. Sometimes we may think we are doing the Lord God a special favor if we keep his commandments. And it is true that it would please him to have us do so, for his declared purpose is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man,"<sup>1</sup> to bring to pass the happiness, and peace and everlasting progress of his children. For this cause were the commandments given, and for this cause has he patiently repeated them through his servants, the prophets. But in keeping them, we serve first ourselves—no matter what we may do for others besides ourselves. And in breaking them we do injury to ourselves, no matter what we may do to others besides ourselves. It is a great virtue to love and to please parents; it is a sincere satisfaction to a teacher to see a lesson learned; and it is good to keep the commandments for the approving favor of our heavenly Father. But in all this pleasing of others, in all this learning of lessons, in all this keeping of commandments, we do immeasurable service for ourselves. And others shouldn't have to plead with us so much or labor with us so long to persuade us to do what we ought to be anxiously doing.

<sup>1</sup>Pearl of Great Price: Moses 1:39.

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## NEW APPROACHES TO BOOK OF MORMON STUDY

(Continued from page 448)

identical stage of development; this would indicate as plain as day that it must have come from the same source. But in that case, why are the earliest Egyptian and the earliest Babylonian writings so different from each other?<sup>112</sup> Whatever the answer, we must now give up the old illusion that the origin of civilization is to be sought in either Egypt or Babylonia. The once popular theory that China saw the earliest beginnings must also be abandoned, though in view of the

impressive list of common cultural traits that bind ancient Egypt, Babylonia, and China, one must assume that China, too, drew from the common source.<sup>113</sup>

How far afield the authorities now range in their search for Eden may be estimated from A. Herrmann's *Erdkarte und Urbibel*. Herrmann believes that the oldest parts of Genesis are the geographical passages, and that these all have one source, a lost "Ur-Genesis," which was in fact originally a History of Abraham,

which he designates as the Ur-Abraham, the ultimate source of Genesis.<sup>114</sup> [According to this source, the entire human race was living in the Land of Eden (not the Garden of Eden) when they were overwhelmed by water.<sup>115</sup> The largest surviving pieces of this lost Book of Abraham are to be found in the Book of Jubilees, according to Herrmann, which, interestingly enough is of all questioned Apocrypha the one most thoroughly vindicated by the finding of the Scrolls, which show Jubilees to be not a medieval but a genuinely ancient document. According to this source, the entire human race was living in the Land of Eden (*not* the Garden of Eden, but the land where it had been) when they were overwhelmed by water.<sup>115</sup> This cannot have taken place in Mesopotamia or Egypt, Herrmann observes, since both those lands are described in the sources as being uninhabited in Noah's day,<sup>116</sup> and Kraeling has noted that according to other sources the people in the ark did not have the vaguest idea where they were after the flood, but being in strange surroundings had to learn of their location by revelation.<sup>117</sup> So Herrmann seeks the Land of Eden in Abyssinia, South Arabia, and the headwaters of the Nile—all dubious locales and all far from the conventional Babylonian sites. It is a quest that would have struck the dogmatic scholars of past years with amazement: they *knew* where the Garden of Eden was.

No subject has been studied more diligently of recent years than that of the ancient towers. In 1946 L. H. Vincent showed that the ziggurat was designed from the first as a means by which the *gigunu* could mount up to heaven; it was "a scale model of the world," and a sort of link between the heavenly and earthly temples and at the same time "a model of the universe" and a ladder to the upper world.<sup>118</sup> The biblical explanation for the Tower of Babel is thus strictly correct.<sup>118</sup> G. Thausig in 1948 included the Egyptian pyramid among such structures, as "symbol of the outpouring of light, architectural manifestation of the idea of emanation and symbol of the uniting of Heaven and Earth. Its very name—*mr*, 'binding' (shows that) it is the Way to the world below, but also to the world above."<sup>119</sup> In the following year André Parrot published a large book on ziggurats, in which

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA



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he sums up all the previous theories as to the nature of these mysterious towers, e.g., that they were meant to represent mountains, thrones, dwellings, the universe, altars, but especially that they are special structures "which the gods use in order to pass from their celestial habitation to their terrestrial residence, from invisibility to visibility. The ziggurat is thus nothing but the supporting structure for the edifice on its top, and a stairway between the upper and the lower world."<sup>120</sup> In a study on the Tower of Babel, Parrot in 1950 elaborated on this last conception as the true explanation for the towers: the god was thought to "land" with his escorting troupe at the "Hochtempel" at the top of the tower, and then to descend the stairs to the "Tieftempel" at the bottom, where everything was in readiness to receive him; the holy company was thought to return to heaven by the same route.<sup>121</sup> In the same year, Contenau in his book on the Babylonian Deluge concluded that the Ziggurat of Babylon actually was the Tower of Babel, that such towers while serving as astronomical observatories were originally "temples of passage," reception places for divinity whenever it visited the earth; the holy mountain itself, according to this authority, was originally such a place of contact between heaven and earth.<sup>122</sup> There is no doubt at all, Contenau believes, that these Babylonian towers are the same as the Egyptian pyramids in their function of "passages for divinity from heaven to earth and back again," the two having a common, but very ancient and unknown, origin.<sup>123</sup>

From a study of the archaic seals of Babylonia, the oldest written documents in the world, Pierre Amiet in 1951 concluded that in the archaic period "the ziggurat was at one and the same time an immense altar on which were placed the gifts designed to attract the god, the platform where the priests raised themselves up to be nearer to the divinity, as an aid to their prayers, and the support for the stairway which the god, in response to those prayers, employed in order to descend to the earth. . . ." <sup>124</sup> The same scholar in 1953 is more specific still: one idea is clear above all others in these old tower-temples, "the idea of ascension, of mounting up."<sup>125</sup> The steps of the tower, like the steps of the altars in the most primitive seals, are stairways, "binding the heavens

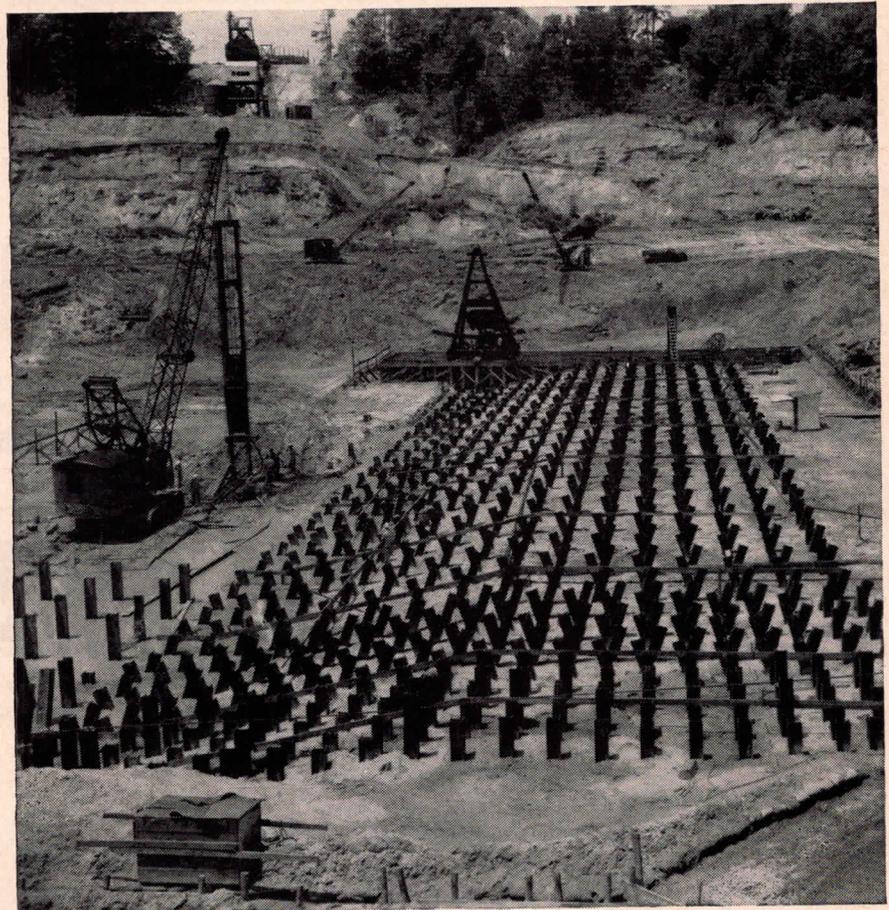
JUNE 1954

to the earth."<sup>126</sup> The earliest of all known temples is "the supra-terrestrial place, celestial as it were, where the two aspects of divinity become fused on the occasion of the performance of essential ordinances, destined to assure fecundity upon the earth."<sup>126</sup> Thus a hundred years of speculation have arrived at the point of departure: there was a real tower that meant what the Bible said it did.

A conspicuous aspect of the sacred tower is that it is always thought of as standing at the exact center of the earth; it is an observatory from

which one takes one's bearings on the universe. This being so, it is easy to see how men would regard such a tower as the starting point for the populating of the whole world. Thus in the Book of Jubilees (38:4), when the sons of Jacob went forth to claim their heritage, "they divided themselves into companies on the four sides of the tower." This is no mere mythological concept: in every ancient land the seat of government was an exalted structure thought to stand at the exact geographical center of the world.<sup>127</sup> The practical

(Continued on following page)



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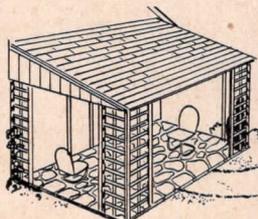
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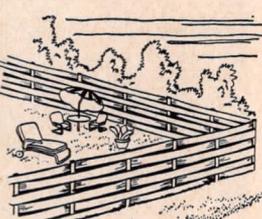
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**New Approaches to  
Book of Mormon Study**

(Continued from preceding page)

economy of this is obvious; after all, most of our state capitals are placed as near the geographical center of the states as is practical. When the scriptures tell us that the people of the world had a great common center to which they repaired and from which, when it broke up, they scattered in all directions, it is not telling a fabulous or impossible tale, but is rehearsing a well-known historic pattern.

By now many readers will be aware of an interesting study on "Men and Elephants in America" recently appearing in the *Scientific Monthly*; the writer concludes: "Archaeology has proved that the American Indian hunted and killed elephants; it has also strongly indicated that these elephants have been extinct for several thousand years. This means that the traditions of the Indians recalling these animals have retained their historical validity for great stretches of time . . . probably the minimum is three thousand years. . . ."128 The author favors three thousand years ago as the terminal date for the existence of the elephant in America,129 which would place its extinction about a thousand years B.C., when the Jaredite culture was already very old and Lehi's people were not to appear on the scene for some centuries. This suits very well with the Book of Mormon account, and in that case the Indian legends must go back to Jaredite times, and indeed the author of the study quoted insists that they must be at least three thousand years old. But since legends are word-of-mouth tradition, the presence of Jaredite legends among the Indians presumes a survival of the Jaredite strain among them, and at the very least such legends cannot have been transmitted from Jaredite to Lamanite hunters without long and intimate contact between the two groups. Here, then, is a strong argument for Jaredite survivors among the Indians, and if one refuses to interpret it as such one must certainly admit extensive intercourse between the two groups in order to transmit to the Lamanites knowledge which only the Jaredites possessed.

My own inclination is to see actual Jaredite heredity in the Indian strain.

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

In Section 49, Verse 24 of the Doctrine and Covenants it is promised that "... the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose." Yet many of the great nations of the eastern forests, the most formidable tribes of all, have entirely disappeared; whatever happens, they will never flourish. Can it be that those fierce and vanished tribes were predominantly of Jaredite stock and not true Lamanites at all?  
(To be continued)

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<sup>101</sup>At the beginning of their long wandering, the Sheikh of the Beni Hilal ordered them to keep a record of each important event, "that its memory might remain for the members of the tribe, and that the people might read it and retain their civilized status (ifadah)," *Kitab Taghribah Beni Hilal* (Damascus edition), p. 14. Accordingly, verses recited on notable occasions were written down on the spot (*loc. cit.*), just as Nephi wrote down his father's utterances by the River of Laman.

<sup>102</sup>Hamdani, *Al-Iklil*, Book VIII (Baghdad, 1931), pp. 15f. The work was translated in 1940 by Nahib Amin Faris (Princeton University Press, 1940), but I have not seen the translation.

<sup>103</sup>Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>104</sup>The expression is found in an Arabic rendering of a very early Christian *Logion* (saying attributed to Christ), No. 102 in the collection in *Patrologia Orientalis* XIII, 426.

<sup>105</sup>I have not been able to see the original text of the poem of Hassan b. Thabit, which Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 18, renders: "Followed he (the hero Dhu 'l-Qarnayn) the Sun to view its setting. When it sank into the sombre ocean-spring."

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<sup>110</sup>V. Altman, in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 67 (1947), pp. 82f. J. J. Gelb, "A Contribution to the Proto-Indo-European Question," *Jahrbuch für kleinasiatische Forschung*, II (1951), p. 34, proclaims "the common ancestry of the Semites, Hamites, and Indo-Europeans," a proposition that would have shocked and amused the experts of twenty years ago.

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<sup>112</sup>R. Engelbach, "An Essay on the Advent of the Dynastic Race in Egypt and its Consequences," *Annales du Service des An-*

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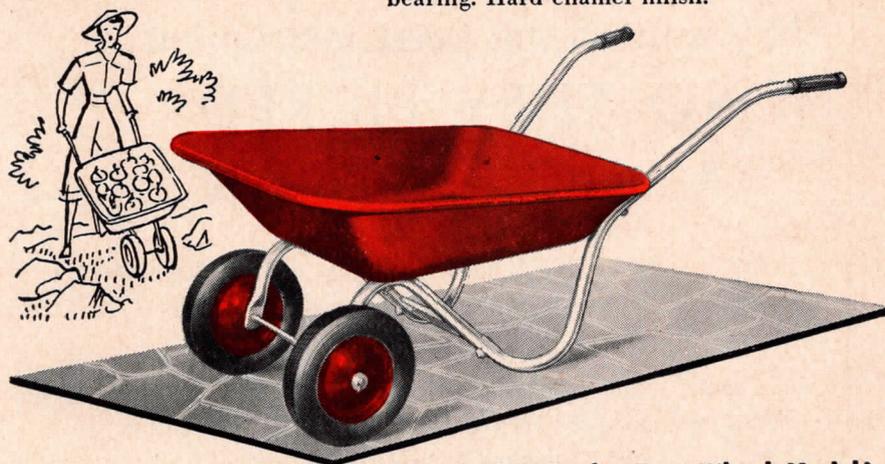
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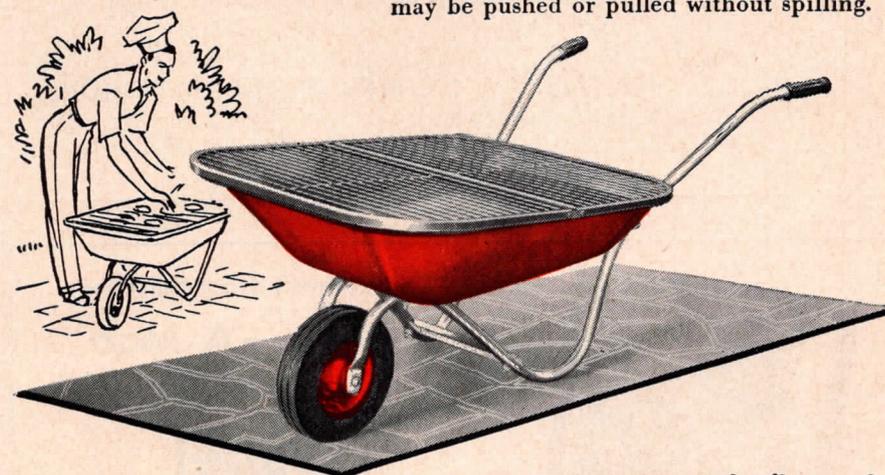
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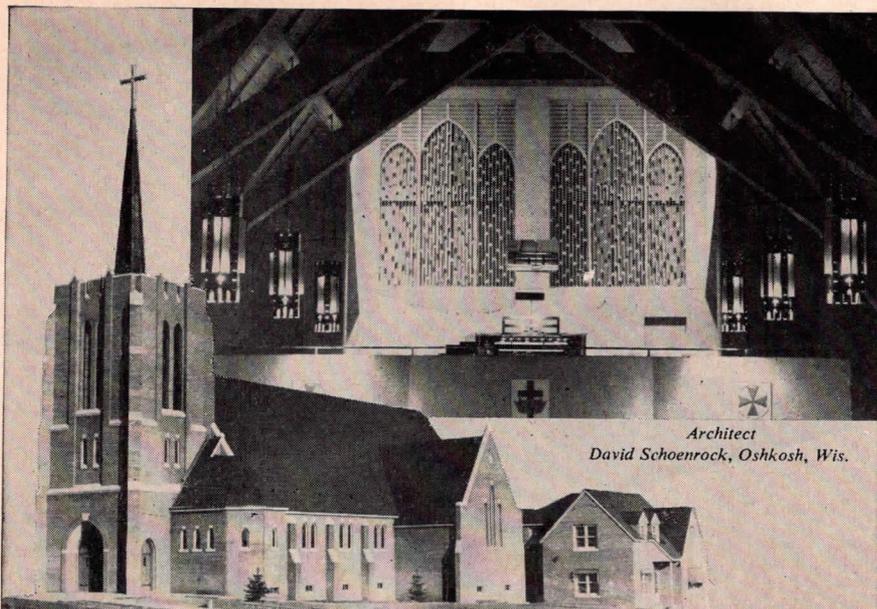
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## New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study

(Continued from preceding page)

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<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 30ff.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>117</sup>E. G. Kraeling, "The Earliest Hebrew Flood Story," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LVI (1947), 290, 280ff.

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<sup>121</sup>A. Parrot, "La Tour de Babel et les Ziggurats," *La Nouvelle Clío* IV (1950), 153-161.

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<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 245, 249f, 260.

<sup>124</sup>P. Amiet, "La Ziggurat, d'après les cylindres de l'époque dynastique archaïque," *Revue d'Assyriologie* XLV (1951), p. 87.

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<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 30f.

<sup>127</sup>Nibley, *Western Polit. Quart.*, IV (1951), 235ff.

<sup>128</sup>L. H. Johnson, III, "Men and Elephants in America," *Scientific Monthly* LXXXV (1952), p. 220.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 216 and *loc. cit.*

## MIA June Conference Calendar

(Concluded from page 374)

BEE HIVE—9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. General Sessions for Stake and Ward Bee Keepers, Kingsbury Hall, U of U Campus, 12:00 noon Birthday Luncheon 85c.

YM ATHLETIC—8:30 a.m. Division Supervisors, Room 21, 50 No. Main; General Sessions 10:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Mission Home (31 No. State). Box Lunches at noon 90c.

DANCE—8:10 a.m. and 1:50 p.m. General Sessions, University Ward (160 University St.) and U of U.

DRAMA—9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. General Sessions, Colonial Hills Ward (1455 So. 17th East, 12:00 noon Haywagon Theatre, Lunch 85c at noon.

MUSIC—8:00 a.m. Stake Supervisors, 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. General Sessions for Stake and Ward Leaders, South East Stake

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(CONCLUSION)

INCIDENTALLY, the problem of the elephant in the Old World is no less puzzling than in the New, to judge by a philological study by Kretschmer, appearing in 1951.<sup>130</sup> According to that renowned philologist, the ancient Germans and Slavs actually confused the camel with the elephant, while the people of India, the classic land of the elephant, seem not to have been acquainted with the animal at first hand, since they had no word of their own for it! R. Walz, reviewing the whole problem of the domestication of the camel, has come to the conclusion that, at least up to 1951, the problem remains unsolved, in spite of all the work that has been done on it.<sup>131</sup>

As to glass and metal, it is now certain that their origin is to be sought neither in Egypt nor in Babylonia, but in the mountains to the north of the latter region, the area that we loosely describe as "Jaredite country."<sup>132</sup>

The names of weights and measures are among the most conservative properties of human society, as our own "foot," "yard," "mile," "ounce,"

attest. But along with their conservatism such terms give evidence at a glance of much borrowing and exchange between cultures. Thus common designations of weight and measure establish prehistoric ties between Egypt and Babylonia.<sup>133</sup> Now the fourteen odd names of measure given in the Book of Mormon are neither Semitic nor Egyptian; unlike the Nephite proper names, these terms have no parallels in the Old World. The explanation for this is obvious: they are Jaredite names. Clear evidence of borrowing by the Nephites can be seen in the words *shiblon*, *shiblum*, and *shublon*, for not only is the obvious confusion of mimation and nunnation indicative of a transition, but the proper names *Shiblon* and *Shiblum*, in both mimated and nunnated form, are found among *both* Jaredites and Nephites. From this we may gain an idea of the really significant influence of the Jaredite upon the Nephite culture, for weights and measures are at the foundation of all material civilization. There is a remarkable and natural consistency in the picture which the most cunning

## New Approaches BOOK OF

by Dr. Hugh

PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION.

calculations of a forger could not hope to achieve: the pains of the Nephite writer to explain the peculiar system, the names which, unlike other Book of Mormon names, have no known parallels in the Old World, the obvious overlapping of Nephite and Jaredite elements (*seon*, *senine*, *senum*), the well-known tendency of established systems of metrology to hold their own, no matter how quaint and antiquated, so that the older system would necessarily have priority over the newer, the equally well-known tendency to combine various foreign elements in a single system, the material superiority and materialistic orientation of Jaredite culture, betrayed by the incurable worldliness of men with Jaredite names. All this is found in the Nephite account, in which the sinister Jaredite influence constantly lurks in the background.

This brings us to a final reflection on the Book of Mormon as a fraudulent production.

There is wisdom in the rule laid down by Blass, that whoever presumes to doubt the purported source and authorship of a document cannot possibly escape the obligation of supplying a more plausible account in its stead. The critic has made the accusation; therefore he must have his reasons—let us hear them. No intolerable burden is put upon him by the demand, for the more obviously fraudulent an account of origin is, the easier it should be to think up a better explanation. The critic is not required to tell exactly what the true origin of the text was, but merely to supply a more likely story than the one given. The world which rejects the official account of the Book of Mormon is not under obligation to tell us exactly when, where, and how the book was produced, but it is most emphatically under obligation to furnish a clear and convincing account of how it *could have* been created in view of all the positively known cir-

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

# to MORMON

## Study

Nibley

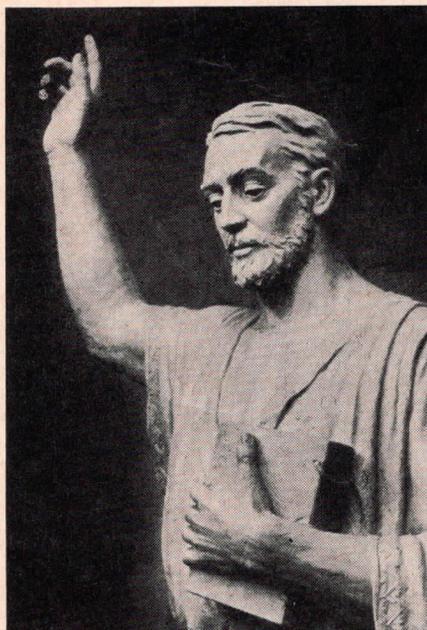
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cumstances of its actual appearance. Clever people have not shirked from this duty, but until now not a single explanation has been offered that is not in glaring conflict with itself or with certain facts upon which all, Mormons and non-Mormons, are in agreement. Above all, it will not do to say that the book is a fraud because angels do not bring books to people, for that is the very point at issue.

Joseph Smith may have been very shrewd and very lucky, but there are impassable bounds set to the reach of human wit and fortune. Consider the cases of Scaliger and Bentley, the two greatest scholars of modern, if not of all, times. The former, a mental marvel without compare, whose prodigious achievements in the field of scholarship make all others appear as novices,<sup>134</sup> could not, for all his immense perspicacity and learning, avoid the normal lapses of human knowledge or the pitfalls of vanity. With a record for accurate observation and penetrating discovery that no other can approach, he none the less "corrupts his own magnificent work by an anxious and morose over-diligence, and by his insane desire to display his erudition."<sup>135</sup> "In particular," says Housman, "he will often propound interpretations which have no bearing either on his own text . . . or on any other, but pertain to things which he has read elsewhere, and which hang like mists in his memory and veil from his eyes the verses which he thinks he is explaining. Furthermore it must be said that Scaliger's conjectures . . . are often uncouth and sometimes monstrous." Housman then quotes Haupt: "Without doing injury to his fame, one may say that no great scholar ever set beside sure discoveries of the most brilliant penetration so much that is grammatically preposterous." "And," says Housman, "the worse the conjecture the louder does Scaliger applaud himself."<sup>136</sup>

Of Bentley, Housman writes: "The  
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firm strength and piercing edge and arrowy swiftness of his intellect, his matchless facility and adroitness and resource, were never so triumphant as where defeat seemed sure; and yet it is other virtues that one most admires . . . his lucidity, his sanity, his just and simple and straight-forward fashion of thought."<sup>137</sup> If anyone could produce a flawless reconstruction of a text, this paragon should, but what do we find? "The faults of this edition, which are abundant, are the faults of Bentley's other critical works. He was impatient, he was tyrannical, and he was too sure of himself. Hence he corrupts sound verses which he will not wait to understand, alters what offends his taste. . . . His buoyant mind, elated by the exercise of its powers, too often forgot the nature of its business, and turned from work to play; and many a time when he feigned and half fancied that he was correcting the scribe, he knew in his heart . . . that he was revising the author."<sup>138</sup>



The Angel Moroni atop the Hill Cumorah Monument.

Now "the nature of the business" of these two men was very close to that of the author of the Book of Mormon: it was to produce ancient texts "in their purity" by correcting the corrupt manuscripts which the world has inherited from early copyists. The correction was done on the basis of what the editor, using all the information at his disposal about the writer in question and the world in

which he lived, conjectured that the author would have written in place of the badly copied text before him. Scaliger, Bentley, and the author of the Book of Mormon are all engaged in the proper business of scholarship, that of bring out of obscurity and darkness ancient texts that present a true and faithful picture of the past. If the former two suffer serious reverses on almost every page, due to inevitable defects of knowledge and judgment, what should we expect of the last, even assuming him to be the most honest of men? To say that he may have made no *more* frightful mistakes per page than a Scaliger or a Bentley is to pay him the highest tribute. More cleverness and luck than that we simply cannot allow him. If any modern man, however great his genius, composed the Book of Mormon it must of necessity swarm with the uncouth, monstrous, impossible, contradictory, and absurd.<sup>139</sup> But it does not. The few odds and ends we have touched upon in this short study should be enough to show what teeming opportunities the writer of the Book of Mormon had to make a complete fool of himself, and the world will give a handsome reward to anyone who can show it but one clear and unmistakable instance in which he did so. We must grant, therefore, that the current explanation of the Book of Mormon—that the man who wrote it was both smart and unscrupulous—explains nothing.

(The End)

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<sup>132</sup>For the latest philological evidence, P. Kretschmer, "Zu den ältesten Metallnamen," *Glotta* XXXII (1952), 1-16: the *oldest* of all names for metal is neither Egyptian nor Babylonian, but Indo-European—our own word "ore." For the classic treatment of the home of metallurgy, J. De Morgan, *La Préhistoire Orientale* (Paris, 1925ff), I, 184ff. H. C. Beck, "Glass before 1500," *Ancient Egypt and the East*, 1934 (June, Pt. i), pp. 7-21.

<sup>133</sup>De Morgan, *op. cit.*, II, 315ff.

<sup>134</sup>"Scaliger," wrote the great Niebuhr, "stood on the summit of universal solid philological learning, in a degree that none have reached since; so high in every branch of knowledge, that from the resources of his own mind he could comprehend, apply, and decide on, whatever came his way." (Quoted by Mark Pattison, *Essays* (Oxford, 1889), I, (Concluded on page 521)

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133). Pattison himself (*ibid.*, p. 195) calls Scaliger's "the most richly-stored intellect which ever spent itself in acquiring knowledge." G. W. Robinson writes: "Whether Joseph Scaliger should be reckoned the greatest scholar of all time, or should share that palm with Aristotle, is, perhaps, an open question; of his primacy beyond all rivalry among the scholars of modern times there can be no doubt. . . ." (*Autobiography of Joseph Scaliger* [Cambridge, Mass., 1927], p. 8.) "His only possible rival," writes H. W. Garrod in his *Manilius* (p. lxxxii), "is Bentley—so much inferior in knowledge, in patience, in circumspection, and in the faculty of grasping a whole, that only a native levity of the caprice of reaction could place him on the same height as Scaliger." "He came nearer than any other man before or since his time to reaching the ideal of a universal grasp of antiquity," thus J. Bernays, *Joseph Justus Scaliger* (Berlin: 1885), p. 1. For other references to Scaliger's achievements, H. Nibley, "New Light on Scaliger," *The Classical Journal*, XXXVII (1942), 291-5.

<sup>136</sup>Huet, quoted in A. E. Housman, *Manilius*, I, xiv.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. xiv ff.

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xvii.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. xvii f, with much more to the same effect.

<sup>139</sup>After immense labor and research a moving-picture of Lloyd Douglas's epic, *The Robe*, has been released. Almost the opening scene shows two lovers parting at a dock—Ostia. Their last embraces are curtailed by the voice of an importunate captain or mate of the ship, who keeps crying from the deck that unless our hero hastens they will surely miss the tide. "The tide, sir! The tide!" wails the voice. As any schoolboy knows who has read his Caesar, there are no tides in the Mediterranean. What if the Book of Mormon had made a slip like that? *The Robe* is full of them.

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fulfilled his every wish. As Father expressed it,

I have always been ambitious, of course, for the welfare of my children. I have worked for them, saved for them, determined that their opportunities should be better than mine were. I wanted them to be accomplished and well equipped for the battle of life. I wanted them to be men and women of character, with faith, loving the right because it was right, with their consciences trained to abhor the habit so common in society which regards self-interest as the dominant thing to be sought after; to be independent thinkers, but at the same time giving honor and respect to the opinions of others, and above all, to have faith that the Lord will care for and direct us if we put our trust in him, and that in the end (and we can't reach a proper judgment until the end comes) we will know that he does all things well.

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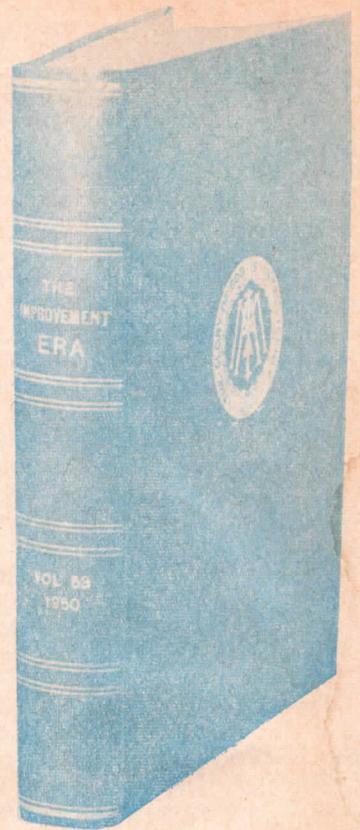
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