

PROOF

A list of all the major areas that have been claimed as “proof” for the Book of Mormon. Completed around November 1997. Feel free to make copies. If there are glaring errors or typos, please contact me (email tolworthy@hotmail.com). Otherwise it is provided “as is”.

Chris Tolworthy

"How glorious is the future... there never were men who had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began."

- Gordon B. Hinckley¹

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¹ October 1995 Conference, Sunday morning session. See Alma 26:35-36.

WHY READ THIS BOOK

What is the purpose of life?

Is there a God?

Are the atheists correct?

Everybody has their own idea. But nobody can prove it, right?

Wrong. YOU can prove it. I have found the proof for myself, and so have millions of others, and so can you. How do you prove it? Ask God himself. "But you've got to have physical evidence!" say the atheists. Fair enough - you want it? You've got it. But first a caution.

If God wanted to hit you over the head with proof, he would have done it already. No, he is subtle. He wants us to choose. He provides just enough evidence, and that is all. It is up to you to decide. For comparison, a scientific experiment means careful collection of mundane data. The scientist then analyses the results, deciding that, on balance, one conclusion is more likely than the others.

This comes as a great disappointment to students at school. I was trained as a physics teacher, and the kids wanted science lessons to be like science fiction on TV. But real science is not all flashing lights, and neither is religion. It can't be handed to you on a plate.

So how do you prove claims about God? Many people claim spiritual experiences, but how do you prove them? How do you prove that another person did or did not see something? Joseph Smith was a Christian who solved the problem. Or rather, God solved the problem, and Joseph Smith found himself in the middle of it. The solution was a book, the keystone of a five stage proof:

1. Attempts at formal logical proof are imperfect. So we "prove" by practical observations.
2. Observation shows that people need people.
3. Religions hold societies together better than atheism. So it's really a case of "which religion?"
4. We need a religion that is based in heaven yet can be tested on earth.
5. The Book of Mormon is testable. It grows stronger with every new test and new approach.

Most of this book deals with the hundreds of tests that have been applied to the Book of Mormon over the years. There is not space to analyse or argue each point, but just to present each in its simplest form. As the years pass, some tests seem less impressive, or are rejected as based on unfounded rumour. But for every test that no longer seems relevant, there are two or three more new tests that make the Book of Mormon stronger still. Scientists who read it are believing it more and more. Opponents who read it admit that they are losing the arguments. You can trust the Book of Mormon. And so you can trust its message - that Jesus Christ is the son of God.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Tolworthy". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line that extends downwards from the end of the signature.

Chris Tolworthy, Summer 1997

PART ONE: WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT THE BOOK?

1 millions of lives have been changed

In 1830 the first English edition of the Book of Mormon was published, with 5,000 copies. These met all demands for a number of years. But demand has grown. There was another printing. And another. And another. Far more than 5,000 are now printed every single day. According to a large non-LDS survey, it is one of the ten most influential books in America.² Why?

The Book of Mormon is held alongside the Bible by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS for short). The church now has over ten million members. Some scholars predict a membership of over one hundred million in the twenty first century, and call it the first genuinely new world religion for over a thousand years.³ Over fifty thousand full time missionaries, the largest such force in the world, take the Book of Mormon round the world at their own expense. Hundreds of thousands testify publicly every month of its truth, and tell how it has led them to Jesus Christ. In this book I will try to suggest why.

" Were a parchment discovered in an Egyptian mound, 6" square, containing 50 words which were certainly spoken by Jesus, this utterance would count more than all the books which have been published since the first century"⁴

² Griffith 140

³ CN 16 Apr'88 p.9; "Eduard Meyer's Comparison..." (FARMS)

⁴ Rev. John Watson, quoted in Ensign Dec '83, p.11

2 proof about God

Society provides the proof for religion. The Book of Mormon lets religion make sense.

TESTING THE EXISTENCE OF A SUPREME BEING.

If you believe there is a God, you will spend your whole life trying to learn from him. If you believe there is not a God, your whole life will be different. Each of us makes the decision to believe or not, but how? What are the rules for deciding? Some of us like to think we have logical proof, but we do not. As an atheist wrote:

“Unfortunately, reality is not decided by logic. Even if you could rigorously prove that God exists, it wouldn't actually get you very far. It could be that your logical rules do not always preserve truth-- that your system of logic is flawed. It could be that your premises are wrong. It could even be that reality is not logically consistent. In the end, the only way to find out what is really going on is to observe it.”⁵

So each of us looks around and decides for himself. We can re-phrase this as the two rules of observability.

1. If it cannot be observed, we are not interested.
2. If it can be observed, we accept it as being “what is really going on” - in other words, proof.

OBSERVING THE WHOLE WORLD

What *is* really going on in the world? This requires us to understand all of reality. But we can't. The trouble is, we do not know enough. In fact, the older you become, the more you realise you don't know. As Sir James M. Barrie put it, “I am not young enough to know everything.”⁶ So do we give up and just base our lives on blind chance? No, a thinking person will try and make sense of at least the bits of the world he can observe.

OBSERVING AS MUCH AS WE CAN

We cannot understand everything, but we can understand some things. As people, we are more likely to observe *people* than anything else. And since we all rely on other people so much (for food, work, peace, love and so on) this is probably the only realistic topic to study. In fact, if it turns out that people cannot survive without believing in God, then that would pretty much prove that God exists, as far as simple observation is concerned.

CAN PEOPLE EXIST WITHOUT BELIEVING IN GOD?

No society based on atheism has ever survived more than one generation. Sociologists have studied thousands of societies, based on all kinds of belief systems. But not one society has ever based itself on atheism and survived. State atheism has been tried (most famously by Stalin⁷) and it has failed. It seems that atheism is social suicide. Atheists who want to promote their cause point to examples of individuals, never societies. So society does not survive without belief. So in terms of what we can see, we have proven that (to all intents and purposes) there is a God or gods. In the same way, the fact that people cannot survive without breathing implies that there is something real and essential in the air. Sure, we can argue that there is another explanation, but we have agreed that our attempts at logic take a back seat to what we see first hand. There is a God.

CHECKING THIS CONCLUSION

⁵ AA FAQ, “Introduction to Atheism” by mathew <meta@pobox.com>

⁶ Murphy

⁷ AA FAQ, “Introduction to Atheism” notes that the Soviet Union tolerated churches until Stalin, who wanted all power for himself.

We arrived at this conclusion by simple observation. But there is a problem. Other observations (for example, scientific observations) seem to contradict what many religions teach. They can't both be right. To accept the conclusion that religion is good, we need to overcome this conflict. What we need is a religion that does not contradict these other observations.

IS THERE ANY RELIGION THAT AVOIDS INTELLECTUAL CONFLICT?

Honest, intelligent people are in all religions and philosophies. I have no intention to condemn the good they do. But what happens when we push each idea to its limits?

- Some religious beliefs (such as held by people who only go to church to get married) are too vague to satisfy a thinking person. Clear thinking needs clear religion.
- Some religions (such as Anglicanism) are criticised as being so all encompassing as to be meaningless.
- A religion that finds itself opposing mainstream science (like some fundamentalist sects) similarly has problems for the outside observer.
- Some religions (such as Soka Gakkai Buddhism in Japan⁸) have successfully adapted to suit the modern world. But how many can show that this was strictly justified by their original plan, rather than just a convenient re-interpretation?
- A religion that can exist in different factions (as in Protestantism) will not impress a thinking person. If anybody who disagrees can just choose a different version, where is the claim to truth?

YES.

Belief in Christ through the Book of Mormon avoids all the conflicts.

- The teaching is clear - a physical resurrection, literal angels, etc.
- It is strengthened by mainstream science.
- It teaches of a single church with authority to make changes, and even produce new scripture.

INDIVIDUAL TESTS DON'T MATTER. WHAT MATTERS IS, IT IS *TESTABLE*.

Most of the book you are now reading is simply summaries of tests that have been applied to the Book of Mormon over the years since 1830. The individual tests don't matter, as (like all science) they develop with the times. We have already accepted that our logic isn't perfect, so yesterday's tests may turn out to have problems and today's tests look for different things. The tests have changed, but the Book of Mormon passes them all. It satisfies the critical mind.

In summary:

Society provides the proof for religion.
The Book of Mormon lets religion make sense.

THE FINAL TEST

Ultimately, we need more than the evidence of our eyes. We need the evidence of the heart. Direct from God. Read the Book of Mormon. In the last chapter, there is a test (Moroni chapter 10). If you follow it, you will know whether God is real (he will answer your prayer), whether angels are real (an angel delivered the original Book of Mormon), whether there is life after death (the angel was a resurrected being), whether there are real prophets (Joseph Smith and his successors), and many more things. The Book of Mormon was prepared for modern people. This means you!

⁸ Encarta, Buddhism

3 how to make a perfect world

**Modern man has a number of deeply held needs that are not addressed by mainstream churches.⁹
Can the Book of Mormon answers these needs?**

It can. By giving real detail about heaven, the physical reality of God, and the love that awaits us.

CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM, OR CHRIST?

The Book of Mormon is different¹⁰ because it presents a way to change the world from inside, not outside. It shows a society run by individuals who make covenants, not by Governments who make policies. Success depends on attention to Christ, not attention to money. It is not capitalist, because amassing capital is not a goal. It is not socialist, because society has no power or property beyond what individuals choose to loan it. The Book of Mormon gives us the blueprint for becoming the kind of people who created the Utopia described in the 4th book of Nephi.

FREEDOM

Only the Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus is the ONLY real source of freedom.¹¹ The Book of Mormon gives more freedom by giving more knowledge.

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

How do you make a better world without Christ? It is easy to think that we can make a better world by being pragmatic - that is, doing what makes most sense on every question. Unfortunately, what seem reasonable steps to you or me may be unreasonable to other people.

For example, it is fashionable to blame world hunger on "overpopulation". But the rich world copes with far higher population densities than the poor countries. Whenever people have the freedom to solve their own problems, they do just that. The real problem is identified by the ancient prophet Mormon, who wrote the book that has his name: We love money more than we love the poor.¹² "No amount of political debate can disguise the fact that, in scientific terms, there is no need for anyone to go hungry in the foreseeable future." . . . "with the current standards of best farming practice achieved on only 60% of available cultivable land, we could feed 30 times the present [world] population."¹³ Political solutions will not save the world. We need to overcome selfishness. We need to become more like Christ. We need the Book of Mormon!

⁹ According to a non-LDS study. Ensign Dec '93 p.7

¹⁰ It is true that the Bible also teaches some of this, but the Book of Mormon presents a clearer choice - see the earlier section on proof.

¹¹ Mosiah 5:8. See also 2 Nephi 3:5, Alma 61:15; Ensign, Dec '88 p.8.

¹² Mormon 9:37 (9:25-41). Population size is not the real problem. If people are greedy and do not cooperate, even a population of two is too many people - see Ether 15.

¹³ NS 16 Nov '78 p.515 See also 9 Aug '84 p.12, 19 May '90 p.26, etc.

4 life after death, & other answers

Can the Book of Mormon answer life's big questions?

If the angel Moroni really visited Joseph Smith, then we can say three things:

1. "Heaven" is a real place.
2. People in the spirit world are interested in us.
3. People in the spirit world want to teach us about the eternities.

Joseph Smith could not have guessed, but modern medicine means that it is not just prophets who can have a glimpse of the afterlife. Thousands of people, believers and non-believers, have had "Near Death Experiences" (NDEs).¹⁴ Many "distinguished" scientists take them very seriously.¹⁵

And the most detailed NDEs do support the three statements above. Heaven is very close!¹⁶

SUFFERING:

Why does God allow suffering? The Book of Mormon holds the answer. Life is a relatively short probation, or test.¹⁷ However, while we are allowed to experience real life, suffering for its own sake is not good: the purpose of life is to have joy!¹⁸ God lets bad people do just enough harm to show that his judgements are just.¹⁹

HOW TO MAKE STRONGER FAMILIES

The Book of Mormon is a textbook for strong families,²⁰ especially fathers.²¹ Strong family life offers commitment, security, acceptance, freedom to be yourself, education, housing, welfare, friends and contacts. What more do you want?

PHYSICAL INTIMACY

The Book of Mormon states that fornication is second only to murder,²² and "virtue" is "most dear and precious above all things".²³ There is now evidence to back this up. Adultery is the main reason cited

¹⁴ For close Book of Mormon parallels, see "Nigh Unto Death" in JB 2.

¹⁵ Spectator, 10 Dec '88 p.9; Sabom

¹⁶ The most detailed NDE yet published (Betty Eadie), answers those points on pages 42-44 & 76, 30-31 & 121, and 84.

¹⁷ Alma 12:24

¹⁸ 2 Nephi 2:25

¹⁹ Alma 14:10-11

²⁰ Ensign, July '88 p.39. See 1 Nephi 1,8,15,16; 2 Nephi 4; Enos 1; Mosiah 4,6,26,27; Alma 20, 24, 25, 30, 36-42, 56; Helaman 10; 3 Nephi 26, 27; etc.

²¹ Ensign Feb 1995 p.14. See 1 Nephi 2; Enos; Words of Mormon; Mosiah 1, 2, 27, 28; Alma 17,56; 3 Nephi 11, and 17.

²² Alma 39:3-5

²³ Moroni 9:9

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for divorce, and divorce can kill children.²⁴ Government statistics say sex before marriage leads to shorter marriages, even when you include the time spent co-habiting before marriage.²⁵ And even the idea that Victorian restraint led in itself to unhappy marriages has been shown to be wrong.²⁶ So the Book of Mormon is right. Of course, the Bible also says "no divorce",²⁷ but how can it be avoided in practice? The Book of Mormon has the answer. It shows how that statement was in the context of broader covenants made at the temple.²⁸

TEMPTATION:

Everything good is from God.²⁹ But what about temptation? The Book of Mormon tells of people who found something even more desirable than their natural desires: Soldiers who found something more desirable than life; a king who found something better than riches; a prince who found something better than idle pleasure.³⁰ The Book of Mormon has a unique answer to temptation: it does not just say "no", but instead it gives a positive message: "bridle" your passions,³¹ as a man bridles a horse, directing the horse's power to something more rewarding!

²⁴ When compared with children of families that stay together, step children on the whole do worse at school, are more likely to be unemployed, involved in crime, take drugs, commit suicide, etc. They are 50 to 100 times more likely to be killed than natural children. Source: "Analysis", R4 16 Mar '95; "Call Nick Ross", R4 2 May '95.

²⁵ Independent, 6 Jun '92 p.1; Daily Mail 7 April '97 p.26

²⁶ TLS, May 6 '94 p.24

²⁷ Matthew 5:32

²⁸ 3 Nephi 11:1-12:2

²⁹ Omni 1:25

³⁰ See Mosiah 3:19; Alma 43:45; Alma 22:15; Enos 1:3-4

³¹ Alma 38:12

5 prophecies

Did the Book of Mormon contain prophecies that came true?

Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon in 1829. Book of Mormon history parallels modern history from 1829 to the present - and beyond. See for yourself in the accompanying chart.

BOOK OF MORMON HISTORY ³² - numbered in years before the birth of Christ			
(remember that this was published in 1829)			
between 279 and 130 ³³		c.200+	120
Huge social change: Mulekites are discovered; Nephites join them. ³⁴	Travel and discovery: journeys between Naphi and Zarahemla ³⁵ ; discovery of Jaredites (big cultural influence); “new” scripture	Nationalism.... ³⁶	...leading to colonialism ³⁷
MODERN HISTORY ³⁸ - numbered in years before the year 2000			
(conventional dates AD are in brackets)			
224, 211 (1776, 1789)	170+ (1830+)	c.200+ ³⁹ (c.1800+)	116 (1884)
Huge social change: American and French revolutions, etc.	Travel and discovery: railways, scientific discoveries (e.g. electricity); “new” scripture	Nationalism.... ⁴⁰	...leading to colonialism ⁴¹

³² The centuries before the move to Zarahemla are covered only briefly. Page for page, the Book of Mormon devotes most space to this period.

³³ The Book of Mormon does not give more specific dates at this point

³⁴ Omni 1:12-19

³⁵ Omni 1:27-29; Mosiah 7-8, 17-18, 22-24; CWHN 5:246; the 24 plates of the Book of Ether

³⁶ Mosiah 9:1-3 (Mosiah 9 through 24)

³⁷ Mosiah 19:15; 21:3; etc. The issue is temporarily resolved in 120BC: Mosiah 24:16-25

³⁸ Most historians say the modern period began with the French Revolution.

³⁹ “200” refers to Napoleon’s dictatorship. After that came high nationalism in S.Africa, Canada, and much of Europe.

⁴⁰ these headings are taken from Beazley and Penguin

⁴¹ in the late 19th Century: height of the British empire; Africa is carved up in the 1884 treaty of Berlin

BOOK OF MORMON HISTORY ⁴² - numbered in years before the birth of Christ						
The most significant 100 years - "reign of the judges" (calendar used from 92BC to AD9)						
87	80s, 70s	76-60	post war period	31 [64-1]	13 [29-13]	AD 1
major war ⁴³	obsession with money; then poverty is the big issue ⁴⁴	bigger wars ⁴⁵	more travel and wealth ⁴⁶	old institutions lose respect; rise of youth culture ⁴⁷	Nephite culture dominates ⁴⁸	Major dated prophecy ⁴⁹
MODERN HISTORY ⁵⁰ - numbered in years before the year 2000						
The most significant 100 years - "20th Century"						
86-84 (1914-18)	70s, 60s (20s, 30s)	61-55 (39- 45)	post war period	40-30 (60s)	11 (89)	0 (2000)
major war	"Roaring Twenties"; great depression	bigger war	mass communication ; "the global vilage"	institutions lose respect; rise of youth culture	Western culture dominates (end of the "cold war")	Major dated prophecy ⁵¹

⁴² The centuries before the move to Zarahemla are covered only briefly. Page for page, the Book of Mormon devotes most space to this period.

⁴³ Alma 2-3 (3:1)

⁴⁴ Alma 4:6-8; 32

⁴⁵ Alma 28:2-62:41

⁴⁶ Alma 62:48; 63:4-9; Helaman 3:3-9,24-25

⁴⁷ Helaman 12:7 - economic success leads to pride and making a mock of the sacred. For general trends see Alma 56; Helaman 5:50; 6:31; 16:15-21; 3Nephi 1:29

⁴⁸ Helaman 11:21 (Helaman 6:8)

⁴⁹ 1 Nephi 10:4; Helaman 14:2

⁵⁰ Most historians say the modern period began with the French Revolution.

⁵¹ Doctrine & Covenants 77:6 - the significance of 2000 is too complex to discuss here

ANCIENT PROPHECIES ABOUT TODAY'S WORLD

The Book of Mormon prepares us for the Second Coming of Christ by teaching us about:

War. Unlike the Bible, the Book of Mormon is written for the nuclear age: both the Jaredite and Nephite nations ended in genocide.

Modern philosophies - see Alma 30, Helaman 16, etc.

Money. How money destroys nations through inequality, crime,⁵² an inefficient legal system, secret organisations, and pride.⁵³

Secret combinations controlling whole nations - unknown in 1830 but more and more relevant in some parts of the world today.⁵⁴

Environmental decay: The last days will be known for pollutions and vapours of smoke.⁵⁵

BOOK OF MORMON PEOPLES TODAY:

In 1830 the "Indians" still held a sizable chunk of North America and were a force to be reckoned with. But the Book of Mormon predicted their destruction, and so it was.⁵⁶ However, it also predicted that the Lamanites would accept the gospel (1 Nephi 15:14, etc.) and so it is: The biggest growth in the Church has long been in Lamanite countries.⁵⁷

PROPHECIES ABOUT JOSEPH SMITH

2 Nephi 3 makes prophecies about Joseph Smith that were largely or completely outside his control. But they were all fulfilled:

Verse 7: He would be a descendant of Joseph of Egypt, and highly regarded among other descendants of Joseph. Although nobody can reliably trace their ancestry back that far, we can go further back than Joseph Smith could. A hundred years after their deaths, we can now prove that practically all the early church leaders (all converts from different places) were of the same lineage.⁵⁸ More recently, study of language families has demonstrated that most of the early converts to the church came from the countries where "the Ten Tribes" probably settled.⁵⁹

Verse 7: Joseph would bring mankind to a knowledge of ancient covenants. Many books now document the fulfilment of this prophecy.⁶⁰

Verse 14: Those who seek to destroy Joseph Smith would be confounded. This has been fulfilled in at least four ways:⁶¹ First, by Joseph's own efforts to discover and avoid plots against him. Second, by his

⁵² "Slippery" money is a good description of crime, inflation, etc. Helaman 13:31-36; Ether 14:1-2.

⁵³ CWHN 9:94

⁵⁴ At the time of researching this - April 1993 - this has brought down the entire Italian system of Government, and is especially prevalent in Book of Mormon lands.

⁵⁵ Helaman 3:6; 3 Nephi 4:19-20; Mormon 8:28-32; etc. CWHN 7:374-378+; 8:551-558, 563, etc. Ensign Dec' 88 p.15

⁵⁶ 1 Nephi 13:14, 22:7, 2 Nephi 1:11 etc.

⁵⁷ Ludlow

⁵⁸ They even shared a common ancestor, five generations earlier. Madsen, tape 3 side B.

⁵⁹ Ensign Feb '94 p.40(?)

⁶⁰ See the FARMS catalogue for studies on Joseph Smith and baptism, marriage, the temple, etc.

⁶¹ Madsen, "Joseph's personality" and "Joseph & Trial".

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spirit (his "unnatural confidence"). This allowed him to overcome (for example) an armed assassin or a 500 strong armed mob just by his words.⁶² Third, by the way that foes, when they got to know him, often became his friends.⁶³ Fourth, despite predictions that the church would die when Joseph did, it grew... and continues to grow!

THE RISE AND FALL OF NATIONS:

The Book of Mormon deals with the end of nations (Judah, Jaredite, Nephite). The cycle of rise and decline is accurate (humility - wealth - pride - fall).

Take Britain for example. People wonder why the Victorians were so religious. Simple: grass-roots religion was the only thing that could reverse the rising crime rate.⁶⁴ Since the moral crusade of the 1840s, crime halved and the country saw its greatest prosperity ever. This century, religion has declined, crime has risen, and the country's wealth has declined. In modern "boom" economies like Singapore, religion and family life are paramount.

America, the world's wealthiest nation, has more churches per capita than any other nation on earth, and the rise of religion has been matched by the rise in science.⁶⁵

SURVIVAL!

National survival depends on following Christ.⁶⁶ This may sound bold, but look at the evidence: no atheist society has ever survived more than a few generations: atheism is a "cultural virus" that apparently destroys its host.⁶⁷ The only major world leader to correctly predict that the soviet empire would collapse was Ronald Reagan.⁶⁸ Why did he predict that? Simply because it was an "evil empire" - i.e. it was godless.

APOSTASY AND RESTORATION

The Book of Mormon teaches that important truths were lost after the deaths of Christ's apostles.⁶⁹ This can now be shown from documentary evidence.⁷⁰ The Book of Mormon comes to restore these truths. It even predicted its own reception (2 Nephi 29), and has been proven right to the letter.

OTHER PROPHECIES FULFILLED BUT ONLY NOW CONFIRMED:

Jerusalem was totally destroyed at the time of Lehi. Until recently, scholars had thought that it meant just the carrying away of the more important people, but now the Book of Mormon has been shown to

⁶² See Madsen for accounts of these, his poisoning, and other violence. See Hinckley p.58 for escaping a death sentence, or in general Ensign Aug '89 p.16

⁶³ Ensign Jan '93 p.27

⁶⁴ BBC Open University video, "A Question of Evidence."

⁶⁵ NS 13 Mar '93 p.3

⁶⁶ 1 Nephi 17:35-40; 22:14; 2 Nephi 6:15, etc.

⁶⁷ NS Christmas '93 issue.

⁶⁸ Alistair Cooke, "Letter From America", R4 13th Jan '95

⁶⁹ 1 Nephi 11-14; Mormon 8

⁷⁰ Talmage (a); CWHN 5

be correct.⁷¹ Nephi's statements about Columbus were confirmed by a vision had by Columbus, not translated into English until 1847.⁷²

THE PHYSICAL GATHERING OF THE JEWS:

The Book of Mormon prophesied of how Gentile nations would assist in the Gathering of the Jews, as they did via the United Nations.⁷³ In contrast, traditional Christianity interpreted Isaiah 49 as saying that the Jews would be assisted by gentiles only AFTER the gathering.⁷⁴

THE SPIRITUAL GATHERING OF THE JEWS:

Although Christians were as anti-Semitic as ever in 1830, the Book of Mormon prophecies limited Jewish conversion.⁷⁵ Now, as prophesied, the gap between Christians and Jews is finally, slowly, beginning to narrow.⁷⁶

OTHER PROPHECIES include the following:

- * 2 Nephi 29:3 - Every LDS missionary sees this fulfilled almost every day.
- * 2 Nephi 27:12 - "Now an impostor might indeed predict the raising of three witnesses, but he could never call down an angel from heaven in the presence of these witnesses, to fulfil his prediction."⁷⁷
- * Moroni predicted⁷⁸ the persecutions of the church in the 1830s and 1840s. The fulfilment of this prophecy is now a matter of history.⁷⁹ As prophesied, their blood was avenged by God and not by man.⁸⁰
- * 3 Nephi 21:22-28. Every word was been fulfilled by LDS history, mainly in the 1830s. Take it slow, with a book on church history to see how.

⁷¹ CWHN 7:374-378+ Insights Jan '87

⁷² Improvement Era Feb '66 p.97; Insights Mar '86

⁷³ See Talmage (b) 335-6 for commentary - this was published in 1899

⁷⁴ Torrey; NIV; Bruce.

⁷⁵ 1 Nephi 10:14; Mormon 5:14

⁷⁶ TLS May 6th '94 p.24; Shapiro; "We have found the Messiah", "The Mormons and the Jewish People" and other LDS missionary pamphlets.

⁷⁷ Pratt (b)

⁷⁸ Mormon 8:27,41, etc; Pratt (b); D&C 63:31.

⁷⁹ See various historical documents (CD) for detailed evidence.

⁸⁰ Lundwall

6 get nearer to God than by any other book

Joseph Smith said, regarding the Book of Mormon, that "a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." Was he right?

How do we get nearer to God? Only the Book of Mormon shows us precisely what he requires, by precisely, and authoritatively defining the covenants and ordinances.⁸¹ So only the Boo of Mormon can do the job.

⁸¹ Mosiah 18:8-10 (baptism) and Moroni 4:3; 5:2 (sacrament) and elsewhere. See also Insights Sep '91.

PART TWO: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1 Can I get an answer from the Holy Spirit? How?

See Moroni 10:4

Praying is of course a personal thing. But Moroni's promise has been proven time and again, many times a day in every mission of the Church. This life is a test, so we should not expect an answer that is stronger than we need. Only you know what you need. For some people the answer is dramatic, for some it is slow and gentle.

I remember an old Branch President of mine, brother McKenzie. A convert, his answer came in the middle of the night. He woke up as if startled by an electric shock, and he knew the truth of the Book of Mormon without a shade of doubt.

Some people do not need a specific Book of Mormon answer. When my wife received her answer she was attending a baptismal service with her sister. She had always been opposed to the church, but that day the spirit caught her and she just began to cry. She knew the LDS church was true, so she did not need an extra answer regarding the Book of Mormon. If the church is true, so is the book, and that is the end of it.

In my own case, all the evidence makes me very favourable to the message of Christ as contained in the Book of Mormon. I have seen the book in action, and I have felt the thrill of excitement as I read about Abinadi or Benjamin or Moroni. I have felt I was actually there. After that, it only required a gentle peaceful feeling to confirm what I have learned. That feeling has come, very subtly, very often.

In my experience, whenever someone claims to have prayed and received no answer, it can be traced to not precisely following each one of Moroni's steps. When all the evidence has been said and done, the message is simple... pray about it!

2 Is the Book of Mormon needed when we already have the Bible?

DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CHRIST?

The Book of Mormon is a witness to the truth of the Holy Bible. And the Book of Mormon contains many new truths about Christ.⁸² The "golden question" according to Ezra Taft Benson is, do you want to learn more about Christ?⁸³

THE BIBLE REFERS TO THE BOOK OF MORMON

(see the evidences section)

THE EFFECT OF THE BOOK ON OTHER CHRISTIANS

Ministers of other Christian faiths have been touched by the Book. Recorded statements include:

- * "It is a revelation, and I believe it is the truth."⁸⁴
- * "I am quoting from them in my sermons to my people."⁸⁵
- * "I have in my library a book [the Book of Mormon] that is worth more than all the other books because it is the word of God." (His library, many years ago, was worth \$12000.)⁸⁶
- * "This is not a dead book; it lives." ... "Isn't it beautiful?" ... "Why can we not fellowship a people who believe in the beautiful things I have read to you today?"⁸⁷

REVELATION 22:18 IS EVIDENCE FOR THE BOOK OF MORMON:

Revelation 22:18 says you shouldn't add to "this book". So why did John himself write his epistles afterwards? And why did prophets still write after Moses said "do not add" in Deuteronomy 4:2 ? Clearly it means that man should not add anything to those individual books within the Bible ("Bible" just means "collection of books"). But if man cannot add anything, how can we understand the harder parts of Revelation? Surely we are meant to understand it? We must rely on God to reveal new understanding. That is why we need the Book of Mormon.

PLAIN AND PRECIOUS TRUTHS.

The Book of Mormon is plain and clear about the purpose of life, the plan of salvation, and what is the gospel.⁸⁸ Read them and feel the spirit!

- * Consider the effect on the individual of honestly applying the questions given in Alma 5.
- * Visualise yourself with the multitude in 3 Nephi 11.
- * Stand with the brother of Jared on mount Sherem in Ether 3.
- * Contemplate Alma's accounts of his conversion in Mosiah 27 and Alma 36.⁸⁹

⁸² See Ensign, Dec '88 p.8 for a list.

⁸³ Benson 203

⁸⁴ CR Oct 1965 p.88

⁸⁵ Ibid. Another example is in the LDS video, "How Rare A Possession"

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ 2 Nephi 2:25; Alma 12:24; 18; 3 Nephi 27:13-21

⁸⁹ Improvement Era Dec 1970 p.54

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The Book of Mormon reinforces and adds depth to existing ideas, such as the voice of God, angels, conversion, miracles, the acts of Satan in history, and it gives entirely new insights into Biblical persons like Joseph.⁹⁰ Surely it is the word of God!

THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT

If we have an "old" testament for before Christ, and a "new" testament for after Christ, why do we need another? Because "old" as used by Paul only applies to the parts that were fulfilled. The "new" testament is eternal. It existed before Christ, because the prophets knew all about Christ, "love thy neighbour", grace, etc. It is new because it always seems new to sinful men! The apostles never limited the term "new testament" to just certain written words. In fact, they taught that "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established"⁹¹ Even the word "testament" implies a third witness: It is from the Latin Testis, a variant of Tri-stis, meaning a third party. It can also mean "covenant". An Old Testament, a New Testament, and Another Testament, to settle all questions, and bring the covenant to the new world.⁹²

NO TRUE CHRISTIAN WILL FIGHT THE BOOK OF MORMON

"He that is not against us is on our part" (Mark 9:40) "Charity ... believeth all things" (1 Cor 13:4,7) "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt 7:1). As someone once observed, the Book of Mormon is so unusual that it has to be either of God or of the Devil. And it cannot be of the Devil, because it is full of testimony of Christ. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" (Luke 11:17).

WONDERFUL NEWS!

Throughout the Bible, God has always used prophets. But which church today would dare to say that its leaders carry equal weight to Moses or Paul? Religious people always prefer dead prophets to living ones.⁹³ But the good news is that God has not changed - the Book of Mormon shows that there are still prophets today!

MYSTERIES SOLVED

- Many scholars believe that the scriptures have had parts added to them over the years, yet the spirit suggests that every letter is literally true. Only the Book of Mormon can explain it: prophets are inspired to add to and edit earlier prophets.
- The Book of Mormon suggests new depth for old passages. For example, Ezekiel 17:22-24.⁹⁴
- Whatever else may be said, it has been shown that the Book of Mormon is a book that serious non-LDS scholars can respect.⁹⁵

TEN REASONS YOU NEED THE BOOK OF MORMON⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Helaman 5:29-31; 3 Nephi 11:3; 1 Nephi 17:45-46; Helaman 6:26-31; Maxwell 82-86; Alma 30; Helaman 16:15-22; CWHN 1:8-9, 16-17; etc.

⁹¹ 2 Corinthians 13:1

⁹² Ludlow; Ensign Jan '95; Origins

⁹³ John 9:28-9, John 7:40-43, Luke 22:70-71, John 7:12

⁹⁴ Sorenson (d). See also points 11 to 13.

⁹⁵ "A Book You Can Respect" and "Reflections on Mormonism" (FARMS)

⁹⁶ See also points 1-5, 7, 8, 10 to 14, 17, 44, 152, 154 and 158.

If you want to understand the Bible, here are ten more questions answered by the Book of Mormon (in addition to the ones already covered):

1. Is there a spirit world? (Ecclesiastes 9:5 has left some in doubt).
2. To whom was the sermon on the mount given, and thus how is it to be understood? (Matthew 5:2 is ambiguous - is it to the multitude or the twelve?)⁹⁷
3. What is the Urim and Thummim?
4. Why did Elijah need to be taken to heaven in a chariot of fire?⁹⁸
5. Did John the Baptist baptize at Bethabara or Bethany? (Many Bible manuscripts say Bethany).⁹⁹
6. Was the "doxology" ("For thine is the kingdom...") in the original Lord's Prayer?¹⁰⁰
7. How should baptism be performed? What should be said over the sacraments?¹⁰¹
8. What does the Book of Revelation mean about the Whore of All the Earth?¹⁰²
9. Protestants and Catholics have always disagreed over faith and works. The Book of Mormon solves the problem in one sentence: "It is by grace we are saved, after all we can do"¹⁰³
10. Why precisely is the atonement necessary?

SECRETS THAT ROCK CHRISTIANITY

Critics of Christianity like to remind us that Gnostic gospels exist that are just as old as the traditional gospels. Some of them say that Jesus survived, and did not die on the cross. Which should we believe - the orthodox or the gnostic version?¹⁰⁴ The Book of Mormon solves the problem by providing independent testimony that the Gnostics were wrong - Jesus definitely did die for us on the cross.

NEW DISCOVERIES THAT SEEMED TO CAST DOUBT ON THE BIBLE

The earliest surviving Bibles¹⁰⁵ miss out Mark 16:9-20 (which concerns the resurrection). Worse, scholars commonly believe that Mark was the original gospel, and that Luke and Matthew simply added to it, so Mark is very important. Worse yet, there is evidence of other changes as well.¹⁰⁶ So, many scholars conclude that the resurrection story was not strong in the original scriptures, and so should not be taken literally. What are we to believe?

Then in the 1960s, reference was found to a "secret gospel of Mark". It was apparently used by Clement and other early church leaders, but not made public. It includes material that is not only new, but completely strange to traditional Christianity.¹⁰⁷ What are we to conclude?

⁹⁷ Insights March '88.

⁹⁸ Alma 45:19 and 3 Nephi 28:15-23 introduce the doctrine of translation.

⁹⁹ McConkie (b) 1:131-132

¹⁰⁰ McConkie (b) 1:237

¹⁰¹ McConkie (b) 2:250

¹⁰² McConkie (b) 3:550-551

¹⁰³ 2 Nephi 25:23

¹⁰⁴ See for example Bagent

¹⁰⁵ The codex Sinaiticus, codex Vaticanus, and others.

¹⁰⁶ Bentley ch 5.

¹⁰⁷ Smith (b).

The Book of Mormon solves the problem by showing that secret teachings normal¹⁰⁸, and so that later prophets are allowed to edit earlier prophets (almost the whole Book of Mormon is an abridgement of other books that are now lost). 3 Nephi 23:6-12 shows how details of the Resurrection were well known, yet were not put in the scriptures until later.

So without the Book of Mormon, modern scholarship weakens our faith in Christ. With the Book of Mormon, modern scholarship just strengthens it.

THE CREATION AND EVOLUTION

According to Genesis, Adam was our common ancestor, circa 4000 BC. Most scientists say "Rubbish - there were humans around before then." ONLY the Book of Mormon allows us to take account of all the evidence - the written history, AND the scientific artifacts. It shows how the history of God's people is probably a "lineage history",¹⁰⁹ seen from a particular point of view (Ether in his cave, Nephi on his throne, Mormon during battle, etc.)

EDEN, EVIL, AND ARCHEOLOGY

According to traditional Christianity, God intended earth to remain the garden of Eden forever.¹¹⁰ Then man messed it up by sinning. So why do archaeologists dig up dead bones from many thousands of years before Eden? The Book of Mormon gives the answer. The garden of Eden was NOT natural.¹¹¹ Evil is necessary. In Eden, God apparently intervened to change the natural order, in order to have the right conditions for the initial choice. This ignorant, naive state was not how God intended this world to be.¹¹² Eden was temporary - perhaps just a few years out of the huge age of the earth.

ETERNAL AND UNCHANGING TRUTH

Biblical manuscripts have gathered errors over the centuries.¹¹³ But the Book of Mormon, where it quotes the Bible, provides a more reliable version. See for example 2 Nephi 12:16, footnote 16a.¹¹⁴ Where it does not quote the Bible, we still have the original copies. What could be better?

MORE CHRISTIAN THAN THE BIBLE?

What evidence tells us that the Bible is true? The same evidence supports the Book of Mormon even more strongly! For example: We are told that "the Bible is true because"¹¹⁵ it has always been accepted

¹⁰⁸ See 3 Nephi 26:9-11, and remember that two thirds of the Book of Mormon was never allowed to be translated. See also Smith (b) 145. The last verses in Mark can be traced to the first half of the second century - that is, the same period as the earliest copies of the rest of Mark.

¹⁰⁹ That is, the record of just one family. For example, the descendants of Abraham, or of Nephi. See point 115.

¹¹⁰ Lion 103

¹¹¹ By nature, people are ignorant and rebellious. Mosiah 3:11-19; Alma 26:21.

¹¹² 2 Nephi 2:11-12, 22-23

¹¹³ For examples of losses and changes, see Griffith (b) ch 6.

¹¹⁴ See also Insights Sep '84; June '86.

¹¹⁵ Helps 3

as inspired [among believers]. But the Bible canon took centuries to be decided, while the Book of Mormon was accepted from the first day. "The Bible is true because"¹¹⁶ it is THE revelation of God. Yet while the Bible was first given to the ancient world, only the Book of Mormon specifically claims to be the revelation for the modern world.¹¹⁷ "The Bible is true because" it centres in God incarnate in Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon centres on Christ even more plainly and more frequently than the Bible itself!¹¹⁸

YOU CANNOT REJECT THE BOOK OF MORMON WITHOUT FIRST REJECTING THE BIBLE:

1. "We don't need any more prophets" or "the new message opposes the old scripture". This is what the Pharisees said against Christ.¹¹⁹
2. "The language style is not very polished". This is what Origen used to support the truth of the Bible - a forger would have been more careful.¹²⁰
3. "Its author is no good". This was always a complaint against Jesus and the apostles.¹²¹
4. "It contains mistakes"? The only minor inconsistencies in the Book of Mormon are easily explained as a result of being written in a form of shorthand. Such "inconsistencies" are far worse in the Bible.¹²² And the Bible is better attested than just about any other ancient document! So if the Book of Mormon goes, we may as well say good-bye to all of ancient history.

¹¹⁶ SDuch as Unger 8-13

¹¹⁷ Mormon 8:5-35

¹¹⁸ For example, the Book of Mormon refers to Christ on average every 2.8 verses. - Ensign Feb '88 p.12

¹¹⁹ Matt 23:29-32; John 7:40-43, 9:28-29; Evanson 43-44

¹²⁰ CWHN 3 ch 4 footnote 6.

¹²¹ Evanton; CWHN 4 ch 1

¹²² Compare Deuteronomy 2:19 and Joshua 13:25; Joshua 11:16,17,23; 12:7,8; 21:43 and Joshua 13:1-6; Joshua 15:63 and Judges 1:8; Joshua 12:10,12,16,21,23 and Joshua 15:63; 16:10; 17:11-12; Judges 1:22-25

3 Has the book been historically proven?

The Book of Mormon proves the existence of Deity in a subjective sense. But do the various tests prove the Book of Mormon itself?

HOW DO YOU DEFINE PROOF?

Sometimes people say the Book of Mormon has not been proven (and critics love this!). But if we say the Book of Mormon has not been proven, we are making a statement about the nature of proof, not about the book. According to philosophers of science like Karl Popper, science does not prove anything. This is because someone can always come up with an alternative explanation. So all we really have is evidence.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

Some evidence is fairly clear cut. For example, people either wrote on metal plates or they didn't. But most evidence is circumstantial. Other evidence has become mixed up over the years. For example, the legends of the great white god Quetzalcoatl not only refer to the original Quetzalcoatl, but to a number of later kings who took the same name. In addition, the legends that were written down by the Maya after the Spanish invaded are influenced by the Spanish. It is easy to find mundane explanations for many details. But the fact remains that, like the smoking gun at the scene of the crime, the evidence is in the right place at the right time. And it is being discovered in great quantities - a quiet witness to the truth of the Book of Mormon.

AN EXAMPLE OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE: STELA 5, IZAPA.

Imagine central America in 600 BC (or a little later). Someone important has something to say. The usual way was to use picture writing - where pictures represent ideas. Of course, as anyone knows who has used pictures as symbols, a picture can mean many different things. Consider for example the modern meanings of a cross, a flaming torch, or a smiley face. To make matters more interesting, writing of that time was well known for its double meanings and puns. The writing in question consisted of a picture of the tree of life, with various people and other images. This writing, a stone image, was unearthed in the twentieth century in Izapa (a Mayan archaeological site). One scholar found 110 parallels between it and the important Book of Mormon story of Lehi's dream.¹²³ Other scholars say these are coincidence, and the stone can be interpreted in other ways. So this is not "final proof". It is, however, precisely what we would expect if an early American was to describe Lehi's dream from the Book of Mormon.

RESPONSIBLE SCHOLARSHIP - ACCEPTING CRITICISM

Responsible LDS scholars accept valid criticisms (see for example the better internet discussion groups such as SAMU). No doubt some of the evidence in this book will turn out to be coincidence. But in the mean time more evidence is being discovered. Most of it cannot be adequately explained without accepting the Book of Mormon. For example, the Mayan legends of the Great White God may be influenced by the Spanish, but this does not explain the distinct Book of Mormon parts, or the fact that these legends are shared by so many other groups (including some that were never "Christianised"). The evidence cannot be easily dismissed.

PSEUDO-SCIENCE OR SOUND SCHOLARSHIP?

Book of Mormon believers are human, and small parts of this evidence will no doubt be proven wrong. But the evidence is there to see. In contrast, critics often state their opinions as fact without any evidence at all. Take for example, the best selling "A History of God". Within the first few pages, the

¹²³ Ensign Jun '88 p.54; Ludlow; Sorenson 187

author states or implies that spiritual things are impossible to prove and that God "is a human idea" that was "not intended to be taken literally".¹²⁴ A noted reviewer described the book as "learned" scholarship from "a genius". Why? Could it be because the reviewer himself was selling another book with the same ideas?¹²⁵

THEORETICAL PROOF

All scientists can ever "prove" is that any given theory has not been disproven so far. So, by this test, the Book of Mormon is proven to be true. If on the other hand you want logically rigorous proof, you need precise definitions of what is meant. Scholars like John Sorenson use this method. He set asked a precise question: is the Book of Mormon "plausible", meaning that it agrees with the known data? The Book of Mormon comfortably passes the test, and is thus "proven".

"Indeed, confronted with a multiplicity of interpretations of varying plausibility and complexity - and all lacking absolute certainty - one of our classical ancestors, conversant with the law of parsimony, might well have opted for divine revelation as the simplest and therefore correct explanation."

And that is from a non-LDS scholar.¹²⁶

EXPERIMENTAL PROOF:

The LDS church is guilty of not using the Book of Mormon as much as it should.¹²⁷ Despite this, there is strong evidence that religion in general, and Book of Mormon religion in particular, improves happiness, coping with stress, recovery from physical illness, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, divorce, pro-social development in teenagers, school performance, etc., etc.¹²⁸ The bottom line is, the Book of Mormon works.

LEGAL PROOF?

Ten million people have claimed that the Book of Mormon is a genuine ancient record. Would a court find it guilty of fraud? Civil cases are proven on the balance of probabilities. Criminal cases are proven if they are "beyond reasonable doubt". Either way, you are the judge. Is it probable that Joseph Smith invented all this? Is it reasonable that he came up with detailed and accurate descriptions of things that were not discovered for another hundred years? If not, we can conclude that the Book of Mormon is guilty as charged.

ARCHEOLOGICAL PROOF

Most educated Bible readers do not talk about "archeological proof" any more. For example, perhaps the most famous guide to Bible archeology¹²⁹ concluded:

"If we now ask ourselves again, "Well, is the Bible right after all?", some readers will answer with a definite "yes", while others will answer with a no less definite "no". Between these two answers there is room for a wide variety of opinion." The Book of Mormon is in the same position. Ultimately, you must decide.

¹²⁴ Armstrong 9-11

¹²⁵ A. N. Wilson. His book, "Jesus, the Evidence", ignores the evidence of the Book of Mormon.

¹²⁶ Hansen (b) p.18

¹²⁷ Benson 51-2; CWHN 10:368, 401, 470, etc.

¹²⁸ Ensign, Oct '94 p.32; Scharffs part XII; CN 20 Jan'85 p.7; Weston.

¹²⁹ History 387

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However, the Book of Mormon is unique. Just compare the Bible form example. When the Bible is shown to be right about some historical fact, sceptics can say "O.K., so it is an ancient book, but that is all I will admit. That does not mean it is true." However, when the same kind of evidence is discovered for the Book of Mormon, there is no middle ground. The book did not appear until 1830, and nobody could translate the early American languages back then. So either the Book of Mormon was found and translated by inspiration from God, or all the discoveries are wrong. It is all or nothing.

So while physical evidence cannot prove the Bible,¹³⁰ it can (and in my opinion does) prove the Book of Mormon.

¹³⁰ Millard 42

4 Do most scientists believe in it?

DO YOU MEAN THE SCIENTISTS WHO HAVE READ IT OR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT?

The big problem is, most people - scientists included - have not read the Book of Mormon. Since the renaissance, science has been based on assuming there is no divine intervention. So the big challenge is for somebody trained in science to (1) read the book, and (2) read it with an open mind.

SOME STATISTICS¹³¹

- The LDS Church as a whole attracts more educated people than most other churches.¹³²
- There are more scientific publications per thousand people from Utah (headquarters of the LDS church) than any other American state. A full 21% ahead of the number two state - and it has been number one for the past fifty years!
- The mounting evidence is making a difference. A recent study show that those scientists who read the Book of Mormon have far more trust in that book now than they did at a similar study in the 1950s. Since 1955, five times as many scientists "strongly agreed" that the scriptures were inspired. The opposite happened for all the churches that did not accept the Book of Mormon - their scientists' belief declined.
- In a poll of professional scientists, 83% members of the LDS church considered themselves strong believers. the next closest Christian church had 44%

JESUS, SCIENCE, AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

The same poll asked scientists if they believed that Jesus was divine. Of LDS believers, 91% had a "Very Strong" conviction, while all the other faiths maintained a spread between "Weak" and "Very Strong," (mostly "Fair"). So the Book of Mormon makes a real difference.

DOES EVERY NON-LDS SCIENTIST ACCEPT IT?

This is very unlikely, because most scientists have never read the Book of Mormon. And how many scientists are able to see it objectively? Scientists are human. And an academic reputation is usually built upon not believing in angels. When scholars take the book seriously, they often admit that they just "don't know what to make of it", As with a non-LDS scholar when he found chiasmic poetry in the Book of Mormon.¹³³

DOES EVERY MESOAMERICAN SCHOLAR ACCEPT IT?

Most mesoamerican scholars do not specialise in the period covered by the Book of Mormon. Expecting a specialist on Aztecs to have special insights into the Pre-classic Maya is like expecting a student of the Industrial Revolution to have special insights into the Roman Empire.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EVIDENCE - AND PEER REVIEW

Primary evidence (specific details such as published by FARMS) directly supports the Book of Mormon story as a whole, and secondary evidence (general points such as the ancient writings on metal plates) supports it indirectly. Sometimes people ask whether Book of Mormon evidence appears in peer reviewed journals - i.e. where the non-LDS academic community has a say. The answer is yes, for secondary evidence, and partly yes for primary evidence. The Journal of Book of Mormon Evidence,

¹³¹ from a summary hat is fully referenced on the internet, <http://www.bolis.com/list-archives/united-order-digest/>

¹³² CN, 16 Oct '83 p.3

¹³³ Peterson 7, 29-30; CWHN 8:239-240

for example, is peer reviewed. For serious criticisms by well informed members and non members, try a forum like SAMU on the internet.

ARE THE CRITICS WELL INFORMED?

As noted, non-LDS scientists do not study the Book of Mormon in any depth. Hence a highly respected specialist on the Maya, Dr Michael Coe, criticised the Book of Mormon on the assumption that it describes events throughout the entire New World. However, the Book of Mormon says nothing of the kind, so most of what Coe wrote was irrelevant. To be fair, many believers have assumed the same thing. We all need to read more carefully!

REVELATION AND SCIENCE

Revelation is top - down, and science is bottom - up. Revelation gives the important facts - e.g. what is right and wrong, who the true prophets were, and what events illustrated their message. Science starts with details - e.g. types of pottery and surviving inscriptions, and tries to reconstruct the big picture. Science has to follow rules or it could never work. One rule is that the simplest explanation for evidence must be followed. Since the surviving evidence is always limited this rule means that something may be true, but a good scientist may still have to reject it! For example, before Columbus discovered America, the available evidence suggested there was no significant land west of Africa until you came to India. Because of this, native Americans were labelled as Indians. That was good science because it was based on the best available knowledge at the time. But was it true?

SCIENCE TAKES A LONG TIME TO CATCH UP WITH REVELATION.

A classic question is “how did people first reach the Americas?” There is not much evidence to go on, so the simplest explanation is to look at a map. Crossing the ocean looks difficult, while crossing the Bering Strait from Siberia looks easier. So scientists did some research and found that, in an ice age, people could probably walk across the Bering Strait without getting their feet wet. So the Book of Mormon, which talks about crossing the ocean, is rejected as unscientific. Then as the years go by, more evidence was found to support ocean crossings. But this was still not the simplest explanation, so it was still rejected as unscientific. Finally it has been shown that the Bering strait was actually uncrossable until long after men appeared in the Americas. So today the simplest explanation must include some ocean crossings. That is now scientific, whereas it used to be unscientific. That is the problem that the Book of Mormon faces with the scientific community! Fortunately, time is on our side.

SCIENTIFIC CONCLUSIONS ARE ALWAYS CHANGING

If a scientist seems convinced that something is right or wrong, don't worry. Strong words are normal. To illustrate how good scientists can disagree strongly over even ordinary topics, let us look at just one single issue of the respected “New Scientist” magazine. As I write, the latest issue I have is 15th Feb 1997.¹³⁴

- One writer discusses superstring membrane theory, marked by “considerable scepticism by the orthodox superstring community. One string theorist I knew would literally cover up his ears whenever the word ‘membrane’ was uttered within his earshot. The mood of the time was summarised by Nobel laureate Murray Gell-Mann with the words: ‘eleven dimensional super-gravity (ugh!)’” Ten years on, it's a Nobel prize winning theory.
- A book reviewer discussed the constant scientific battles between environmentalists and their critics.
- Another reviewer chronicled the “ferocity” of arguments between supporters of the Big Bang theory and the Steady State theory. In years gone by, Steady State's implication of “matter out of nothing” was “a hanging and flogging offence”. But now quantum physics makes it orthodox.

¹³⁴ Michael Duff, letters, p.49;

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- Another writer notes that ancient remains dug up from the Columbia river were dismissed as “yet another native American skeleton”. Yet initial studies suggest it is caucasian - “tangible evidence to challenge the received theory of the colonisation of North America.”
- Other disagreements were regarding genetic engineering, the state of the antarctic ice sheet, the justification for supporting Soviet nuclear plants, measuring scientific achievement, and so on. So disagreements are normal. And when the scientific community changes its mind on controversial topics, it does so quietly - as for example over the effects of lead in petrol, acid rain, CFCs, etc.¹³⁵ Or over the Bering Strait theory, cement, writing on metal plates, etc. You hear when they disagree. You do not hear when they agree.

SCIENTISTS ARE HUMAN

A scientist is just as likely to reject the unfamiliar as anyone else. For example, a recent study¹³⁶ confirmed the frequent observation that (at least in Europe) sexism is normal in science. Women have to achieve 2.5 times as much recognition as men to be given the same recognition. Similarly, ethnic minorities almost never reach the highest levels of the scientific community. Scientists are human - prejudice is universal.

THE SMITHSONIAN RETREAT

The Smithsonian Institution produces a statement explaining why they do not use the Book of Mormon. But as the years go by, they keep having to change the statement as things they say the Book of Mormon got wrong turn out to be right after all. The latest version of the statement I saw is already out of date (for example, regarding silk, barley and the Bering land bridge). Some of its generalisations even disagree with Smithsonian scientists.¹³⁷ Most of the others are simply irrelevant to the Book of Mormon.

Public opinion influences the Smithsonian,¹³⁸ just as it influences public institutions the world over. The challenge of course for Book of Mormon readers is not to follow the world's wisdom, but to follow Jesus!

¹³⁵ NS 30 Nov 96 p.30 - “Silence of the Experts” by Fred Pearce

¹³⁶ “Science Now” R4 24 May '97

¹³⁷ For a detailed review of the 1989 version of the Smithsonian statement, see the FARMS “Evaluation” booklet.

¹³⁸ For example, the Smithsonian felt obliged to cancel part of an exhibition on the Atom bomb (NS 8 Apr '95 p.42). The intention was to include some views that opposed the Bomb, and to give details of the deaths that it caused, but some Americans did not like this.

5 Have the gold plates been put on show?

Question: where are the plates now?

Answer: the same place as the Ten Commandments. Why does it matter? Would pieces of metal convert anyone to Christ?

If the plates had not been taken, they could not have fulfilled the scriptures. The original copies of every book of the Bible have disappeared without trace. Apocryphal books (as well as the Bible) show several examples of an angel delivering a book, then taking it away again, or burying sacred objects.¹³⁹ If an angel did not bury the record again, then the prophet was expected to do so.¹⁴⁰

If Joseph was a fraud, why did he claim to have plates? Nobody had ever discovered gold plates before. And how do you explain the many witnesses?

If it was Joseph's idea to produce a religious text, why not copy the best known example? Mohammed did not need plates to write the Holy Quran, so why did Joseph?

¹³⁹ Peterson 22-23; Insights Nov '90; Examples are the Vision of Hermas, or the fourth century man of Tarsus who was visited by an angel three times. He was told to dig up a hidden book written by Paul, and was once chastised for his disobedience - just like Joseph. - Erickson (e)

¹⁴⁰ CWHN 8:41 note 60; 8:74-75.

6 Have the ruined cities been found?

The Book of Mormon has been even more successful in this area than Bible archeology. To see why, imagine a conversation between a critic of the Book of Mormon and a well informed student.¹⁴¹

Critic: Bible cities have been found, but Book of Mormon cities have not!

Student: Hold on there. The Book of Mormon mentions Jerusalem and other cities, and these have been found!

Critic: That's cheating - Jerusalem was never lost.

Student: Exactly! And most Bible cities were never lost either. The vast majority of Biblical sites were "discovered" because the old names were still there. The remainder were located simply by triangulation - for example, there is only one ruined site between **A** and **B**, so we assume it is the one the Bible says was between **A** and **B**. This says nothing about the Bible being inspired.

Critic: But the fact is, all the sites have been found!

Student: Have they? Despite being the most studied book in all the world, 45% of the place names are still lost -for example, there are twenty candidates for Mount Sinai.

Critic: Well many were found anyway.

Student: Even atheists accept that the Bible was written in the ancient Middle East, so of course the cities are there. What does it prove? On the other hand, the Book of Mormon was translated by Joseph Smith, so if he finds even one single lost site we must conclude that he was either impossibly lucky or else he was inspired.

Critic: O.K., name one site that Joseph Smith got right.

Student: Nahom.

Critic. Oh... O.K., so Joseph Smith was extremely lucky. Name another one.

Student: Bountiful.

Critic. Er - but those sites are in the Old World. What about the Americas? You would expect some of those sites to be found by now if they had cities like in the Bible.

Student: OK, so 55% of Bible cities have been found, do you expect us to find 55% of Book of Mormon lands?

Critic: Yes!

Student: But far more people study the Holy land than study the ancient Americas, and they have a several hundred years head start. It wasn't until the 1850s that even one Old Testament name to be found outside the Bible.¹⁴²

Critic: All right, but I'd still expect to find, say, 20% of your cities.

Student: Even though the Americas are a hundred times bigger area to search?

Critic: - O.K, but I'd still expect to find, say, 5% of those cities.

Student: Yes, if the Americas were a nice dry desert like much of the Holy land, so remains could be preserved... but much of the continent had humid forests

Critic: Well I'd expect to find, say, 2% of your cities then.

Student: Yes, if the archeologists had helpful early documents, like the Onomasticon of Eusebius (with its list of cities and distances between them), but they do not - partly because the Spanish conquerors deliberately destroyed the native books they found.

Critic: Er - but if you tried hard you'd have a fair idea of, maybe 1%...

Student: If many of the original names survived, which they do not...

Critic: Well O.K., but I'd still expect a guess at that 1%...

¹⁴¹ "Basic Methodological Problems with the Anti-Mormon Approach to the Geography and Archaeology of the Book of Mormon" by William J. Hamblin. JB 2/1 (Spring 1993) pp. 161-197

¹⁴² Jehu of Judah, on the "black obelisk" in Nimrud.

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Student: Yes, if there was some kind of inscriptions on the ruins that are found from the early (pre-Classic) period, but most ruins from that period are silent...

Critic: Er... well I'd still expect maybe a wild guess at the 1% ...

Student: Actually, we can do a lot better than a wild guess!

There is good evidence for identifying the city of the Jaredite king Lib,¹⁴³ the river Sidon,¹⁴⁴ Zarahemla, Helam, Lehi-Nephi, etc. with archaeological sites.¹⁴⁵ Even when the Book of Mormon seems to get it wrong, it turns out to be right - for example, the description of the "narrow neck of land" perfectly fits how the Nephites would have seen the Isthmus of Tehuantepec,¹⁴⁶ yet is not how modern readers see it. Sometimes the presumed real world geography helps solve what otherwise seem to be problems in the text, such as the position of the city Aaron.¹⁴⁷ Joseph Smith knew nothing of central America,¹⁴⁸ but the authors of the Book of Mormon obviously knew a lot.

The Quiche Maya claimed to come from a place in the East called Tulan (or Civan-Tulan). It is equivalent to the name Bountiful in English. They told the Europeans that it "bordered on Babylonia", just like Nephi's land of Bountiful in the Arabian peninsula.¹⁴⁹ "Bountiful" may also have been the name for a Mesoamerican city known for its temples and libraries.¹⁵⁰ There is a region in central America still referred to as the "Borders of the Sea",¹⁵¹ just as in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon city Sidom was probably near the modern archeological site of Zactan. And both words have the same root meaning - "lime".¹⁵²

BEWARE GENERALISATIONS! - A NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY STATEMENT

If it seems that the Book of Mormon is superficially behind the Bible, we simply need to read more carefully. For example, a critic on the internet showed a letter dated 1981 from the National Geographic, that read:

“Although many Mormon sources claim that the Book of Mormon has been substantiated by archaeological findings, this claim has not been scientifically substantiated. However, several locations in the Bible have.”

On the surface, it looks bad. Now imagine the words were swapped round.

“Although many Fundamentalist sources claim that the Bible has been substantiated by archaeological findings, this claim has not been scientifically substantiated. However, several locations in the Book of Mormon have.”

¹⁴³ "San Lorenzo..." (FARMS)

¹⁴⁴ "A correlation of the Sidon..." (FARMS)

¹⁴⁵ See Sorenson 201-206, 230, 255, 347, ...in fact, the whole book!

¹⁴⁶ In terms of width, North-South orientation, etc. Griffith (b) 72; Insights May '90

¹⁴⁷ Sorenson 204

¹⁴⁸ Joseph assumed the book dealt with the all of North and South America.

¹⁴⁹ CR Oct. 1954 p.110

¹⁵⁰ Erickson (c)

¹⁵¹ Sorenson 33

¹⁵² Sorenson 205

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Both statements are true. Locations in both books have been scientifically substantiated (in that they fulfill all the requirements given in the text) but neither book has been substantiated as a whole (because the texts also include references to miracles). It is highly unlikely that the person who wrote the statement had even read the Book of Mormon in any depth, so the statement is of passing interest but no more.

7 More questions the critics ask

THE CRITICS' RETREAT

The Book of Mormon is a challenge to atheism, agnosticism, and traditional religion. So the world is full of critics. Just check the internet for examples! Before answering some common questions, let me quote at length from a recent presentation by Noel B. Reynolds¹⁵³

It may be of interest for you to hear what two young evangelical scholars recently told their own colleagues in comparing evangelical criticisms to the research published by faithful LDS scholars in recent years. In a paper that they hope to publish in a major theological journal, they pointed out that certain evangelical beliefs about Mormons are nothing more than myths or wishful thinking. . . . [they] went on to draw several conclusions from their study of the debate between Mormons and evangelicals, much of which focuses on the Book of Mormon:

Conclusion #1 There are many qualified Mormon scholars.

Conclusion #2 Mormon scholars and apologists have answered most of the evangelical criticisms.

Conclusion #3 There are no evangelical books that interact responsibly with contemporary LDS scholarly and apologetic writings.

Conclusion #4 At the scholarly level, evangelicals are losing the debate with the Mormons.

And conclusion #5 Evangelicals involved in the counter-cult (anti-Mormon) movement lack the skills and training necessary to answer Mormon scholarly apologetic.

They went on to explain, and I quote:

"Having read an immense amount of the scholarly literature published by LDS intellectuals; having read a great deal of apologetic material produced by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS); and having read or examined most evangelical works on Mormonism, we feel that we are justified in our conclusions."

A QUERY FROM ANOSTICS AND ATHEISTS: "HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE IN RELIGION?"

More to the point, how can anybody NOT believe in religion? "Spiritual" experiences are normal, according to Dr George Gallup Jnr (of the Gallup polling organisation). "Nearly half of the populaces of the United states and Great Britain... have experienced something in the range of the paranormal...on a very immediate and personal level".¹⁵⁴ 69% of Americans believe they have had some kind of contact with angels.¹⁵⁵

A "spirit world" is scientifically very reasonable. Think about "dimensions" for a moment. String theory (the way physicists explain reality) requires eleven dimensional space.¹⁵⁶ But you only need five dimensions to explain every miracle in the scriptures.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ BYU Forum Assembly May 27, 1997

¹⁵⁴ "In Search of the Dead", BBC2, Summer '92.

¹⁵⁵ Network First 16 Dec '95 ITV. See also point 157.

¹⁵⁶ NS 10 Sep '95 p.28. As one applied physicist put it, "there is speculation, there is wild speculation, and there is cosmology" - Spectator 27-6-92 p.17.

ISN'T THE "MORMON CHURCH" A CULT?

Everyone from the New Testament church to the Salvation Army has been attacked as a "cult" at one time or another. I strongly recommend the book "Cults" by Harrison for an informed investigation of

30 000 CHANGES IN THE TEXT

... Of the New Testament.¹⁵⁸ 4000 in the Book of Mormon. This second number is the favourite attack of professional anti-Mormons. Is that the best they can do? The man who translated the Book of Mormon into Arabic, Sami Hanna, was told by anti-Mormons about these "changes". He researched the claims, and found out the changes were because the first edition had terrible English grammar. Why? Because it was closer to Hebrew grammar! He went on to join the LDS Church.¹⁵⁹

DO SIMILARITIES WITH THE KING JAMES BIBLE PROVE ANYTHING?

- The "King James Bible" language was once mocked, but is now shown to be the only language appropriate to the task.¹⁶⁰
- Supposed similarities with the Bible are nothing compared with "repeats" within the Bible itself!¹⁶¹
- The Isaiah chapters chosen are particularly pertinent for the Latter days.¹⁶²
- On the whole, the meanings of the Isaiah quotations in the Book of Mormon are closer to those in the Dead Sea Scrolls than they are to the King James Bible.¹⁶³
- Many of the "changes" look major, but are simple errors in Hebrew. For example, copying three dashes instead of four, or confusing similar sounding words.¹⁶⁴
- Old Testament "quotations" are entirely in keeping with the Israelite culture of the time.¹⁶⁵ As for New Testament "quotations", many ideas and phrases once thought to originate in the New Testament are now known to be much older. For example, Paul's "Faith, Hope and Charity" is drawn from "an older, unknown source".¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁷ There is not space to discuss this here. It is based on extrapolating a famous mathematicians' concept, "flatland". See also Doctrine & Covenants 130:6-7; Moses 1:27.

¹⁵⁸ In the 1881-85 English Revised Version - just one of the 250 English translations since the King James Version. - Harper

¹⁵⁹ Jorgensen (a). The biggest change of all was in 1 Nephi 11:21. "Eternal Father" (a title of Jesus, as creator of the earth) was changed to "son of the Eternal Father" (to avoid confusion).

¹⁶⁰ CWHN 8:88+

¹⁶¹ Examples: multiplying food, saying a wife is a sister, gaining political office by interpreting dreams, etc. New Era Mar '72 p.40. See also CWHN 11 part 1; Welch; point 39.

¹⁶² "The Isaiah Quotation..." (FARMS)

¹⁶³ Insights June '84

¹⁶⁴ Ensign Oct '86 p.64.

¹⁶⁵ CWHN 8:87. Compare Isaiah and Micah, Kings and Chronicles, etc.

¹⁶⁶ CWHN 8:79,88+, 218. Of course, a lot of similarity is to be expected, as (1) the same God inspired both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, and (b) Joseph Smith was translating for an audience familiar with Bible phrases.

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- Critics used to say that 2 Nephi 1:14 quotes Shakespeare ... but it is closer to ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts.¹⁶⁷
- The Dead Sea Scrolls were also accused of being crude imitations of scripture ... until people finally looked at them seriously.¹⁶⁸

DOES IT HAVE THE MARKS OF A FORGERY?

By looking at proven forgeries, it is possible to see patterns. For example, forgers tend to avoid unsympathetic critics, keep the document short, and avoid writing history.

Joseph Smith was obviously not a forger!¹⁶⁹

IS IT BASED ON OTHER NINETEENTH CENTURY BOOKS?

Even after all these years, uninformed critics still say the Book of Mormon was copied from Solomon Spaulding's "Manuscript Found" (MF), or Ethan Smith's "View of the Hebrews" (VOTH). As Gordon B. Hinckley said, "To compare the Book of Mormon with these is like comparing a man to a horse. It is true they both walk, but beyond this there is little similarity."¹⁷⁰ VOTH is about the ten lost tribes of Israel in Roman times, using lots of scriptures and evidences that are ignored or contradicted by the Book of Mormon. One non-LDS scholar sums the two books up as "far too dissimilar to suggest plagiarism".¹⁷¹ MF is about a Roman ship, blown off course in the 4th Century AD. It was the subject of much rumour, because the actual manuscript was lost. When it was found in 1884, the non-LDS scholars who examined it said "The theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon in the traditional manuscript of Solomon Spaulding will probably have to be relinquished ... [we] could detect no resemblance between the two."¹⁷²

DO THE CRITICS ALL HONEST AND SCHOLARLY?

Close inspection reveals that many attacks on the Book of Mormon use forged documents. This has been well documented, so I won't spend much time on the subject.

Examples from 1830 to the present include:

- * Affidavits against Joseph Smith produced by P. Hurlbut - a man who's own character was so notorious that his publisher, E.D. Howe, would not even use his name when they were printed. The affidavits contradicted each other, were all in Hurlbut's writing style, and are factually very inaccurate, but critics still rely on them.¹⁷³
- * The "Confession of Oliver Overstreet": by a man who said that Oliver Cowdery denied his testimony. Amongst its many gaffes, the pamphlet claims to be printed at a printing house that never existed, and no copies can be traced back before this century.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ CWHN 8:5; 7:162; Smith, R.F.

¹⁶⁸ CWHN 1:242-3

¹⁶⁹ CWHN 8: chapter 3

¹⁷⁰ Ensign, Nov. '93 p.51 For details, see Welch (d); Scarffs 166.

¹⁷¹ Hansen, K. 11

¹⁷² Talmage (b) 501-502.

¹⁷³ Brown 2:229-234. "The Myth Makers" in CWHN 11, and Insights Sep '93.

¹⁷⁴ Ensign, Apr '87 "I Have A Question".

* The "Salamander Letter" claimed to be an old document that proved the Book of Mormon was no good. Many people believed it in the 1980s, until the forger killed two people and later confessed all to the police.¹⁷⁵

If the Book of Mormon was a fake, would its opponents need to resort to fabricating evidence against it? What do you think?

IS IT LIKE OTHER CENTURY BOOKS ABOUT THE ANCIENT WORLD?

No. It is too restrained, and its language too simple.¹⁷⁶ Its messages do have some parallels in the nineteenth century, but only because they are universal - they have parallels in every century. Some modern critics admit they did not come from Joseph Smith's time (hence the opposition), and vaguely assume they came from ancient "hermetic" writings.¹⁷⁷ Others say it is "obviously" pro-Catholic, or "obviously" anti-Catholic, or it is "obviously" not worth reading.¹⁷⁸ Clearly the book confounds the critics. It is in a class of its own.

FAMOUS NAMES AMONG THE CRITICS

Opponents of the Book of Mormon tend to use the same old arguments, and the same names tend to come up again and again. But these star witnesses do not bear close examination. Perhaps best known is Fawn Brodie, who wrote a novel about Joseph Smith and called it a biography. "A number of scholars have raised serious questions about the limitations of her research, her fundamental assumptions, and her use of evidence."¹⁷⁹ In recent times a couple called the Tanners have made their living by photocopying old documents out of context, and "can expect little sympathy from serious historians".¹⁸⁰

Sometimes critics quote David Whitmer, who fell out with Joseph Smith. He had once been persuaded by apostates to claim to receive revelations. He later regretted this and withdrew those claims. He made a similar claim when bitter at the end of his life but died before he could reconsider. His human foibles came and went, but one thing did not change - his testimony of the Book of Mormon, which was even placed on his tombstone.¹⁸¹

Sometimes critics quote B. H. Roberts, an old LDS General Authority (1888-1933). He once listed every objection to the Book of Mormon he could think of. What critics forget is that he did this just so he could be prepared for debates. He enthusiastically promoted the Book of Mormon until his death.¹⁸² Even more disturbing for the serious critic, as the years have passed, more and more of Roberts' "objections" have turned out to be unexpected evidences that support the Book of Mormon - for

¹⁷⁵ Lindsey

¹⁷⁶ CWHN 5:123; 8:68

¹⁷⁷ TLS 24 Mar '95 p.10-11; CWHN 7:1-60; 8:279-80; Welch 20.

¹⁷⁸ CWHN 8 chapters 6-8

¹⁷⁹ Hansen, K. 248 See also CWHN 11 parts 1 and 2.

¹⁸⁰ Scharffs 90-91 Review 1993; Winwood 101-105 Brown volumes 1 and 2.

¹⁸¹ Anderson 161-4; Peterson 4

¹⁸² Welch; Roberts (b)

example, he thought the writing was repetitive, but it can now be shown that other genuine ancient histories are the same.¹⁸³

MORMONISM IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

It is popular among critics to imagine that most LDS teachings are not found in the Book of Mormon. This may be because they seldom read it. Church organisation, the New Jerusalem, the Godhead, the pre-existence, even the sacrament prayers can be found there.¹⁸⁴ The "deepest" doctrine relies most heavily on the Book of Mormon.¹⁸⁵ Contrast the Bible which, though inspired, does not even define what the gospel is.¹⁸⁶ As one critical scholar had to admit, "With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that many of Joseph Smith's unorthodox ideas were already contained in the Book of Mormon."¹⁸⁷

THE OPPOSITION IS GETTING WORRIED

Disproportionate opposition to the Book of Mormon is powerful evidence of its truth.¹⁸⁸ For example, Britain's main Christian radio show dropped its plans to hear from minority religions after invited a "Mormon" guest to be first. Not because of what he said, but from audience prejudice: "He achieved something no other guest has ever done - he's got hate mail before he's even been on!"¹⁸⁹ There is no obvious evidence to justify such venom.¹⁹⁰ The tactics used against the book and its church are the same as used against the apostles in New Testament times. It makes you think...¹⁹¹

¹⁸³ See Welch for a discussion of each objection.

¹⁸⁴ CN, 4th Jan '92 p.8-9; Griffith 132-139 (Note the exact wording of Helaman 5:47 and Ether 12:41).

¹⁸⁵ See for example Skousen (b)

¹⁸⁶ Compare the clarity of 3 Nephi 27:13-21

¹⁸⁷ Hansen 155

¹⁸⁸ Acts 5:33,38-9

¹⁸⁹ OR2 "Good Morning Sunday" 14 Jul '94

¹⁹⁰ Harrison

¹⁹¹ McConkie (c) ch 49; Evanson 35-48

PART THREE: EVIDENCE

1 Has any really powerful evidence been found?

WRITING ON METAL PLATES

Hugh Nibley was right when he wrote in 1952, "it will not be long before men forget that in Joseph Smith's day the prophet was mocked and derided for his description of the plates more than anything else". Practically no ancient writing on metal plates was known in 1830. And especially not buried in a stone box! Since 1830, over a hundred examples of writing on plates have been found throughout the world. Now we can even show how they were especially significant in Lehi's time.¹⁹² Stone boxes containing valuables have been found in America, just as Joseph Smith described.¹⁹³

KING BENJAMIN'S SERMON

Imagine the situation: It is 1829. You are listening to Joe Smith, an uneducated farm boy, dictate a ten page sermon in one afternoon (Mosiah 2-4), supposedly making it up as he goes along. As you later re-read it, you realise that it is one of the most inspiring sermons ever given. Then over the next 160 years, you discover that it also contains the following:¹⁹⁴

- Seven distinct parallels with ancient **coronation** patterns (the context of Mosiah 1-2)
- The **She-Hekkeyanu** prayer (offered at all Jewish holy days);
- All eight elements of the **Rosh Hashana** (new year festival);
- All eleven elements of **Yom Kippur** (the day of atonement), including using the name of God the correct number of times;
- All thirteen elements of the **Sukkat** (the feast of tabernacles);
- Up to nineteen of the twenty elements common to Jewish and other ancient **farewell** sermons (even Moses only had sixteen in Deuteronomy 31-34, and Paul only had fourteen in Acts 20);
- The six distinct features of early first millennium BC **treaties**;
- Poetry such as **Chiasmus** (in Mosiah 3:18-19 and 5:10-12, etc.);
- And "striking parallels to the **kingship** ideology in Israel and elsewhere in the ancient Near East"

The huge ritual public sermon is now known to be an authentic Jewish tradition.¹⁹⁵ The tower itself had ritual significance to the ancient Jews.¹⁹⁶ Even the plates and the sword of Laban (Mosiah 1:15-16) are far more symbolic than they first appear.¹⁹⁷ But these things are nothing compared to the teachings in Mosiah 2-4. Don't take my word for it - read it for yourself!

¹⁹² Insights Jul '94; Hamblin; Peterson 7

¹⁹³ Cheesman; CWHN 7:40,41,45,56-57. Instructor Aug '60 p.276.

¹⁹⁴ CWHN 7:248-250; "The Treaty/Covenant Pattern in King Benjamin's Address" (and other FARMS reprints in the same part of the FARMS catalogue); FARMS insights Jun '87; Aug '87; Jul '89. See also points 56 ("this day") and 80.

¹⁹⁵ CWHN 6:480.

¹⁹⁶ Insights Aug '95

¹⁹⁷ CWHN 6:502; "Mosiah: the Complex Symbolism..." (FARMS).

IN THE DESERT:

1 Nephi shows signs of being written by someone who knew the ancient desert customs: No fire was allowed (it attracted robbers); places were given different names by each passing group; "mists of darkness" (fog and dust) can lose people even in the daylight;¹⁹⁸ rivers flow only in the start of the year (springtime); the people ate "raw meat", the name of a local dried delicacy even today.¹⁹⁹ How could Joseph Smith have known? But this is nothing compared to the geographical details.

How could Joseph Smith know details about an ancient journey on the other side of the world, and places that appeared on no map available in America?²⁰⁰ The directions given were the ONLY reasonable course in that desert in 600 BC.²⁰¹ Over 20 precise details are given of the route, so that modern travellers have been able to retrace the steps.²⁰² There are many other details Joseph did not know - for example, the period of greatest sufferings coincided with the region with the longest gaps between water holes.²⁰³

"NAHOM":

In 1830, all that was known about the Arabian desert was that there was not greenery. And Nahom was on no map in America. But 1 Nephi 16 said that Ishmael was buried at a place called Nahom, and further on there was a "bountiful" land of trees and fruit where Nephi built his boat. Critics still ridicule this, but both places have apparently now been found, just where Nephi said they were. The place pronounced NA-HUM means "mourning" in Hebrew, and there is an ancient cemetery there. The nearby land now identified as "Bountiful" does indeed have fruit, large trees, iron ore, cliffs, etc.²⁰⁴

CONCRETE PROOF

Heber J. Grant, in 1929, recalled how he was once mocked for believing in the Book of Mormon, because it mentioned cement. Scholars were certain back then that the ancient Americans did not have cement. But Heber J. Grant was not bothered. He knew the book was genuine. He replied, "If my children do not find cement houses, I expect that my grandchildren will." The critic said, "Well, what is the good of talking with a fool like that?" Today, not only has the use of cement been proven, but its first use coincides with the time it was first mentioned in the Book of Mormon.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ Ensign Apr '85 p.52; CWHN 5:43-44; 6:256-7; 8:247

¹⁹⁹ CWHN 5:78; Ensign Oct '76 p.54

²⁰⁰ Most of us don't realise just how ignorant people were about Arabia in Joseph Smith's time. - Peterson 13.

²⁰¹ CWHN 5:110

²⁰² Ensign Sep & Oct 1976; Everton; "Through the Arabian Desert..." (FARMS); Griffith (b) 43.

²⁰³ Ensign Oct '76 p. 49. See also "Through the Arabian Desert..." (FARMS).

²⁰⁴ Insights Sep '86; Peterson 15. See Insights Aug '95 p.7 for iron ore.

²⁰⁵ Instructor Nov '68 p.430; West; CWHN 7:223; Insights May '91; Book of Mormon Institute 354

2 Does the most amazing evidence bear close examination?

It has been claimed that not only does the Bible refer to the Book of Mormon, but it even predicts the exact year the Book of Mormon was published! Too amazing to be true?

This topic is explored in depth at <http://570.cjb.net>

I refer the reader to the web site. What follows is just a brief summary:

The Year 1830 and Bible Prophecy

The historical background

The great Bible prophecies - in Daniel and Revelation - say a lot about the break-up of the Roman empire, Daniel's fourth beast. When we look at the history books and see how that happened, all the dated prophecies fall into place.

Western Civilisation saw three main successors to Rome: Islam, Byzantium, and Papal Europe. In all three cases, the turning point was 570: Mohammed was born in that year, Byzantium started its long decline after Justinian's death, and Gregory the Great (the founder of the worldly power of the Catholic church) began his career. The catalyst for the last two events was the last barbarian invasion of Italy - by the Lombards, in 568-571. This was also the year when, as far as can be determined, the last priesthood holder died.

The first of these three successors was Byzantium - which Constantine had made the capital of the Roman empire. Its origins were as the smallest of the four divisions of Alexanders' empire (see Daniel 8:9, Jerusalem Bible translation). Its greatest power was when it conquered three of the old Roman kingdoms in the years before 570 (see Daniel 7:8). This region was called "the seat of Satan" and "where Satan dwells" (Revelation 2:13). For the origins of Europe and Byzantium - and Japheth, the Gentiles, and Magog - see the web site.

The essential scriptures

Daniel 2:31-45	The essential background to all the visions that follow. The sequence of world history is as follows: Babylon > Persia > Greece > Rome > kingdoms after Rome > Kingdom of God.
Daniel 7:25, 12:7 Revelation 11:2, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5	1260 "days": This is the key - it is repeated more times than any other prophetic number in the Bible. 1260 years is the time when Satan overcomes the church. It begins when the "little horn" gains power and drives the church into the wilderness and the "manchild" (the priesthood) back to heaven. Historically this was fulfilled in AD 570. AD 570 + 1260 = 1830.
Daniel 9:24-27	Perhaps the best known dated prophecy. 490 years from the decree to restore Jerusalem (457 BC) until the Messiah, plus other related dates.
Daniel 8:14	From the battles between Greece and Persia to the cleansing of the sanctuary (the church). Greece became the dominant power with the rise of Athens in the 400s BC. Persia left Daniel's world with the decree of 457 BC. 2300 years later, in 1844, a great prophet sealed his testimony with his blood, completing the restoration process. The church was now cleansed of doctrines from the Dark Ages.
Daniel 12:11-12	The book of Daniel ends with the key dates that take you from beginning to end. It is spelled out clearly so there can be no mistakes. The biggest fixed date known to Daniel was the fall of Israel in 721 BC- the end of their continuous state of independence. 1290 years later the Great Apostasy is complete - the "little horn" is triumphant. But if you wait another 1335 years, you enter a blessed time. President Hinckley (in "Truth Restored") titled the 20th Century as "the sunshine of Goodwill". (See notes). 721BC + 1290 = 570. 570 + 1335 = 1905.

N o t e s

Daniel chapter 2: Note especially verse 44 - this happens long after New Testament times.

1260 "days": This is equivalent to 42 Jewish "months" (30 days each), or 3 1/2 "years" (or "times", 12 months each). "Days" in this context symbolise years - the web site shows why.

The year 1844: This date had more impact on students of Bible prophecy than any other. Millions of people were convinced that the world would end in 1844. (Look up "Millerites" in any good encyclopaedia). But the words actually say a cleansing of the church. Don't forget... When adding dates, remember there was no "year 0". AD 1 comes right after 1 BC.

The "daily sacrifice": Great confusion is caused by this unfortunate translation. Look in the King James Bible: "sacrifice" is in italics. That means it was not in the Hebrew, but was added by the translators! Why they added it is another story (see the web site). The word translated as "daily" is elsewhere translated "continuous". The precise meaning depends on the context.

1905: This was the anniversary of Joseph's birth, when the great memorial was erected at his birthplace. The Church entered a new phase. It stopped running for its life (and returned to the Eastern states). It could afford to erect such monuments (it got out of debt to the world, paying back its last bonds between 1903 and 1907). The worst persecution ended (with the "Second Manifesto" in 1904, and the resignations of Taylor and Cowly in 1905). And it stopped being under others' political control (the first LDS senator was elected in 1903, and won his battle to stay in office in 1907). The twentieth century was "blessed" indeed!

For full details about this and much more, see

<http://570.cjb.net>

or <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Olympus/5234/>

Part three: “mountains of evidence”

Is there evidence in the Bible for the Book of Mormon?

"There is more in the Bible about the Book of Mormon as a book of scripture than there is in the Old Testament about the New Testament"²⁰⁶

SOLVING THE PUZZLE: WHERE ARE THE MISSING SCRIPTURES?

There are plenty of missing scriptures,²⁰⁷ but which are most important? We need to go back to the start of the Bible to find a clue.

Genesis is the introduction to the Bible. Genesis always follows the birthright lineage - from Adam to Noah, from Abraham to Jacob, etc. It all leads up to 14 chapters about Joseph. So Joseph is crucial.

The twelve tribes were blessed and their futures foretold twice in the Bible: at the end of Genesis (by Israel himself in chapter 49), and at the end of the books of Moses (by Moses in Deuteronomy 33). Joseph's blessing was always the longest (in words) and the greatest (in content - see below). For comparison, Judah had the second longest blessings, and the promise that the Messiah would come through his lineage. The Bible records the fulfilment of the promises to Judah. But where is the fulfilment of the promises to Joseph? Where is the record of Joseph?

The blessings say that Joseph's descendants would become a multitude in the "middle of the earth". They would apparently travel over waters: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; who's branches run over the wall". The promises continue: "blessings...unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills". A Jewish convert said that in the Hebrew,²⁰⁸ "utmost bounds of the everlasting hills" should say "until - limits - hills - world". Or "the place where hills go from one end of the world to the other". He noted that Abraham was promised the land from the Nile to the Euphrates,²⁰⁹ but Jacob's inheritance was to be even greater.²¹⁰ This inheritance was passed on to Joseph as the birthright son. And Book of Mormon peoples fulfil all the prophecies in every detail!

FAMILY REUNION: JOSEPH AND JUDAH

Israel contains more than just the tribe of Judah. Judah and Joseph were separated long ago, but are now coming together again. Ezekiel prophesied that a sign of the gathering of Israel in the last days would be the joining of the stick of Joseph with the stick of Judah. Recent research has supported the view that the word translated "stick" implied a written record. Certainly the Hebrew word for stick is

²⁰⁶ Bruce R. McConkie (c) 419. A "born-again" Christian recently asked me where the Bible spoke about the Book of Mormon. I showed him five different places, mostly in the Old Testament. I then asked him where the Old Testament spoke about the New Testament. He could not find one place. So judging by the Old Testament, which book is more important as a testimony of Christ?

²⁰⁷ For lost prophets, see Numbers 11:29; 12:26; Deut. 13:1; 2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chr. 29:25, etc. For lost books, see Num. 21:14; Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18; 1 Kings 11:41; 1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 33:19; 1 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 3:3; Col. 4:16; Jude 1:14, etc.

²⁰⁸ Cohen

²⁰⁹ Genesis 15:18

²¹⁰ Genesis 49:26

not the same as that for staff in Zechariah 11:7. Ezekiel may even have been holding books, or writing boards called "sticks", when he reported the prophecy.²¹¹

THE LANDS OF ISRAEL AND YUCATAN

"Hebrew" means more than just "Israelite". Genesis 5 and 10 give the early history of man, and usually follows just one family line. But we're told of two sons of Eber (father of the Hebrews) - Peleg and Joktan. The Bible follows Peleg's line, but what about Joktan? In translations unavailable to Joseph Smith, Joktan (which can be pronounced Yuktan) had a son called Jared, and a brother of Jared (referred to as Ophir) who went to an undetermined distant land of gold and exotic things. It was a three year round trip away by sea. At the same time, the Jaredites who settled (probably) the Yucatan peninsula. Moroni says the Bible contains the earlier history. Coincidence?²¹²

JESUS' OTHER SHEEP

Jesus said He was only sent to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). After spending years in the land of Israel, He said He had "other sheep ... which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ..." (John 10:16).

ISAIAH 29

...is usually dismissed as just another millennial prophecy, but it takes on far more meaning in the light of the Book of Mormon. There is not space here to discuss the symbolism of "Ariel", but briefly, "the vision of all" ("every vision" - Good News & Jerusalem Bibles) becomes as a description of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The chapter is a warning against the wisdom of the world. The established churches neither understand nor want new revelation, but it is given nonetheless.

THE BOOK FROM HEAVEN

The Bible and apocrypha speak of sacred books that are carefully preserved, pass between heaven and earth, and are preserved until the end of time. They are hidden from all but the Saints: partly by a portion being sealed (for example two thirds), and partly because the language is too dull and simple to interest the world. They contain plain words, and in the latter days shall be given to the righteous.²¹³ The prophecies have been fulfilled!

ADDITIONAL BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

Discoveries since 1830 have supported details about...

1. Unknown prophets. For example the prophet Zenos. The more that is discovered, the less he looks out of place.²¹⁴
2. Known prophets. Alma 13:13-19 "reveals a profound understanding of Melchizedek, superior to later Jewish and Christian interpretations and dependent on very early sources".²¹⁵
3. Angels. The three Nephites apparently follow a wider pattern that goes well beyond the Bible.²¹⁶

²¹¹ Ezekiel 37:15-19; CWHN 8 ch 1; Meservy

²¹² Ether 1:3-4; Reynolds 6:46-49

²¹³ CWHN 2:112, 146-9, 151, 154 note 298, 155; 9:508

²¹⁴ CWHN 1:250. See also points 49, 16 and 71.

²¹⁵ "By Study And Also By Faith" (FARMS) vol.2

²¹⁶ CWHN 1:153-4, 201; CWHN 4:60, 64-5; CWHN 7:156; CWHN 8:251. See also points 59 (Moses) and 149.

4. Hard sayings. How can we reconcile Jesus' statement to "take no thought for the morrow" with teachings like those in Luke 14:28 and Luke 22:35-36 and the need to prepare? 3 Nephi 13:25 explains it.
5. Authorship. Isaiah is a popular chapter, yet conspicuously absent from Book of Mormon quotations. Scholars now consider it to be a summary by a later prophet.²¹⁷
6. How a prophet is called. The Book of Mormon contains the best available example of this, but no one realised until recently.²¹⁸

THE BIBLE PREDICTED a "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21), with angels visiting the earth (Rev. 14). Even in the reformation, many people (including Oliver Cromwell), called themselves "seekers" because they knew something else had to come.²¹⁹ We know that we cannot rely on scholars [e.g. scribes] to interpret scripture,²²⁰ so God has done as He promised, and restored the original truth.

²¹⁷ CWHN 1:218

²¹⁸ "The Throne Theophany ..." and "The Calling of a Prophet" (FARMS). See also "prayer circles" in CWHN 4:53-4

²¹⁹ Ensign Oct '80 p.57

²²⁰ 2 Peter 1:20; 2 Corinthians 3:6

DID ANYONE SEE THE GOLD PLATES²²¹?

At the beginning of the Book of Mormon there is “the testimony of the three witnesses” and also “the testimony of the eight witnesses”. They all saw (and most handled) the gold plates from which the book was translated. Many of these people later left the LDS church when things got tough.²²² They had perfect opportunities to change their story. But none of them ever denied that they saw the gold plates, but all testified of it till their deaths. Eduard Meyer, the greatest non-LDS scholar ever to study the church at length, concluded that none of the three witnesses who saw the gold plates and the angel, “ever betrayed the slightest trace of doubt”. Yet the experience of the eight witnesses was “far harder to explain” because it happened in broad daylight with no spiritual element.²²³

THE PERFECT TEST - the Three Witnesses.

These formed a cross-section of the community: a schoolteacher (and later, lawyer), an independent businessman, and a farmer. All three received glowing reports from non-members concerning their character and integrity both before joining and after leaving the Church.

OLIVER COWDERY - “IRREPROACHABLE”

Cowdery shared in many of Joseph's revelations from 1829 to 1838. Clearly his testimony could not be due to some once-only event or hypnosis. He was so respected by non-members that his name is conspicuously absent from contemporary anti-Mormon stories. He had a very sharp mind, and was responsible for testing young lawyers for admission to the bar. The local political party once nominated him to run as their candidate, and the most respected local citizen called him “irreproachable”.

MARTIN HARRIS - CERTAINTY FROM A SCEPTIC

Harris, a successful farmer, was a pillar of the community. He was elected as town manager, fund-raiser, overseer of highways (7 times!), grand juror, etc. Before seeing the plates, he was very sceptical. He interviewed the Smith family individually before going any further, and took a copy of the plates' characters to a professor in New York. He once even substituted a fake duplicate stone for the Urim and Thummim (Joseph, unaware of this, was concerned that he seemed unable to translate). Once he had seen the plates he never doubted. When he fell out with Joseph Smith and left the church, all of his beliefs fluctuated except his testimony of the Book of Mormon.

CHARLES ANTHON, THE “RELUCTANT WITNESS”

Dr Anthon confirmed the accuracy of Joseph's translation. But he was later embarrassed by being linked with such “wretched fanatics” and tried to distance himself from what he had done. But his denials were inconsistent. (Once he said he had been asked but didn't sign anything. Later he said he had not even been asked.) Whatever he said, he certainly used the phrase “reformed Egyptian” (a phrase which Joseph Smith then borrowed), and it was enough to convince the sceptical Martin Harris, who later mortgaged his farm to pay for printing the Book of Mormon.²²⁴

DAVID WHITMER - UNDER PUBLIC SCRUTINY FOR FIFTY YEARS

²²¹ Unless stated, all information is from Anderson (a).

²²² And some, like Cowdery and Harris, finally came back.

²²³ Nibley (d)

²²⁴ Insights May '85; CN 17 Jul '83

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Once, soon after leaving the church, an armed mob of over 500 confronted Whitmer. They demanded at gunpoint that he deny his testimony or die. Whitmer testified of the truth of the book. Frightened, they let him go. Over the next 50 years literally thousands of people, friends and enemies, in public and in private, lawyers and journalists, asked him for the "real" story. They all got it! When someone claimed he had changed his testimony, twenty two community leaders signed a statement that in the 40 years he knew him, he was "of the highest integrity and of undoubted truth and veracity".

THE SMITHS - THE ONES WHO KNEW JOSEPH BEST STAYED FAITHFUL

Listing their daily work shows them to be poor but very hardworking. Joseph senior, about 1830, was in prison for debt. He had a large family and the Church was very new - he had nothing to gain from it. He was offered freedom if he would renounce the Book of Mormon. Instead of doing so, he accepted four days' starvation and thirty days' imprisonment.

THE WHITMERS²²⁵ - IMMUNE TO ANY PRESSURE

The Whitmers stayed behind in anti-Mormon Missouri when the Church left. There was strong social pressure to be "consistent" concerning the Book of Mormon, yet like every other witness, each constantly reaffirmed his testimony until death.

OTHERS ALSO HANDLED THE PLATES

... when covered, including Emma Smith (when cleaning), and William Smith. Mother Whitmer reported seeing them, and Mother Smith reported handling two of the objects that were buried with them. Where could Joseph get such plates? When Harris felt the plates through a cloth bag (before seeing them), he said that they had to be either made of gold or lead ... and he knew that Joseph could not afford that much lead!²²⁶

WAS JOSEPH SMITH RELIABLE?

JOSEPH SMITH AS A TRANSLATOR

There are other examples of Joseph's inspiration, such as the Book of Moses. It contains hundreds of parallels with newly discovered apocryphal books. My favourite is the part about Mahujah, which does not appear anywhere else except in the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered over 100 years later.²²⁷

Joseph Smith was not taken in by forgeries. For example, the "Kinderhook plates" fooled everybody *except* Joseph.²²⁸

Joseph translated the Book of Abraham. It compares well with apocryphal Abraham literature and discoveries unknown to Joseph. For example, in what it says about Pharaoh and Abraham, Genealogy, Idolatry, Sacrifices at cult centres, Terah, substitute kings, names, places, the woman who discovered Egypt underwater, etc. This is good going considering that the book is only a few pages long.²²⁹

JOSEPH SMITH, AN HONEST MAN.

²²⁵ Including Hiram Page, who married Catherine Whitmer in 1825.

²²⁶ Anderson; Ensign Dec '86 p.65.

²²⁷ Improvement Era Jan '63 p.32. CWHN 2; 2:277

²²⁸ Some thought he had translated them but he did not - in fact he ignored them after he first saw them. Ensign, Aug '89

²²⁹ Previous references, plus Ensign Jan '94 p.16; NS 24 Jul '93 p.15; Sitchin 370; CWHN 1 :101-102; 5:321

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Non-members who lived with Joseph described him as "honest", with comments like this from a famous lawyer: "his mind is the most just of any man I know".²³⁰ Even his writing style indicates honesty, according to a convert English professor.²³¹ Thousands who got to know him took up his cause, and on getting to know him, foes became his friends.²³²

JOSEPH SMITH, A TRUE PROPHET.

Joseph fulfilled every requirement of a true prophet - according to the most prominent non-LDS scholar to study him.²³³ Early Jewish traditions (included the Dead Sea Scrolls) prophesied of a priestly "anointed one" of Aaron in the last days, who prepared the way for the more important "anointed one" of David (i.e. Jesus Christ). His name is probably Asaph, and his father is called Asaph. Asaph is of course a variant of the name Joseph. Note also the meaning of the name Hyrum (or Hiram), "my brother is exalted".²³⁴

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS TESTIFIES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON²³⁵

The Doctrine and Covenants is a formidable book. For example, Section 87 (and see 130) predicted the American civil war. Section 89, on dietary rules, was scientifically 150 years ahead of its time. And many sections restore ancient knowledge of temple work.²³⁶

IF JOSEPH SMITH MADE IT UP, WHAT'S THE MOTIVE?

Money? The book made Joseph no money, and eventually cost him his life.

Popularity? Mark Twain called it "chloroform in print", and most people of the time did not like it.

Popularity among Bible readers? People liked scriptural commentaries, but did not want new scripture - the Bible was all they cared for.

If we ignore Joseph's own explanation, then there is no rational explanation for the existence of the Book of Mormon.²³⁷

AN IDIOT AND A GENIUS AT THE SAME TIME?

There is no evidence that anyone but Joseph was involved in writing the Book of Mormon. But Joseph has been ridiculed for his ignorance. he had no money, and only three years' formal schooling. He did not even know that Jerusalem had walls until he translated a verse that mentioned them. He could not even pronounce "Saraiah", or write a coherent letter, according to his wife.²³⁸ According to his mother,

²³⁰ Ensign Sep '79 p.57. For Hurlbut, see point 45. For anecdotes, see Madsen.

²³¹ Ensign March '89 p.13

²³² Ensign Jan '93 p.27.

²³³ Madsen; Lundwall; Nibley (b)

²³⁴ CWHN 7:202; Erickson (b).

²³⁵ Doctrine & Covenants 17:6

²³⁶ CWHN 4; 12; most of Erickson; Parry; FARMS catalogue Fall '95 p.32, etc.

²³⁷ CWHN 8:71-73; 11 part 1.

²³⁸ Ensign July '93 p.62-3; CWHN vol.8, p.67-69.

"of all her children he was the least inclined to give his time to reading books". And besides, there was no local library.²³⁹

Yet other critics call him a genius: "Smith's creativity may perhaps best be explained on the same basis on which we attempt to explain the creative genius of a Mozart or a Beethoven."²⁴⁰ An idiot and a genius at the same time?? And how do we explain the fact that, after the visits of Moroni, careful analysis of this boy's writing displays a sophistication that normally takes many years to develop?²⁴¹ The book was translated in at most, 60 days, dictated with no reading back or editing.²⁴² And each page is packed with detail (choose one at random and see for yourself). Joseph consistently hit targets he did not even know he was aiming at, and even great scholars have been unable to find fault in the book.²⁴³

The only answer is the one Joseph Smith gave: the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God.

IS THERE STATISTICAL PROF?

STATISTICAL PROOF

Everyone has their own way of writing. We all have our subconscious patterns of using words. Until the days of computer analysis, no-one realised just how unique these patterns are. Computer-aided stylistic analyses of word frequencies (or "wordprints") are used like fingerprints to identify authors. Analysis of the Book of Mormon revealed:

1. The Book of Mormon had at least 24 authors.
2. When compared with Joseph Smith and his friends, the 19th century writers had small similarities (as would be expected), but they were consistently different from any of the book's authors.
3. The odds against the book having one author "exceeded one hundred million to one".²⁴⁴

THIS IS GREAT LITERATURE

The people are historically plausible.²⁴⁵ The writers' characters are reflected in what they do and the words they choose.²⁴⁶ There are many other ways that the Book of Mormon's design, structure, internal development, doctrinal themes and abridgement show it has tremendous depth.²⁴⁷ After 168 years it has

²³⁹ Petersen 48-50; Insights Jan '94. See also Insights Feb '86, Improvement Era Feb '69 p.54, Madsen tape 2 (end).

²⁴⁰ Hansen, K. 15-16, agreeing with professor Jan Shippis.

²⁴¹ CN 18 Sep '93 p.7

²⁴² Petersen 49-50

²⁴³ Peterson 5-6+; CWHN 8:239-40

²⁴⁴ According to a CN clipping in my possession (no date or page). For more detail, see Insights Sep '88; Griffith (b) p.83.

²⁴⁵ Peterson 3

²⁴⁶ Roberts 1:173; Insights Oct '86, Apr '87, Apr '88

²⁴⁷ Insights Oct '87, Nov '87, Feb '86, Dec '88, Apr '89; CWHN 8:67-69; Welch (e); Roberts 1:173, and many articles in the "language and literature" section (and elsewhere) in the Fall 1995 FARMS catalog.

stood the test of time. The book has three-dimensional characters,²⁴⁸ and generally compares well with the themes of great literature.²⁴⁹ It is a Great Book by any standard.

IS THE BOOK OF MORMON PHILOSOPHICALLY NEEDED?

PHILOSOPHICALLY, IF THE BOOK OF MORMON IS NOT TRUE, THEN NOTHING IS.

The study of knowledge (epistemology) has two problems: First, our knowledge of the external world exists only in our minds. That is why two people can disagree about the same thing. Second, we cannot know what is really going on in other people's minds. In other words, we really cannot be sure of anything. A theory to solve the problem is "extraordinarily difficult to develop".²⁵⁰ The only possible solution is a mediator - a third party who understands and speaks direct to the thoughts of everyone. The Holy Spirit does this. Only the Book of Mormon offers personal revelation as standard, and an up to date revelation through that mediator for all mankind.²⁵¹ So if we cannot understand reality by following the Book of Mormon, we have no hope.

THE BOOK OF MORMON IS UNIQUE

As a fully developed history of a "new" lost civilisation, perhaps the only book that resembles the Book of Mormon is "The Lord of the Rings". But that was written over a period of years by a man who taught at Oxford and Cambridge, not in 60 days by an uneducated farmer.²⁵² If it is unique in literature, is it unique in scripture? It is the only book since the renaissance that:

1. claims to be scripture like the Bible,²⁵³ and
2. provides for equally inspired prophets²⁵⁴ who can keep the interpretation relevant and up to date.

ARE BOOK OF MORMON NAMES AUTHENTIC?

BOOK OF MORMON NAMES: HEBREW

" After the Book of Mormon came forth the Prophet Joseph was terribly worried about what the world would say, and he said, "O Lord, what will the world say?" And the answer came back, "Fear not, I will cause the earth to testify of the truth of these things." "²⁵⁵

Most of the "new" names in the Book of Mormon have since been found in ancient documents from the middle East: Ammon, Helaman, Korihor, Mormon, etc.²⁵⁶ The rest make much more sense in Hebrew

²⁴⁸ For example, CWHN 8: ch.17; 7: ch.12

²⁴⁹ For example, the story of Enos (CWHN 8:535) or the theme of "The Despised Outcast" (JB 2).

²⁵⁰ Britannica

²⁵¹ See Moroni 10:3-5 and point 35.1

²⁵² Peterson 3

²⁵³ Books like the "Watchtower" publications, or "Science and Health" are commentaries, and thus not the equal of the Bible.

²⁵⁴ The Sikh Granth (finalised in the seventeenth century) is referred to as the eleventh and last guru; the Hindu Upanishads (seventeenth century) do not direct the reader to one organised church; and the Baha'i books (nineteenth century) lead the reader to a group that is run by a committee since the last prophet died.

²⁵⁵ LeGrand Richards, CR Apr '55, p.123

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than in English: for example, Mulek was the son of the king, and Melek is Hebrew for king; Chemish is awkward to say in English but easier in Hebrew.²⁵⁷

These names are covered in detail in FARMS publications²⁵⁸, so I will not go into detail here. But my favourite Book of Mormon name is Mosiah, the man who saved his people, and also founded the Nephite democracy.²⁵⁹ "Mosia" in ancient Hebrew meant "saviour" (and a "mosia" did precisely the four things that Mosiah did in the Book of Mormon).²⁶⁰

Even mistakes turn out to be strengths. Alma, a female name, is given to a man, which seemed crazy ... until the same thing was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁶¹ Also there are no "Baal" sounds in Book of Mormon names yet there are many in Bible names. Newly discovered name lists from Lehi's time do not have "Baal" sounds either.²⁶²

EGYPTIAN NAMES²⁶³

Nephi was taught the language of the Egyptians, and so the non-Hebrew names are usually Egyptian. Some examples:

Amon - the most common element in the Elaphantine name lists, and the most common element in Book of Mormon names (HelAMAN, AMINadab, etc.)²⁶⁴

Mormon's final words were on charity and the eternities. MOR was Egyptian for "love", and MON was "established forever".²⁶⁵ Nephi founded the dynasty, and his brother was Sam. SAM TAWI founded an Egyptian dynasty, and he succeeded NEHRI. It was a common name around 600 BC. "Pa..." is a prefix for a number of rulers or would-be rulers. In Egypt it was a prefix for a number of powerful high priests.

JAREDITE NAMES:

Jaredite names are quite distinct from Hebrew or Egyptian.²⁶⁶ They compare well with names from similar cultures of around 2000 BC. The "rules" were correctly followed - such as "mimation" and "nunation".²⁶⁷ As for names, they also tally. Compare king Ahah and his father Seth (Jaredites) with king Aha and his father Seth, founders of Egypt's first dynasty. The best known Jaredite name is

²⁵⁶ CWHN 7:244-247; Improvement Era Nov '70 circa p.120; Griffith (b) p.73-74; etc.

²⁵⁷ Jorgensen

²⁵⁸ see also Ensign Sep '76 p.24; Insights Jun '83.

²⁵⁹ Omni 1:12; Mosiah 29

²⁶⁰ Insights Apr '89; "What Was A Mosia?" (FARMS); Peterson 24-25.

²⁶¹ Peterson p.16

²⁶² Ensign Apr '85 p.52; Griffith (b) p.75.

²⁶³ CWHN 5:20-28 and elsewhere.

²⁶⁴ CWHN 8:535; Improvement Era as above.

²⁶⁵ New Era Jun '83 p.40. See also Mosiah 18:30

²⁶⁶ CWHN 8:243-5,8; Tvednes

²⁶⁷ Names ending in "m" or "n" at different periods. CWHN 6:283,288, Erickson (b).

deseret (meaning honey bee). The name is also important in the second civilisation of Egypt, where it also represents a bee.²⁶⁸ How could Joseph Smith have known?

INTERESTING NAMES...

One of the best lectures I heard on Book of Mormon evidence was by the astronaut Don Lind. He pointed out that of the 58 non-Hebrew names in the Book of Mormon, 56 are Arabic (including Egyptian), and 2 are Greek. The same proportions were found in the Elaphantine name lists from Lehi's time.

Not only are names authentic, but they are used in authentic ways. Lehi's sons, for example, tell us something of Lehi's life. Lehi lived close to the desert. Laman and Lemuel are Arab "pendant names" (the first two sons' names are either alliterative or rhyme). Nephi and Sam are Egyptian, reflecting Lehi's growing prosperity. His last sons are Jacob and Joseph, reminding him of the country he is leaving. It is these little touches that bring the Book of Mormon alive for me.²⁶⁹

IS THE BOOK OF MORMON WRITING STYLE AUTHENTIC?

BAD ENGLISH GRAMMAR. OR GOOD HEBREW GRAMMAR?

The Book of Mormon sometimes has poor English grammar. No wonder! It was originally written in a form of Hebrew. For example: "And" frequently begins sentences, or is used instead of a comma. "I and my father" instead of "my father and I". "Words of plainness" instead of "plain words". "bows...lost their springs" instead of "bows lost their spring." and so on.²⁷⁰ The Book of Mormon claims to be written in Hebrew, using Egyptian characters. Examples of such a practice have now been found from Lehi's time.²⁷¹ Other characteristics of ancient Hebrew (writing from right to left, no capital letters or punctuation) caused some problems for Joseph. He even left Jerusalem in lower case, and relied on the printer to add all the paragraphs.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

An old teacher of mine used to say "always start by looking at the beginning and ending of a book". Beginning by stating one's credentials, giving credit to one's parents, ending with "and thus it is", and finishing the book with the title page (as the gold plates did, according to Joseph Smith), are authentic ancient touches.²⁷²

THE WORDS CHOSEN HAVE HIDDEN DEPTHS

For example, the phrase "this day" has since been shown to have special significance. Another example: a non-LDS scholar, using the Koran, suggested that each religion "has its own summary of its most cherished principles, stated in terms relevant to its own culture". The Old Testament has the ten commandments. The Book of Mormon has "the ten woes", reflecting the Nephites' unique experience.²⁷³

POETRY

²⁶⁸ CWHN 5:258; 5:189

²⁶⁹ Lind; CWHN 6:283,291-2; Ensign Oct '84 p.21; Sorenson 185.

²⁷⁰ Jorgensen (a); CWHN 5:125; 6:101-2,231; Insights Sep '87; Jun '88; Cary 4-6; Welch 17; Ensign Jul '93 p.63; Peterson 31

²⁷¹ Peterson 32; Sorenson 78

²⁷² CWHN 7:151-152; 5:17; Insights Jul '94.

²⁷³ 2 Nephi 9:27-38. Insights Apr '90, Sep '84, Mar '85.

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It may not rhyme, but the Book of Mormon contains all the major forms of poetry used in ancient scripture, including some, like chiasmus, that were not rediscovered until the twentieth century.²⁷⁴ New discoveries are being made in this area all the time, so I shall just refer the reader to the latest FARMS catalogue.²⁷⁵

GOSPELS (3 NEPHI) AND PSALMS (2 NEPHI 4)...

... and memoir (1 Nephi - the autobiography was a popular form in 600BC), apocalypse (1 Nephi 11-14), testament? (1 Nephi 1) song (in the ancient sense: Lehi's "quasidah" in the valley of Lemuel), lamentation (Mormon 9), allegory (Jacob 5), blessing (2 Nephi 2), epistle (Mormon 8), genealogy (Ether 1), history, oratory, prayer, prophecy, prose (both symbolic and dialogue forms)... The Book of Mormon is almost an A to Z of ancient types of writing, and includes forms that were not well understood in 1830.²⁷⁶

HOW DOES THE BOOK OF MORMON COMPARE WITH THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS?

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

NOTE: Nephi prophesied of the Bible having parts taken away, and of "other books" being discovered by the gentiles to make known those lost parts (1 Nephi 13:38-40). These books often contain many false ideas, but if they also contain "lost" parts (parts that are in the Book of Mormon but not the Bible), they fulfill the prophecy.

Lehi and Alma both took communities to follow God in the desert. There closely followed the Dead Sea Scrolls tradition, long before the scrolls were discovered.²⁷⁷ The numerous parallels have been well documented, so I shall not list them all here. Just three favourite examples:

1. The Qumran community seemed to have many Christian elements - before Christ.
2. They taught that Moses was not buried (as is suggested in modern Bibles), but was taken up to God, as the Book of Mormon teaches.
3. A non-LDS scholar once wrote that the Qumran group should really be called "Latter-Day Saints", but unfortunately the name had already been used by the "Mormons".²⁷⁸

BEYOND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The Qumran community is not alone in shadowing the Book of Mormon. Two examples: The Rechabites, left for the desert in the same way. The Mandaeans wrote on metal plates and buried them in times of danger, and practised baptism before Christ.²⁷⁹ The Book of Mormon fits into the pattern.

THE TREE OF LIFE IN 1 NEPHI 8 AND 11...

²⁷⁴ Ideas in the form A-B-C-D-D-C-B-A. This was first noticed in the Bible in the 1930s, but was not well known until the 1960s. See Alma 41:12-15; all of Alma 36; Mosiah 3:18-19, 5:10-12 etc.

²⁷⁵ ...and Ensign Oct '89 p.58; Cary; Insights Sep '90 and Aug '89; Griffith (b) p.81, 82. See also points 62, 101, and 116.

²⁷⁶ CWHN 7:37,153; Insights May '86

²⁷⁷ CWHN 7:265-269; 8:73,274; 9:388; and other LDS books and tapes on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

²⁷⁸ Peterson p.21.

²⁷⁹ CWHN 6:68; 7:83,155,272-4

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...has parallels throughout the ancient world.²⁸⁰ The other imagery is accurate in every detail. Consider for example, the "great and spacious building" floating in the air. This is just how a desert nomad would see proud and lazy city dwellers: old Arab cities often had ten storey stone buildings, with the windows beginning fifty foot up for defence. At night with lights burning they would appear to hang in the air. Nibley lists thirteen such examples. As he said with regard to Joseph Smith's inspiration, "this alone would clinch it".²⁸¹

"IN MEMORY OF OUR FAMILIES..."

The story of Moroni putting his coat on a pole to gather patriots is almost identical to the story of Kawe, who founded the Persian monarchy and priesthood. The story that Moroni quoted at the time, of Joseph's coat being found, has since been discovered in a collection of old Jewish writings.²⁸² Other elements of the story - treading on garments, tearing the coat, raising the coat on a pole, etc. are all authentic ancient Near Eastern practice.²⁸³ Again I ask, how could Joseph Smith have known all this?

BACK FROM THE SPIRIT WORLD

What did Jesus teach immediately after his resurrection? Various apocryphal books, not available in 1830, claim to reveal what he said. And where they agree, they parallel Jesus' teachings in 3 Nephi.²⁸⁴ Does that mean that 3 Nephi is just another imitation gospel? No, comparison shows it has more in common with the genuine gospels than the apocryphal gospels.²⁸⁵

BURIED TREASURE

For centuries, ancient records were copied and recopied and handed down, leaving scholars to work out what they originally meant. Nobody expected to find original documents conveniently buried intact. Then the Book of Mormon came, and prophesied of "other books" in addition to itself and the Bible.²⁸⁶ After that came whole libraries from Qumran, Nag Hammadi, Ebla, etc. The Book of Mormon opened the floodgates!

THE PEN AND THE SWORD

Could Laban have written on brass plates? For years scholars said no, but now it seems that Old Testament copper can be called brass, Hebrew writing on copper or bronze plates has been found from 12th century BC Palestine, and writing on genuine brass was found from Palestine of the 2nd century BC.²⁸⁷ Likewise, Laban's steel sword: Steel is now known to be older than people thought. And recent research shows the sword to have a special symbolic meaning just as in the Book of Mormon, where it becomes a key national treasure.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁰ Ensign Jun '88 p.26. An impressive example is the Dura synagogue - CWHN 7:188-192

²⁸¹ CWHN 5:116-117; 6:253-264

²⁸² CWHN 7:199; 8:249-50

²⁸³ CWHN 7:243,304. Welch 16,18

²⁸⁴ Ensign Jul '83 p.83; Nibley; CWHN 8: ch. 9 & 19.

²⁸⁵ Anderson (b)

²⁸⁶ 1 Nephi 13:19-23,35-36,39-40

²⁸⁷ Petersen 7-8; CWHN 6:452,456; Ensign, Sep '84, p.35.

²⁸⁸ CWHN 7:221,223; Millennial Star Aug '62(?) p.28-34; Welch 9; Holbrook

GOD KNOWS WHERE YOU'RE GOING - the liahona, God's compass:

The liahona once seemed ridiculous, but similar devices (based on pointers with divine messages on them) are now known to have been used in the ancient Arab world. Or perhaps the liahona was magnetic? Despite what critics used to say, it now appears that magnetic compasses were used well before Lehi's day, in both the old and new worlds.²⁸⁹

MULEK: SON OF THE KING

2 Kings 25 says Zedekiah's sons were killed, yet the Book of Mormon says one escaped. But look closely - "the whole army" fled, "all" the soldiers were scattered, but not "all" the sons were killed. Ezekiel 17:22-24 may refer to the Mulekites. Jeremiah 38:6 mentions to "MalkiYahu, ben-Melek", or "MalkiYahu, son of the king" - Mulek is an authentic variant of the name. The ancient Lachish letters say that between 590-588 BC, a young descendant or offspring of the king delivered letters saying to flee. The evidence suggests that Mulek was young, and would fit the description perfectly.²⁹⁰ One non-LDS scholar commented that "If Joseph Smith thought that up, he did well!".

LEHI'S ESCAPE

The way that people like Lehi fled from Jerusalem is confirmed by the "Lachish letters", discovered this century. They also contain Book of Mormon names like Jaush (Josh).²⁹¹ The name Lehi has now been discovered, and also caves from Lehi's time near Jerusalem with ancient graffiti showing ships. The graffiti quotes from Jeremiah, Isaiah, and an unknown prophet, whom some scholars say was fleeing Jerusalem. The caves, near the Biblical town of Lehi are called "Khirbet Beit Lei", "the ruin of the house of Lehi". A text has been discovered from that era about a man it calls Zosimus. He had a vision similar to Lehi's in which he meets a group escaping the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. They were then taken across the ocean by God. Of course Joseph Smith could have known none of this.²⁹²

ALL TYPES OF PEOPLE:

The Book of Mormon describes authentic types of people, unknown to Joseph Smith. For example, Lehi, Laban, and Abinadi are classic types from Israel of 600BC;²⁹³ Mormon and Moroni show the classic signs of survivors of more recent holocausts.²⁹⁴ Personal relationships are accurate (the bedouin family; ancient loyalty to family rather than country, etc.); as are political relationships at Jerusalem (the Book of Mormon is pro-Sidon, anti-Tyre, etc.) and the links with ancient Egypt (including where links did NOT exist - such as there being no references to Pharaoh.)²⁹⁵ This book is genuine.

THE CENTRE POINT OF TIME AND SPACE

The Book of Mormon opens in 600 BC Palestine, the "axial period" of world history. The world was transforming - ancient monarchies falling due to the power of their peoples. (Assyria, then Babylonia, Rome, Egyptian pharaohs fell to Persia, Phoenicia fell, Carthage became a republic, etc.) "Modern"

²⁸⁹ CWHN 7:255-259; Insights Mar '84

²⁹⁰ Ensign Dec '81 p.49; Insights Feb '84; CWHN 8: ch. 15,18; Sorenson (d)

²⁹¹ CWHN 8:400; ch 15 & 18.

²⁹² CWHN 7:42; Berrett; Welch (c)

²⁹³ CWHN 6:46,120; 8:303

²⁹⁴ Hawkins

²⁹⁵ CWHN 6:247; 6:89,95-108; 6:84-91

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thought began with Solon, Pythagorus and Aesop, Confucious, Zoroaster, etc. And Israel was the cross roads of Africa, Europe, and Asia, the known world.²⁹⁶ Similarly, Mesoamerica was the centre of America, the Olmec culture was falling, and "Bountiful" was the ideal place for the later visit of Christ.²⁹⁷ Everything about the book of Mormon is hugely important!

JESUS WAS BORN AT THE LAND OF JERUSALEM:

Apparent "mistakes" show the truth of the Book of Mormon. Alma said Jesus was born "at Jerusalem, which is the land...". Critics scoff - they even produce bumper stickers that say "Mormonism or Christianity, Jerusalem or Bethlehem". But the phrase "land of Jerusalem" has since been found in documents including the Dead Sea Scrolls, and has shown to be a perfectly good description of Bethlehem. Some apocryphal books even say that Jesus was not actually born right in Bethlehem, but just outside, half way to Jerusalem (which is only 5 miles away).²⁹⁸

BOWS AND ARROWS

The short "broken bow" incident in 1 Nephi 16 has nothing to do with Red Indians, but shows how Nephi knew things that no American did in 1830.²⁹⁹ Why did the bow break? Descriptions of the journey would place this incident in a region of extreme heat, saltiness, and up to 100% humidity. His steel bow rusted!³⁰⁰ This also explains why his brothers' bows lost their springs at the same time³⁰¹: they would have been made in the lower humidity of Jerusalem. Nephi's brother's strong reaction can now be explained in terms of the ancient symbolism of "breaking a vassal's bow".³⁰² Why did Nephi make new arrows when it was only his bow that had broken? Archery was out of fashion in 1830, so Joseph would not have known that the weight ratio of bow to arrow is crucial.³⁰³ Going by the journey description, Nephi would have made a replacement bow in the only part of the Arab world where the proper wood grows.³⁰⁴

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE:

Joseph Smith could not know, but 3 Nephi 8-9 describes ten distinct phases of a great earthquake, exactly as history shows they happen. Most of these characteristics were not understood until recently. Internal evidence suggests Guatemala as a probable location for much of the Book of Mormon. Guatemala is one of the most earthquake prone spots in the world. Descriptions sound traight from the Book of Mormon.³⁰⁵

²⁹⁶ CWHN 7:239

²⁹⁷ Sorenson 85-87,107,362.

²⁹⁸ Peterson 17-19. Insights May '84; Mar '95; CWHN 6:469

²⁹⁹ Griffith (b) p.53

³⁰⁰ Ensign Oct '76 p.50

³⁰¹ 1 Nephi 16:21

³⁰² "The Breaking of the Bow..." (FARMS)

³⁰³ Insights July '84

³⁰⁴ CWHN 6:232

³⁰⁵ CWHN 7:231-238 NG Nov '74 & June '76, on Guatemala

WAR:

The Book of Mormon contains 170 pages that mention warfare. Nothing looks out of place to ex-soldiers, and the tactics agree with Clausewitz' classic book "On War", published some years after the Book of Mormon.³⁰⁶ It agrees with descriptions of both Mesoamerican and ancient Israelite weapons and warfare.³⁰⁷ It has a "textbook example" of guerilla warfare (the opposite of Joseph Smith's experience), paralleling both ancient and modern examples.³⁰⁸ Special curses, holy war, etc., they are all authentically portrayed and help to explain some unusual passages.³⁰⁹

Most important, the Book of Mormon gives us the principles to follow in wars, including: Trust in God, never strike first, give up lands if the Lord requires, and the other side's people should be precious to us. The real enemy is our own iniquity!³¹⁰

THE TEMPLE

The Book of Mormon attitude to the temple was that of the ancients, not of the Bible scholars of 1830. Not only was the temple important to the Nephites, it was central to major events, and to how a man can become a king.³¹¹ The idea that any faithful Jew would consider building a temple outside of Jerusalem (2 Nephi 5) was thought preposterous in 1830, but not any more. Temples or plans for temples have been discovered at Elaphantine, Tel Arad, and elsewhere.³¹² The way Nephi that built his temple sounded impossible in 1830, but not any more.³¹³ Many important passages in the Book of Mormon make much more sense when seen in terms of the temple.³¹⁴ In summary, temples were the most important places in the world in the days of Christ and the prophets.³¹⁵ They still are! Have you been to the temple recently?

LET'S PARTY!

The ancient Jews liked to celebrate, and their festivals are reflected in the Book of Mormon: traditions associated with the passover,³¹⁶ dancing and the "15th of Av" celebrations,³¹⁷ and the feast of

³⁰⁶ CWHN 7:291-334; Ricks

³⁰⁷ CWHN 6:231; "Armor in the Book of Mormon" (in Ricks).

³⁰⁸ Peterson 8-12; "The Gadianton Robbers..." (in Ricks).

³⁰⁹ Morrise; Welch 16; "Holy War" (in Ricks); Firmage; Insights Mar '89

³¹⁰ 1 Nephi 2:23-24; Alma 31:35; 43:46; 48:7-10, 14-16, 23; 50:21; 52:37-38; 61:10-14; Helaman 4:18-19; See also D & C 98:23-30

³¹¹ Coronations, great sermons, the arrival of the Messiah, etc. all took place at the temple. The great sermons are full of temple imagery. See "Christ and Temples in the Book of Mormon" (FARMS); Insights Nov '91; 2 Nephi 5; Mosiah 2, 7; 3 Nephi 11, etc.

³¹² For Elaphantine, see point 6. See also CWHN 7:53; Welch 13

³¹³ Welch 14.

³¹⁴ "Christ and Temples..." (FARMS)

³¹⁵ See CWHN 10 and 12

³¹⁶ Alma 36-42 and Insights Aug '84; Abinadi and Insights Sep '85

³¹⁷ Mosiah 20-23; Insights Feb '85

tabernacles and others. Nobody recognised the clues until this century. What other secrets are hidden in the Book of Mormon?

THE LAW: ON TRIAL

The Book of Mormon is more interesting than any modern courtroom drama, if you know where to look. For example, Nephi killing Laban was good Arab justice for the time;³¹⁸ Abinadi had a classic "trial by ordeal"; Seantum's confession had to be precisely right or it would not hold up in an Israelite court; Sherem was careful to allege specific crimes that were punishable by death; Ammonihah was destroyed because of very specific crimes, not just "being evil".³¹⁹ The Book of Mormon knows a lot about trials. So when it says this life is a trial (or probation),³²⁰ we had better pay attention!

THE DEATH PENALTY

The Book of Mormon is legally accurate in all sorts of ways. The swearing of oaths, how Zemnariah was executed, the laws of Mosiah, the exemption of the Ammonites from fighting; the distinction between "theft" and "robbery", all show that the Book of Mormon contains not only the law of God, but a fair amount of the law of ancient Israel too!³²¹

MAGIC NUMBERS:

If archeology and anthropology bore you, what about maths? Nephite money, refined over centuries, used the same ideal ratios (1-2-4-7) that were used in early computer punched cards, and compare well with Egyptian and ancient Near East silver weights and grain measures. The apparent link between 70 and 72 is just as in the Bible,³²² and the number 24 (plates, survivors, judges, etc.) is also a significant ancient number.³²³ The Book of Mormon is reliable - you can count on it!

WHERE THEY LIVED

Book of Mormon towns and buildings have some nice touches. The towns are not always as described in the bible, but would have been familiar to ancient Israelites. For example, houses apparently had special places to pray, and some people had prayer towers.³²⁴ Ancient towns did not always evolve as once thought, but were often planned as cities, as in the Book of Mormon.³²⁵ Everyday life is always accurate. For example, the work and symbolism of olive growing is accurately described. In fact, the only part of Jacob 5 that is not good gardening (grafting in of wild branches to make them tame again), is an authentic ancient religious concept.³²⁶

³¹⁸ While western readers are shocked that Nephi should kill Laban, many Arab readers wonder why he waited so long! Ensign Apr '85 p.52; CWHN 6:Preface 1964, xii-xiii

³¹⁹ Ensign Feb '88 p.12; Insights Feb '90; Jan '91; July '87

³²⁰ Alma 12:24

³²¹ Johnson; Insights Nov '84; Mar '87; June '89; Peterson 28

³²² Psalm 90:10 says man lives for 70 years, 2 Nephi 28:2-3 implies 72. Jesus "eventy" is sometimes translated "seventy two", and the Septuagint was called the LXX, some say, because it was translated by 72 people.

³²³ Insights Dec '85

³²⁴ CWHN 6:404; 7:243-4

³²⁵ CWHN 6:411

³²⁶ CWHN 7:238; Peterson 25-27; Ricks (b).

A BIT UNLIKELY?

Even the apparently more unlikely actions are less and less peculiar as more is learned about the ancient Near East. For example, the way that Nephi was able to sneak into Jerusalem undetected, Laban (not a priest) keeping of the records, writing Hebrew in Egyptian characters, Nephite armies marching great distances with their families, etc.³²⁷ If it seems odd to us, chances are it was right at home in the world of 600 BC.

LEHI'S WORLD:

The Book of Mormon leaves inadvertant clues that show it could only have been written by someone with Lehi's background in Israel, 600 BC. For example, the details of mourning, settling disputes, or erecting altars, or casual phrases like "my father dwelt in a tent", or "elders of the Jews". These things are easy to read and ignore, but hundreds of such clues show that the Book of Mormon came from ancient Israel, and not nineteenth century America.³²⁸

PICTURES OF THE DESERT... AND OF HEAVEN

Lehi, when in the desert, spoke and acted exactly as a desert traveller of that time and place would have, although few could have known this in 1830. For example, valleys are seen as stronger than mountains,³²⁹ "white" means "delightsome"; a sea can be called a "fountain"; certain types of oaths are made, etc.³³⁰ He also used the language of "prophetic Judaism", as seen in recent discoveries. For example, heavenly beings are described as "stars", and come to earth in white garments, often in threes,³³¹ there are several references to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, "spotless garments", mixing of different imagery (such as Zenos' olive grove/vineyard), and so on.³³² How does the Book of Mormon get inside the heads of these ancient prophets? Simle. It was revealed through an modern prophet.

LIFE AND DEATH AND JESUS CHRIST - the doctrine.

Since the Book of Mormon was published, other records have been found. They have also contained "pre-Christian Christianity" (the Mandaeans for example), alleged new sayings of Jesus, prophets not mentioned in the Bible, and other parallels with the Book of Mormon³³³ - for example, the doctrine of the "two ways", or special reference to the apostle John.³³⁴ Even the style of language is similar.³³⁵ And what about the world Lehi came from? Studies of Jewish writings from around 600 BC show there was a special emphasis on Messianic doctrines. No wonder there's so much about Christ in the Book of Mormon!³³⁶

³²⁷ CWHN 6:110-111,116-117,428; point 53

³²⁸ CWHN 5:79,144; 8:100,243-45,249; Ensign Apr '85 p.52. See especially all of CWHN 5 and 6.

³²⁹ 1 Nephi 2:10

³³⁰ CWHN 5:43-44; 6:256-7; 8:105-6,247

³³¹ 1 Nephi 1:9-11

³³² CWHN 7:153-162 See also Sorenson 90 and elsewhere.

³³³ CWHN 7:65,174,277

³³⁴ CWHN 6:485; 7:205

³³⁵ CWHN 7:163-4 gives examples of verses that could have come straight from the Book of Mormon.

³³⁶ CWHN 8:76-78,82

LEGENDS OF THE BROTHER OF JARED

The brother of Jared may have left his mark as he travelled across asia to the Pacific. The Mandaeans had a legend with many similarities,³³⁷ and legend says that the first Chinese emperor went up mount Taisan (now a holy place) and spoke with his god. He returned with stones that shone in the dark.³³⁸

SINGING UNDER THE SEA³³⁹

These were once thought to be an invention of Joseph Smith, until early non-Biblical accounts of Noah's ark were discovered: they describe much the same design of boat and the same light source. Research has shown that glass wasn't such a recent discovery as people thought in 1830, and scientists have now been able to duplicate the "shining stones" in the lab.³⁴⁰ How could Joseph Smith have known?

ENVIRONMENTAL TURMOIL

The land and weather in Ether - lots of lakes ("many waters") and a great wind - matches what scientists now say about the world (notably Asia) as it was warming up after the last ice age (i.e. the few thousand years after 10 000 BC), and what other legends say about the earth as it settled down in the centuries after the flood.³⁴¹ Next time you are out in a boat in a gale, remember the brother of Jared!

A TRUE EPIC:

The book of Ether, in contrast with the rest of the Book of Mormon, is entirely in prose, and is a classic example of the EPIC genre and "heroic age": Classic signs are:

- * Wars of total extermination, and lone survivors;
- * Heroes, and loyalty to heroes rather than families or groups;
- * Great migrations and wilderness on a grand scale;
- * Lists of kings, while ignoring the peasants entirely;

And so on. Ether had all these elements and more, a hundred years before the genre was even recognised!³⁴²

A LOST WORLD

The Book of Ether shows extraordinary knowledge of a period of history that is very alien to us. It is not just larger than life, but authentic. For example, Ether 9 (a kingdom being forced back by snakes), Ether 10 (massive royal hunting trips), and the repetition of the number 42,³⁴³ seem very unusual, but have parallels in the Old World of the time.³⁴⁴

"NEW WORLD" EVIDENCE

³³⁷ CWHN 7:83,155,272-274

³³⁸ Heinemann 11

³³⁹ Ether 6:9

³⁴⁰ CWHN 5:216-217; 7:210; 8:243; Insights Sep '92

³⁴¹ CWHN 5:177, 180, 183

³⁴² CWHN 3:213; 5:185,233,234,236,296+; 7:208

³⁴³ Ether 10:8,15,30,32

³⁴⁴ CWHN 5:221, 341, 344-6; CWHN 5:221-222; 6:335-336; CWHN 7:209, 225;

SOMETIMES EXPERTS ARE WRONG

Despite the traditional view that no-one crossed the oceans to America before Columbus, many many historians now say otherwise:³⁴⁵

800 BC: Phoenicians discovered land "30 days" west of Gibraltar.³⁴⁶

Old Testament times: There is a theory that Tarshish, and perhaps Ophir, referred to lands further west than Spain.³⁴⁷

60 BC: According to Plutarch, two large islands were reached 1200 miles west of the African coast.³⁴⁸

Third Century AD: The early Christians believed the Lord has covenant people on the other side of the world, the "Antichthonians".³⁴⁹

AD 459: Chinese sailed the pacific to Mexico.

AD 570: Ireland's St Brendan explored America's Atlantic coast.³⁵⁰

AD 985: Viking Bjarni Herjulfsson discovers "Vinland".

AD 1000: Leif Ericson established a colony, and for 300 years the Vikings used America as a source of timber.

AD 1170: Prince Madoc ap Owain Gwynedd of Wales went and taught Welsh to the Natives.

AD 1200: a small group of Knights Templars reached America.³⁵¹

WHEN EVEN THE WEATHER IS ON YOUR SIDE

Thor Heyerdahl spent much of his life demonstrating that ancient craft could cross the oceans (his Kon-Tiki and Ra expeditions are best known). Experts said it couldn't be done as the Book of Mormon said (crossing from Asia, eastwards). But when God told Nephi, he prepared a way. Known trade winds opposed Lehi's route in Joseph Smith's day. But the discovery of the "El Nino" phenomenon shows how strong currents and winds can indeed sometimes go from East Asia to the west coast of America.³⁵²

ALL KINDS OF EVIDENCE FOR ANCIENT OCEAN CROSSINGS:

Just about every book on ancient America begins by stating that the first Americans crossed the Bering strait land bridge before the end of the last ice age (about 10000 BC). For over 160 years the Book of Mormon has been saying that significant groups have come by sea. For over 160 years scholars have scoffed at the Book of Mormon for this. Until now. According to "a leading [non-LDS] authority" on the Bering region, the land bridge was not passable until 9500 BC, and there is no evidence of people there until 9000 BC. But there was already evidence of people in South America. And those people had DNA that was close to Pacific islanders but ot to Asians. Nobody came in boats, right?³⁵³

³⁴⁵ Unless stated, these are from the Readers 217.

³⁴⁶ Priddis 16.

³⁴⁷ Ensign Oct '71 p.56; point 12 above.

³⁴⁸ Priddis 16-17.

³⁴⁹ CWHN 7:65

³⁵⁰ A National Geographic expedition showed that it could have been done, and identified reports in his history that could be taken as evidence to support the claim. National Geographic Dec '77 p.769.

³⁵¹ Sinclair

³⁵² Insights Apr '86; CN 6 Oct'85 p.7; Heinemann 17-18; Ensign Oct'71 p.60; Hansen, L. 204-5

³⁵³ Insights Feb 1996; Feb '97

Some non-LDS scholars talk of "mountains" of evidence to support early contact between America and the Old World, everything from a Chinese junk found in San Pedro to to Egyptian figurines in a central American tomb. FARMS publishes a two volume, 1250 page book on the subject. Is it full of evidences? No, it only has space to list the books that list the evidence!³⁵⁴

METEORITES AND GOLD PLATES

The traditional view among scientists is that ancient Americans (pre Inca and Aztec) did not use metal. Ironically, when presented with examples of early American metalwork, they say the metal is wrongly dated (!) or came from meteorites!³⁵⁵ The truth is, of course, that nobody has seriously studied early American metalwork, so everyone is guessing. But steel artefacts have been discovered,³⁵⁶ and hardened iron tools,³⁵⁷ iron smelting furnaces, iron ore deposits,³⁵⁸ and man-made items that apparently could not be made without metal tools.³⁵⁹ Ancient Americans even had a basic word root for iron.³⁶⁰ Writing on metal plates has now been found in Mexico, and stone boxes as described by Joseph Smith, and even sacred buried records on brass.³⁶¹ Yet none of this was known in 1830!

PYRAMIDS AND MUMMIES IN AMERICA

Nephi was taught in the language of the Egyptians,³⁶² and the Jaredites came from the same time and place as the first Egyptians. And it shows! Words,³⁶³ the structure of their hieroglyphics, style of burial and mummification, carvings, etc. are all parallels between ancient America and ancient Egypt. The oldest Egyptian pyramids, like the towers in Babel, are stepped, American style.³⁶⁴

A GOOD LAUGH? (HEBREWS IN AMERICA)

Mel Brooks, in his comedy Western "Blazing Saddles", had Jewish Red Indians. That about sums up most peoples' ideas about Hebrews in America - it's just a joke. But is it? The Book of Mormon does not teach that Hebrew was the dominant culture among native Americans, but that it WAS an influence. Evidence supports this:

Apparently Hebrew inscriptions on early American tombs, similarities between Hebrew and Mayan poetry (including Chiasmus), Hebrew words in many native American languages, many parallels

³⁵⁴ Sorenson (c); Insights Apr '86; CN 6 Oct '85 p.7; Heinemann 17-18; Ensign Oct '71 p.60; Hansen, L. 204-5

³⁵⁵ See the Smithsonian "Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon"

³⁵⁶ as in Laban's sword - Sorenson 278-9+, 283,287

³⁵⁷ Farnsworth 138

³⁵⁸ Instructor Nov '68 p.430; West; CWHN 7:223; Insights May '92.

³⁵⁹ Petersen 31; Farnsworth 72,137

³⁶⁰ Farnsworth 137; Sorenson as above.

³⁶¹ Petersen 3,15

³⁶² 1 Nephi 1:2

³⁶³ The best known of many examples is Ra, the sun god in both America and Egypt, and inspiration for Thor Heyerdahl's famous expedition.

³⁶⁴ Ensign Oct '84 p.16-17; Insights Jan '84; NG Dec '75 p.762; Sorenson 85.

between Hebrew and Mesoamerican beliefs, and even the testimony of early European conquerors that some Indians spoke a corrupt form of Hebrew!³⁶⁵ Truth is stranger than fiction.

THE UNIVERSAL STANDARD OF RIGHT AND WRONG: the gospel of Christ

Despite the later beliefs in many gods, evidence suggests an underlying monotheism in early American beliefs.³⁶⁶ The first Spanish priests in America reported a ceremonies like the sacrament and baptism,³⁶⁷ and structures Like baptismal fonts have been found.³⁶⁸ Teachings of some ancient Americans parallel distinctive

Book of Mormon stories.³⁶⁹ For example, one group claimed to have a "seer stone", said to have originally been brought from Egypt.³⁷⁰

LIFESTYLES OF THE WEALTHY AND SUCCESSFUL

The Book of Mormon contains what were until recently anachronisms in describing how wealthy ancient Americans lived. It mentioned silk, linen, vineyards, and barley, even though everyone knew that they did not exist in America before Columbus. But over a hundred years after its publication, linen was found, silk (or something practically identical) was found, something called a vineyard, and most recently barley has been found. How could Joseph Smith have known?³⁷¹ Some critics say that certain plants should be more widespread today, if the Nephites brought them across the ocean so long ago. That seemed fair enough... until scientists found evidence of tobacco in the stomachs of several egyptian pharaohs! Yet tobacco was supposed to be unknown outside of the Americas...³⁷²

HORSES, and other animals:

As implied by the Book of Mormon, and contrary to what scholars used to say, there is now evidence of a "full pastoral tradition" in ancient America.

The Book of Mormon mentions horses, yet there were no horses in America before Columbus. Or were there? We now know they were there before the ice age, even up to 2000 BC, and some perhaps "in recent times". The Book of Mormon says horses roamed free in early times, but by 100 BC only kings kept them, and they are not mentioned at all A.D.³⁷³ It is quite possible for large animals to exist, then disappear without a trace: e.g. Elephants are known to have once been in Syria and Mesopotamia, but only because old writings say so.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁵ McCulloch; Ensign Oct '71 p.56; Oct '84 p.16-17; Daily Telegraph 27th March '89 p.4; Heinemann 19; Sorenson 58-61, 79-80

³⁶⁶ Sorenson 366

³⁶⁷ Talmage (b) 286; Farnsworth 28-35,48,53.

³⁶⁸ Cheeseman; Ensign Oct '84 p.18.

³⁶⁹ Erickson (a)

³⁷⁰ Insights May '95.

³⁷¹ Ensign Apr '92 p.62; Insights Dec '84, Nov '88; NG Sep '87 p.330; Sorenson 139, 186, 232.

³⁷² Insights Feb '97

³⁷³ Sorenson 289-296, 395; Ensign Oct '84 p.20; SA Aug '86 p.98; Instructor Nov'68 p.430; Erickson (a); West; CWHN 8:111; Insights Jun '84; Welch 8

³⁷⁴ Osbourne 1; Ensign Oct '84 p.19; CWHN 7:225-226

HOW IS YOUR MEMORY?

When making statements about history, it pays to remember whether the Book of Mormon has anything to say on the matter. Early Jaredite kings kept elephants, but scholars used to say that there were no elephants in the Americas before Columbus. Since then, discoveries have proved that there were elephants in America before the ice age. Then elephant remains were found with arrow heads in them. Then skeletons that could be dated to 4000 BC, or perhaps even 2500 BC (the Jaredite era). Since even Mammoths are now known to have survived until 2000 BC off Siberia, the Jaredite records seem more and more likely.³⁷⁵

YOU NEED WHEELS

The Book of Mormon mentions chariots, which would presumably imply the use of wheels.³⁷⁶ Yet everyone knew that they did not exist in America before Columbus. But over a hundred years after its publication, evidence of wheels was found: Wheeled toys, big stone wheels, high quality roads, pots that implied a potter's wheel, etc. Is it possible for wheels to be used and later forgotten? Yes - it happened in some countries of the East, where Roman horses and chariots were replaced by the more practical camels.³⁷⁷

THE BIG PICTURE

Modern scholars now largely agree with the Book of Mormon, even though most have not read it. The earliest Americans (Jaredites) travelled overland across Asia. As far as Mesoamerica is concerned, the Olmecs agree in time and place with the Jaredites. They arrived at an advanced level, and shared many similarities with the early Chinese. The Olmecs later lived alongside another group (The Maya - Mulekites/Nephites?), who finally replaced them, but inherited their features and their culture. The Maya had appeared, already advanced, from the direction of the Pacific. So not only is there evidence of ancient ocean crossings but the Book of Mormon is right on the specifics as well.³⁷⁸ N.b. Scholars conclude that America's first full blown civilisation began between 1800-2000 BC and had vanished in wars by 300 BC. It had the symbol of the royal bee.³⁷⁹

"MOUNTAINS OF EVIDENCE"

Even sceptical scholars are beginning to slowly come round. Klaus Hansen, who is not an archaeologist, may be typical. After repeating the familiar statement that proof is hard to find, even he has to recognise that "some evidence for American migrations from the ancient Near East is beginning to accumulate."³⁸⁰ And recently a non-LDS scholar of some stature announced research that suggests that ancient American languages are linked to the ancient near East.³⁸¹

DEFINITE BOOK OF MORMON ARTIFACTS?

³⁷⁵ NS 27th Mar '93 p.15; other references as last item.

³⁷⁶ Although the Hebrew for "chariot" could mean any riding thing, not just with wheels.

³⁷⁷ Instructor Nov '68 p.430; Farnsworth 39,94; CWHN 7:223; Insights Jul '85; May'91; Sorenson (b); Welch 9

³⁷⁸ Ether 2:4-7,13; 6:5-12; Heinemann 11,14,16-19; Insights Nov '86, Feb '87, Mar '91

³⁷⁹ Erickson (a)

³⁸⁰ Hansen 12

³⁸¹ Insights June '95.

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Book of Mormon archaeology is probably more successful than New Testament archaeology: "Nothing belonging to the first century has been dug up which is clearly Christian. This is true in Palestine, in Rome, and elsewhere; there is no trace of Christianity. ... The explanation is simple. In terms of their physical environment, Christians were no different from their neighbours. They lived in the same kinds of houses. They used the same utensils. ...[so] Without written indication, Joseph and Mary's house would be just like any other."³⁸²

In contrast, Book of Mormon discoveries may already have been made:

Stela 5, Izapa ("the Lehi Stone") Stela 3, La Venta was discovered more recently, and depicts a Jewish-looking man meeting a Mayan-looking man. It was found at just the place where Sorenson concludes that the Mulekites arrived.³⁸³ There are also claims of finding some distinctly Jaredite relics in a cave in Utah, but opinion is divided.³⁸⁴

Since the ancient Mayan languages have only recently been deciphered, we can look forward to more precise identifications of Book of Mormon people and places over the next hundred years or so. We live in exciting times!

WARFARE³⁸⁵

Until recently, ancient America was thought to be very peaceful. But new discoveries have forced the historians to change their minds. Ancient pictures of war, arrow heads "by the basketful" ploughed up from the New York hill Cumorah, bone pits containing skeletons with arrowheads sticking out, fortifications, etc. have all been found.

The types of fortifications, armour, weapons, and guerilla warfare, and even the time of year, the overall scale and number in each battalion, presence of families, setting a date, the use of tents, and even the weapons that are not mentioned, all agree with the Book of Mormon. Just about every detail can now be supported by discoveries that nobody could have predicted in 1830.³⁸⁶

HUMAN RIGHTS:

Most people have seen pictures of colourfully dressed Aztec priests ripping out victims' hearts. How does this fit with Book of Mormon teachings of peace and love? Nephite prophets opposed human sacrifice,³⁸⁷ and archeology confirms that it took place in Lamanite lands.³⁸⁸ The reason for ritual

³⁸² Millard 184. Millard notes that the only written records to survive are those buried in the desert. All the others rot away. Note that the Nephites, living in a very humid climate, probably wrote most of their records on something like paper: Alma 14:8,14.

³⁸³ Sorenson 121, 149, 250. For Jewish looking Mayan glyphs, see National Geographic Sep. 1940, quoted in CR Oct. 1954, p.107.

³⁸⁴ Heinemann 21

³⁸⁵ See point 79 for parallels with war in the Old World.

³⁸⁶ Welch 9 (FARMS); Sorenson 261-2, 307, 347, 350, 402 note 56; Ensign Feb '88 p.15; Sep '84 p.34; Jorgensen (a); Insights Sep '87, Jun '90, May '94; Ricks & Hamblin

³⁸⁷ Alma 14:8-10; 49:27; 3 Nephi 1:9; Moroni 9:10-14

³⁸⁸ E.g. in Cuello, in Belize, 400 BC. - NG July '82 p.126. Compare Sorenson's maps. Most of the sacrifices were long after Book of Mormon times.

sacrifice was apparently for the leaders to intercede with the gods on behalf of their people. This is just what Mormon did at times of crisis, but he chose more humane methods: he simply prayed.³⁸⁹

MORE ABOUT EVERYDAY LIFE:

Everything about the Book of Mormon agrees with the ancient American way of life: The organisation by kin groups,³⁹⁰ the nature of priestly power, rulers and of their conquerors, the appointment of kings and military leaders, how they led their armies - reasons for migration, tribal networks, how secret societies operated, etc.³⁹¹ Reading it is like being transported to another world!

A CIVILISATION MORE ADVANCED THAN OUR OWN (in every way that matters)

No-one in 1830 could have known how advanced the ancient Americans were,³⁹² but bit by bit the discoveries have pushed civilisation back in time, from the Aztecs to the Maya and beyond. Populations numbered in their millions. There was a highly developed culture and priesthood. The Maya even invented the number zero! Great highways have now been dated as far back as 300 BC.³⁹³ As for money, no detailed study has yet been carried out. As Alma 11 says, they used metal measures rather than coins. Discoveries of money in South America have changed all the traditional views, and LDS scholars await with interest any detailed study of commerce in Mesoamerica.³⁹⁴

WONDERS OF THE WORLD - the great pyramids.

The best known evidence of ancient American civilisations is their pyramid like temples. Mesoamerican pyramids can rightly be thought of as towers or temples. They agree with the Book of Mormon in prevalence, form and purpose.³⁹⁵ Other statements about buildings are no longer seen as mistakes.³⁹⁶ For example, Helaman 7:10 once contradicted what was "known" about markets, gardens and highways in Ancient America. It has since been vindicated.³⁹⁷ So Book of Mormon towers and temples are authentic in every way.

A REAL "JURASSIC PARK" - recreating a whole book from fragments.

Even though the Lamanites would have destroyed any fragments of the Book of Mormon,³⁹⁸ and it is possible for whole languages to be lost,³⁹⁹ they could not destroy the circumstantial evidence:⁴⁰⁰

³⁸⁹ Mormon 3:12

³⁹⁰ See Sorenson for a detailed discussion.

³⁹¹ Sorenson 102, 164-5, 213-4, 230, 260, 263-4, 301, 305, 307, 337, etc.

³⁹² Contrast Mosiah 10:5, Alma 1:29; 4:6; Helaman 6:11,13; Ether 9:17; etc.

³⁹³ Ensign Oct '84 p.18

³⁹⁴ Ensign Oct '84 p.14,15,21; Sep '84 p.35; Instructor Nov '68 p.430; New Era Nov '77 p.50; Wiesenthal; Readers 265; CWHN 7:224; Sorenson 233

³⁹⁵ Sorenson 167,174,143,158; CWHN 8:344,542; Insights April '85.

³⁹⁶ Such as the mention of synagogues: Sorenson 235-6

³⁹⁷ Insights April '85.

³⁹⁸ Moroni 1:1-3

³⁹⁹ e.g. the Nahuatl tongue - Sorenson 81

⁴⁰⁰ Ensign Sep '84 p.35; Oct '84 p.14-15; New Era Nov '77 p.50

Scholars used to say that ancient Americans did not have writing. We now know they did, but only in Mesoamerica. The Book of Mormon is an excellent example of Mesoamerican "lineage history": records of your family's origins justify your power, and history is biased to the ruling family (most clearly seen in Ether where the brother of Jared is not even named).⁴⁰¹ Deciphering depends a lot upon context and understanding the Mayan culture.⁴⁰² Rather than astrology and chronology as was once thought, Mayan Stelae deal with "conquest, humbling of captives, royal marriage, and royal descent", as in the Book of Ether.⁴⁰³ Some things are almost impossible to write due to "space considerations and ritualistic associations".⁴⁰⁴ Mayan symbols can represent sounds, not just whole words as previously thought.⁴⁰⁵ It is just as the Book of Mormon said!

"IT CAME TO PASS" ...and Ancient American poetry

The repetition of this phrase has been the source of ridicule of the Book of Mormon. But it has now been shown to occur in the same frequency as in comparable parts of the Bible. Recently the phrase has also been discovered in Mayan writing, and used in the same four ways as in the Book of Mormon.⁴⁰⁶

Hebrew poetic forms in the Book of Mormon AND other ancient American texts include the various forms of parallelism,⁴⁰⁷ "marasmus",⁴⁰⁸ and chiasmus.⁴⁰⁹ Mayan prophecy is also poetic, or at least stylised.⁴¹⁰ People sometimes ask why the Book of Mormon is not written in everyday language. Simple: it is poetry. Learning to appreciate poetry is not always easy - but it is always worth it.

A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD

The Book of Mormon gets inside the heads of the ancient Americans. There is not space to list all the obscure or subtle ways, but when the highland Nephites say that the coastal Lamanites are Lazy,⁴¹¹ or when Alma uses imagery of a tree sprouting from one's heart,⁴¹² and so on,⁴¹³ they are thinking just as the ancient Maya thought.

⁴⁰¹ Sorenson 51,311-3

⁴⁰² Ether 12:22-25

⁴⁰³ Omni 1:20

⁴⁰⁴ 3 Nephi 5:18; Mormon 9:31,33; Ether 12:25

⁴⁰⁵ Mormon 9:32

⁴⁰⁶ Insights Apr '87; BYU Travel Study Update Vol 8, Winter '90; "It Came To Pass in the Bible and..." (FARMS)

⁴⁰⁷ Point 57.

⁴⁰⁸ Young + old = everybody; flesh + blood = sacrificed animals. See Alma 37:37. This is also called "difrasismo" or "kenning".

⁴⁰⁹ Insights Dec '86; Jan '88; see also 57 above.

⁴¹⁰ Point 25.

⁴¹¹ Sorenson 140

⁴¹² Sorenson 219

YOU CAN'T CATCH IT OUT!

Again and again the Book of Mormon refuses to contradict the discoveries. For example:

- Why is the "Great Mother" (a major ancient American figure) not represented? Maybe she is (although Mormon edited out most pagan references).⁴¹⁴
- Archeologists say there were people in America who differed from those in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon almost certainly implies that the Nephites mixed with existing inhabitants.⁴¹⁵
- Deadly games were popular in Ancient America (such as their famous version of handball). The Book of Mormon may contain references to such contests.⁴¹⁶
- Gold plates of the size described would not be the weight described, and thin gold is too soft to write on. But the ancient American gold-like alloy "tumbaga" fits the description perfectly.⁴¹⁷
- Christ was not born 600 years after Zedekiah's reign, as the Book of Mormon says? Yes he was - if you use an ancient American calendar!⁴¹⁸

Other "problems", such as the mention of leprosy, or bees, turn out to be based on false assumptions.⁴¹⁹ You just can't catch the Book of Mormon out!

LIGHT AND DARK RACES:

Legends and wall paintings confirm that there were distinct light and dark races in ancient America. Some were bearded and apparently non-Amerindian. There were certainly white peoples according to legend and existing types. (Though note that the "dark" Lamanites and "white and delightsome" Nephites may have been as much symbolic as anything else.)⁴²⁰

A CHALLENGE

Could *you* produce a book about a totally unknown civilisation... and a hundred years later find you had even got the names right? Recent research suggests that the name Tenoch (the probable founder of Tenochtitlan) was equivalent in the original language to Zenoch, a Book of Mormon name.⁴²¹ I have also heard claims that there is a mountain called by the indigenous people "Moronihah" and a river called "Nepihah".⁴²² There are parallels in the way people were named as well: The Maya used to

⁴¹³ The world in four parts: Insights Aug '86; Mountains and waters: Sorenson 179,223; Dragons: Sorenson 187,223; Omens in dates: Sorenson 275; etc., etc.

⁴¹⁴ CWHN 8:548

⁴¹⁵ CWHN 8:542-4; Sorenson 85-6,91-2; point 97.

⁴¹⁶ CWHN 8:539.

⁴¹⁷ Insights Oct '84

⁴¹⁸ Sorenson 273-274; Insights July '86

⁴¹⁹ Insights Sep '94; CWHN 5:194.

⁴²⁰ Cheesman; Ensign Oct'84 p.18; Magleby; Sorenson 88-89; Farnsworth 61,76-77,164,166-9.

⁴²¹ Insights Mar '93

⁴²² From West, I think. Moral: always write down the reference!

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name adults after what they were like,⁴²³ which would explain the how Korihor and "Pa-" were such appropriate names.⁴²⁴

This may not seem like many names,⁴²⁵ but archeologists do not know what most ancient American names sounded like - all they have is the picture-glyphs. We could find more similarities if we looked. For example, is the archaeological site Lamani anything to do with the Lamanites? I really do not know.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR MARK ON HISTORY⁴²⁶

Some Book of Mormon peoples apparently made a mark on history, despite the attempts by the Lamanites to wipe out every memory of the Nephites. Possible references to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Brother of Jared, Lehi, Mulek, Benjamin and Mormon are noted elsewhere.⁴²⁷ A scene in room 2 of the buildings at Bonampak, discovered in 1946, parallels a scene from the life of General Moroni.⁴²⁸ As for Nephi, consider Manco Capac, who helped to found the Quiche Indians.⁴²⁹ Manco Capac lived much later, but certain stories helped to justify his claim to be king. He was called "Royal Master" or "Chief" (Nephi's title); He came across waters (as did Nephi); He was pale faced or white (as were the Nephites); He came with three brothers (Sam and Laman and Lemuel?); They had "sister-wives" (the daughters of Ishmael were sisters); They were guided there by a golden staff (the liahona?); They settled at the seven caves that were the origin of the later peoples (like the Book of Mormon's "seven tribes"⁴³⁰); Manco Capac taught law, agriculture, arts and industries (as did Nephi); and so on.

We should read the book about these people who made such a dent on history!

"It is a story of courage, faith, and fortitude, of perseverance, sacrifice, and super-human accomplishments... It is the word of God."⁴³¹

THE WRITINGS OF IXTLILXOCHITL:

Ixtlilxochitl was a 16th century Aztec historian. He wrote of three original groups of settlers. The first crossed large lands, arrived on the East coast, and settled the North. They arrived on the east coast. They were finally destroyed by great calamities from heaven for their sins. The second group was tall, white, and bearded. They were artisans and builders, and arrived after the first group's decline. The third group landed on the east coast like the first. They found some of the first group who had escaped destruction.⁴³² The parallels with Book of Mormon Jaredites, Nephites and Mulekites are obvious.

⁴²³ NG Dec '75 p.749.

⁴²⁴ See point 49.

⁴²⁵ But see also point 109, the "Lehi Stone", and point 140 for names of places.

⁴²⁶ For Old World references, see section 6.3 of this book. For names that have survived, see point 120.

⁴²⁷ Part 7.6, points 90, 109, 62, 124, 134.

⁴²⁸ Ludlow

⁴²⁹ Farnsworth 24,87; Priddis 65; CWHN 6:462. See also point 123.

⁴³⁰ Insights Nov '87.

⁴³¹ Spencer W. Kimball, quoted in "Come Unto Me" (1988 LDS Relief Society Manual) p.17-18

⁴³² Instructor Mar '68 inside back cover

THE LIAHONA (see 1 Nephi 16:10)

"The Title of the Lords of Totonicapan" states that the Quiche Maya were "descendants of Israel, of the same language and the same customs". The Lord had given them a "present called Giron-Galgal" that guided their ancestors across the seas to their new land.⁴³³ Vowels were not written in ancient Hebrew, so Galgal is equivalent to Gilgal, meaning "a wheel, rolling". Gilgal was the name given to the first Israelite camp as they entered that other promised land, a "dwelling place of prophets in northern Israel",⁴³⁴ and a Book of Mormon name.⁴³⁵

ANCIENT AMERICAN SCRIPTURE

Only a handful of pre-Columbian books survived destruction by the Spanish invaders, or were re-written from memory soon after. The "Borgian Manuscript" also contains traditions that parallel those from the Bible and Book of Mormon: an original ancestor with 12 sons, the ten plagues, buried records, etc.⁴³⁶ "Anales de los Xahil" records how the first settlers asked their younger brother how to cross the sea. He told them to build ships, they travelled eastward and arrived in South America.⁴³⁷

THE LOST BOOK

Popol Vuh was the Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiché-Maya.⁴³⁸ It was written to replace a much older sacred book which had disappeared. The original had contained information about the creation, and the Maya's origin across the sea. It teaches of a godhead of three persons, the devil, the fall, the flood, and other Christian beliefs.⁴³⁹ "Popol Vuh" means The Book of the People, or The Book of the Princes. It was the book of prophecy and the oracle of the kings and lords (remember that Nephi, Ammon, Mormon, etc., were all kings, princes, or rulers).⁴⁴⁰

OTHER LEGENDS OF A LOST BOOK

The **Otomis** had a legend of a Book about Christ that was sacred and handed from father to son. They buried and lost it before the Europeans came.⁴⁴¹

The **Toltecs** said they had the Bible first. The book is now lost. A great leader called Hueman gathered all the religious beliefs and histories together and called them Teoamoxitli, or "things of God". When the Spanish came, the natives called the Bible Teoamoxitli because it was very similar. The book was compiled by a man called Hueman. Like Mormon, Hueman was described as a great prophet of God, and head general of the army.⁴⁴² The dates are the same - see below.

⁴³³ Improvement Era, Sep '69 p.8; Jun '70 p.101.

⁴³⁴ Strong

⁴³⁵ 3 Nephi 9:6; Mormon 6:14; Ether 13:27-30

⁴³⁶ West

⁴³⁷ Improvement Era, Sep '69 p.8

⁴³⁸ Not published in English until 1950, by Goetz and Morley.

⁴³⁹ Improvement Era, Sep '69 p.8; New Era Jan/Feb '83 p.8.

⁴⁴⁰ Instructor Mar '68 inside back cover; CR Apr '55 p.103-4; point 123.

⁴⁴¹ Farnsworth 65

⁴⁴² Hunter 337-370. This was based on the writings of Ixtlilxochitl.

The **Hopi** Indians had a similar tradition of having lost their books. But they said, "We were not left without hope; we were told some day young white men with blue eyes would come knocking at Hopi doors and would bring back to us our records and our true story. They would come from the east and that we would know them by their outstretched hands, and they would call us "my brother" and "my sister." ".⁴⁴³

A number of LDS missionaries have been told by native Americans that "their progenitors in the distant past had possessed a sacred, religious book, which volume had disappeared; and a prominent factor in those traditions is the claim that the sacred record would be possessed again by the American Indians. On a number of occasions these people have identified the Book of Mormon as the record of their ancestors".⁴⁴⁴ For example, a group of **Cree** Indians travelled far and waited months for an opportunity to get a copy of the Book of Mormon. They "expressed much joy and deep satisfaction regarding what they were taught, declaring that the Book of Mormon was truly the sacred record of their ancestors".

JESUS IN AMERICA⁴⁴⁵

NOTE: These are the most widely held legends in the western hemisphere. Although some legends were written down after (and influenced by) European contact, that does not explain them all:

1. There is no clear motive for the native historians to lie.
2. They are shared by non-Christian groups like the Waikano of Brazil.⁴⁴⁶
3. Some of the legends were recorded before European contact, or were kept hidden from the hostile outside world until recently.
4. They include details from the Book of Mormon that are not in the Bible.

IT'S NOT JUST "MORMONS" WHO SAY THIS

Viscount Kingsborough began publishing his "Antiquities of Mexico" in 1830, just too late (and on the wrong side of the Atlantic) for the publication of the Book of Mormon. Its nine volumes contain documentary evidence suggesting that Jesus visited the Americas. Kingsborough died in a debtor's prison in Ireland in 1837, the year that LDS missionaries came to the British Isles.

L. Taylor Hansen spent time travelling and gaining the trust of elders of various American tribes in the early 1960s. She wanted to save the oral traditions before they died out. She thought the legends might refer to the visit of an Essene to America, although European settlers thought they might refer to Saint Thomas.⁴⁴⁷

The Yaqui Indians said they had a quorum of 12 holy men which was older than the European conquest, and originally given by Jesus Christ. The LDS scout who heard this from them, Ammon Tenney, assumed that the story came from Catholic monks. But his non-LDS guide said they insisted no: Cortez had not visited or conquered them, and neither had Montezuma. They claimed their authority from Christ, not Peter. And the

⁴⁴³ Buchanan 285.

⁴⁴⁴ One example is from Western Canada in 1908 - Fisher 148-150, 180-184.

⁴⁴⁵ Unless specified, see Improvement Era, Sep '69 p.8; Dec '70 p.118; Instructor Mar '69 inside back cover; Talmage (b) 268.

⁴⁴⁶ Hansen, L. 24,209

⁴⁴⁷ Hansen

Catholic church does not have 12 apostles.⁴⁴⁸

THE GREAT WHITE GOD

Native American legends tell of a god who visited them. He was tall, white, bearded (unlike most native Americans), with blue eyes (or grey-green: the colour of water). He wore flowing white robes and sandals. He was given many names, but was best known as Quetzalcoatl, after "bird" (one tradition says he arrived through the air) and "serpent" (compare John 3:14; Helaman 8:14).⁴⁴⁹ He was sometimes called "Lord" (no other gods were called this).⁴⁵⁰ Some said that he had cross-shaped wounds on his hands. Others that his face shone.⁴⁵¹ The Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus also visited the Isles of the Sea. There is indeed evidence that he visited Japan,⁴⁵² and remote Lapland.⁴⁵³

At least one famous Mayan archeologist has compared the effect of Quetzacoatl on American culture with the effect of Christ on Middle Eastern and European culture. And he notes that they date from the same historical period.⁴⁵⁴

QUETZALCOATL AND CHRIST

Jesus Christ has made a great impact on both the Eastern and Western hemispheres. Ixtlilxochitl recorded the time when the sun and moon eclipsed, the earth trembled, the rocks broke, and there were other signs. During the physical darkness, the people were praying for the light to return. Then Quetzalcoatl arrived.⁴⁵⁵ He came from across the sea to the east where all men are bearded. He was born of a virgin, and the birth involved a star and winged beings singing.⁴⁵⁶ One legend was that he was crucified on a cross (of Greek form), took the infirmities and sorrows of man and was buried, during which time he descended into Hell. In Chiapas they say Bacab was crucified, and resurrected after three days.⁴⁵⁷

HIS WORDS

"The Great White God" called the Almighty "my father", and spoke of "my father's business". One Indian group recorded the following sayings: "in my father's land are many lodges" and "my father's land lies deep within you". Another recalls Him saying "Of myself I can do nothing". Another group recalled an event similar to Matthew 19:14. He also taught about living water and the water of life, which became a major theme in Mesoamerican religion.⁴⁵⁸ Although "the prophet" asked each tribe to

⁴⁴⁸ Petersen 84-88.

⁴⁴⁹ CR, Oct 1954, p.108

⁴⁵⁰ Farnsworth 43

⁴⁵¹ Hansen, L. 24,28,66; Farnsworth 62

⁴⁵² LDS general authority Elder Kikuchi gathered legends that suggest this - Erickson (c)

⁴⁵³ The first Christian missionaries found that Christianity was already practised - Erickson (a)

⁴⁵⁴ CR April 1961 p.53

⁴⁵⁵ See earlier references plus Sorenson 128,321

⁴⁵⁶ Hansen, L 14,48,79,161

⁴⁵⁷ Farnsworth 55

⁴⁵⁸ Sorenson 176-9; Petersen 75.

give him a name as they pleased, the Algonkin asked for his original name from the east. They and the Puan call him the dawn god, "Chee-Zoos".⁴⁵⁹

MIRACLES:

Quetzalcoatl created the earth and came in human form. "The Prophet" walked on water, healed the dying, raised the dead, and was known as a miracle worker, "lord of wind and water", and calmed storms. He turned hills into plains and plains into mountains.⁴⁶⁰

HIS ORGANISATION

The Prophet had unmeasured kindness, founded the ancient religion, and urged people to build temples. Widespread traditions (from Mexico to Oklahoma) say he had a religious council of 12 holy men. The Prophet stopped human sacrifice, and taught baptism (for adults, not children). He taught a secret language and signs. Spanish conquerors were astonished to see a form of the Lord's supper.⁴⁶¹

HE PROMISED TO RETURN:

"The Prophet" predicted a final destruction of their people, and invasion of white men in ships. After He had gone, every Aztec king was told by his priests at coronation that the kingship was not his, but was only borrowed. According to a calendar stone, Cortez arrived in the exact year as foretold by the Prophet.⁴⁶²

HOW THE CULTURE DECLINED TOWARD HUMAN SACRIFICE

As in the "old world", scholars agree that it all ended in apostasy: "the degeneration of the ancient [early Mayan] traditions, especially under the Aztecs."⁴⁶³ As today, this was partly due to the widespread misuse of drugs: "Their misuse hastened degradation of spiritual sacrifice to a cult of cruel blood-letting."⁴⁶⁴

NAMES AND DATES - A SUMMARY OF THE DISCOVERIES

WHAT THE BOOK OF MORMON SAID IN 1830	WHAT SCHOLARS (AND LEGENDS) SAID, DISCOVERED YEARS LATER.
c. 2000 BC First civilisation began (i.e. just after Babel). ⁴⁶⁵	c.2000 BC Pre-classic Maya period begins. ⁴⁶⁶
c. 600 BC Second civilisation began.	c.600 BC (According to other scholars) second civilisation (Maya) begins ⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁵⁹ Hansen 26, 91, 99.

⁴⁶⁰ Hansen, L 15,17,55,87; Farnsworth 79,80

⁴⁶¹ Hansen, L 18,28,45,48,53,54,66,91,96; Erickson (a), quoting "Dayspring" by Arnold Miller.

⁴⁶² Hansen, L 43,54,125

⁴⁶³ Ions 248

⁴⁶⁴ Ions 259

⁴⁶⁵ Instructor Mar '68 inside back cover

⁴⁶⁶ Grolier, pre-Columbian art and architecture

⁴⁶⁷ Wiesenthal; Farnsworth 12,144-5. See Sorenson for a more detailed view.

Before 420 BC Enos searches for a way to make future generations remember the old prophecies.	433 BC A New Calender is chosen (apparently linked to Lehi's "600 years" prophecy) ⁴⁶⁸
Before 279 BC Last Jaredite dies.	c.300 BC End of first civilisation.
From 130 BC Busiest period of history	From c.125 Most archaeological remains
AD 1 New calendar	AD 1 New calendar ⁴⁶⁹
AD 34 Great signs in nature; Jesus arrives	AD 34 Great signs in nature; Quetzalcoatl arrives. ⁴⁷⁰
AD 36 All people converted to Jesus	AD 36 First worship of Quetzalcoatl
c.36-200 Quiet period	c.50-200 Quiet period
Before 194 First new Lamanites	AD 177 New pagan calendar ⁴⁷¹
AD 245 Nephites divide into classes	c.250 Class distinctions reappear ⁴⁷²
AD 300 Nephites same as Lamanites	c.300 Civilisation declines ⁴⁷³
AD 328 Height of Lamanite victories ⁴⁷⁴	AD 328 First human sacrifice ⁴⁷⁵
AD 350-360 Ten years' peace	AD 350-360(?) Ten years' peace. ⁴⁷⁶
AD 379 Lamanites overrun Nephites	AD 379 Highlanders overrun lowlanders
AD 395 End of Samuel's "400 years" ³⁹⁹	AD 395 New calendar ⁴⁷⁷

Mesoamerican calendars also help explain why Nephites fought only at certain times, and how Helaman's teenage army of 2060 could have such success. The dating system - multiples of 20 and 400 years - is also authentic.⁴⁷⁸

"THE MOUNTAINS ARE FALLING ON US" (3 Nephi 8:9-14)

⁴⁶⁸ Spackman

⁴⁶⁹ Spackman

⁴⁷⁰ Hansen, L. 21; Ludlow; CR April 1961 p.51,52; April 1954 p.112; 3 Nephi 8:5

⁴⁷¹ Spackman 69

⁴⁷² Sorenson 331,335; Insights Sep '92.

⁴⁷³ Heineman 19; Sorenson 85-87, 107, 110, 114, 118-119, 123,127-36, 212, 335, 340.

⁴⁷⁴ Mormon 1:6,12-16; 2:2-3

⁴⁷⁵ Erickson (a)

⁴⁷⁶ See point 124 for references, also Talmage (b) 286; Ludlow

⁴⁷⁷ Spackman 70

⁴⁷⁸ Alma 45:10 and elsewhere. See also 1 Nephi 10:4

Some cities have now been found that are sunken under the sea, and native American groups have legends of others.⁴⁷⁹ When looking at the likely archeological sites, the city listed in 3 Nephi that was not by the sea, turns out to be by a lake. A lake that is now known to have engulfed cities in more recent times.⁴⁸⁰

THE BIG PICTURE

There were two main traditions America during Bible times (very loosely, the Olmec and later the Maya), corresponding to the Book of Mormon Jaredites and Nephites.. The Book of Mormon indicates the right trends at the right times and at the right places. None of this of course was known in the days of Joseph Smith.⁴⁸¹ The Maya can be divided into the highland and lowland groups, just as the Book of Mormon divides the descendants of Lehi into Lamanites and Nephites. The ethnic conflicts, the drift northward, the types of monuments (modest or proud) etc. are all as in the Book of Mormon.⁴⁸² The Book of Mormon was right.

THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL GUIDE

The Book of Mormon is full of information about ancient central America. Statements about the land of "many waters", the time taken to cross the sea, peculiar kinds of bad weather, beliefs about a particular hill and many more can all be verified today, but could not have been known in 1830.⁴⁸³

SOLVED! ONE OF ARCHAEOLOGY'S GREATEST MYSTERIES

One of the greatest mysteries of archaeology is, "what caused the classic Mayan civilisation to suddenly end?".⁴⁸⁴ Apparently, Mayan cities were often taken over by hostile new owners. Many were eventually abandoned. Finally the Mayan civilisation just collapsed. Why?⁴⁸⁵ Earlier civilisations, such as the Olmecs, were also swept off.⁴⁸⁶ Much later, Europeans almost completely wiped out the Aztecs, and later still they swept the North American Indians off the face of the land. Why are American empires swept off the face of the land, whilst "Old World" empires tend to decline gradually? The answer is in Ether 2:8. We have been warned!

THE YEAR THE HEAVENS OPENED

On the night of 22 September 1827 (when the gold plates were released from the earth), many people saw "armies marching and rushing into battle" in the sky.⁴⁸⁷ The period around 1830 saw an outpouring of the Spirit in all areas:

⁴⁷⁹ Everton 13, quoting CN 7 May '67; Hansen, K. 73,76. West refers to excavations off Honduras.

⁴⁸⁰ Sorenson 224, 247

⁴⁸¹ Sorenson 85-7,107,110,114,118-9,135; Insights Mar '91.

⁴⁸² Sorenson 235,245,251,335

⁴⁸³ Sorenson 267, 111, 182-3, 351

⁴⁸⁴ According to the head of a research team from the University of Florida, interviewed on R2, 5 Jun '95 6.45pm

⁴⁸⁵ National Geographic Dec '75; Readers c.265

⁴⁸⁶ Heinemann 19

⁴⁸⁷ Ensign Sep '78 p.30

IN SCIENCE: Michael Faraday was a devout non-orthodox Christian, and the greatest experimental scientist ever.⁴⁸⁸ He discovered the secrets of electricity and magnetism, as well as work that led to an understanding of the electron, the basis of all chemistry. In other words, the foundations of modern technology were laid in this period. Other advances included the discovery of the endocrine system, the discovery of proteins and the isolation of enzymes. In technology, the first passenger steam train ran in 1830, and the reaping machine was developed - very symbolic.⁴⁸⁹ In fact, it was in 1830 that the word "scientist" was first used!⁴⁹⁰

IN POLITICS: Slavery was abolished in the British Empire,⁴⁹¹ by William Wilberforce in 1833, and the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed in 1829. The Central and South American lands of the Book of Mormon became or had just become independent. The industrial revolution began to spread throughout the world, and the term "sociology" was first used in 1830.⁴⁹²

IN RELIGION This was the only time that such a restoration could come about.⁴⁹³ This was also the time when the Bible was most in need of the Book of Mormon.⁴⁹⁴ In the 1830s for example, Tischendorf was searching for the earliest possible copy of the scriptures in order to prove that the Bible was genuine. He eventually found the Codex Sinaiticus, but what he really needed was 2 Nephi!⁴⁹⁵

IN THE ARTS: Albert Roustit, a French doctor of musicology, became convinced that the history of music mirrors that of spirituality. He concluded that between 1798 and 1844 there must have been a great outpouring of the Spirit. He later heard of the Book of Mormon and joined the Church.⁴⁹⁶

VISIONS: Various people had visions of something important about to happen, and many of them later joined the LDS church.⁴⁹⁷ Others, such as Margaret MacDonald, didn't find the Church. In 1830 she had a vision of the second coming of Christ, which led to a charismatic renewal in Scotland.⁴⁹⁸

MESSAGES IN DREAMS

One non-LDS man dreamed of receiving a book. When he received the Book of Mormon, he knew it was the one, and paid for 1000 copies to give to others.⁴⁹⁹ Another man who investigated the LDS

⁴⁸⁸ Britannica.

⁴⁸⁹ Hutchinson; Revelation 14:15

⁴⁹⁰ By William Whewell. NS 28 Oct '95 p.28

⁴⁹¹ The British Empire reached its greatest power under Queen Victoria, who came to power in 1837... the year that missionaries brought the Book of Mormon to England.

⁴⁹² Hutchinson

⁴⁹³ Institute, "Church History" 12, note 16; Ensign Sep '78 p.9.

⁴⁹⁴ For example, the path-breaking "Das Leben Jesu" by D. F. Strauss, was published in 1835.

⁴⁹⁵ Bentley

⁴⁹⁶ Ensign Dec '74 p.30

⁴⁹⁷ New Era Jan '72 p.6; Ensign Dec '84 p.17; Sep '78 p.28. There were also spiritual experiences within the church at the time. See Pratt (c) 4 (1850) 49; "History of the Church" (CD) for the period 1829-1830.

⁴⁹⁸ Elwall

⁴⁹⁹ Ensign Sep '89 p.68

church sometimes dreamed of passages in the Book of Mormon *before* he read them the next day.⁵⁰⁰ A woman read the entire book, night after night, in dreams, before she ever set eyes on it awake. When she first saw it, she recognised it instantly.⁵⁰¹

One particular dream was given twice in the Book of Mormon.⁵⁰² It has also been given to people who have never heard of the Book of Mormon, including an American Indian Chief,⁵⁰³ and at least two other people who later heard of the Book of Mormon and joined the LDS church.⁵⁰⁴ LDS church members (such as David B. Haight)⁵⁰⁵ have had the same dream with added detail. Whether we learn of the Book of Mormon from dreams or from missionaries, the question is the same: what do we do with this knowledge?

MORE MIRACLES

One man reported having a house fire and the only possession not burned was a Book of Mormon.⁵⁰⁶ Another man, praying after becoming disillusioned with his church, heard the "voice of the spirit" tell him to read the Book of Mormon, yet he knew nothing of Mormons beyond a High School history class.⁵⁰⁷ A woman who's eyesight made her unable to read... found that she could read Book of Mormon passages left by missionaries ignorant of her condition.⁵⁰⁸ Another woman had a son who had Downs' Syndrome, and found that the Book of Mormon had a unique power to teach him to read.⁵⁰⁹ Most Book of Mormon experiences are less dramatic, but no less powerful. The Book of Mormon has drawn millions of people to truths about Jesus Christ. It is a miracle!

⁵⁰⁰ Ensign Mar '88 p.33.

⁵⁰¹ Ensign Sep '76 p.20

⁵⁰² 1 Nephi 8 and 11

⁵⁰³ Jorgensen (b)?

⁵⁰⁴ Ensign Mar '86 p.52; Oct '88 p.42

⁵⁰⁵ While unconscious in hospital - as reported by the presiding General Authority at Sunderland England Stake Conference, Sep '91.

⁵⁰⁶ Ensign Oct '86 p.61.

⁵⁰⁷ Ensign Jan '92 p.51

⁵⁰⁸ Carpenter

⁵⁰⁹ LDS Relief Society study guide 1984, p.12

"We do not have to prove the Book of Mormon is true. The book is its own proof. All we need to do is read it and declare it! The Book of Mormon is not on trial -- the people of the world, including the members of the Church, are on trial as to what they will do with this second witness for Christ."⁵¹⁰

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- D&C The Doctrine and Covenants. LDS scripture, a companion to
the Bible and Book of Mormon.
- DNTC See McConkie (b)
- Daily Mail. UK national daily newspaper.
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Looking at the Book of Mormon through these lenses has been an insightful and inspiring exercise! I recommend it to each of you. During these six months, I have invited various groups—including my Brethren in the Quorum of the Twelve, missionaries in Chile, and mission presidents and their wives gathered in Argentina—to consider three related questions that I urge you to think about today. One of our missionary granddaughters, Sister Olivia Nelson, promised an investigator that if he would read the Book of Mormon daily, his test scores on his university exams would improve. He did, and they did. It teaches what it really means to be born again. From the Book of Mormon we learn about the gathering of scattered Israel. We know why we are here on earth. The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ. It is about 500 pages long and was written in biblical times on the American continents by the Nephites, Lamanites and Jaredites. It was translated by Joseph Smith, prophet, seer and revelator in the mid-1800s. The book that Mormons use, like how Jewish people have the Torah and Muslims have the Quran. Just like the Bible, it's a pain in the ass to read because of its use of old English, random story arcs coming out of nowhere, and being deathly boring. However, the Book of Mormon does get more points than the Bible because it's not even half as long as the Old Testament. The Book of Mormon also comes with "Doctrine and Covenants" and "Pearl of Great Price" DLC. Don't read the Book of Mormon.