Introduction

Daniel C. Peterson

"I believe," said Jeffrey R. Holland in 1986, "that by Aristotle's standard the Book of Mormon is not only a good book; it is a classic."\(^1\) Holland referred specifically to the structure and development of the book, and a good argument can be made that he is right. The narrative of the Book of Mormon, to choose just one aspect, is a far cry from the simplistic and naïve yarn which many of its dismissive critics claim to see in it. It is, in fact, much more complex and sophisticated than is recognized even by most of its professed disciples. But, of course, the Book of Mormon is not simply a great story well told. "To begin with," writes Elder Neal A. Maxwell, "the Book of Mormon provides resounding and great answers to what Amulek designated as 'the great question'; namely, is there really a redeeming Christ?"\(^2\)

Yet, by and large, the Book of Mormon has not received the attention that it deserves. For all its potential significance in comparative religions,\(^3\) for all the historical influence which it

---

1 Jeffrey R. Holland, "Conclusion and Charge," in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), 317.
2 Neal A. Maxwell, "The Book of Mormon: A Great Answer to 'The Great Question',' in Nyman and Tate, Doctrinal Foundation, 1.
3 There have always been a few scholars who have recognized the world-historical significance of Mormonism and the Book of Mormon for religious studies. Eduard Meyer, with his famous Ursprung und Geschichte der Mormonen (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1912), English trans. by Heinz F. Rohde and Eugene Seaich (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, n.d.), is perhaps the most illustrious example, but others come to mind. For instance, in an article entitled "Joseph Smith und die Bibel: Die Leistung des mormonischen Propheten in neuer Beleuchtung," which appeared in the Theologische Literaturzeitung 109/2 (Feb. 1984): 81-92, the Finnish scholar Heikki Räisänen appealed to European students of "Religionswissenschaft" to give Mormonism and its scriptures more serious attention. (The article by W. D. Davies, "Reflections on the Mormon Canon," Harvard Theological Review 79 (Jan. 1986): 44-66, is perhaps a step in this direction.) And in November 1987, when a group of prominent Islamicists gathered in Boston to discuss a colleague's new book on the
has undeniably exercised, for all the spiritual value attributed to it by millions of believing Latter-day Saints, it has been left relatively unstudied. The eminent Judaic scholar Jacob Neusner put his finger on perhaps one of the reasons for this odd situation in an article published over ten years ago. "Among our colleagues," he remarked, "are some who do not really like religion in its living forms, but find it terribly interesting in its dead ones." To take a prominent example, Neusner continues, the Book of Mormon "is available principally for ridicule, but never for study. Religious experience in the third century is fascinating. Religious experience in the twentieth century is frightening or absurd." The Book of Mormon has been, indeed, and as President Benson has been telling us, neglected—and by believers only comparatively less than by nonbelievers.

Perhaps this is beginning to change. Certainly the Prophet's call for renewed emphasis on the Book of Mormon has met a response among many members of the Church. And it can hardly be dismissed as self-congratulation—since I am a newcomer to the organization—when I say that the establishment of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies itself represents both a symbol of an apparent renaissance in Book of Mormon studies and a watershed in their development. But while F.A.R.M.S. is a manifestation of heightened interest in the Book, it is not the only manifestation. New theories on the origins and claims of the Book of Mormon

nature of scripture and canon in world religions, the Qurān was naturally their primary focus—but the Book of Mormon was a prominent secondary topic of discussion. And (to my delight) it was apparent that at least certain of the discussants knew something about it.

4 Jacob Neusner, "Religious Studies: The Next Location," Bulletin of the Council on the Study of Religion 8/5 (Dec. 1977): 118. From the context of his statement, Neusner seems to share with Heikki Räisänen the assumption "was jedem historisch denkenden Nicht-Mormonen ohnehin klar ist: Das BM ist ein Produkt des 19. Jahrhunderts" (Räisänen, "Joseph Smith und die Bibel," 82). We should not be surprised or distressed at this: While one can perhaps believe the Book of Mormon to be a modern production and still accept it as scripture (at least, there are a few who claim to do so), it would be rather difficult to believe the Book to be ancient and authentic and not regard it as scripture. Thus, of course even sympathetic non-Mormons will tend to view it as a creation of the nineteenth century; otherwise, presumably, they would not be non-Mormons!
proliferate not only without but, for perhaps the first time in any significant way, within the Church. Some of these are, in my frank opinion, pernicious. A few are simply retoolings of theories which have been around since the nineteenth century. But they are presented, in many cases, with a persuasive force which merits the most serious and honest attention. For those who occupy themselves seriously with the rising field of Book of Mormon studies, they cannot simply be dismissed.

As The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues its remarkable emergence from the obscurity and isolation of the Great Basin to the status of a truly global institution, it and its beliefs will undoubtedly come under yet more scrutiny. And, since the Book of Mormon is crucial to the claims of the Church, it is inevitable that it too will be examined and cross-examined by both sympathetic and unsympathetic observers. Inescapably, it will come under attack. (What surprise in this, since it has been under attack now for sixteen decades?) It is, therefore, and will ever be the duty of believers in the Book of Mormon to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [them] a reason of the hope that is in [them]” (1 Peter 3:15). Not to prove to the world that the Book of Mormon is true. Such an outcome is probably impossible, and almost certainly inconsistent with the noncoercive plan of salvation adopted before this world was. Rather, we need simply to show that there is room for faith, that belief is not something which honest and rational human beings must sadly forego.

But a deeper knowledge of the Book of Mormon is not merely desirable in order to reinforce our apologetic armor. If that were the case, the Book of Mormon would be no more useful to us than a piece of worthless peripheral territory is to a city under siege. If the Book of Mormon served only to increase the perimeter we must defend against attack, we would be well-advised to cast it off.

This Review is founded on the deeply held belief that the Book of Mormon has immense value to both the Church and the world. The challenges of the years ahead will not be merely, or even largely, challenges of opposition. Rather, they will include the rapid growth of the Kingdom, the widening gap between Zion and its alluring but decadent rival, Babylon, and the difficulties of planting the gospel in foreign nations and cultures which we have up until now barely touched. They will involve materialism and violence, international conflict and weakened
faith, infidelity and the lust for status and power. All of these problems, and many others, are addressed in the Book of Mormon. A more profound understanding of the Book is imperative if we are to meet the tasks which lie ahead.

This is the first issue of what we hope and plan to be an annual review of books written about the Book of Mormon. It is simultaneously a response to the greater manifested interest in the Book of Mormon, and a part of that trend. We undertake this enterprise with some concern that our intentions be properly understood. As Latter-day Saints, we belong to a culture which values kindness and the accentuation of the positive. This is quite proper, and entirely Christian. Criticism in the commonly used sense of the term—and the reviewing of books written by fallible mortal authors will always entail a certain amount of such criticism—is something that our culture is wary of, and with some justification. Too often, it can be unhelpful, unfair, cruel, and self-aggrandizing. Of Babylon, and not of Zion. I hope that we have successfully avoided that tendency in our first attempt.

Furthermore, "criticism"—pop definitions notwithstanding—need not be negative. (I think naturally of the publication, a few years back, of the F.A.R.M.S. “Critical Text” of the Book of Mormon. Shortly thereafter, one newspaper ran a headline announcing “Group Publishes Text Critical of the Book of Mormon.”) There is much to admire in some recent publications on our subject, much that is useful. To borrow a phrase, “there are many things contained therein that are true” (D&C 91:1). But if discernment is necessary in reading those ancient texts, so too it is necessary in reading the increasing number of books and articles appearing annually about the Book of Mormon. We do not intend in this Review simply to stand back and attack all those who are attempting to contribute to our knowledge of the Book of Mormon. Rather, we intend to criticize in the pure sense of the word, which goes back to the Greek krino, “to separate, choose, decide.” Discernment, after all, is a gift which each one of us is encouraged to develop. We are to “lay hold upon every good thing” (see Moroni 7:12-19). “Prove all things,” admonished the apostle Paul. “Hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

That is what this project is designed to do. There is value for anyone in peer review. That fact has long been recognized in academic fields ranging from chemistry to comparative literature. We often fail to notice, even in daily life, the things that we do
INTRODUCTION

amiss. It requires someone else to point them out to us—a wife, a child, a friend, sometimes even an enemy. The garden of Book of Mormon studies will produce more abundantly and healthily if its gardeners and consumers are adept at distinguishing edible plants from weeds.

The metaphor is deliberately chosen. We hope for a plenteous harvest, but weeds must be recognized for what they are. Where there is shoddy writing or shallow reasoning, we hope to point it out. Not that we necessarily enjoy doing so—although on those rare occasions where there is dishonesty or bad faith, it is a positive if not altogether saintly pleasure to draw attention to it. (No such occasions occur in this volume, although they have in the past and, no doubt, will in the future.) Rather, we hope in a modest way to improve the quality of writing and thinking on the Book of Mormon, our own not excluded, by signalizing defects and areas of potential improvement. But the purpose of the garden, the goal of the gardener, the ambition of the hungry onlooker, is to harvest wholesome vegetables and delicious fruit. Obsessive weeding for its own sake is just that—obsessive. Unfruitful. Although this Review will not hesitate to point out bad work, we will enjoy much more the opportunity to draw attention to things that have been well done. If we can encourage a wider circulation for good ideas and enriching insights, we will be delighted.

We welcome diversity of viewpoints and approaches. A varied diet, to continue the metaphor. Simply because this Review is published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies does not mean that archaeological, geographical, and philological avenues are the only ways to approach the text. They are not even the most important ways. Far from it, although they can be of valuable assistance to other approaches as well as being interesting and stimulating in their own right. Any important text—and the Book of Mormon is certainly in that class—can be profitably read in a multitude of ways. No one way—and this is one of the articles of faith underlying this enterprise—is exclusively valuable. I myself have found benefit in reading the Book of Mormon sometimes rapidly, sometimes very slowly, occasionally in a different language, sometimes looking for doctrinal themes, at other times trying to puzzle out historical issues, sometimes searching deliberately for the spiritual guidance in which at all times I have found it so rich. Each approach has its value. One of the great testimonies to the Book of Mormon, I feel, is that it stands up so
well—and yields so very much—to all manner of readings. Thus, we have included in this Review not only materials that might be expected to appeal to people (like much of the leadership of F.A.R.M.S.) who have special interests in the ancient world, in Mesoamerica and the Near East, but also writing of a more devotional kind. And we have included something from the anti-Mormon camp, as well. Indeed, we have tried to cover all the book-length items concerning the Book of Mormon which were published in the interval 1987-1988. (Previously published reviews of major books before this time have been collected and are available from F.A.R.M.S.) There have been, we know, some omissions. We will attempt to pick these up in the next issue, and we would be grateful to any of our readers who might bring other items to our attention.

Those books that we review in this issue are presented in alphabetical order, by author. In the two cases where more than one review is given of the same book, we have printed these in alphabetical order by reviewer. No effort has been made by the editor or by anyone else connected with this Review to harmonize the viewpoints expressed here, or to guide the reviewers. The editorial hand has been relatively light. The opinions expressed in these reviews are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or the respective institutions with which the authors are affiliated.

There remains the opportunity to thank all of those who have helped in the production of this Review. To the reviewers, who responded so well at short notice and at a rather inconvenient time; to Janet Twigg of the F.A.R.M.S. office, who secured the books and sent them out for review; to Shirley S. Ricks, who entered the reviews into the master computer disk and established them in a uniform and pleasing format; to Glen Cooper, who compiled the Bibliography; to all of these I express my gratitude.

Reviewed by John W. Welch

This small book is an important volume that casts a very long shadow. These Book of Mormon addresses by President Ezra Taft Benson will have a long-lasting, beneficial effect on Book of Mormon studies and on the Church.

This volume contains eleven talks by President Benson, mostly delivered in General Conferences from April 1975 to October 1987. It is a great service to readers to have these talks collected in one convenient location, attractively typeset and designed. It will be crucial for all who want to understand the ministry of President Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator, to digest the counsel given in these speeches.

The book is complemented by a good subject index. In addition, a scripture index could well be added, since so many Book of Mormon scriptures are integral to these talks. A scripture index would also reveal some key scriptures frequently cited by President Benson, such as D&C 84:54-57. In any subsequent printings, it would also be informative to have notes telling readers when and where each of these talks was given, for it is impressive to know how long-standing and repeated President Benson’s emphasis has been on the Book of Mormon and on certain recurring themes about this volume of scripture.

This collection of talks is forthright, hard hitting, direct, and declaratory. It places central importance on the urgency for us to know more about the Book of Mormon and do more with it. Its style is pithy and memorable; its tone unwavering yet inviting; its scope open to all who will remember and take seriously the new covenant—the Book of Mormon. One may wish to augment these passages with further references now also available in *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*.1

Declared and discussed are such topics as the purposes of the Book of Mormon, the condemnation that comes from neglecting the Book of Mormon, the greater value of certain scriptures for our day, reasons for studying the Book of Mormon, the transforming power of the book, use of the Book of Mormon in teaching and family relations, the central role of

1 Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988, especially pp. 46-65.
the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to the Nephites, the attributes of Christ, and the traits of those who are captained by him.

These subjects, and several more, are taught by example. Each chapter is a model of practical wisdom, a “how-to-do-it” approach for detecting the impressive messages of the Book of Mormon and for putting them to work in our lives. While serious, these messages are constructive and encouraging, for with the warnings comes the witness of promised blessings, something few people should want to miss.

Reviewed by Camille Williams

Professor Black’s brief book testifies of Christ, the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith and LDS doctrine; she is a believer writing for believers. The most engaging parts of the book are her personal experiences as a ten-year-old challenging a minister (pp. 1-4) and as a teacher watching her class show compassion (pp. 71-72). Both speak of her faith and insight.

In addition to bearing testimony, she questions the purpose of Book of Mormon scholarship (pp. 10-13), then outlines her own observations about names for Christ (pp. 15-31), about indicators of his body and passions (pp. 51-64), about his appearance to the Nephites (pp. 38-48), about Book of Mormon themes (pp. 31-34), and about the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith (pp. 80-84). Testimonies, of course, aren’t subject to a review such as this, but her observations present us with an issue that requires further exploration.

I am puzzled by her attack against both the “gratuitous verbiage” of critics of the Book of Mormon (p. 10), also against the efforts of “sympathetic” archaeologists, anthropologists, and other scholars (pp. 10-12). Her assertion that some studies of the Book of Mormon “are intellectually stimulating but not always spiritually edifying,” often missing “the Christ-centered purpose of the book” (p. 11), suggests in perhaps a too general sense that scholars lack or destroy faith. This seems an unhappy generalization, especially since it is followed immediately by a quantitative study of Christ’s names and their frequency of use—a type of the analytical approach similar to those which she appears to condemn.

Surely the Book of Mormon deserves our best, most faithful scholarship not because we can “prove” or “disprove” our arguments, but because scholarly inquiry is another way of experiencing the text, and it is that experience, not the words we write about it, that convinces and converts.

Professor Black’s focus on one clause on the title page—“to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations”—is valid; but it is likely that other scholars view their work as addressing other clauses on the same page. They may see their linguistic,
anthropological, or other studies as supporting the book’s mission “to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers;... that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever.”

Perhaps the problem lies not in academic inquiry itself, but in the kinds of questions we ask, the ways we gather data, and in the conclusions we draw. Professor Black’s conclusions do not automatically follow from her lists and tables. It is unfortunate that she does not guide the reader through her analysis.

The claim that “each appearance of his name [Christ’s] reveals something unique, something essential, and something deeply inspirational about him” (p. 16) is not obvious. Of the 101 different names referring to Christ 34% are God, another 34% Lord, 8% Christ; those names and percentages seem not unexpected; it is possible that many readers do not understand that Christ is being named when they see “Lord” or “God.” Had she moved into the text to demonstrate, for example, how Almighty (2 Nephi 23:6) could not work well in place of Lord God Almighty (2 Nephi 9:46), her interpretation of the significance of the names would have been more convincing. The reader is left to work out the links between the data and the conclusions.

This lack of cohesive links between data and analysis persists throughout the section treating Christ’s body and passions (ch. 4). It is left unclear how the charts of words relate to increased knowledge about Christ, his attributes, or his mission.

Much of the last third of the book is a summary of Book of Mormon themes as related to our own day, and a compilation of testimonies about Joseph Smith’s mission. The summary and its supporting arguments include copious references to the Book of Mormon, but still do not take us into the Book of Mormon text itself. This is a weakness that might have been addressed at the editorial stage, where some uneveness of diction, and too frequent repetition of phrasing and metaphor could also have been corrected.

Professor Black’s testimony permeates her writing. She has spent years studying the Book of Mormon, but for the most part her scholarly insights are less clearly communicated than they might have been.

Reviewed by Donald W. Parry

Wade Brown, Institute instructor and doctoral candidate at the University of Idaho, has endeavored in this work to format the entire text of the Book of Mormon into various parallelistic and poetic structures. Brown's chief aim is to show that all parts of this sacred book (including the testimony of the three and eight witnesses) consist of Hebrew poetry. His claim is that "over 6,000 identifiable examples of parallel or poetic structures which are common to ancient Hebrew writings" (p. v) exist in the Book of Mormon.

Additionally, to assist the reader in understanding poetic verse, the author has included a commentary, which consists of a brief "Note of Explanation" found in the preface, and a series of explanatory and demonstrative footnotes. However, Brown's comments make up only a small portion of the book. The 988-page book consists primarily of scriptural text.

In order to prove his supposition that the entire Book of Mormon is composed of parallelisms and poetry, Brown has arranged and systematized the printed text of the Book of Mormon into a series of intricate indentations. The author explains that "in this volume the parallels will be visually demonstrated by indentation. When lines begin at the same point across the page it is proposed that there is some way in which those lines correspond to each other" (p. 1). For example, 1 Nephi 13:26 is arranged in a chiastic pattern as follows:

For behold they have taken away from the gospel
of the Lamb
many parts
which are plain
and most precious
and also many covenants
of the Lord
have they taken away (p. 59).

Therefore, according to the author's method of line and phrase indentation, the first line of this example corresponds and is in some way parallel to the last line. This is indicated by
having both lines “begin at the same point across the page.” And thus it is with every other line in the text of the Nephite scripture, according to Brown’s system.

Notwithstanding the author’s voluminous presentation of Hebrew poetry and parallelistic verse as demonstrated in this work, serious problems exist, both in his general thesis and in his method of formatting the text of the Book of Mormon. Both of these issues will be examined here.

Concerning the theme of the book, Brown sets forth the unjustifiable theory that the entire Book of Mormon is composed of poetic and parallelistic verses. His assertion is that “parallelism is not found here and there in the Book of Mormon but is the basic format into which the prophets placed their accounts” (p. v). No doubt Brown received this notion from Paul Kraus, a Hebraist who lived more than half a century ago (see p. vii). According to the story, Kraus made an attempt to format the entire Hebrew Old Testament into poetic verse. Considering that there exists more prose than poetry within the Hebrew scriptures, his attempt predictably failed.

Not one of today’s biblical scholars shares Kraus’ once-held belief that the entire Old Testament was composed entirely of poetry. Generally, it is thought that approximately one-third of the Old Testament is written in poetic form. So it is with the Book of Mormon. Its pages feature both prose and poetry, with the former being utilized far more than the latter.

Moreover, Brown claims that he has included and identified “at least sixty” (p. v) different poetic forms in his work. A close examination of these sixty types makes it apparent that only a handful can properly be termed “parallel or poetic structures” (p. v). Obviously, this view is in direct

---


contradiction to that of the author, but it is in line with the scholars of biblical poetics. For instance, Brown’s examples include an ellipsis (p. 5), a metaphor (p. 179), simile (p. 187), triple synonym (p. 8), hyperbole (p. 875), rhetorical questions (p. 31), and correlative word-pairs (p. 7). While he correctly identified these varieties, and while all of them are important figures of speech, they simply are not parallelisms. Nor can they be considered poetry of any type. In identifying them to be such, the author has overstepped the bounds of discriminating scholarship.

On the other hand, Brown fails to include many important parallel types, all of which are attested within the Nephite scripture. Such categories as catabasis, simple synonymous, repeated alternate, antimetabole, cycloides, epible, and exergasia are not included among his sixty models. In connection with this, many of his definitions lack accuracy. His example of chorus (p. 795) has been incorrectly identified, his definition of anabasis (p. 333) lacks completeness, and his description of extended alternate (p. 166) is somewhat ambiguous.

As mentioned above, problems exist concerning Brown’s system of arranging and structuring the text of the Book of Mormon. His method of indenting the lines does not seem to serve its purpose effectually. While he admits that some “mixed forms” of poetry are “difficult to adequately diagram or illustrate” (p. 21), it is nearly impossible to decipher his illustrative maze of poetic verse.

This is due, in part, to the fact that many parallelisms contain subtleties and complexities which are not readily discovered. That is to say, parallelistic structures may contain such word-pair schemes as synonyms (preacher-teacher), antonyms (holy-unholy) and identical words or phrases (child-child); they may also embody such intricacies as complementsaries (bows-arrows), superordinates (wine-drink) and reciprocals (to retire-sleep). Further, such poetic arrangements may contain different inflections of the same root, such as “to judge,” “a judge,” “judgment,” and “judgment-seat,” and gradations, which represent an increase or decrease of the sense or idea.

With this in mind, Brown could have more readily identified the different parts of poetry and thus simplified things by employing bold lettering, italics, and capital letters to feature certain word pairs, keywords, or other associations found
within the passage. The use of underlining would be helpful in underscoring specific parallels between the lines. Brown could have employed many more explanatory notes, abbreviations, and any number of identificatory symbols which would have demonstrated to the reader exactly which poetic structure is being presented. Also, an introductory chapter outlining the fundamentals of biblical poetics would have been helpful.

It should also be noted that Brown has removed all punctuation marks (see his explanatory remarks on pp. 71ff.), attempting to imitate the style and format of the ancient prophetic writings. Presumably, Brown believes that such stichographic formatting will enable the reader to more easily identify the poetry found within the text. However, this seems to confuse the issue, as twentieth-century students are not accustomed to reading such texts.

A final comment about the book is in order. Brown contends that “the arrangement and structure of the language of scriptures has divine origin” (p. iii). Hence he entitles his work The God-Inspired Language of the Book of Mormon. His basic claim is that Jesus Christ, both as a premortal spirit and as the resurrected Lord, taught and revealed his divine word using only poetic phrases and expressions to his prophets of the Nephite and Jaredite nations. Afterward, the prophets followed this perfect pattern and also employed parallelisms in their writings, according to Brown.

The author first asks the question, “How did the prophets come to use this form?” (p. iii). His answer is, “All the individual prophets ... without exception ... followed the form which Jesus Christ presented both before and following his mortality” (p. iii; see also his comments on pp. 52, 58, 59, 61). Of course, it is a basic tenet of members of the Church to believe that the Book of Mormon is the “word of God” (Article of Faith 8). And an important doctrine relates that all scripture is “the will of the Lord ... the mind of the Lord ... the word of the Lord ... [and] the voice of the Lord” (D&C 68:4). But to limit the inspired works of Jesus and the prophets to poetry alone, is too great a liberty to take. Brown’s broad statement does not allow the prophets to use forms other than poetic verse, such as prosaic expressions and utterances.

Considering the recent exhortations by President Benson for members of the Church to read and study the Book of Mormon, and knowing its unequaled importance, Brown is to be commended for undertaking such an overwhelming project.
But the task at hand is far from complete. It will take decades to sift and sort out the poetic verse from the prosaic passage. Students of the Book of Mormon from many different persuasions will likely add their part to the study of scriptural poetics. The work is yet in its beginning stages.

Reviewed by David P. Wright

A tradition in Book of Mormon literary study has crystallized over the past twenty years or so. This tradition has three discernable directions. Perhaps the most familiar of these is the attempt to identify structures and forms in the book that are found in ancient documents, particularly the Hebrew Bible and other Near Eastern documents, such as poetic parallelism (i.e., the collocation of semantically, syntactically, or grammatically similar phrases, sentences, or paragraphs) and chiasmus (inverse parallelism, such as the pattern a b c / c b a). Another familiar course is "wordprint" analysis by which scholars attempt to determine if a work derives from one or many authors. While these two approaches seek to elucidate the meaning of the text, they (and particularly the second) have often had the historical goal of seeking to demonstrate the antiquity of the book. A third, less familiar direction is the application of modern literary-critical methods to elucidate and discuss the book. This approach has generally not had the historical aim the other two approaches have had.

The book under review here has been influenced by all three of these directions, but is mainly in line with the first. The book chiefly consists of displaying the parallelistic or repetitive structure of the entire Book of Mormon. Apart from the author's extremely short "Introduction" and "A Note of Explanation" (pp. iii-vii) and his wife's "Foreword" (p. i), which all provide the rationale for the work and its theological and historical perspectives, the entire book is a reproduction of the Book of Mormon with phrases, sentences, and paragraphs indented and spaced in order to exhibit the book's perceived parallelistic structure (pp. viii-988). The only other materials coming from the author are comments and footnotes, mostly on the first one hundred pages, which make a few observations regarding specific passages or forms in the first part of the Book of Mormon, present definitions of literary terms and structures, and offer theological and inspirational miscellanea.

By its own admission, the book is not a scholarly work but rather a witness of the author's religious convictions. Indeed, it was his family for whom the work was originally
written as a “as a gift of his testimony of the language of the Book of Mormon” (p. i) that had the work published. This may account for the extremely brief and undeveloped character of the author’s arguments and analysis. If there is a main argument in the introductory material and notes, it is that the literary form of the Book of Mormon is evidence of the book’s divine character. While the author notes that real proof of the book’s character comes through a spiritual witness, the concentration and perfection of repetitive structures throughout the book show for him that the form, and hence the text, has a divine origin. Moreover, the “refined and pure phrasing” in the Book of Mormon which is not found in other books, the author argues, gives meaning to Joseph Smith’s statement that “the Book of Mormon is the most correct of any book on earth” (p. iv). One of the author’s specific historical arguments is that “parallelism is not original with the Hebrews nor is it a product of language evolution” since parallelistic form is found not only in parts of the Book of Mormon which by traditional dating and interpretation stem from ancient Israel but in the speeches of “the pre-mortal Messiah and his prophets... long before the house of Israel came into being” (p. v). In other words, this style is not of human origin; it is divine.

The point of this review is not to question Brown’s religious views, nor will it dwell on his metaphysical-historical judgments about the origin of the parallelistic form of the Book of Mormon which certainly can be questioned, even by scholars who view the book from an orthodox perspective. The point is rather to show that his layout of the text—apart from the problematic secondary material he has added—is a helpful contribution to the literary study of the Book of Mormon and has implications for further study.

That the Book of Mormon has a style which involves parallelism and repetition is not Brown’s imposition upon the text. And he does not go too far in trying to see these structures throughout the entire book. They are really there. Before becoming acquainted with Brown’s book, I began my own study of Book of Mormon narrative. Part of this work involved ascertaining in detail the rhetorical or literary structure of certain chapters in the book. All the chapters studied displayed structures of repetition or other definable structures (see below). This is not to say the Book of Mormon is somehow unique in having discernable literary forms. Every product of speech—be it literary, religious, scientific, journalistic, or whatever—has a
formal logic and stylistic features. Form is inherent in the conventions of speech and is begotten the minute we open our mouths or pick up the pen. But this investigation showed that the Book of Mormon had its own concentrated and intelligent style that required description. When Brown’s book appeared, I was happy to see that someone had attempted to perform this analysis for the entire Book of Mormon.

Certainly there are problems with Brown’s textual presentation and his secondary observations. Brown is too simplistic in calling all his discerned structures examples of parallelism. It seems in several cases that his search for repetition may have obscured the representation of other forms. Furthermore, his work, though covering the entire Book of Mormon, has no real analysis or commentary. For example, a reader would like to see some discussion about how form affects the meaning of passages or a much more mature and extensive discussion about the historical significance of the forms. In connection with the lack of analysis, while Brown does refer to some studies of literary matters in the Hebrew Bible for elucidation of points here and there, he has not digested this material but uses it in a piecemeal fashion. Another difficulty lies in the Book of Mormon text he has used. Literary analysis should be conducted on the best text available, which, arguably, is the text that Joseph Smith first dictated. The Original Manuscript would for the most part represent this text (theoretically it may not completely represent what Joseph Smith dictated since there is a chance that scribes did not correctly write what he said). But since it is not available for general public use and is incomplete, constituting an “original” text can only be done by making conjectures from the Original Manuscript in connection with the Printer’s Manuscript (copied by Oliver Cowdery from the Original) and early published editions of the Book of Mormon. Brown has apparently attempted to give his readers something of an original text, but it is not trustworthy. His sources for his text seem to be the first edition (1830) and the Printer’s Manuscript, which he calls “the earliest documents available” (p. 125; cf. pp. 260, 540). It appears that he has eclectically chosen readings from these sources, but he has not always included clearly authentic readings from these early documents.

These shortcomings limit the value of Brown’s textual representation. Nevertheless, it is still beneficial as a springboard for more detailed consideration of form and style.
It draws our attention to literary features that require further investigation and discussion. A few examples will show the type of features and issues Brown's work brings into view. The first three derive from my own study of Alma 30 conducted prior to my seeing Brown's book. The structuring of the text, however, is much the same as in Brown's work. The fourth and last example is dependent on Brown's work, though with this I use my own, slightly different, structuring. This selection of examples will not only show how Brown's work might stimulate thinking about the issues; it will also exemplify the diversity of Book of Mormon forms and will show how we can go beyond mere structuring of the text to say something about its meaning.

1. One of the Book of Mormon's formal characteristics is embedding, where each phrase in a series of phrases is grammatically or logically dependent upon the phrase just before it, thus forming a chain of linked phrases. For example, in Alma's description of Korihor's curse (Alma 30:47) we find a five-member embedded structure:

   a Therefore, if thou shalt deny again,
   b behold, God shall smite thee,
   c that thou shalt become dumb,
   d that thou shalt never open thy mouth any more,
   e that thou shalt not deceive this people any more.

The first two phrases are members of a conditional ("if-then") phrase. Phrase c develops b with a result clause conjoined with the word "that" describing the effect of the smiting; phrase d develops c, also with a result clause similarly conjoined, describing or defining the effect of being dumb; and finally e concludes with another similar result clause describing what happens when one cannot open one's mouth. One of the literary effects of this particular embedded structure is a feeling of focusing. From the general condition of denial one moves to the specific result of being smitten. This is then defined further as becoming dumb. Temporal limits are then set for the curse: Korihor will never open his mouth any more. The final clause fleshes out the description by giving the ultimate rationale for the curse.

2. Another feature of Book of Mormon narrative is listing. This may be termed a type of parallelism. Korihor describes the
means by which the church leaders have oppressed the people (Alma 30:28):

and have brought them to believe
by their traditions,
and their dreams,
and their whims,
and their visions,
and their pretended mysteries

The repetitive structure is clear whether one sees it visually listed as here or reads it in customary verse-paragraph form. One of the effects of this list is to halt the reader in the middle of Korihor’s criticism and hear more emphatically the anti-Christ’s criticisms. They become drum beats accentuating his charges. The reader becomes more aware of his negative character hearing plainly his sacrilegious mixing of the pure forms of religious knowledge, i.e., traditions, dreams, and visions, with impure forms, i.e., whims and pretended mysteries.

3. The last example from Alma 30 shows the statement-counterstatement form (30:24-26).

a Ye say that this people is a free people,
b behold, I say these are in bondage
c Ye say that those ancient prophecies are true,
d behold, I say that ye do not know that they are true
e Ye say that this people is a guilty and a fallen people
f because of the transgression of a parent,
g behold, I say that a child is not guilty because of its parents.
h And ye also say that Christ shall come,
i but, behold, I say that ye do not know that there shall be a Christ.
j And ye say also that he shall be slain for the sins of the world—

Korihor first makes a statement about what the people believe (a, c, e, h) and then refutes it (b, d, g, i). The last item in the series contains only a statement (j) with no refutation, but this is intuited by the momentum of the passage. The third statement contains an extra explanatory tag (f) not found in the other cases. Each statement contains the initial elements “ye . . . say that.” The counterstatements begin with “behold, I say that.” This form, much like the list in the previous example, sets up a rhythmic expectation. Its tempo is much slower than the list’s, but it draws the reader’s attention to its message just as
well. This form which sets ideas off against one another is particularly apt as a miniature reflection of the larger political and religious conflict between Korihor and Alma.

4. In scanning Brown's text of the Book of Mormon, I picked several passages at random to study in detail to see if his structuring was more or less legitimate and profitable. In none of these cases did I find his work unhelpful. Mosiah 25:8b-11 was one of these passages. This passage has a semantically and syntactically parallelistic structure with each element consisting of a condition and a response to the condition:

a. For when they beheld those
b. that had been delivered out of bondage,
c. they were filled with exceeding great joy.
d. And again when they thought of their brethren
   e. who had been slain by the Lamanites
   f. they were filled with sorrow
   g. and even shed many tears of sorrow
h. and again when they thought
   i. of the immediate goodness of God
   j. and his power
   k. in delivering Alma and his brethren out of the hands of the Lamanites
   l. they did raise their voices
   m. and gave thanks to God
n. and again when they thought upon the Lamanites
   o. who were their brethren
   p. of their sinful
   q. and polluted state
   r. they were filled with
   s. pain
   t. and anguish
u. for the welfare of their souls

We have here four parallel sections (a-c, d-g, h-m, n-u). Each section begins with a conditional phrase ("when they..."), describing the people's perception of or thinking about various people or about blessings (a: "beheld"; d: "thought"; h: "thought"; n: "thought"). Each conditional clause is accompanied by a main clause describing the accompanying response of the people (c: joy; f-g: sorrow; l-m: thanks; r-s: pain and anguish). Three of the sections are similar in providing relative clauses modifying the people being beheld or thought about (b, e, o). Section h-m is unique since it lacks such a relative clause. Yet there is the same balance of words in this
section as in the other sections with the long object of thought and prepositional phrase in i-k. Thus, rhythm is kept while variation occurs in the four sections. In the second section we find two conjoined phrases for the main clause (f, g) instead of one (cf. c). Likewise in section three we find two conjoined statements (l-m) in the main clause. Section four has both a relative clause (o) like sections one and two (b, e) and an object of thought (in two parts: p, q) like section three. Note that the relative clause in section four intervenes between the verb "thought" in n and the object of thought in p-q. The main clause in the fourth section has only one sentence (r-u) as opposed to the conjoined forms in f-g and l-m, but has the conjoined elements "pain and anguish" which imitates the other dual phrase forms. The fourth section's main clause also has the prepositional phrase "for the welfare of their souls" not paralleled in the other sections.

The differences amidst similarities in the four sections exhibit the dynamics of Book of Mormon narrative. As in the statement-counterstatement form, noted above, the similarities in the sections create expectations for the reader. A momentum is established and the reader is carried along with it. The variations, however, provide scenic change during the reader’s travel and this influences meaning. For example, by the time the reader begins to recognize a pattern about halfway through the second section, he or she begins to expect repetition of the form experienced in section one. The doubling of the phrase in the main clause in f-g, however, is noticeable vis-à-vis that of section one and consequently adds emphasis to f-g. Semantically, the adverb "even" in g contributes to this emphasis perceptible through form. In addition to variations and their effects in the other sections, the general play of content against form creates potentials in the story’s circuit. Most notable in this example is the alternation of positive and negative events and sentiments. Section one begins with the deliverance of those in bondage and accompanying joy; section two, in contrast, reflects on those who had been slain and accompanying sorrow; section three returns to a positive tone by treating the good of God and praise of him; section four turns back to a negative issue: the sinfulness of the Lamanites and concomitant pain and anguish. In a way, section three really goes with section one, and section four with section two. One could rearrange the passage in this way and not disturb the information to be conveyed. But the literary alternation creates a reversal in polarity from section to
section. Thus the passage conveys not only data but an experience too, which together constitute the meaning of the passage.

The structuring in each of these four examples is like that found in Brown's and thus indicates the utility of Brown's work. It aids in the quick perception of structures. These examples also show that the Book of Mormon is formally rich. This richness involves much more than parallelism, contra Brown. While the structures in the last three examples are parallelistic, they are significantly different from one another. And the example of embedding does not fit under the category of parallelism. This diversity indicates that we must go beyond the category of parallelism, particularly that inspired by biblical studies, in analyzing the structural character of the Book of Mormon. The diversity in form also indicates that the Book of Mormon has its own unique literary character and alerts us to a methodological priority. As we analyze the book from a literary perspective, we should first do so in terms of its own literary character. Just as in general comparative studies phenomena must be examined and understood in their own cultural contexts before comparison takes place, so we must examine the literary character of the Book of Mormon in its own context before turning to comparison with other literatures, modern or ancient. This way we avoid imposing outside categories on the Book of Mormon text which brings skewed descriptions of the literature.

In sum, Brown's work is a serviceable, though limited, contribution to literary studies of the Book of Mormon. If the secondary material is stripped away, particularly the unsophisticated historical and theological arguments, the remaining structured text of the Book of Mormon—which is not trustworthy as a critical text—can serve as a stimulus to more definitive work.

Reviewed by Lavina Fielding Anderson

The title page proclaims this book as the proceedings of "the First Annual Book of Mormon Symposium," announcing the commitment of both the Religious Studies Center and Brigham Young University to have an annual symposium on this "keystone" scripture. This symposium was held in September 1985, and to date four have been held; the proceedings of two are now in print, and the third and fourth should appear this year.


As is clear from these titles, topics range from thematic analyses of culture and doctrine within the book itself, the history of its coming forth, and examinations of the broader ancient context in which the Book of Mormon was created. All of the presentations seem to have been created with the interested layperson in mind and are admirably clear and well documented.
No doubt future symposia will also include more specialized materials.

Two papers I found most absorbing were the diffusionist presentations of Carter and Totten—also the only two among the presenters who were not BYU faculty members. Carter, of Texas A&M, reported the absorbing narrative of his own research into transoceanic transmission of such biological items as cotton, the sweet potato (“botanically and linguistically it is clear that it has been carried out of America probably three times, and at least two of these are pre-Columbian,” p. 169), chickens, maize (“maize of a type formerly grown on the coast of Peru, but having long disappeared from that region before 1500, is one of the kinds ... found in the interior of China,” p. 171), and other plants, including the pineapple, which appears in a mural at Pompeii.

Totten, who is part Choctaw, launched an energetic and well-documented attack on isolationism which, he accuses, “sometimes results in not reporting or even worse in hiding evidence which supports opposing views” (p. 189). He then catalogues twenty items of evidence of both trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic contact that were fascinating in both their range and their specificity. As diffusionists, Carter and Totten are not in the majority of American anthropologists and archaeologists, but their vivid research raises worthy challenges to traditional views of American origins.

Christianson’s careful and even-handed analysis of the Bering Strait hypothesis for the peopling of the North America was also interesting. Ludlow’s analysis of the major claims for the Book of Mormon (p. 4) provides a solid foundation not only for his own analysis of the major themes but also for the several doctrinally focused studies of his colleagues. I particularly enjoyed Dahl’s analysis of “Faith, Hope, and Charity,” and Brown’s essay on love.

For many readers, the diversity of approaches in this book and the universal accessibility of discussion will be enlightening, refreshing, and a stimulus to personal studies—no doubt the intent of the symposium’s organizers and participants. If the promise of the title page holds true, other equally handsomely designed volumes will make welcome additions to personal libraries.

A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies

Reviewed by John Clark

This study began as a review of F. Richard Hauck’s recent book, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*. His approach and claims, however, deserve consideration within a broader context. Hauck claims to build upon the groundwork established by John L. Sorenson’s *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*. He proposes refinements to the Sorenson geography, but these are too extreme to be considered mere refinements. Both geographies place the Book of Mormon story within a small area confined to what is known as southern or eastern Mesoamerica, an area that includes southeastern Mexico, Guatemala, and part of El Salvador. The Sorenson geography is based upon a narrow neck = Tehuantepec Isthmus and river Sidon = Grijalva River correlation. In counterpoint to Sorenson’s geography, Hauck rejects any narrow neck = isthmus theory and also advocates a river Sidon = Usamacinta River correlation. In further contrast to Sorenson, Hauck rejects the idea that the directions given in the Book of Mormon could be anything other than the cardinal points of our own modern compass. These claims are considered in more detail below. The net result of these varying assumptions is a geography which differs significantly from that proposed by Sorenson, or from previous Usamacinta geographies proposed by others (especially M. Wells Jakeman)—two of which are slated for future publication. In several years we may well have four or more geographies to pick from, leaving us to choose among a cacophony of plausible alternatives. My purpose here is to suggest a simple key for evaluating any Book of Mormon geography that may be proposed. Given the sensitivity of this field, it is worth noting that I do not espouse a particular geography and have no vested interests in which geography may or may not prove the most satisfactory.

---

It has been my experience that most members of the Church, when confronted with a Book of Mormon geography, worry about the wrong things. Almost invariably the first question that arises is whether the geography fits the archaeology of the proposed area. This should be our second question, the first being whether the geography fits the facts of the Book of Mormon—a question we all can answer without being versed in American archaeology. Only after a given geography reconciles all of the significant geographic details given in the Book of Mormon does the question of archaeological and historical detail merit attention. The Book of Mormon must be the final and most important arbiter in deciding the correctness of a given geography; otherwise we will be forever hostage to the shifting sands of expert opinion. The following is my personal opinion of what I think the Book of Mormon actually says. I focus here only on those details which allow the construction of a basic framework for a Nephite geography; I leave more detailed reconstructions to others. Of primary importance are those references which give relative distances or directions (or both) between various locations, or details which allow us to make a strong inference of either distance or direction.

Hauck devotes chapter 3 of his study to the rules of inference as they apply to "decipherment" of the internal geography of the Book of Mormon; the guiding concern should be parsimony. As noted, in his critical reading of the text he can find no explicit reference to the narrow neck being an isthmus. The text states "it was only the distance of a day and a half’s journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea" (Alma 22:32). An east sea is not explicitly mentioned. Elsewhere we learn that the Nephites fortified the narrow neck area that ran "from the west sea, even unto the east; it being a day’s journey for a Nephite, on the line which they had fortified and stationed their armies to defend their north country" (Helaman 4:7). An east sea is not explicitly mentioned here either. Hauck correctly charges that we have generally read more into this text than is unambiguously stated. He justifiably calls into question the generally accepted narrow neck/isthmus correlation based upon these passages. I think, however, that he is guilty of poor logic when he concludes from this "no-isthmus possibility" that the narrow neck was not an isthmus. It still remains equally likely that Mormons have been reading these two passages correctly all
The major consequence of Hauck's critical reading of the narrow neck passages is that he must have two lands of Bountiful, rather than one, to reconcile the Bountiful passages in the absence of an isthmus; he also ends up with two lands northward, two narrow passes, and should also argue for two lands of desolation. This is too much. A non-isthmus narrow neck (read "narrow corridor") requires too many unjustified supporting assumptions; Occam's razor in this instance favors the isthmian alternative.

When I read Hauck's treatment of this issue in his reconstruction of the geography, it differed in detail so greatly from how I read those passages that it motivated me to do exactly what he urges his readers to do—to read all the geographical passages in the Book of Mormon (nearly all of them are listed in his Appendix A for this purpose). Still following his lead, I have been careful throughout to minimize the number of assumptions made about the meaning of a passage. As apparent below, some inferences and guesswork are inevitable given the nature of the text. I will be explicit about these, thereby allowing others to reject those inferences which fail to meet their own standards of reasoning.

The following are my initial assumptions about the geographic references in the Book of Mormon: (1) Assume a literal meaning. (2) Assume no scribal errors unless internal evidence indicates otherwise. (3) Assume no duplication of place names unless the text is unambiguous on the matter. (4) Assume that all passages are internally consistent and can be reconciled. (5) Assume that uniformitarian rather than catastrophic principles apply to the actual Book of Mormon lands (i.e., that the locality where the Book of Mormon events took place was not unrecognizably altered at the time of the crucifixion, that geographic details in the Small Plates and in the Book of Ether are therefore compatible with those in Mormon's and Moroni's abridgment, and that the principles of natural science that apply to today's environments are also pertinent to Nephite lands). (6) The best internal reconstruction is one which reconciles all of the data in the Book of Mormon with a minimum of additional assumptions.

The internal reconstruction of Nephite geography described below is significantly different from that proposed by Hauck, but in substantial agreement with that described by
Sorenson and by J. Nile Washburn. Hauck’s dismissal of a narrow neck/isthmus correlation and presumed knowledge of the Nephite directional system force him into a convoluted geography many times more difficult to understand than the original passages in the Book of Mormon. (His geography bears all the earmarks of having been forced to fit his idea of Book of Mormon lands.) The best approach to Hauck’s geography is to read all of the relevant passages in the original before trying to decipher his book. The careful reader will want to supplement the references in Hauck’s Appendix A with George Reynold’s *A Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon*. Hauck’s listing of references has been selected to fit his view of the geography; the subheadings and listings are based many times on his assumptions and inferences. More importantly, many critical references are inexplicably absent (and in several instances they are those which discuss distances between cities and places which cannot be reconciled within his geography).

Reconstructing an Elemental Geography

During the days of Alma and General Moroni, Book of Mormon lands consisted of three sectors that could be considered Nephite, Lamanite, and former Jaredite. The depopulated Jaredite lands comprised the land northward; Nephite and Lamanite lands lay in the land southward. Nephite lands, known as the land of Zarahemla, were sandwiched between the ancient Jaredite lands to the north and the Lamanite land of Nephi to the south. A narrow neck of land divided the land northward and the land southward; thus, Book of Mormon lands were shaped like an hourglass (Fig. 1). The land southward was further divided into northern and southern sectors by a narrow strip of wilderness that ran from the east sea to the west sea. Nephites inhabited the lands north of this wilderness divide, and Lamanites controlled those to the south. As evident in Figure 1, Nephite lands were quadrilateral, having four sides and four corners. We could quickly establish the size and shape of Book of Mormon lands using simple geometry if

---

Figure 1. General Features of Book of Mormon Lands.
we knew the length and direction of at least three of its four borders. And, if we could link at least one important locality in Lamanite and Jaredite lands to an established point in the Nephite land of Zarahemla, we would have the basic skeletal structure of Book of Mormon lands—and a key for evaluating competing Book of Mormon geographies.

An elemental framework of Book of Mormon geography can be reconstructed with just seven points or six transects (a line connecting two of these points), as shown in Figure 2. The following sections consider each transect shown in Figure 2 and present the data, inferences, and conjectures used to determine the distance between each pair of localities. As can be seen, the southern border of Nephite lands was considerably longer than its northern border; and the western border was much longer than the eastern border.

Before proceeding with the specifics of each transect, I need to clarify how I am treating distance and direction. I assume that the Nephite directional system was internally consistent and that this consistency persisted throughout the period of their history. I do not pretend to know how Nephite “north” relates to the north of today’s compass, and such information is irrelevant for my present purpose of reconstructing an internal geography. I do assume, however, that regardless of what any “real” orientation may have been, Nephite north was 180 degrees from Nephite south, and both were 90 degrees off of east and west. The directional suffix “-ward” is here loosely interpreted to mean “in the general direction of.” Thus, I read “northward” as “in a general northerly direction.” Finally, all directions are directions from “somewhere.” I assume the central reference point was the city of Zarahemla, located in the “center” of the land of Zarahemla (Helaman 1:24-27).

Distances in the Book of Mormon are more problematical than directions. My assessments of distance are based upon travel times, whether stated, inferred, or conjectured. Distance as “time” is familiar to most of us. When asked how far it is from Provo, Utah, to Burley, Idaho, for example, I quickly respond that it is “four hours” rather than 250 miles. If my dad is driving, the “distance” (in terms of time) is considerably less—and significantly more if my mother is driving. Similar concerns with velocity are relevant to Book of Mormon accounts. I have converted all travel times into “units of standard distance” (USD), analogous to our “miles” or
Figure 2. Elemental Structure of Book of Mormon Lands.
“kilometers.” The USD is based upon one day’s normal travel over flat land. Travel through mountainous or hilly “wilderness” is considered to be half of the normal standard in terms of actual linear distance covered. In other words, two days of travel through the wilderness would cover the same as-a-crow-flies distance as one day’s travel on a plain, this because of the extra vertical and lateral movement necessitated by more difficult terrain. Internal evidence in the Book of Mormon is convincing that “wilderness” refers to mountainous regions filled with wild beasts. Some Book of Mormon travel accounts involve the movement of men, women, children, animals, and food stores, while others concern armies in hot pursuit or blind retreat. For purposes of our USDs, travel of children and animals comes under the normal standard—being more susceptible to ground conditions or terrain. Army travel (war speed) is calculated at 150-200 percent of normal (or 1.5-2 times as fast). These estimates are proposed as close approximations that will allow us to reconstruct the relative length of each border of Nephite lands. My goal is to work within the limits of precision dictated by the text—all measures given here are merely approximate. I have not adjusted my estimates of distance to fit any preconceived notions of where these places may actually be. Such interplay between text and modern maps is inappropriate and results in forcing the text to fit one’s notions or desires for placement of Book of Mormon lands. (It is no accident, for example, that most Church members in New York do not accept a limited area for Book of Mormon lands.)

I. Hagoth to Bountiful

I have designated the NE and NW corners of Nephite lands as “Bountiful” and “Hagoth” respectively. These points define the east-west line that traversed the narrow neck separating the land northward from the land southward. “Hagoth” (not used as a place name in the Book of Mormon) marks the place where Hagoth and his adventurous group embarked on their journey from the west sea to the lands northward. “Bountiful” was near the land of Bountiful and north of the city of Bountiful. This northern border of Nephite territory is one of the most poorly known and controversial transects that we will consider. As noted above, the Book of Mormon apparently specifies precise travel times for this area. But the short distances involved (one to one-and-a-half days)
cannot be squared with any known isthmus (without special conditions or travel rates being specified). Hauck’s careful reading of these passages, however, may provide the key for resolving this puzzle. The critical data for this transect are listed below numerically; inferences and conjectures are listed alphabetically.

1. The lands of Desolation and Bountiful met in the narrow neck of land which divided the land northward from the land southward (Alma 22:30-32).

2. A narrow pass or narrow passage led from the land southward to the land northward and was near the borders of the land of Desolation (Alma 50:34, 52:9; Mormon 2:29, 3:5).
   a. “Borders” probably refers to the southern border which adjoined the land of Bountiful (see 4 and 7).

3. The narrow pass “led by the sea into the land northward, yea, by the sea, on the west and on the east” (Alma 50:34).
   a. Both the west and east seas are referred to here.
   b. The narrow pass was close enough to each sea that its location could be described by reference to both. This suggests that the narrow pass was near the center of the narrow neck of land.4
   c. This passage, coupled with 1 and 2, is clear evidence that the narrow neck was indeed an isthmus flanked by seas, to the west and to the east.
   d. The narrow pass paralleled the flanking seas and coastlines and thus ran in a north-south direction.

4. The city of Desolation was in the land of Desolation, near the narrow pass and perhaps near the sea, or a large river that led to the sea (Mormon 3:5, 8).

5. The city of Bountiful was the northernmost (and most important) fortification of the eastern border of Nephite territory during the days of General Moroni. Its purpose was to restrict access to the land northward and to keep the Nephites from

---

4 Amalikiah’s attempt to seize this pass, and Teancum’s encounter with Morianton may suggest that the narrow pass was actually closer to the east sea (John Sorenson, personal communication, 1988).

6. The city of Bountiful was less than a day's southward march of the eastern seashore and near a wilderness to the southwest; plains lay to the south (Alma 52:20-22).

7. The "line" between the land of Bountiful and the land of Desolation ran "from the east to the west sea" and was "a day and a half's journey for a Nephite" (Alma 22:32; see also 3 Nephi 3:23).
   a. Since the east "sea" is not specified, maybe the travel distances were not meant to be from sea-to-sea, but from the west sea to a point to the east.
   b. The short travel times for what apparently was a significant distance suggest travel over relatively flat terrain (see section VII, below).

8. The Nephite-inhabited land of Bountiful extended from "the east even unto the west sea" (Alma 22:33).
   a. The land of Bountiful stretched across the narrow neck from the west sea and at least close to the east sea (compare with 6).

9. A fortified "line" extended "from the west sea, even unto the east; it being a day's journey for a Nephite, on the line which they had fortified" (Helaman 4:7).
   a. The travel referred to here may only pertain to the portion of the narrow neck that was the "fortified line" (see 7a).
   b. This probably was flat land (see 7b).
   c. I have assumed that the journey referred to here was foot travel. If water transport was involved the distance traveled could have been greater.

10. Hagoth built "an exceedingly large ship, on the borders of the land Bountiful, by the land of Desolation, and launched it forth into the west sea, by the narrow neck which led into the land northward" (Alma 63:5).
    a. The wording here suggests that the parallel lands of Bountiful and Desolation may not have stretched all the way to the west sea (but compare to 7, 8, and 9).
b. The west sea at this location may have been a natural port or embayment that would have allowed launching a large ship without difficulty.

From all of the above it seems abundantly clear that the narrow neck was an isthmus (rather than a narrow corridor) of relatively flat lowlands (see Alma 22:32). Therefore, all travel distances should be at least normal standard, but they may have been marching (or running) distances between fortifications. If so, 1-1.5 day’s journey would have been 2-3 USD in terms of our proposed standard measure of distance. This would have been the minimum width of this area.

It is noteworthy that the east “sea” or seashore is never specifically mentioned in conjunction with the land of Bountiful. The phrasing is consistent, regardless of which cardinal direction is specified first—“east to the west sea” (7), “east even unto the west sea” (8), and “west sea, even unto the east” (9). This suggests that the failure to mention the east “sea” is not due to mere grammatical parallelism or elliptical thought based on word order. We should, therefore, entertain the possibility that the land of Bountiful did not run all the way to the east sea. The shared border between the lands of Bountiful and Desolation, along a “line,” ran east-west to the west sea, or very near to the west sea (see 10). This “line,” which was at one time fortified, could have been a natural feature of some kind, such as a river or a ridge, that would have afforded natural advantage to the Nephite forces against attack (in terms of protection or vantage).

The narrow pass appears to have crossed the line between the lands of Bountiful and Desolation and, thus, would have been located north of the city of Bountiful and south of the city of Desolation. Both cities were located on the eastern edge of their lands, probably within a day (USD) of the sea (see 4 and 6). The hypothetical NE point “Bountiful” of our northern transect, then, would have been located to the north and probably east of the city of Bountiful; I estimate one USD in both directions.

As noted, a plausible (if not probable) interpretation of the travel distances (1-1.5 days; 2-3 USD) for the narrow neck is that they refer only to the “line” from the west sea to the east. I follow this interpretation here and add at least one day USD to extend the eastern end of this “line” to the east sea. I consider 4

USD a reasonable estimate of the northern border of the greater land of Zarahemla. This distance is consistent with the facts of Limhi’s expedition. As Sorenson points out, this group of explorers unknowingly passed through the narrow neck and back to Nephi in their unsuccessful search for the city of Zarahemla. The narrow neck had to have been wide enough that travelers going north-south could pass through without noticing both seas from one vantage point, including the narrow pass.

In sum, our working assumption will be that the narrow neck was oriented east-west and was about 4 USD wide.

II. Bountiful to Moroni

Extensive data for the eastern border come from the accounts of Moroni’s campaign against Amalickiah (and, later, Ammoron) who attempted to break through the Nephites’ fortified line in Bountiful and gain access to the land northward. Bountiful was the northernmost and most important fortification of the Nephites’ eastern flank.

1. Moroni drove the Lamanites out of the east wilderness into their own lands to the south of the land of Zarahemla; people from Zarahemla were sent into the east wilderness “even to the borders by the seashore, and [to] possess the land” (Alma 50:7, 9) “in the borders by the seashore” (Alma 51:22).

2. The city of Moroni was founded by the east sea and “on the south by the line of the possessions of the Lamanites” (Alma 50:13).
   a. As discussed above, a “line” could be a natural feature such as a river.

3. The city of Nephihah was founded between the cities of Moroni and Aaron (Alma 50:14).
   a. Nephihah was westward from Moroni, and Aaron was westward from Nephihah (see IV.4).

4. The city of Lehi was built north of Moroni by the borders of the seashore (Alma 50:15).

---

6 Ibid.
5. A contention arose concerning the land of Lehi and the land of Morianton "which joined upon the borders of Lehi; both of which were on the borders by the seashore." The people of Morianton claimed part of the land of Lehi (Alma 50:25-26).
   a. These cities would have to have been in close proximity to be fighting over land, which had to have been close enough to each city that it could be worked effectively from each (cf. Alma 50:36).

6. The people of Lehi fled to the camp of Moroni; the people of Morianton fled north to the land northward. The people of Morianton were headed off at the narrow pass by Teancum and brought back to the city of Morianton (Alma 50:27-35).
   a. The narrow pass appears to have been the most logical way to get to the land northward.

7. Amalickiah took the city of Moroni; the Nephites fled to the city of Nephihah. The people of Lehi prepared for battle with the Lamanites (Alma 51:23-25).
   a. The city of Nephihah was off the most direct, or easiest, route to the land northward.
   b. The city of Lehi was next in line for the Lamanite attack.

8. Amalickiah "would not suffer the Lamanites to go against the city of Nephihah to battle, but kept them down by the seashore" (Alma 51:25).
   a. Nephihah was inland from the seashore.

   a. Nephihah was readily accessible from these three cities, probably northwest of Moroni (see 7a and 8b) and southwest of Lehi and Morianton.

10. Amalickiah took the cities of Lehi, Morianton, Omner, Gid, and Mulek [mention of taking Nephihah is probably a scribal error as it was captured much later; see Alma 58:61] "all of which were on the east borders by the seashore" (Alma 51:26), but did not take the city of Bountiful.
11. Teancum camped on the borders of Bountiful; Amalickiah camped "in the borders on the beach by the seashore" (Alma 51:32). Teancum killed Amalickiah; the Lamanite armies retreated to the city of Mulek (Alma 52:2).
   a. The seashore was close to the southern border of the land of Bountiful.
   b. This section of seashore had a beach.

12. Teancum fortified the city of Bountiful and secured the narrow pass (Alma 52:9).

13. There was a plain between the city of Bountiful and Mulek. From the city of Bountiful, Teancum marched to Mulek near the seashore and Moroni marched in the wilderness to the west (Alma 52:20, 22-23).
   a. Moroni marched southward at the edge of the eastern wilderness.
   b. The city of Bountiful was within one USD of the eastern seashore to the south.
   c. There was no city between Mulek and the city of Bountiful (otherwise, the Nephite stratagem of "decoy-and-surround" would have had little chance of being successful; the Lamanites would not have been decoyed out of their fortress if there had been a Nephite fortress in their line of pursuit).

14. The Nephites took Mulek by stratagem. The Lamanite armies chased Teancum's forces "with vigor" from Mulek to the city of Bountiful in one day and started back for Mulek when they were trapped and defeated by Moroni's and Lehi's forces (Alma 52:21-39).
   a. The city of Bountiful was within one day's travel (war speed) of Mulek, or about 1.5 USD.

15. The city of Mulek was one of the strongest Lamanite cities (Alma 53:6).

16. After taking Mulek, the Nephites took the city of Gid (Alma 55:7-25).
   a. Gid was the next significant city to the south of Mulek.
17. From Gid, Moroni prepared to attack the city of Morianton (Alma 55:33).
   a. Morianton was south of Gid.

18. Moroni and his armies returned from a campaign at Zarahemla against the king-men and traveled eastward to the plains of Nephihah. They took the city, and the Lamanites escaped to Moroni (Alma 62:18-24).
   a. The cities of Moroni and Nephihah were east of the city of Zarahemla.
   b. Nephihah was on a coastal plain but near the edge of the eastern wilderness, inland from the city of Moroni (see 8 and 9).

19. Moroni went from Nephihah to Lehi; the Lamanites saw the approaching army and fled from "city to city" "even down upon the borders by the seashore, until they came to the land of Moroni" (Alma 62:32).
   a. Some smaller settlements seem to have been involved in the Lamanite retreat, but only the larger fortified cities are mentioned by name.
   b. Moroni's army traveled from a point near Nephihah to Lehi and south to Moroni in one day (war speed). Lehi and Nephihah were probably within one USD, and Lehi and Moroni were probably one USD apart; Nephihah and Moroni probably were not more than 1.5-2 USD apart.

20. The Lamanites "were all in one body in the land of Moroni" (Alma 62:33); they were "encircled about in the borders by the wilderness on the south, and in the borders by the wilderness on the east" (Alma 62:34). They were camped inside the city of Moroni (Alma 62:36). General Moroni drove the Lamanites out of the land and city of Moroni (Alma 62:38).
   a. The city of Moroni was not right next to the seashore but was separated by a "wilderness." Given the setting, it may have been a swampy, lagoon-estuary "wilderness" rather than a hilly area. (Moroni sank beneath the sea at the time of the crucifixion [3 Nephi 8:9, 9:4]).
   b. The seashore was close to the city of Moroni. I estimate a distance of 0.5 USD.
c. The city of Moroni was on the edge of the southern wilderness, or on the borders of Lamanite lands.

21. The sons of Helaman, Nephi and Lehi, began their missionary travels at the city of Bountiful; they traveled to Gid and then to Mulek (Helaman 5:14-15).

a. They visited Gid and Mulek in reverse order of the Lamanite attack and Nephite reconquest (see 10, 14, and 16). Barring scribal error (for which there is no evidence) this missionary journey suggests that Gid was not directly in line with Mulek. One could get to Gid without going through Mulek, and on some occasions it was logical or convenient to do so.

b. Since Mulek appears to have been near the seashore, or at least in the middle of the coastal plain (see 13), this passage suggests that Gid may have been inland from Mulek.

In summary, the Lamanite drive to the land northward along the eastern border of the land of Zarahemla proceeded from south to north. They took the cities of Moroni, Lehi, Morianton, Omner, Gid, and Mulek. Bountiful, the final obstacle in their path, withstood their attack. Later, the Lamanites took the city of Nephihah. In their counter-offensive, the Nephites regained Mulek, Gid, Nephihah, Morianton, Lehi, and Moroni, and drove the Lamanites into the southern wilderness. The recapture of Omner is not mentioned, suggesting that it was inland from the main line of fortifications. I have reconstructed the settlement pattern as shown in Figure 3. In the absence of specific information I assume a distance of 1.5 USD between adjacent fortifications in a string of fortifications (the “day” or “day and a half’s journey for a Nephite”). Where we have accurate information this appears to have been about the distance (e.g., Bountiful to Mulek). Also, 1.5 USD is just a day’s travel, or less, at war speed. Spacing fortifications this far apart would mean that every place on the fortified line would be within a half’s day travel from a fortification. The only question, then, is which cities constituted the fortified line. I consider them to have been Bountiful, Mulek, Gid, Morianton/Lehi, and Moroni. As Gid was probably inland from Mulek, the direct distance from Bountiful to Gid would have
Figure 3. The Northern and Eastern Borders of Nephite Lands.
been less than the 3 USD expected by this spacing. The distances of the other cities were discussed above.

In conclusion, the direct line distance from the city of Bountiful to Moroni was about 5 USD; adding another day’s travel (the distance from the city of Bountiful to point “Bountiful”) gives us a total distance of 6 USD for the eastern transect.

III. Moroni to Seashore City

The city of Moroni was the eastern anchor of a string of fortified cities which stretched from the east sea to the west sea, paralleling the southern narrow strip of wilderness that separated the land of Zarahemla from the land of Nephi. The westernmost city of this chain was an unnamed city on the west coast. Calculating distances along the southern fortified line is more problematical because it crossed two wilderness zones, east and west, of unknown width. We do have clues that the eastern wilderness was wider and lower than the western wilderness (this is discussed more fully in section VII). The Sidon River Basin was thus ringed with “wilderness” on all sides. Information for estimating the length of the southern frontier comes from Helaman’s campaign in the Manti quarter and Moroni’s forced march on Zarahemla against the king-men.

1. “Helaman did march at the head of his two thousand stripling soldiers, to the support of the people in the borders of the land on the south by the west sea” (Alma 53:22). The Lamanites came into the area from “the west sea, south” (Alma 53:8).
   a. Helaman came from the north, probably from Melek (see Alma 35:13, 53:11-16).
   b. The Lamanites came eastward from the west coast through the western wilderness, probably through a pass (see IV.10a).
   c. The Lamanite attack probably continued westward.
   d. The seashore city may have been a Lamanite possession rather than a Nephite fortification. The political affiliation of this city does not affect our consideration of its position in calculating the distance to the west sea.
2. Helaman and his “two thousand young men” marched to the city of Judea to assist Antipus (Alma 56:9).
   a. Helaman must have marched southward from Melek to Judea.

3. Lamanites controlled the cities of Manti, Zeezrom, Cumeni, and Antiparah (Alma 56:14).
   a. These cities must have been major fortifications which we would estimate were spaced at 1.5 USD intervals (see section II). They were probably arranged from west to east in the order listed.

4. The Nephites kept spies out so the Lamanites would not pass them by night “to make an attack upon our cities which were on the northward” (Alma 56:22). The cities to the north were not strong enough to withstand the Lamanites (Alma 56:23).
   a. Nephite fortifications were north of the Lamanite-controlled cities.
   b. Lamanite strongholds probably were strung out east-west (the captured fortified line of the Nephites).
   c. The Nephite fortifications were close enough together that they could watch their newly fortified line and protect the weaker settlements to the north.

5. “They durst not pass by us with their whole army” (Alma 56:24). “Neither durst they march down against the city of Zarahemla; neither durst they cross the head of the Sidon, over to the city of Nephihah” (Alma 56:25).
   a. Zarahemla was at a lower elevation than the fortified cities on the southern frontier.
   b. A route connected Nephihah, on the east coast, with the cities on the southern frontier of the Sidon River Basin.
   c. The Lamanite-controlled cities, including Manti, were west of the Sidon.

6. In a Nephite stratagem, Helaman’s army marched “near the city of Antiparah, as if [they] were going to the city beyond, in the borders by the seashore” (Alma 56:31). Antipus waited to leave Judea until Helaman was near Antiparah. The Lamanites were informed of troop movements by their spies. Helaman fled “northward” from the Lamanites (Alma 56:32-36).
a. The city of Antiparah was near the route to the seashore city. It was probably the westernmost city of the Lamanite-controlled strongholds in the Sidon River Basin.

b. Helaman’s natural course to this route to the seashore took him close to the city of Antiparah (otherwise the stratagem would not have been effective); Helaman traveled westward. Judea must have been east and somewhat north of Antiparah.

c. Judea was within a day’s march of Antiparah.

7. The Lamanites pursued Helaman northward until night time. Antipus chased the Lamanites who were chasing Helaman. The Lamanites began their pursuit before dawn. Helaman fled into the wilderness and was hotly pursued all day until nighttime. The Lamanites chased them part of the next day until Antipus caught them from the rear.

a. Helaman was traveling at maximum speed for about a day and a half, probably northward along, and just inside, the edge of the western wilderness. He and his troops could have traveled 3 USD. They did not pass any cities worthy of note in that time.

b. If Helaman’s travel was east-west (which I doubt), through the wilderness, it would indicate a width for the western wilderness of at least 3 USD.

8. The Nephites sent their prisoners to the city of Zarahemla (Alma 56:57, 57:16).

a. Zarahemla was on a route from Judea, undoubtedly northward.

9. The Lamanites fled Antiparah to other cities (Alma 57:4). The Nephites next attacked and surrounded Cumeni. They cut off the Lamanites’ supply line and captured their provisions. The Lamanites gave up the city (Alma 57:9-12).

a. Cumeni was the next fortification in the line from Antiparah.

b. The Lamanite strongholds were adjacent to their territory to the south.

10. The Lamanites arrived with new armies but were beaten back to Manti; the Nephites retained Cumeni (Alma 57:22-23).
a. Manti was east of Cumeni (see 9a).

11. The Nephites attacked Manti; they pitched their tents on the wilderness side, "which was near to the city" on the borders of the wilderness (Alma 58:13-14).
   a. Manti was not in the wilderness (south) but was very close to it (see also Alma 22:27).

12. The Lamanites were afraid of being cut off from their supply lines; they went forth against the Nephites and were decoyed into a trap. Helaman retreated into the wilderness and Gid and Teomner slipped in behind and took possession of Manti. Helaman's army took a course "after having traveled much in the wilderness towards the land of Zarahemla" (Alma 58:23). At nightfall the Lamanites stopped to camp; Helaman continued on to Manti by a different route. When the Lamanites learned that Manti had fallen they fled into the wilderness (Alma 58:15-29).
   a. Helaman traveled south from Manti and made a loop (east or west) that brought him back to Manti. He was able to travel in a north-south and east-west direction within the southern wilderness.

13. The Nephites retook possession of all their cities in the southern sector. Many Lamanites fled to the east coast and were part of Ammoron's successful attack on Nephihah (Alma 59:5-8).
   a. Coupled with the preceding data (see 12) this suggests an east-west route from Manti to Nephihah through the eastern wilderness (see also Alma 25:1-5, 43:22-24).
   b. The southern wilderness permitted travel in a north-south direction (see section V) as well as in an east-west direction, suggesting the absence of major natural barriers that would prohibit travel.

14. General Moroni marched from the city of Gid with a small number of men to aid Pahoran against the king-men at Zarahemla (Alma 62:3). Moroni raised "the standard of liberty in whatsoever place he did enter, and gained whatsoever force he could in all his march towards the land of Gideon." Thousands flocked to the standard "in all his march" (Alma 62:4-6).
a. Moroni's march took him through many unnamed places, thus he was able to press thousands into his army.
b. Moroni traveled westward through the eastern wilderness.
c. Given Moroni's purpose of raising an army en route to Zarahemla, it is unlikely he took the most direct route to Gideon.
d. The eastern wilderness was probably several days' march wide; a reasonable estimate for the distance from Gid, or Nephihah, would be several days' USD. (Army speed through the wilderness would be about the same as normal travel on a plain.)
e. A route connected Gid to Gideon.

15. Pahoran and Moroni went down to Zarahemla; they slew Pachus and the recalcitrant king-men and restored Pahoran to the judgment seat (Alma 62:7-9).
   a. Gideon was in an upland position eastward from Zarahemla.
   b. Gideon was the first major city to the east of the city of Zarahemla (see 16).

16. In an earlier battle, Alma's army pursued the Amlicites from a hill east of the Sidon (and the city of Zarahemla) all day. When it got dark they camped in the valley of Gideon (Alma 2:17-20, 6:7).
   a. Considered with 17 (below), Gideon could have been no more than 1.5 USD eastward from Zarahemla and the river Sidon and may have been less than one USD.
   b. The hills and uplands leading to the valley of Gideon were within a half a day's travel of the Sidon.
   c. These uplands can be considered the western fringe of the eastern wilderness (see II.1).
   d. From the above, it follows that the Nephites had major settlements and fortifications in the zone they considered to be wilderness. (The Lamanites also inhabited the wilderness zones.)
   e. In conjunction with 14 (above), it follows that the eastern wilderness ran from Gid and Nephihah to a western margin close to the river Sidon.
17. Alma’s spies followed the Lamanites to the “land of Minon, above the land of Zarahemla, in the course of the land of Nephi” and saw the armies of the Lamanites joining forces with the Amlicites (Alma 2:24).
   a. Minon was southward from Gideon on a route that led to the land of Nephi (probably meaning the more restricted area around the city of Nephi).
   b. Minon occupied an upland position. 

18. Later, on a missionary journey, Alma traveled southward from Gideon “away to the land of Manti.” He met the sons of Mosiah coming from the land of Nephi (Alma 17:1).
   a. The land of Manti was southward from Gideon and probably from Minon (see 17).
   b. The upland route from Gideon to the south was connected with the upland route from the land of Nephi to Zarahemla (see Section V).
   c. A spur of this route led down to the Sidon Basin and the city of Manti, to the west.

19. The land of Manti was located on the east and west of the Sidon, near the river’s headwaters in the southern wilderness (Alma 16:6-7, 22:27; see also 5).
   a. The city of Manti was directly south of Zarahemla along the Sidon.
   b. Manti may have occupied a peninsular position (if we have interpreted these east and west passages correctly and barring scribal error) between two major tributaries of the Sidon that joined downstream from Manti as the main channel of the Sidon. Thus, the Sidon could easily have been considered to be both east and west of Manti.

20. Returning to General Moroni, he and his new battle proven recruits marched from Zarahemla to the city of Nephiah (see II.18).

---

7 Sorenson (personal communication, 1988) believes that I have misplaced Minon; he argues that it was on the west side of the Sidon, upriver from Zarahemla. This placement does not affect our calculation of the length of the Nephi-Zarahemla transect.

8 Washburn, Book of Mormon Lands and Times, 97.
a. A route connected Zarahemla and Nephihah; this undoubtedly passed through Gideon.
b. Nephihah was east or eastward from Zarahemla.

In estimating the length of the southern defensive line we lack information for a direct route from Moroni to Manti and the city by the seashore. We can get a close approximation, however, by summing the western half (Manti to Seashore City) with the eastern half (Zarahemla to Moroni). The logic for doing this is that Manti and Zarahemla are on a direct north-south line defined by the course of the river Sidon. Lines or transects which are perpendicular to the same line should be parallel.

As mentioned, we are using the 1.5 USD estimate for the spacing of the Manti-Zeezrom-Cumeni-Antiparah chain. As Hauck (p. 64) notes, the failure to mention a Nephite counteroffensive against the city of Zeezrom may indicate that it was offset from the direct east-west line. We relied on similar reasoning in our placement of the east coast cities of Omner and Gid, and for consistency of argument we apply the same standard to Zeezrom. Of necessity, Zeezrom must have been offset to the south, given the circumstances of the war. Therefore, the projected 1.5 USD between Manti-Zeezrom and Zeezrom-Cumeni would not have constituted 3 USD of linear east-west distance, but would have been less, as shown in Figure 4. I estimate 2.5 USD between Manti and Cumeni. From Cumeni to Antiparah would have been another 1.5 USD, but this was probably not directly east-west along our hypothetical Moroni-Seashore City transect. The circumstances of the Nephites' decoy-and-surround stratagem against the city of Antiparah suggest that it may have been slightly northward from the Manti-Cumeni line, as I have shown in Figure 4. The remainder of the line to the Seashore City requires even more guesswork. Antiparah was close to the western wilderness and to the route or "pass" through this wilderness. As the western wilderness appears to have been more narrow than the eastern wilderness (see VII), which we estimate at 2.5 USD, I consider 1.5 USD a reasonable estimate for the width of the western wilderness. I calculate another day's normal travel from the western fringe of the western wilderness to the seashore, or only 0.5 USD from the edge of the wilderness to the Seashore City. Thus our estimated distance from Manti to the west seashore is 6.5 USD.
Figure 4. The Southern and Western Borders of Nephite Lands.
In the previous section (II) we calculated the distance from the east sea, slightly east of the city of Moroni, to the city of Nephihah to be 2 USD (see Figure 3). We estimated an additional 2 USD of direct-line distance from Nephihah (probably directly south of Gid) through the eastern wilderness to the city of Gideon (see 14d) and another 1-1.5 USD to the city of Zarahemla (see 16a) located north of Manti and east of Moroni (see 14-16, 20, and Alma 31:3, 51:22). Thus, our best guess of the distance of the eastern half of the southern transect is 5 USD.9 This gives us a ballpark figure of 11.5 USD for the Moroni-Seashore City transect. If the city of Zarahemla was directly west of the city of Moroni (as indicated by General Moroni’s travels) and Manti was directly south of Zarahemla (as indicated by Alma’s travels), then 11.5 USD would underestimate the distance from Moroni to Manti (which would be the long side of the Manti-Zarahemla-Moroni triangle). But given the imprecision in our directional information, our estimates of the width of wildernesses, and our estimates of the distance and placement of Nephite fortifications, we cannot justify taking this extra distance (one USD) into account.

IV. Seashore City to Hagoth

The information in the Book of Mormon is too inadequate for even guessing the distance of this western transect; the Nephites largely ignored this coast. The only other coastal city we know of is Joshua, occupied by General Mormon’s army in their doomed retreat from the land of Zarahemla to their final stand at the hill Cumorah (Mormon 2:6). As an approximation of the length of the western border we can estimate the distance from Zeezrom (which may have been the southernmost Nephite fortification; see Figure 4 and section III) to Hagoth, or to the Hagoth-Bountiful transect (Fig. 2). The key to this reconstruction is the city of Melek, which appears to have been a well-protected city west of the city of Zarahemla. The people of Ammon (Anti-Nephi-Lehies) were sent from the land of Jershon (on the east coast, south of the city of Bountiful) to Melek (Alma

---

9 Sorenson (personal communication, 1988) suggests that the distance between Moroni and Manti was greater than what I have estimated. The account of the Lamanite attack on Manti (Alma 43) is convincing evidence of his interpretation. The Manti-Seashore City transect could have been 3-4 USD wider than I show in Figures 3, 4, and 6.
This movement accomplished a dual purpose. It gave Moroni and his army room to defend the east coast from Amalickiah's attack, and it secured the people of Ammon, sworn pacifists, in the heart of the land of Zarahemla, away from the battle zone. Judea was probably at least several days' march south of Melek (see III.1, 7a). Helaman's northward flight before the Lamanite army at Antiparah suggests a long stretch without a Nephite city worthy of mention (see III.7a). (I consider it more probable that his journey in the wilderness was along the edge of the western wilderness, and in a northerly direction from which they dared not turn "to the right nor to the left" [Alma 56:37], rather than towards the seashore.) Thus, I estimate at least 3 USD for the minimum distance from Melek south to Judea. The data listed below allow the reconstruction of the northern half of this transect; see Figure 4.

1. Alma left the city of Zarahemla "and took his journey over into the land of Melek, on the west of the river Sidon, on the west by the borders of the wilderness" (Alma 8:3).
   a. Melek lay west of the city of Zarahemla and near the eastern edge of the western wilderness.
   b. The route from Melek went "over" higher ground, probably a large hill or range of hills.
   c. Melek was probably at a higher elevation than the city of Zarahemla.

2. People came to Alma "throughout all the borders of the land which was by the wilderness side. And they were baptized throughout all the land" (Alma 8:5).
   a. Melek was the major settlement in this area of the "wilderness side."
   b. As other data in the Book of Mormon indicate that Alma baptized by immersion (Mosiah 18:14-15), there may have been a good water source near Melek.
   c. Given its location at the edge of an upland wilderness, the water source was probably a river that ran past Melek eastward towards the Sidon.

3. Alma departed Melek and traveled "three days' journey on the north of the land of Melek; and he came to a city which was called Ammonihah" (Alma 8:6).
a. As both of these cities appear to be in the Sidon Basin, the land was probably relatively flat; Alma’s three days’ travel can be considered as 3 USD.

b. Ammonihah was north of Melek.

4. Alma was cast out of Ammonihah, and he “took his journey towards the city which was called Aaron” (Alma 8:13).

a. A route connected Aaron and Ammonihah.

b. The route was probably not westward (the wilderness side) or southward (the land Alma had just passed through).

5. Alma returned to Ammonihah, “And he entered the city by another way, yea, by the way which is on the south of the city of Ammonihah” (Alma 8:18).

a. Alma had not entered (or been cast out) of this southern entrance on his previous visit; he may have exited north of the city.

b. The preceding suggests that Aaron was north or east of Ammonihah. But we know that it had to have been adjacent to the land of Nephihah (Alma 50:13-14); therefore, Aaron was located eastward of Ammonihah.

6. Alma and Amulek left Ammonihah; “they departed, and came out even into the land of Sidom” where they found all the people who had fled Ammonihah (Alma 15:1).

a. Ammonihah and Sidom were probably adjacent cities.

b. There were enough room and resources (land) at Sidom to absorb the influx of the Ammonihah refugees.

c. The trip from Ammonihah to Sidom may have required travel “up-and-over” an upland area, hence the phrase “come out.”

d. Sidom may not have been on the Ammonihah-Aaron route (see 4).

e. Sidom was probably eastward from Ammonihah. Melek lay to the south and Noah to the north (see 10, below).

10 See Sorenson, An Ancient American Setting, 201, for a discussion of this point.
7. Alma baptized Zeezrom and many others in the land of Sidom (Alma 15:12-14).
   a. Again, this suggests ready surface water such as a river.
   b. Travel eastward from Ammonihah would have been towards the river Sidon.
   c. It is quite likely that Sidom was on the river Sidon; see Sorenson for detailed discussion of this possibility.  
   d. Given Alma’s travels to this point (Zarahemla-Melek-Ammonihah-Sidom), Sidom would have been north of the city of Zarahemla.

8. Alma and Amulek left Sidom and “came over to the land of Zarahemla” and the city of Zarahemla (Alma 15:18).
   a. The route from Sidom to Zarahemla led over higher ground.
   b. This route was probably southward from Sidom (see 7d).

9. Lamanite armies “had come in upon the wilderness side, into the borders of the land, even into the city of Ammonihah” (Alma 16:2). The Lamanites completely “destroyed the people who were in the city of Ammonihah, and also some around the borders of Noah” (Alma 16:3).
   a. The Lamanites came up the west coast and crossed the western wilderness from west to east, probably through a pass (see 10).
   b. Ammonihah was on the interior side of this wilderness; hence the lack of warning of the Lamanite attack.
   c. Noah was the city in closest proximity to Ammonihah.
   d. Given 9c, Sidom and Aaron were more distant from Ammonihah, and probably in a direction that would not have led past Noah.
   e. Noah was probably within 1-1.5 USD of Ammonihah.

10. The Lamanites approached the rebuilt and fortified city of Ammonihah and were repulsed (Alma 49:1-11). They

11 Ibid., 205.
“retreated into the wilderness, and took their camp and marched towards the land of Noah” (Alma 49:12). They “marched forward to the land of Noah with a firm determination.” Noah had been a weak city but was now fortified more than Ammonihah (Alma 49:13-14).

a. The Lamanites repeated their same point-specific traverse of the western wilderness, coming from the west coast to Ammonihah. This repeated eastward traverse of the western wilderness suggests a special route (see also III.6 and Mormon 1:10, 2:3-6). All known travel through the western wilderness tended east-west, suggesting that north-south travel was not feasible. (The probable exception is Helaman [III.6-7], who was probably just traveling through the edge of the wilderness.) All of these data suggest a formidable wilderness that could only be traversed through a few passes. (This would explain why Melek, located on the eastern edge of the western wilderness, could be considered a secure position for the people of Ammon.) The western wilderness was clearly more impenetrable than the wildernesses on the south and east.

b. The Lamanite retreat from Ammonihah took them back to the wilderness (westward) from which they marched to Noah.

c. From all of the above, the most probable location for Noah was north of Ammonihah. (We have no mention of it on Alma’s journey to Ammonihah from the south.)

d. Had Noah been east of Ammonihah, the Lamanites would not have had to retreat to the wilderness side of Ammonihah (assuming that there was not another wilderness east of Ammonihah).

e. Given 10d and 9d, the cities of Sidom and Aaron were likely located eastward from Ammonihah, as suggested (see 6a and 4b).

f. Our 1.5 USD rule between fortified cities does not apply to Noah. It was a weak city, undoubtedly under the protection of Ammonihah. Thus, one USD between it and Ammonihah is a better estimate.
11. The land of Zarahemla had a northern wilderness area (not specifically described as such) that lay between Noah and the lower, narrow neck area (see Alma 22:31, Mormon 3-5).

a. It follows that Noah was still some distance from the narrow neck. I estimate 2 USD as a ballpark figure. This would include the distance from Noah to the southern fringe of the northern wilderness, the wilderness itself, and travel from the northern foot of the wilderness to our Hagoth-Bountiful line (see section VII). Our 2 USD is a minimal estimate; obviously, the distance could be much greater. I am assuming, however, that the northern wilderness was not significantly wider than the eastern wilderness which we estimated at 2.5 USD.

We are now in a position to estimate the length of the western border, along the “wilderness side,” of the land of Zarahemla. This is shown in Figure 4. The estimated total length is 11 USD, or about the same estimated length as the southern border.

V. Nephi to Zarahemla

The central travel route of the Book of Mormon was that connecting the Nephite capital of Zarahemla to the city of Nephi, the capital city of the Lamanites. Of all the transects considered here, this route is the best documented. The route passed inland over the narrow strip of wilderness that separated the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi, which I have been calling the southern wilderness (from a Nephite/Zarahemla perspective).

1. Mosiah I and his group departed the land of Nephi and went into the wilderness; they were “led by the power of his [God’s] arm, through the wilderness until they came down into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla” (Omni 12-13).

   a. Mosiah I relied on divine guidance to travel to Zarahemla.
   b. The land of Zarahemla was at a lower elevation than the land of Nephi and the southern wilderness.

2. King Mosiah II was desirous to know “concerning the people who went up to dwell in the land of Lehi-Nephi, or in the
city of Lehi-Nephi, for his people had heard nothing from them from the time they left the land of Zarahemla” (Mosiah 7:1).
   a. The land of Nephi was “up” from the land of Zarahemla.
   b. There was no contact between the two lands.

3. Zeniff led a party from Zarahemla “to go up to the land” of Nephi; they traveled many days through the wilderness (Mosiah 9:3).
   a. The wilderness between Zarahemla and Nephi was many days wide.

4. Mosiah II granted 16 strong men that they “might go up to the land of Lehi-Nephi, to inquire concerning their brethren” (Mosiah 7:2). Ammon led the group up to Nephi (Mosiah 7:3). “And now, they knew not the course they should travel in the wilderness to go up to the land of Lehi-Nephi; therefore they wandered many days in the wilderness, even forty days did they wander” (Mosiah 7:4).
   a. There had been no communication between the people of these two capitals.
   b. The wilderness was such that it was easy to get lost. This suggests a labyrinthian arrangement which allowed travel in all directions.
   c. Forty days of wilderness travel (20 USD) is a high estimate for the distance between Nephi and Zarahemla.

5. After forty days they came to a hill north of the land of Shilom, and from there they went down to Nephi (Mosiah 7:5-6).
   a. Nephi was located in a highland valley; the wilderness to the north of the city of Nephi was “up” from the city.

6. King Limhi sent 43 people into the wilderness to search for Zarahemla: “And they were lost in the wilderness for the space of many days, yet they were diligent, and found not the land of Zarahemla but returned to this land, having traveled in a land among many waters, having discovered a land which was covered with bones of men, and of beasts, and was also covered with ruins of buildings of every kind” (Mosiah 8:7-8). King Limhi had sent “a small number of men to search for the
land of Zarahemla; but they could not find it, and they were lost in the wilderness.” They found a land covered with bones and thought it was Zarahemla, so they returned to Nephi (Mosiah 21:25-26). They brought back the Jaredite record as a testimony of what they had seen (Mosiah 8:9).

a. The Limhi party obviously got to the land northward near the area of final destruction of the Jaredite people, or the hill Ramah (the Cumorah of the Nephites).

b. They did not know the route to Zarahemla.

c. They apparently passed through the narrow neck of land without realizing it.

d. They must have traveled through the area the Nephites called the eastern wilderness. Any other northward route would have taken them through the Sidon Basin, near the west sea, or the east sea. They did not know the route to Zarahemla but they must have known at least three key facts concerning it: that it lay to the north, that it was an inland river valley, and that a wide wilderness separated Zarahemla and Nephi.

e. Given the preceding, we suspect that the eastern wilderness was quite wide, and at this time, sparsely populated.

f. Sorenson suggests that the Limhi party must also have had a general idea of the distance between Nephi and Zarahemla,12 in which case they would not have traveled much more than twice the expected distance. This would place the hill Ramah/Cumorah in the southern part of the land northward.

7. Limhi and his people escaped from Nephi with women, children, flocks, and herds, and traveled “round about the land of Shilom in the wilderness, and bent their course towards the land of Zarahemla, being led by Ammon and his brethren” (Mosiah 22:8, 11). “And after being many days in the wilderness they arrived in the land of Zarahemla” (Mosiah 22:13).

a. The land of Shilom was north of the city of Nephi.

12 Ibid., 140.
b. Zarahemla was "many days" from Nephi, even when the route was known—assuming that Ammon discovered the route during his wanderings to Nephi.

8. The Lamanite army chased Limhi’s group into the wilderness, but they got lost after they pursued them for two days (Mosiah 22:15-16).
   a. It was easy to get lost, even when the trail was fresh; the route from Nephi to Zarahemla was not obvious.

9. The Lamanite army that had followed Limhi “had been lost in the wilderness for many days” (Mosiah 23:30); they stumbled on to the wicked priests of King Noah in the land of Amulon (Mosiah 23:31). The people of Amulon and the Lamanites searched for Nephi, and they came upon Alma’s group at Helam (Mosiah 23:35).
   a. The wilderness was a virtual maze; the Lamanites could not even find their way back home after only two days’ travel in the wilderness.
   b. The mutual aid of the people of Amulon and the Lamanites was a case of the blind leading the blind. The wilderness must have been such that people could “walk in circles.”
   c. This wilderness area was not populated, or only sparsely populated, at this time. (They could not ask anyone directions for the way back.)

10. Alma and his group had “fled eight days’ journey into the wilderness” to escape the armies of King Noah who were searching for them in the land of Mormon, and they arrived in Helam. They took their grain and flocks (Mosiah 23:1-3).
    a. This travel distance is wilderness speed and thus is only 4 USD, or less.

11. The land of Mormon was in the “borders of the land” of Nephi (Mosiah 18:4, Alma 5:3).
    a. Mormon was located on the edge of the territory immediately surrounding the capital of Nephi. It was probably not more than 1-1.5 USD from Nephi.

12. Mormon was near a “fountain of pure water.” Alma hid there from the searches of the army of King Noah; people
gathered from the city of Nephi to hear Alma speak, and many were baptized (Mosiah 18:5-16). Alma and his group departed into the wilderness from the waters of Mormon.

a. The waters of Mormon were in close proximity to the lesser land of Nephi.

13. Alma and his followers escaped Helam by night. They took flocks and grain and departed into the wilderness, “and when they had traveled all day they pitched their tents in a valley” which they called Alma (Mosiah 24:18, 20).

a. This travel distance is also wilderness speed and is only 0.5 USD.

b. Given all of the baggage that Alma’s party packed around, my USD estimates may be inflated.

14. Alma and his group fled the valley of Alma and went into the wilderness. “And when they had been in the wilderness twelve days they arrived in the land of Zarahemla” (Mosiah 24:24-25).

a. The land of Zarahemla was not the same as the city of Zarahemla; the city must have been some additional distance removed.

b. We standardize this travel distance, as before, to 6 USD.

15. The Lamanites could not follow Alma past the valley of Alma, owing to divine intervention (Mosiah 24:23).

16. The sons of Mosiah went up to the land of Nephi to preach; “they journeyed many days in the wilderness” (Alma 17:8-9).

a. These eager missionaries should have had adequate travel instructions as to the route; it was still “many days” of travel.

17. On their return trip to Zarahemla, the sons of Mosiah met Alma as he was “journeying from the land of Gideon southward, away to the land of Manti” (Alma 17:1, 27:15-16).

18. Nephi and his small party fled “into the wilderness” from the land of first inheritance “and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many days” until they came to the place they called Nephi (2 Nephi 5:5-8).
a. Nephi was a favorable place for settlement.
b. We know that Nephi was a highland valley (see 5). Thus, Nephi’s trip from the coast involved at least some travel eastward (see 19).

19. The Lamanites lived in the wilderness “on the west, in the land of Nephi; yea, and also on the west of the land of Zarahemla, in the borders by the seashore, and on the west in the land of Nephi, in the place of their fathers’ first inheritance, and thus bordering along by the seashore” (Alma 22:28).

a. The west coast of the land southward was extensive, consisting of three parts: that west of the land of Zarahemla, that west in the land of Nephi, and that in the area of the Nephite’s landing.
b. The area of first inheritance was south of the land of Nephi.
c. Given 19b, Nephi’s many days’ journey to the land of Nephi (see 18) was probably mostly northward.
d. It is probable, therefore, that the highland valley of Nephi was closer to the west coast than to the east coast—since much of the travel appears to have been northward rather than eastward. (The east coast is not mentioned in accounts of Lamanite lands, other than the area just south of the city of Moroni.)
e. The Lamanites inhabited the wilderness areas and at one time occupied the wildernesses to the east, west, and south of the Nephites.

20. Jerusalem was “a great city” “joining the borders of Mormon” (Alma 21:1-2). Jerusalem, Onihah, and Mocum were submerged under water at the time of the Lord’s crucifixion—“waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof” (3 Nephi 9:7). Compare this to the very different phrasing for the city of Moroni: That “great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea” (3 Nephi 8:9, 9:4).

a. Jerusalem was near the waters of Mormon.
b. This must have been a very large body of water to be able to rise and cover a whole city, and possibly three cities.
c. This body of water was located near Nephi, and vice versa, in a highland area; it therefore must be a large lake.13

The three most obvious points of these passages are (1) that it was a long journey from Nephi to Zarahemla (2) through wilderness lands (3) in which it was easy to become lost and “wander.” The best information on distance comes from Alma’s account; his group traveled 21 days from the waters of Mormon to the land of Zarahemla. It is unlikely, however, that this represents direct lineal distance. In their journey to Helam, for example, it was not their intention to go to Zarahemla, and we cannot reasonably presume that they traveled in that direction during this eight-day leg of their trek. The total distance would have been 10.5 USD by our measure. I have reduced this to an estimated 9 USD between the land of Zarahemla and Nephi (assuming that the waters of Mormon were within 1-1.5 USD of Nephi). On the other hand, I assume that the point where they entered the “land of Zarahemla” was still some distance from the city of Zarahemla. I have taken the point of Alma’s reunion with the sons of Mosiah as a likely candidate for this entrance. This would still have been 2 USD from the city of Zarahemla.

The city of Helam and the valley of Alma were plotted with the assumption that the city of Nephi was near the west coast (see Alma 22:28). I have also assumed that the waters of Mormon were to the west of the city of Nephi (Fig. 5). This assumption does not affect the placement of the city of Nephi on our transect, but rather only the placement of Helam and Alma. Our general picture of the size and shape of Book of Mormon lands is not affected by this assumption.

VI. Bountiful to Cumorah

The information on this transect is less precise than that for all other transects. We know that the hill Cumorah was known as the hill Ramah to the Jaredites and was near the area of their final destruction (Ether 15:11). We know that the hill Cumorah was “in a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains” (Mormon 6:4), undoubtedly the same area visited by Limhi’s party which had “traveled in a land among many waters, having discovered a land which was covered with bones of men” (Mosiah 8:8), a

---

13 Ibid., 176.
Figure 5. The Nephi to Zarahemla Transect.
land with “large bodies of water and many rivers” (Helaman 3:4). This was “an exceedingly great distance” from the land of Nephi (Helaman 3:4). The land near Cumorah was probably also the destination of Morianton’s group who fled past Bountiful for the land northward “which was covered with large bodies of water” (Alma 50:29). We also learn from the Jaredite account that the hill Cumorah was near the eastern seashore (Ether 9:3; see also Ether 14:12-13, 26). Mormon and his army had retreated northward from the city of Desolation, past the city of Teancum (Mormon 4:3) and other cities, before they came to Cumorah.

From all of the above we know that Cumorah was north of Desolation and near the seashore. It had to have been at least 3 USD north of point “Bountiful,” given Mormon’s retreat through the seashore city of Teancum—assuming our 1.5 USD rule for the spacing of major fortifications. We placed Desolation one USD from our Desolation/Bountiful line. I have assumed that Cumorah was several days’ USD from the point of our last firm data (somewhere north of Teancum). This gives us an estimated 6 USD, or the same distance from our hypothetical point “Bountiful” as the southernmost Nephite city of the eastern coast, Moroni. Obviously, the hill Cumorah could have been much farther north than this. But as noted (V.6f), the facts of the Limhi expedition suggest that the hill Cumorah would be in the southern part of the land northward—as does the story of Morianton’s group. Finally, the name “Desolation” undoubtedly derives from the evidences of the Jaredite destruction (see Alma 22:30). As we have seen, this was the land just north of the narrow neck. For all of these reasons, I have placed the hill Cumorah as shown in Figures 2, 6, and 7.

VII. A Relative Geography of the Wilderness

As apparent in the preceding discussion, several of the measures of distance depend upon our assessment of the various wilderness areas. It will be worthwhile to consider them in more detail here. These wildernesses are considered to be upland areas of mountains or hills. Wilderness surrounded the Sidon River Basin and the lesser land of Zarahemla on all four sides. Of these, the northern wilderness is the most poorly known and is not specified by name. It was from this northern wilderness that the Lamanites launched their final and decisive offensive against the Nephites who were in the land of
Desolation in the land northward. The Lamanites came "down" upon the Nephites, and the Nephites went "up" to battle the Lamanites (Mormon 3-5). Keeping in mind that directions relate to one's own point of reference, we read that the people of Zarahemla landed near the land of Desolation (Alma 22:30) and "came from there up into the south wilderness" (Alma 22:31). This "south wilderness" would have been north of the city of Zarahemla, the place that they finally settled. Therefore, from the perspective of the later Nephites, this area would have been a northern wilderness. In precise terms, the real situation was probably somewhat more complicated. We know that the southern border of Nephite lands was two to three times wider than the northern border in the narrow neck. We also know that the western wilderness and eastern wilderness ran north-south, paralleling the western and eastern coastlines. Given the restricted northern border, these two wildernesses must have converged near the narrow neck, and north of the city of Zarahemla. This area would only have been considered a northern wilderness for those traveling north within the Sidon Basin; for those traveling along the coasts, it would have been the northernmost part of the western or eastern wilderness.

The key to our relative geography of the wilderness is the western wilderness known as Hermounts (Alma 2:34-37). We saw previously that the western wilderness stretched from the Nephite lands southward to the place of the Nephite's landing on the western coast, a place south of the land of Nephi (Alma 22:28). This sounds like a mountain chain that paralleled the western coastline (Fig. 6). We saw previously that the Nephites did not inhabit this wilderness zone, or the narrow coastal plain to the west. The western wilderness was apparently a natural barrier of such magnitude that it provided protection against attack. This was true except of the points where natural routes lead through the wilderness; I argued above that these were passes through the wilderness. As noted, all travel within this wilderness tended in an east-west direction—in contrast with the other wilderness areas. I take this as evidence that travel in a north-south direction was not feasible under normal conditions. All of the above suggests that the western wilderness was higher than the other wilderness zones. This wilderness also seems to have been near the borders of the west sea (Alma 22:28). Unlike the eastern coast, no plains are mentioned for the west coast, suggesting that the mountains dropped quickly to the coast. If it was a high mountain range, it must have also been
Figure 6. Nephite Lands and Defense System.
relatively narrow. I therefore consider it to have been the most narrow of all the wilderness zones. All of these features would have made the western wilderness a prominent and obvious feature of the landscape, and one having great military value. It is doubtless significant that this is the only wilderness given a specific name, the wilderness of Hermounts. Names for natural features are rare in the Book of Mormon. We have generally interpreted the presence of a name to indicate a prominent feature (e.g., hill Cumorah, river Sidon, waters of Mormon).

I take as my working assumption, then, that the western wilderness was higher and narrower than all the others. This wilderness, however, apparently did not extend to the narrow neck of land. This means that the western wilderness must have sloped down towards the narrow neck. Also, the western wilderness logically had to converge with the eastern wilderness (to form our northern wilderness) before they reached the narrow neck. Each of these wilderness zones probably also became more narrow as it sloped down to the narrow neck. If true, it follows that the easiest passes through the wilderness of Hermounts would have been in the north rather than in the south. The repeated Lamanite attacks on the city of Ammonihah (see Fig. 4) make sense in this regard. These northern passes would have been lower and shorter.

We saw in the discussion of the Nephi/Zarahemla transect that the southern wilderness was a bewildering labyrinth of possible travel routes. Also, it was at least 9 USD wide, undoubtedly the widest of the four wilderness zones surrounding Zarahemla. But this wilderness was also referred to as a narrow strip of wilderness that ran from the “sea east even to the sea west” (Alma 22:27), a curious description for the widest strip of wilderness in Book of Mormon lands. The narrow strip probably was the northern fringe, that immediately bordering the Nephite land of Zarahemla, of this greater southern wilderness. This seems clear in the description of Ammon’s group which “departed out of the land, and came into the wilderness which divided the land of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla, and came over near the borders of the land” (Alma 27:14; see also Alma 47:29). This suggests that they went “over” a final, narrow strip of wilderness before dropping down into the land of Zarahemla. If the narrow strip of wilderness was immediately south of the land of Zarahemla, it would explain why Lamanite forces consistently entered the southern borders of Nephite lands near the city of Manti (see Alma 16:6,
which was located at the head of the Sidon (Alma 22:27). The Sidon had its headwaters in the southern wilderness (Alma 16:6); one logical route or pass into the southern borders of Nephite lands would have been down this river pass. It may have been favored because the narrow strip of wilderness offered natural protection and prohibited travel into the Sidon Basin.

The remainder of the southern wilderness must have been uniformly difficult, with possibilities of travel in many directions, with no impassable obstacles in any particular direction, and no major landmarks to guide those who became lost. This would have been a very different kind of wilderness than Hermounts and probably the narrow strip of wilderness. The southern wilderness adjoined the upland region that the Nephites called the eastern wilderness near the borders of the land of Antionum, or near the city of Moroni (Alma 31:3).

The eastern wilderness appears to have been similar to the southern wilderness. We have seen that the eastern wilderness was settled by the Nephites. It also must have been quite wide. Again, we have the testament of the Limhi party. The eastern wilderness is the only logical place they could have traveled and not have discovered either Zarahemla or that they were lost. I am assuming here that this group of travelers would have realized that they were lost had they traveled near one of the seas. They must have been searching for a large inland basin drained by a major river. Sight of an ocean would have been sure evidence that they were lost and/or should travel inland. General Moroni’s travel from Gid to Gideon also suggests a wide wilderness. We saw earlier that the eastern coast was an area with at least several plains (near Bountiful and Nephihiah). In contrast with the western wilderness, this suggests a more gradual drop to the sea. All of this evidence indicates an eastern wilderness that was lower and wider than the western wilderness. Travel through the eastern wilderness was both east-west and north-south. It was also settled by the Nephites—indicating a rather hospitable “wilderness.”

The only detail we have of the northern wilderness is that it existed. We lack information that would indicate its width. But it must have been relatively low, given its proximity to the lowlands of the narrow neck. As noted, most of what we have been calling the northern wilderness was probably the northern

14 Ibid., 19.
end of the eastern wilderness (as suggested in the data about the city of Bountiful). I assume, therefore, that it was most like the eastern wilderness in terms of its potential for settlement and travel. It was apparently heavily populated during the days of General Mormon, as evident in the Lamanites' attacks against the Nephite stronghold at Desolation.

I have used all of this relative information about Book of Mormon wildernesses in completing our general map of Nephite lands shown in Figures 6 and 7.

VIII. A Question of Seas

The critical reader at this point may be wondering why no north sea or south sea is shown in any of the figures. There are two references in the Book of Mormon which mention or appear to allude to these seas. In Helaman (3:8) we read that the Nephites "did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east."

Support for this statement comes from the description of the narrow neck. "And now, it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land of Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward" (Alma 22:32). There is much more, and less, in these passages than meets the eye, and they deserve special attention.

A careful reading of these two passages will show that they are talking about two different things. The first refers to the land northward and the land southward; the second is in reference to the land southward only, being comprised of the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi. It is also clear that the second passage is in reference to the east sea and the west sea on both sides of an isthmus. A similar passage describes the founding of the city of Lib in the narrow neck area. "And they built a great city by the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land" (Ether 10:20). This is also a clear reference to an isthmus and perhaps a large river running into the east sea across the narrow neck, thus "dividing the land" (see 3 Nephi 19:10-13 and section I.4).
Figure 7. Some Book of Mormon Lands.
The solution to this problem may be quite simple. The passage in Helaman may have been meant in a metaphorical rather than a literal way. Explaining away difficult passages as metaphors goes against one of my guiding assumptions for dealing with the text, but in this case I think it is well justified. North and south sea probably have no more concrete meaning than the phrases “filling the whole earth” and “as numerous as the sands of the sea.” Mormon waxes poetic whenever describing the Nephites’ peaceful golden age of uninterrupted population growth and expansion. This is understandable given the circumstances under which he wrote, and his knowledge of the certain doom of his people. It is interesting that in a parallel passage describing the same sort of population expansion no north or south sea is mentioned. “And thus it did come to pass that the people of Nephi began to prosper again in the land, and began to build up their waste places, and began to multiply and spread, even until they did cover the whole face of the land, both on the northward and on the southward, from the sea west to the sea east” (Helaman 11:20).

I am convinced that the reference to a north sea and a south sea is devoid of any concrete geographical content. All specific references or allusions to Book of Mormon seas are only to the east and west seas. Any geography that tries to accommodate a north and south sea, I think, is doomed to fail. But we cannot dismiss the reference to these seas out of hand. If they are metaphorical, what was the metaphor?

Figure 8 shows a conceptualization of Nephite lands. The city of Zarahemla and the lands immediately surrounding it were the “center” (Helaman 1:24-27) or “heart” (Alma 60:19, Helaman 1:18) of the land (Fig. 7). The surrounding lands, to the various wildernesses, were considered quarters of the land. A Bountiful quarter (Alma 52:10, 13; 53:8; 58:35) and a Manti quarter (43:26; 56:1-2, 9; 58:30) are mentioned. Moroni was another “part” of the land (Alma 59:6). We lack information on the eastern quarter; my designation of “Melek” is merely my best guess.

We have seen that the Nephite lands were surrounded by wilderness on every side. And, conceptually, beyond each wilderness lay a sea, south, north, west, and east. Thus, the land was conceived as surrounded by seas, or floating on one large sea. The land was divided into a center and four quarters. Each quarter duplicated the others. The quartering of the land was not the way most of us would do it, by making a cross
Figure 8. The Conceptualized Nephite World.
following the cardinal directions, but was a cross as shown in Figure 8. Such a conception of the world would not be out of place in the Middle East at the time of Lehi; and it is remarkably close to the Mesoamerican view of their world. It is not my purpose here, however, to discuss the Nephites' concept of their universe; others are more qualified for this task than I. The main point is that the reference to north and south seas fits nicely into the Mesoamerican scene as part of a metaphor for the whole earth and was probably used in a metaphorical sense in the Book of Mormon.

Ten Points of Nephite Geography

The data needed to plot the six transects of our elemental geography have given us a rather complete view of Nephite lands, but we have essentially ignored the details of Lamanite and Jaredite lands. In previous discussion I listed the data for the convenience of those who want to rethink the elementary geography proposed here, or to evaluate one of the Book of Mormon geographies available. All that remains now is to use this information in evaluating the two geographies currently on the market. I have abridged the information in the preceding sections to the following ten simple points.

1. I am convinced that the narrow neck of land was an isthmus flanked by an east sea and a west sea. It separated the land northward from the land southward.

2. The known coastlines of the land southward varied significantly in length. The western sea bordered the land of Zarahemla, the land of Nephi, and the land of the Nephites' first inheritance. The eastern sea, however, is only known to have bordered the land of Zarahemla. This gives us at least three times as much western coastline as eastern coastline known to have been used by the Nephites and Lamanites.

3. As noted, there were also important differences in the wildernesses. The eastern wilderness appears to have been much wider and lower than the western wilderness. The southern wilderness was much wider than the eastern wilderness. The northernmost portion of the southern wilderness was the narrow strip of wilderness. There was also a wilderness to the north of the city of Zarahemla.
4. The cities of Zarahemla and Nephi were in large valleys. Zarahemla was in a large river basin; Nephi was located in a highland valley. The Zarahemla Basin was much larger than the valley of the city of Nephi.

5. The river Sidon drained the Zarahemla Basin; it ran northward from its headwaters in the southern wilderness, just south of Manti. We lack information on the Sidon’s course north of Zarahemla. Given the relative elevations of the eastern and western wildernesses, the Sidon most likely drained into the east sea. As noted, the Sidon skirted the western flanks of the eastern wilderness. The Zarahemla Basin was at least several USD wide west of the Sidon.

6. The information for the waters of Mormon suggests that it was a highland lake of significant size. It was also located within a day or two (USD) of Nephi.

7. Zarahemla was located in a large basin drained by a large river. Zarahemla was near the center of the land and was surrounded by Nephite fortifications that protected the center. There were also wilderness or upland areas in all four directions from Zarahemla. Zarahemla was about three weeks’ travel from the capital city of Nephi located to the south. The key Nephite fortification of Bountiful lay several days’ travel to the north.

8. Nephi was three weeks’ travel south of Zarahemla in a highland valley; it was also near a large lake, the waters of Mormon.

9. Bountiful was north of Zarahemla and near the narrow neck of land. It guarded the route to the land northward. Bountiful was only about five days’ travel from Moroni.

10. Cumorah was in the land northward near the eastern seashore. It was probably not more than 6-8 days’ travel from the city of Bountiful and may have been considerably less.

With these ten points we can now evaluate the very different Book of Mormon geographies proposed by Sorenson
and Hauck. A summary of the two hypotheses is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. A Comparison of the Sorenson and Hauck Book of Mormon Geographies with the Points Made in This Review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sorenson</th>
<th>Hauck</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Isthmus</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Coastlines</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Wilderness</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Valleys</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rivers</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Lake</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Zarahemla</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Nephi</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Bountiful</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cumorah</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from Table 1 that there is no contest between these two geographies according to the criteria outlined here. All that this really means, of course, is that I have apparently interpreted the Book of Mormon passages in a manner similar to Sorenson, and Hauck has read them differently. As discussed, the major differences hinge on the identification of the narrow neck and the orientation of cardinal directions. I leave it to the discerning reader to decide what the Book of Mormon says in this regard. I am personally convinced that the Hauck geography cannot be correct. There is no need to evaluate its merits against the backdrop of archaeology.

I argued above that there were two tests for a valid and satisfactory geography—the first test being the more important. We have just seen that Hauck’s geography is wide of the mark. The Sorenson geography meets the first test with flying colors. This does not mean, however, that the Sorenson geography is necessarily correct. The second test will be to evaluate it against the backdrop of its proposed ancient American setting. The simple expectation is that the archaeological sites identified as Book of Mormon cities should be in the right place (in relation to all the rest) and date to the right period of time. Moreover, they

---

should have the features mentioned for them in the Book of Mormon, such as walls, ditches, temples, towers, and so on. Sorenson outlines succinctly the archaeological criteria for the second test of a Book of Mormon geography,¹⁶ and they need not detain us here. The basic point of Table 1 is that Sorenson’s geography proceeds on to the second test; one need not worry about the archaeological details in Hauck. Evaluation of the Sorenson geography in the light of archaeological evidence will require many years and perhaps several books. This is a field for experts such as Hauck, Norman, Warren, Jakeman, and others. For most of us, it is enough to know that there really is an area of the Americas that matches the geographic details of the Book of Mormon in terms of shape, topography, hydrology, and dimensions. For the interested reader I recommend the Sorenson text. I recommend Hauck’s book only for the truly dedicated enthusiast who wants to evaluate critically his/her own geographical interpretations of the Book of Mormon.

¹⁶ Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting.*

A Stumble Forward?

Reviewed by William Hamblin

This is a seriously flawed book which nonetheless opens up an interesting new approach to the study of Book of Mormon geography. In chapters 1 through 3 Hauck presents some methodological background to the study of the geography of the Book of Mormon. Chapter 4 is in a sense the heart of Hauck’s book, where he offers some new interpretations of several Book of Mormon geographical features and terms. Hauck’s views will be, to say the least, highly controversial. For example, he claims that northward, eastward, and southward are technical terms in the Book of Mormon for northwest, northeast and southeast respectively. For Hauck the narrow neck of land is not an isthmus, but a type of “coastal corridor” (p. 35). This theory necessitates the existence of two “lands of Bountiful,” one by the east sea and one by the west sea. Some of these novel ideas will be discussed in detail below. In chapters 5 through 8 Hauck offers what I feel is the most useful part of his book. Here he devises abstract models and charts symbolizing textual references to geographical relationships mentioned in the Book of Mormon. This, too, will be further described below. Hauck then takes the final step of attempting to correlate his abstract diagrams with the actual topography of Mesoamerica in chapters 9 and 10. Since these chapters are based on several dubious assumptions, I find this section of his work completely unconvincing, as I will describe below. His book concludes with Appendices detailing some technical methodological considerations, and lists and tables of geographical data from the Book of Mormon.

I feel there are several major problems with Hauck’s study. First is his irksome lack of references and bibliography to the important work of previous studies on Book of Mormon geography. Perhaps the worst example of this is on pages 21-22, where he lists twelve “facts” which he feels have been established about Book of Mormon geography. Not only does he fail to provide references to modern studies for any of these twelve “facts” (and nearly all of them have received modern
attention), he does not even provide references to passages in the Book of Mormon which could be used to establish his "facts."

A related problem is Hauck's failure to come to grips with John Sorenson's *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*. This is strange, for Hauck has read Sorenson's work, saying that it "has established the cultural correlation of Book of Mormon peoples with the ancient inhabitants of southern Mesoamerica" (p.2). But Hauck never mentions the fact that Sorenson's work also provides a model for direct correlation between Book of Mormon geography and specific sites in ancient Mesoamerica. Now it may indeed be that Sorenson's geographical correlations are wrong, as they must be if Hauck's theories are to be accepted. But if Hauck wishes his theories to receive serious attention he must not only present his ideas, but show where Sorenson's geographical correlations are flawed and his own are superior. This he never does. He seems to simply present his opinions as if in an intellectual vacuum.

Hauck also makes some grandiose, but totally unsubstantiated claims for his work. For example, "For the first time since its publication in 1830, the Book of Mormon has been successfully used to predict the location on the American continent of ancient ruins described within its pages" (p.1). Good news indeed! But who predicted it? Where is the modern location? What Book of Mormon site is referred to? Who conducted the archaeological dig? What professional journal published the analysis? Who reviewed the findings? Hauck does not even grace his claim with a footnote! Indeed, all we find is that "informal archaeological investigations have identified a series of large, fortified settlements in specific geographical locations described in the Book of Mormon" (p. 3). In other words, Hauck apparently went driving through Mexico or Guatemala, found some ruins, and has declared them to be from Nephite times. I do not want to be hypercritical, but I am frankly tired of this sort of thing being passed off on the Latter-day Saints as serious Book of Mormon scholarship. If Hauck has made a significant archaeological find, let him describe it in a detailed paper, submit it to peer review, and publish his specific findings and analysis for critical appraisal. Undoubtedly he intends to do so, but until he does, he has gone beyond the pale of responsible scholarship in making assertions such as he does.

Hauck's work is also flawed by additional methodological failings. Perhaps the major problem in this regard is that his
arguments frequently run backward, from general assumptions to specific interpretations. He presents his assumptions, then attempts to demonstrate how specific geographical references can be interpreted to match those assumptions. However, he often fails to show how specific texts can be used to prove his general assumptions. I will deal in detail with two major examples of this phenomenon.

Hauck insists that “A careful reading of all the references in the text concerning [the directions] north-northward, south-southward, and east-eastward establishes that all six are never used as interchangeable directions. This means that these six terms are not six ways of defining three cardinal directions, but rather six different points of the compass.... Logic suggests therefore that since northward, southward and eastward are not identical with the cardinal directions, they must be the intermediate quadrants at 45 degrees between the cardinal points of the compass” (p. 30). He goes on to insist that northward is northwest, eastward is northeast, and southward is southeast (p. 31).

There are several serious problems with this interpretation. Hauck simply claims that “a careful reading” establishes his idea, without quoting the text of a single passage from the Book of Mormon. Careful reading is something quite different from analysis and proof, neither of which Hauck provides. (Indeed, my “careful reading” of the text suggests that northward, southward and eastward refer simply to general directions. Northward means in a general northerly direction, sometimes to the northeast, and at other times perhaps to the northwest.) Next he claims that since “all six are never used as interchangeable directions” they must refer to “six different points of the compass.” I find this lapse of logic little short of incredible. It is one thing to show that northward is never used to mean eastward. I’m glad the Book of Mormon never makes this serious error. It is quite another matter to conclude thereby that northward is a single specific direction on our modern compass. Despite the serious, if not fatal weaknesses in Hauck’s interpretation of this point, his entire reconstruction of Book of Mormon geography is based on the premise that this claim is true.

Another very dubious assumption in Hauck’s work is that there are two lands of Bountiful. Hauck claims that “the numerous references to the land of Bountiful ... demonstrate the existence of two very separate and contemporary entities both
given the name Bountiful” (pp. 31-32). Although Hauck does provide a list of references to passages in the Book of Mormon mentioning Bountiful, he does not provide a single quotation or analysis of any of these texts. Here is the core of his discussion. “References including Alma 22:29-33; 50:11, 32; 63; Helaman 4:5-8; and 3 Nephi 3:22-24 all correlate the land Bountiful with the adjacent land Desolation and the west sea. On the other hand, there are references that correlate the land of Bountiful with the adjacent land of Jerushon and the east sea (Alma 27:22; 51:26-32; 52:9, 15, 18, 39; 53:3; Helaman 1:28-29; 5:14-16). The spatial associations given in these references are always consistent. The places associated with the east sea Bountiful, including the city of Bountiful, are never mixed with the references and places associated with the west sea Bountiful” (p.32).

Hauck’s last sentence is manifestly false. His very first reference is to Alma 22:29-33. Let’s see what the text says. “And also there were many Lamanites on the east by the seashore, whither the Nephites had driven them. And thus the Nephites were nearly surrounded by the Lamanites; nevertheless the Nephites had taken possession of all the northern parts of the land bordering on the wilderness, at the head of the river Sidon, from the east to the west, round about on the wilderness side; on the north, even until they came to the land which they called Bountiful” (29). This text seems to associate Bountiful with the east sea. After saying that Bountiful bordered Desolation, and was called Bountiful because of its wildlife, the text continues: “And now, it was only the distance of a day and a half’s journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward. And it came to pass that the Nephites had inhabited the land Bountiful, even from the east unto the west sea” (32-33). Now Hauck maintains that the text does not explicitly state that Bountiful extended from the east sea to the west sea, but only from an indefinite east to the west sea (pp. 38-39; emphasis added in above quotes). Let us grant him this point, which could be seen as ambiguous. Nevertheless, verse 29 seems to be linking Bountiful to “the east by the seashore,” while verse 33 relates Bountiful to the west sea. Likewise, Alma 50:8-11, Hauck’s second reference, discusses the geography of the lands of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful, referring to the east sea in
verse 8, and the west sea in verse 11. Alma 50:32-34, talks of the lands Bountiful and Desolation, “by the sea, on the west and on the east.”

A very simple geographical theory can account for all the information in these passages. The land Bountiful is near the narrow neck of land, and extends to or near the east sea and the west sea. Just as there is no reason to conclude that there are two separate countries both called the United States of America simply because the United States borders both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, there is no reason to conclude that there must be two lands of Bountiful simply because the text sometimes refers to Bountiful as being near the west sea, and sometimes near the east sea. Yet Hauck provides no reason to reject this clear and simple reconstruction of Book of Mormon geography, despite the fact that he himself believes that “Veracity lies with the concept that has the greatest clarity and simplicity, is most consistent, and correlates best with all the other supporting geographic information in the text” (p. 35). Why is his two-Bountiful theory superior to the one-Bountiful theory? What geographical problems does it solve? What types of geographical relationships does it clarify? How does it make the narrative of the text more clear and consistent? Hauck never even begins to provide an answer.

But let us grant Hauck the benefit of every doubt. The best one could say is that by various manipulations and strained interpretations one could argue that the text might be referring to two different places. But one could never conclude, as Hauck insists, that “The places associated with the east sea Bountiful, including the city of Bountiful, are never mixed with the references and places associated with the west sea Bountiful” (p.32). This claim is simply false. However one wishes to interpret the passage, the references to Bountiful, the east sea, and the west sea are quite manifestly mixed in the texts quoted above. The problems with his theory are further compounded by the fact the it requires that a single body of water be given two different names: he identifies the Pacific Ocean as being both the south sea and the west sea (p. 107).

Thus, in my opinion Hauck’s interpretation of the technical nature of direction terminology and his claim for the existence of two lands of Bountiful are not only very weak but quite evidently false. If these two major assumptions are invalid his entire geographical reconstruction must be rejected. Then why not simply ignore the book entirely?
I believe some benefit can be derived from a study of chapters 5 through 8 (pp. 41-116), in which Hauck proceeds to develop abstract diagrams symbolizing the textual geographical information of the Book of Mormon. For example, if the text describes a journey from Zarahemla to Bountiful, Hauck maps out this "path" indicating rivers, valleys, and additional features claimed in the text to have existed between Zarahemla and Bountiful (p. 50). After all the smaller paths have been diagramed, they are combined into larger abstract "networks" as more geographical links are found connecting locations together. The end result could have been a geographical encyclopedia of abstract diagrams representing the geographical information from the Book of Mormon.

Unfortunately, however, Hauck's method of presentation limits the usefulness of his diagrams. First, he usually identifies the sites by number rather than name, making it difficult to keep the sites straight in one's mind and necessitating continual flipping through the pages to find the names of the sites. He seldom includes the references or the text from the Book of Mormon which he used to develop his diagram. Thus again, one must flip through the text and charts in Appendices to determine what specific phrase is being used to establish a particular point on his diagram. He also fails to distinguish between explicit and implicit interpretations of textual references. Finally he limits his geographical information to natural features, making little reference to cultural characteristics such as walls and towers which can be of vital importance in eventually correlating the abstract diagrams with the actual terrain in Mesoamerica. Thus, all in all, his material is not well organized to serve as a reference source for students of the Book of Mormon. Nonetheless, these chapters of his book offer an interesting way to approach the study of Book of Mormon geography. Ultimately I feel that it would be extremely useful at this point in the study of Book of Mormon geography to have a detailed toponymic and geographical dictionary of the Book of Mormon, with full page abstract diagrams illustrating all known geographical data for each Book of Mormon site, along with references and complete texts from the Book of Mormon, linguistic analysis of the names, and references to possible Mesoamerican correlations.

In summary, the most generous review I can give is that Hauck has shown that much of the geographical material contained in the Book of Mormon is somewhat ambiguous.
This, however, should be obvious to anyone who has seriously studied the text. Unfortunately, Hauck has not expressed his eccentric theories in terms of the inherent ambiguity of the geographical references in the text, but in terms of a near certainty which he has by no means demonstrated. His work on developing abstract charts and diagrams illustrating textual references of geographical relationships could have been an important step forward in Book of Mormon geographic studies. Unfortunately, the serious problems with his work make it a stumble rather than a lengthened stride.

Reviewed by Mark V. Withers

This critique is a general overview of a recent study of Book of Mormon geography. Having minimal book review experience, I have endeavored to give a general overview based on subjective standards rather than objective standards. I have decided to use the following categories in my discussion: premises, significance, understandability, technique, and diagrams.

The theme which was well brought out in the text was that this book is not the end but merely a study which is in fact in its infancy. Mr. Hauck explained clearly that this study is not to prove the Book of Mormon but rather to aid in studying it. Another premise that he established besides the two already mentioned is that the geographic information in the Book of Mormon is far from all inclusive and that the results are based on likelihoods and probabilities rather than concrete facts. Nevertheless, even with a lack of many crucial historical and geographical facts, the premise that a systematic approach could possibly go far in putting to rest the present speculations and theories concerning the whereabouts of Book of Mormon geography is a sound one and appears to have aided Mr. Hauck in his studies.

What I read in this book could be helpful as a tool in studying the Book of Mormon. As I read the Book of Mormon and located the mentioned areas on the maps, I gained a greater appreciation of what really happened, the distances traveled, and the terrain involved. Having served my mission in Guatemala, I was able to picture the areas described in the book. However, it may be very confusing for all but the technically minded to read this book and picture exactly what Hauck is describing, unless the reader has actually personally seen the areas described, or has seen photographs or drawings of such areas. For example, if readers were able to see pictures of the rugged mountain chains, the narrow pass along the coast where agriculture is so abundant, the valley passes, the east sea region near Lake Izabal, or any of the areas described, their understanding would be that much more clear. Finally, although not seeking to "prove" the Book of Mormon true, it seems that a reader who already deems
the Book of Mormon true will gain added insight as the geography of what he or she already believes in unfolds.

The understandability of this book depends upon the efforts of the reader. I noticed that what Hauck said at the beginning of his book is true where he stated that the book was addressed to the scientific reader as well as the average reader who uses the book as a guide to studying the Book of Mormon. I found myself lost in technicalities quite often and it seemed like half the book was an introduction or a thorough description of the second half, which seemed to be the meat of the study. The study leans more toward the scientific reader than the average reader who is merely seeking some answers to make the study of the Book of Mormon easier. However, if the average reader makes an effort in understanding this book, I think it would be understandable for him or her as well.

The technique, as described earlier, is a complex systematic approach. Although perhaps more technical than other studies, Hauck’s book seems to have used a systematic approach in a workable manner. The scripture passages are included for corroboration by the reader, as well as lengthy discussions of the system. The diagrams use facts and assumptions and add clarity to the technical descriptions contained in the texts.

Overall, I found the present book enlightening, although somewhat technical. I enjoyed reading about the events in the Book of Mormon in their geographic context. This volume will assist in future studies of the Book of Mormon.

Reviewed by L. Ara Norwood

When Mormon scholar Lester Bush wrote his historical survey of the Spaulding Theory eleven years ago, he made a comment at the tail end of his paper which bears repeating: "One therefore can reasonably expect that new variants [of the Spaulding theory] will, like the influenza, reemerge every now and then."\(^1\) Vernal Holley's 1983 booklet, *Book of Mormon Authorship: A Closer Look*, is one of the more recent strains of this particular virus. Even so, the work does have some merit.

The main premise of Holley's study is that, contrary to statements by the likes of Bush, Hugh Nibley, L. L. Rice, President Joseph F. Smith, and James H. Fairchild, president of Oberlin College (where the Spaulding manuscript is now housed), there exist many similarities between the two texts. These similarities are given as evidence that the later work (the Book of Mormon) borrowed from, or was influenced by, the earlier work (the Spaulding manuscript). If that is so, then it is generally concluded that the Book of Mormon is the product of the mind of a nineteenth-century rustic whose clever trickery has duped millions of people into embracing the religion of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.\(^2\)

Vernal Holley's contribution to the issue is a plethora of parallels. Though interesting, these parallels do little to establish the charge (or in this case, the implication) of piracy on the part of the author of the Book of Mormon.\(^3\)

Citing parallels involving, among other things, what Mr. Holley sees are "the same ancient American inhabitants,... arts and sciences,... Christian theology,... white God person,... the

---

2. Although this is not openly stated by Mr. Holley, that it is implied is a certainty.
3. Even Sandra Tanner, who is an avowed enemy of the Book of Mormon, found the parallels somewhat padded and generally unimpressive (private 1985 conversation with L. Ara Norwood). See also Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Did Spaulding Write the Book of Mormon?* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1977).
use of seer stones, and ... a war of extermination between two nations whose people were once brothers” (p. 11), Holley wonders aloud whether or not the author of the Book of Mormon borrowed from, or was dependent upon, Solomon Spaulding’s unpublished Manuscript Story.

Holley is neither provisional nor conservative in his exhibition of the parallels between the two works; he is, however, provisional and conservative in his interpretation of those parallels. For this he is to be credited.

He presents far more parallels between the Manuscript Story and the Book of Mormon than have previously been published. Nevertheless (to paraphrase Nibley) the significance of each parallel must be weighed and evaluated separately. Finding that both records make frequent reference to the word “and” is not as convincing as is the fact that both mention “kings,” which would not be as convincing as finding the words “cureloms and cumoms” in both records (which we do not). The degree of commonality between words or phrases in the two records determines the significance of the parallels.

If the parallels in question are unique to both the Manuscript Story and the Book of Mormon, then we have a good case for possible pilfering. If, on the other hand, the parallels are found in other sources as well, then the case for duplicity is diluted. When the investigator makes claims for parallels which do not even exist, then the charge of plagiarism is exploded.

After careful scrutiny of the Spaulding manuscript, I found that some of the parallels mentioned by Mr. Holley do exist while others do not, but never do I find parallels of enough significance to lend credence to the claims of plagiarism. For instance, it is true that both tell of a war of extermination

---

4 My count reveals approximately 181 alleged parallels depending on how infinitesimal one wants to be in his analysis. This does not include a list of 53 word combinations, eight of which are identical but insignificant, seven of which are nearly identical and moderately significant. Compare that with Walter Martin, The Maze of Mormonism (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1978), who claims to have studied the Spaulding manuscript and to have found numerous similarities in the Book of Mormon, yet fails to cite even one due to a lack of time (p. 60).

between two nations whose people were once brothers,6 but each record was not "found in exactly the same way,"7 as can be demonstrated.8

Regarding the parallels, Holley says,

It is important ... to call attention to the fact that the Book of Mormon concepts are [in some instances] ... exactly opposite to those in Spaulding's story.... Many of the parallels between the Book of Mormon and Spaulding's Manuscript Story are typified by a ... reversal of conceptual word order (see p. 13).

It need not be pointed out that if a "parallel" is opposite, it isn't a parallel; what should be remembered about parallels, however, is that it is very easy to find an abundance of parallels of various types between almost any two works of literature provided they are comparable in size. Finding parallels between the Book of Mormon and any other literary work (fiction or nonfiction) is facile if the latter contains any historical nuances.

The thing that would make a study of this kind convincing (or at least intellectually provocative) would be if the parallels found in the two works in question were unique or unusual.

6 Solomon Spaulding, The "Manuscript Found," or "Manuscript Story," (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1886), 22-24; actually, the two peoples were brothers only in the sense that they were all children of one God. The Manuscript Story is explicit on this. Speaking to the two nations, Lobaska says, "You have all derived your existence from the great Father of Spirits, you are his children & belong to his great family. Why, then have you thirsted for each others' blood? for the Blood of Brothers?" (Spaulding, Manuscript Story, p. 56). It should also be noted that a colossal difference exists in the motivation behind the wars in the two stories.

7 Ibid., 10.

8 In Manuscript Story, the stone which allegedly led to the parchments was "a small distance from the [ancient] fort," had ancient writing on it, rested on other stones, covered an artificial cave, concealed a second stone, was flat, and was found by chance. In the case of the Book of Mormon, there is no mention of a fort, ancient writing on the stone, other stones, an artificial cave, or a second stone. Furthermore, the stone in the Book of Mormon was "thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side," not flat (see JS-H 1:51), and was not found by chance but by divine guidance. Thus, to claim that the two records were found in "exactly" the same way is to overstate the issue.
For instance, if the Tree of Life motif were found in the *Manuscript Story*, or if words like “deseret” and “Irreantum,” “ziff” and “Zenock,” “limnah” and “liahona,” “neas” and “Neum,” “Rameumptom” and “Rabbanah,” or even if “title of liberty,” “secret combination,” or “Gadianton Robber” were found therein, the parallels would carry far more weight and the whole study would take on an entirely new dimension. Yet not one of these terms, nor any term like them, is found within the text of *Manuscript Story*.9

There are a number of other incorrect statements as well. For instance, Mr. Holley claims the Book of Mormon makes the error of teaching “Copernican astronomy” centuries before such principles were advanced (see p. 14). Actually, the Book of Mormon makes no such claim, neither in Alma 30:44 nor in any other place.10 In another instance, Mr. Holley makes several

---

9 Not only is there a dearth of significant parallels, but there is an abundance of “unparallels.” After my first reading, I isolated no less than 100 differences between the two works, some of which include the following:

a. The main parchment of *Manuscript Story* discussed the life of its sole author and that portion of America near the Great Lakes and the Mississippi. The Book of Mormon has numerous authors and never mentions either the Great Lakes or the Mississippi.

b. *Manuscript Story* uses terms such as “gentle reader,” “bite the dust” (to describe death), “wigwams,” “Mamoon,” and “Bird Play” (a game). All of these terms are absent from the Book of Mormon.

c. In *Manuscript Story*, a storm arose and blew the vessel off course and away from Brittian [sic], their intended destination. In the Book of Mormon, the vessel eventually arrived at the intended destination.

d. In *Manuscript Story*, one of the fair-skinned mariners requests permission for an interracial marriage and his request is granted. Such a notion is condemned in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 5:21-23).

In addition to my study, Dale R. Broadhurst has prepared other very detailed unpublished studies.

10 It should be noted that although Book of Mormon writers are never explicit about the prevailing beliefs concerning astronomy, neither are the biblical writers. Indeed, the heliocentricism acceptable among the Greeks only shortly after the time of Lehi was replaced by the geocentrism of Ptolemy until revived in a new form by Copernicus. Also, prophets of God in any age could have independently known the truths concerning the revolutions of the stars and planets.
comments to establish that the traditional LDS opinion regarding Book of Mormon geography being located in Central or South America is not "compatible with the evidence within the text [of the Book of Mormon]" (see pp. 31-33). Actually, John L. Sorenson's work demonstrates that a Mesoamerican setting for the Book of Mormon is very plausible. Also, contrary to Mr. Holley's assertions, the two texts do not describe "the same ancient American inhabitants,... the same white God person" (p. 11), and especially not "the same Christian theology." In fact, Mr. Holley claims that the theological principles in chapter 7 of Manuscript Story are paralleled in King Benjamin's address, "in each account in exactly the same order" (p. 16). Yet, of the six parallels he cites to support his assertion, only three of them deal directly with theological principles, two of the three come from Jacob, not Benjamin, and one of those is actually a contradiction of what the Manuscript Story teaches. Thus, his concluding statement that, "The theological similarities noted above are presented in the same place in the story outlines in both works" (p. 16), is utterly false.

One of the more notable characteristics of Holley's booklet is the tone. There is a dearth of the hysteria, finger-pointing, or arrogance reminiscent of previous studies in support of the Spaulding Theory. One is relieved that a person can state his/her case against the Book of Mormon without claiming to have the last word in pinpointing Book of Mormon origins. Compared with the tone of prior hostile attacks, a rather tentative hue permeates most pages of this booklet and the work is generally void of polemics.

Perhaps the most innovative portion of the study is the section on geography. Several anti-Mormons shouted with glee when they first laid eyes on the map of proposed Book of Mormon lands shown side by side with the map of New

---

11 John L. Sorenson, An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985). I acknowledge that Holley's study originally appeared about two years prior to Sorenson's. Still, Sorenson's views were widely circulated long before 1983, and he was not the first to suggest the idea in general.

12 In this instance, Manuscript Story approves of plural marriage if granted by a mortal (i.e., the king), whereas the Book of Mormon forbids plural marriage unless God commands it (see Jacob 2:30).

13 See E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed (Painesville, OH, 1834); John C. Bennett, Mormonism Exposed (New York, 1842); Martin, The Maze of Mormonism, for examples of this.
England (see figs. 1 and 2), while some LDS scholars looked forward to studying the maps since it seemed that a fresh point of attack worthy of scrutiny had finally reared its head. An exhaustive study of the maps is beyond our purview here. Nonetheless, my general findings are summarized below:

Of the 17 Book of Mormon place names treated by Mr. Holley, nine of them (more than 50%) are mentioned only once or twice in the entire Nephite/Jaredite record. This reveals an effort to try to pinpoint cities which have little or no clue given as to their respective locations from the text of the Book of Mormon itself. Even so, it surprised me to learn that many of the cities on Holley’s maps are placed in incorrect relationship to one another.

For instance, Angola and Jacobugath should be north of Zarahemla (Mormon 2:3b-4 and 3 Nephi 7:12a; 9:9a); Alma should be north of Lehi-Nephi (Mosiah 18:30-34; 23:1-4, 19; 24:20, 24-25); Jerusalem should be in the land of Lehi-Nephi (Alma 21:1; 24:1); and Morianton should be on the eastern borders of the land southward (Alma 50:28-34; 51:26). Mr. Holley has altered these locational relationships in every instance. Furthermore, he displays a glaring inconsistency in his treatment of the river Sidon. On his maps, he sees a parallel between this river and the Genesee River, yet on pages 14-15 he draws a parallel between the river Sidon and the Ohio River.

Other pertinent questions surface when considering just how original the place names are. For instance, several of the Book of Mormon place names appear in the Bible. These include Ephraim (2 Samuel 13:23), Ramah (Joshua 19:36), and, of course, Jerusalem. If the author of the Book of Mormon were given to pilfering, why would he need the Manuscript Story when the Bible would serve just as well?

It is also important to note that some of the New England cities were not even incorporated entities prior to 1830. Angola was incorporated in 1873,15 and in Monroe County, Ohio, Jerusalem’s post office wasn’t established until January 8, 1850. Thus, Mr. Holley’s claim that such places were known in the neighborhood of Joseph Smith is chronologically

14 My more thorough treatment of the maps is the result of an invitation I received from James R. Spencer to respond to their implications. This unpublished study is in my possession.
Figure 1. Actual Place Names in the Location of the Spaulding Story (Holley, Book of Mormon Authorship, p. 36).
Figure 2. Proposed Book of Mormon Lands (Holley, Book of Mormon Authorship, p. 37).
misinformed. Finally, to draw etymological parallels between "Jacobugath" and "Jacobsburg," or "Shurr" and "Sherbrooke" is to strain one's credulity.\(^{16}\)

To his credit, Mr. Holley does not state firm conclusions. Instead, he merely presents his research, asks questions (which any good researcher does), and lets the reader ponder the implications.

Finally, let me say that if I were a law professor and were to assign a student the exercise of making a case on behalf of the Spaulding Theory, I would expect (and be delighted in) the kind of results Mr. Holley has produced. This in no way means that I would find the evidence produced to be significant enough to seriously discredit the Book of Mormon (and I do not in this case). Mr. Holley's evidence, though still far from undermining the Book of Mormon, is as good an effort as has been made by any proponent of the Spaulding Theory to date.

---

\(^{16}\) It must also be pointed out that none of the Book of Mormon place names treated in Vernal Holley's maps appears in the Spaulding manuscript, a curiosity since the front cover of his booklet states, "A comprehensive study of the similarities of the Book of Mormon and the writings of Solomon Spaulding."

Reviewed by Stephen D. Ricks

These volumes on the Book of Mormon complete—with the exception of a forthcoming volume on 1 Kings to Malachi in the Old Testament—the eight-volume _Studies in Scripture_ series, begun in 1984 by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, as essays systematically treating the various books of Latter-day Saint scripture. The volumes include contributions by twenty-six different authors, most of them from Brigham Young University or the Church Educational System: Mae Blanch, Spencer J. Condie, Larry E. Dahl, Kay P. Edwards, S. Brent Farley, Camille Fronk, LaMar Garrard, H. Dean Garrett, Kent P. Jackson, Clark V. Johnson, Victor L. Ludlow, Thomas W. Mackay, Darrell L. Matthews, Joseph F. McConkie, Robert L. Millet, Monte S. Nyman, D. Kelly Ogden, Robert E. Parsons, Daniel C. Peterson, Rex C. Reeve, Jr., Andrew C. Skinner, Terrence L. Szink, Morgan W. Tanner, Catherine Thomas, Rodney Turner, and Gary Lee Walker, besides a recent conference address by President Benson and excerpts on the coming forth of the Book of Mormon by Oliver Cowdery taken from _The Messenger and Advocate_. Each of the chapters of the Book of Mormon is considered in order in these volumes. The contents of each of the chapters correspond to section divisions used for the Book of Mormon course at Brigham Young University.

The editor’s preface at the beginning of the first of these two Book of Mormon volumes sets out the intention of the essays in the volumes: “The reader will readily see that the emphasis in this volume is on the _teachings_ of the Book of Mormon. The authors have stressed the messages contained in the sermons and writings of its prophets. At the same time, they have discussed Book of Mormon history to clarify the narrative and emphasize the lessons that are taught through the historical events it records. Since the primary purpose of the Book of Mormon itself is to teach and bear testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, our purpose in this volume has been to do likewise. Thus, we have considered external evidences of the
Book of Mormon, as well as contextual and comparative studies, to be of lesser value for this work” (p. viii).

In sacred history, as elsewhere—even in scripture where doctrine is the central focus—context must properly be given its due. While many of the details of history as well as of the realia mentioned in sacred writ are primarily of antiquarian interest, others are important in understanding the teachings. Awareness of, and attention to, the chiastic structure in Alma 36 helps the reader to see unmistakably the didactic and doctrinal core of the chapter at verse 18: “Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.” Recognizing Mosiah 1-6 as a covenant renewal festival, where the king gives an accounting of his rule (cf. Deut. 17), such as those found in the the Old Testament in Exodus 19 and 20-24, the entire book of Deuteronomy, and Joshua 24, with an explicitly Christian element added, enables the reader to see the logic of the order of service and the specific choice of topics more clearly. Seeing the rending of garments by Moroni and the people in Alma 46 as a simile having a rich Near Eastern treaty and covenantal background provides insight into a dimension of ritual richness that might otherwise be missed. Even knowing something of Lehi’s desert experience lends meaning to Nephi’s terse comment, “My father dwelt in a tent” (1 Nephi 2:15) as well as to the imagery of his vision in 1 Nephi 8. Needless to say, such background details also add an important element of human interest to a study of the Book of Mormon.

As noted above, the emphasis in this volume is expressly laid on the teachings of the Book of Mormon. Yet Jackson and Millet, in their New Testament Studies in Scripture volume, place doctrine and history on an equal footing. But is the “primary purpose” of the Gospels in the New Testament (the focus of Jackson and Millet’s Studies in Scripture volume) any less “to teach and bear testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ” than the Book of Mormon? I think not. But Jackson does not explain for us his differing approaches to these two volumes of scriptures, although elsewhere he does note that “the Book of Mormon ... teaches its messages primarily though history.”

Fortunately, most of the essays in this volume do allow a role for history in the chapters under discussion, although it is often less than I might have wished and less than the available evidence would have permitted and could have been used to elucidate even doctrinal points.

Consciously or unconsciously, these two volumes tend more toward being theologies than the other volumes in the Studies in Scripture series. Within the parameters of their intentions, however, these two volumes are quite successful. Some of the essays have been splendidly done, and are fairly loaded with new, and sometimes challenging, insights—the essays of Rodney Turner and Robert L. Millet immediately come to mind, as do also the fine studies of D. Kelly Ogden on 1 Nephi 1-7 and Terrence L. Szink on 1 Nephi 16-18, which sparkle with fresh geographical, historical, and theological perspectives; others are workmanlike; others tend toward being pedestrian recapitulations of the contents of the chapters under discussion, which is unfortunate, since the primary justification for a commentary or other studies on scripture is to provide the reader new insights. Still, this is perhaps the best companion to the teachings of the Book of Mormon that is currently available, and could be used with profit as a teaching aid in the classrooms of the Church.

Prophetic Messages or Dogmatic Theology?
Commenting on the Book of Mormon: A Review Essay

Reviewed by Louis Midgley

In two handsome volumes taking us through Mosiah,¹ Joseph F. McConkie and Robert L. Millet reproduce the text of the Book of Mormon divided into blocks of dissimilar length, which they follow with annotations on what they understand to be doctrinal matters. Though they never indicate exactly what they mean by doctrine, the Book of Mormon is treated as a "theological treatise" (2:2) containing "theological gems," which provides an indication of what they have in mind. *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* is a series of statements, either about phrases or about topics suggested by some of the language in the Book of Mormon. The primary exception to this practice is found in the treatment of the long passages taken from Isaiah (2 Nephi 7-8, 12-24), where brief paraphrases are provided for entire chapters, and the text, as it is found in the Book of Mormon, is not reproduced.²

Topics are addressed in *Doctrinal Commentary*, whose outlines are occasioned by language in the Book of Mormon, but little or no attention is given to literary forms, narrative contexts, or to larger structures, patterns or distinctive language in the text. The statements of others are at times quoted either to advance or bolster the opinions of the authors. *Doctrinal Commentary* is thus an inventory of statements about what are thought to be Mormon doctrines or Mormon theology, cast in the form of glosses (or annotations) on the text. Because the Book of Mormon is viewed as a source for theology, little effort is made in *Doctrinal Commentary* to ascertain the subtlety of

---

¹ Presumably the remainder of the Book of Mormon will be covered in yet unpublished volumes, though no explanation of the plan for the series appears in the currently available volumes.

² It is also indicated that in "the latter part of the book of Alma, where history dominates the text," the text of the Book of Mormon will not be included (1:xvi).
what it teaches, or to weigh possible alternative readings of the
text. Instead, the faith of the Nephites and the language of the
Book of Mormon tend to be harmonized with certain contem­
porary statements about Mormon beliefs, though that is of
necessity done in a random manner, and always on the
assumption that the two must be made to appear identical.
Unfortunately, in some ways the work tends to resemble the
mode of biblical interpretation employed by Protestant
Fundamentalists, including argument by assertion and a
pencilant to proof text the scriptures, sometimes augmented by
statements made on various topics by certain of the Brethren.

“The genius of the Book of Mormon, like any work of
art,” according to Richard Bushman, “is that it brings an entire
society and culture into existence, with a religion, an economy, a
technology, a government, a geography, a sociology, all
combined into a complete world. For purposes of analysis, we
must, of course, call forth one thread, one theme, one idea at a
time, but we must also bear in mind the existence of this larger
world and relate individual passages to greater structures if we
are to find their broadest meaning.” 3 If anything like that is
correct, then it is a mistake for us to claim to possess the one and
only proper mode of interpretation and explication, since, when
we begin to focus on any one theme or thread to the exclusion of
the whole and especially in opposition to the legitimate work of
others on other threads or themes, we threaten to warp the world
that is called into existence by our text. Instead of focusing
merely on a single aspect or theme, as important as that may be,
when we approach the Book of Mormon we must strive to keep
in sight the entire world which it evokes. And we need to take
advantage of all possible resources for understanding and
probing every aspect of the book. Collaboration among the
faithful in the serious study of the Book of Mormon would help
us avoid being drawn into the quarrelsome factions which now
tend to divide us and weaken our efforts to build the Kingdom.

From my perspective, the Book of Mormon signals that far
more is going on in the restoration achieved through its means
than merely an awkward way of providing a random assortment
of theological gems that we can fit into our own schema. If the

---

3 Richard Bushman, “The Book of Mormon in Early Mormon
History,” in New Views of Mormon History, ed. by Davis Bitton and
Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1987), 3-18, at 5.
existence of the Book of Mormon shows us anything, it is that our words about God—our efforts to do theology—are both futile and arrogant, and that what we need is access to messages from the heavens. When we narrow our focus, we tend to turn the Book of Mormon into a mere resource for our own theologizing. There is an element of pride in such ventures. If what we needed was an authoritative theological treatise, the Book of Mormon was an odd way for it to have been made available. Looked at that way, it turns out to have been a failure, which may explain why some students of doctrine tend to discount it.

The question that needs to be addressed is why we have a complex record of prophetic teachings presented in an historical setting intimately linked with the tragic fate of defiant peoples. As we begin to address that question, we inevitably move away from theology either in its dogmatic or systematic forms. But the Saints have always tended to ignore those portions of the Book of Mormon—by far the bulk of the book—that could not be easily exploited as simple proof texts for dogmatic theological purposes.

What seems to have led the Saints to neglect the Book of Mormon—there is no denying that, as a rule, we have done that—is a desire for dogmatic or systematic theology, rather than a yearning for the restoration of a past that can function as a key to understanding our present and future, both as individuals and as a community. Have we really understood the significance of what is implied in the story of the angel or the historical accounts he provided to Joseph Smith? It seems that we have not, for we have neglected the wonderful gift brought by the angel. To fasten our attention on one theme or thread in the Book of Mormon to the exclusion of the whole is to perpetuate our neglect of what was restored.

It is ironic that, as we praise the Book of Mormon, we may indulge an urge to systematize and even elaborate where the sacred text—one that should function as our canon—remains silent. From the desire to have tidy synopses of Mormon doctrines, we may sow seeds of contention, and end up disputing over what we may even want to identify as the doctrines of salvation. Against such the Book of Mormon provides an emphatic warning. Latter-day Saint scholars would do well to guard against the arrogant desire to advance theological systems—to develop a kind of Mormon scholasticism—rather than assuming a more modest role which
gratefully accepts what is taught in the scriptural canon and by
the prophets. The Book of Mormon directly confronts our pride
and hence also our academic ambitions and pretensions, both of
which are at work in our dogmatism and in our urge to
harmonize and systematize. 4

The flaws in Doctrinal Commentary are ones common to
much of Mormon scholarship. The tendency is to divert
attention away from the message and meaning in the text under
consideration, and back towards what we already know. Such
efforts do not enhance our understanding; they tend to make the
very teachings they celebrate seem merely sentimental and
insubstantial. Such endeavors also tend to close the door on the
untapped possibilities within the scriptures. Our tendency is to
rely upon presumably authoritative statements on matters that
may seem urgent to us, but which may not have been of concern
to those responsible for providing us with the Book of Mormon.
These secondary materials may be edifying or at least harmless,
but are quite often of limited value, being themselves flawed by
the kind of neglect of the enigmatic and yet fruitful particulars
found in the Book of Mormon that has brought the Church
under divine condemnation. Part of the neglect of the Book of
Mormon and the resulting censure (D&C 84:54-57) may be
traced to our urge to advance seemingly authoritative answers to
questions that are not addressed in that text.

4 Of course, in reading the Book of Mormon we should strive to
see its teaching, prophetic messages, and warnings as a coherent whole, as
far as the text makes that possible, and as much within the linguistic
horizon of the text as is possible—we should strive to see the world through
the lens provided by the text, and not the other way around. The meaning of
the text is paramount, and should not be subordinated to later dogmatic or
theological understandings. The mistake about which I am complaining is
the urge to see in the Book of Mormon merely scattered fragments from
which one might fashion a theology or system of Mormon doctrines, which
are also roughly harmonized with notions drawn from exterior sources. The
other mistake is to assume that the Book of Mormon is composed of bits
and pieces of dogma and doctrine inserted into a narrative by Joseph Smith
in an attempt to address his and others’ theological quandaries up to 1830,
which he later discarded as he began what is now called the “reconstruction
of Mormon doctrine” upon less orthodox and more progressive, liberal lines.
An approach that looks in the the Book of Mormon for a system of
theology, which now must be authoritatively elaborated, or was later
terminated by more liberal insights, does not do justice to that text
understood as an authentic revelation from God containing the fulness of the
gospel of Jesus Christ.
McConkie and Millet\(^5\) claim that it is not their "intent to suggest that a proper understanding" of the Book of Mormon "requires the interpretative helps of trained scholars" (2:xiii), and they express "some concern" because certain Latter-day Saints inquire about the historical claims of the Book of Mormon (2:xiii). Unfortunately, *Doctrinal Commentary* seems to rest on the notion that thoughtful scholarship and an explication of scripture are inimical (2:xiii). It is, of course, no secret that elements of Secular Fundamentalism—including certain of the dominant modes of understanding divine things in the modern world—tend to work against faith, especially as Latter-day Saints understand such things. But it is simply wrong to hold that all scholarly endeavors are harmful to faith (2 Nephi 9:29).

After making those assertions, McConkie and Millet apologize for their own endeavors. Curiously, they do that by launching an attack on all biblical scholarship, which they claim is necessarily damaging to faith (2:xiii). Are we to assume that all inquiries into the Book of Mormon, other than their own, have the same impact as what they accuse biblical scholarship of doing to faith? Instead of merely indicating that they wish to highlight for the beginning student some of the more familiar teachings in the Book of Mormon, they seem intent upon defending their mode of interpretation against other approaches to the text. Hence, they extend their attack on all biblical scholarship to include virtually everyone not engaged in a theological exegesis of the Book of Mormon. They brush aside

---

\(^5\) *Doctrinal Commentary* does not contain an indication of the division of labor between the two authors. Nevertheless, certain blocks of text seem to have been written by one of the authors. For example, much of what seems to be the general introduction to the series, "Glad Tidings from Cumorah" when it appeared in 1987 (1:2-16), was later published by McConkie as "A Comparison of Book of Mormon, Bible, and Traditional Teachings on the Doctrines of Salvation," in *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, Paul R. Cheesman, ed., assisted by S. Kent Brown and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), 73-90. The material in "Glad Tidings from Cumorah" (1:9-16), which appears with numbered subheadings (1 through 12) in *Doctrinal Commentary*, is reproduced, with a somewhat more felicitous editing, in *The Keystone Scripture*, without the last paragraph under the subheading "Revelation" (87), and the "Conclusion" (87-89), and also with a section entitled "Scriptural Inerrancy and Infallibility" (85-86) inserted between items 11 and 12 in *Doctrinal Commentary*, when these materials were republished in the *The Keystone Scripture*. 
as insignificant (and even perhaps pernicious) other scholarly work on the Book of Mormon.\textsuperscript{6} Ironically, both McConkie and Millet are capable of better scholarship,\textsuperscript{7} and have written less tendentious essays. But given what appears as hostility to the scholarly enterprise, McConkie and Millet never satisfactorily answer the question of why we need a commentary on the Book of Mormon (2:xiii). “The only justification for a commentary,” they opine, “is an expanded understanding of holy writ and of the manner in which its teachings apply in our lives” (1:xv).

\textsuperscript{6} Virtually the only serious scholarship on the Book of Mormon cited in Doctrinal Commentary is the 1967 edition of Hugh Nibley’s Since Cumorah (see 2:323, for the Nibley citation in their bibliography), but even this is inadequately utilized. A thirty-three word passage taken from p. 393 of the 1967 edition of Nibley’s book (pp. 356 and 357 of the 1988 edition, published as volume 7 of The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley), and quoted in Doctrinal Commentary, 2:13-14—commenting on Jacob 2:13-16—is as follows: “Wealth is a jealous master who will not be served half-heartedly and will suffer no rival—not even God … [ellipses where 157 words and six citations have been removed]. The more important wealth is, the less important it is how one gets it.” The passage quoted from Nibley is part of his exegesis of 2 Nephi 9:30: “But wo unto the rich, who are rich as to the things of the world. For because they are rich they despise the poor, and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore, their treasure is their God. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also.” But in dealing with that passage, Nibley is not quoted. Doctrinal Commentary would have been materially improved if more materials like Nibley’s pithy explications of the teachings and prophetic warning of the Book of Mormon had been assembled under the appropriate headings. It is in essays like Nibley’s on the message of the Book of Mormon that we begin to see the possibilities of an insightful exegesis of that text.

\textsuperscript{7} Both have published fine scholarly treatments of themes ancillary to the doctrines of salvation. For example, McConkie’s best essays—I think of his “Premortal Existence, Foreordinations, and Heavenly Councils,” in Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints, ed. by C. Wilfred Griggs (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1986), 171-98—make considerable and effective use of the work of a wide sampling of gentile scholarship. Hence his attack on all attempts to generate a competent scholarship on the Book of Mormon is puzzling. Of course, competent exegesis of themes in the Book of Mormon need not necessarily always draw upon gentile scholarship, but there is nothing in principle that calls for a rejection of the learning of those outside the Church. A judicious use of that learning has advanced our understanding of a number of matters about which we were previously partially in the dark, as McConkie’s essay on heavenly councils illustrates.
They then beg the question of how that is to be done, and why their particular mode of interpretation should take precedence.

To pursue other than theology in the Book of Mormon, "no matter how interesting the material presented, is to create a spiritual eclipse or to upstage the divine message with something that by its very nature is of lesser importance" (1:xv). They claim to approach matters of greatest worth—everything else is secondary. They "have chosen...to confine their attention almost exclusively to the doctrines espoused within the book, leaving it to others to deal with such matters as culture, history, and geography, as well as internal and external evidences of the book. In so doing they do not seek to suggest that such matters are without importance" (1:xv), but later they more than merely hint that to deal with the teachings in any other way, or to take up any other themes or threads in the Book of Mormon than the issues they consider of paramount importance, is to be involved in things of secondary value, and that such endeavors are even harmful to the faith (2:xiii-xv).

McConkie and Millet say many things that are both familiar and fine. But by dealing with the Book of Mormon primarily as a resource for narrowly focused theological declamation, they fail to provide a thoroughgoing, competent explication of its teachings. They falter at the very thing they undertake because they ignore many of the hints, clues, subtleties, obscurities, complexities and puzzling passages in the Book of Mormon. By treating the scriptures merely as a collection of proof texts to be fitted into a theological system, the authors of Doctrinal Commentary downplay or ignore the historical setting and content, narrative structure, language, and literary form in the text, and hence fail to identify fully and explicate the prophetic message and warnings found in the Book of Mormon.

An essentially ahistorical approach to the Book of Mormon is unable to take us much beyond the received opinion on Mormon beliefs. Doctrinal Commentary thus remains on the surface, and is not calculated to probe the less familiar and yet more subtle and profound teachings in the text. Let me illustrate the kinds of teachings that are neglected in Doctrinal Commentary. The name and description of the community (or church) in the Book of Mormon was People of God, or Covenant People of the Lord. Those names, as well as a complex of related language, are linked with the making and renewal of the covenant binding the faithful to God. The covenant was at times renewed through rituals involving the
entire community. Those rituals admonished and constituted, as they did with ancient Israel, what the Book of Mormon calls "ways of remembrance" (1 Nephi 2:24). The constant stress on cursings and blessings, and the offering of sacrifices, coupled with the reading and explication of an account of the creation that functioned as the historical prologue to the covenant, forms the emblematic and dogmatic horizon in which the life and sacrificial death of Jesus of Nazareth was taught and understood. Are we not to remember, as the Nephites of old remembered? And are we not to remember curses brought upon the Nephites, which they inflicted upon themselves by forgetting the terms of the covenant? Are we not to understand that we are cut off from the presence of God—that is, in bondage and captivity—to the extent that we do not remember the terms of our covenants, including the Book of Mormon? The sacred records brought with the Lehi colony, when coupled to a host of dramatic epiphanies, explicated in highly formulaic ways in accounts of prophetic speeches, in letters and blessings, but also in political proclamations, as well as legislation, judicial proceedings, and so forth, provide us with prophetic direction and warning by preserving and enlarging our own memory of God's mighty deeds, and of the terms of the covenant that made them (and us) the People of God.

McConkie and Millet tend to ignore the peculiar and complex structure of language in the Book of Mormon; they therefore neglect some of its more intriguing elements. For example, the Hebrew verb meaning "to remember," in its various declensions, appears in the Old Testament one hundred and sixty-nine times, for the most part with God and Israel as subjects. But the language of memory and remembrance, often closely associated with covenants, and their renewals, and with records and their role in the life of the People of God, occurs in the Book of Mormon some two hundred and twenty-seven times. One looks in vain for an explication of such matters in Doctrinal Commentary. What is provided instead is a rather familiar treatment of themes as they are commonly understood by the Saints.

In undertaking a doctrinal commentary, McConkie and Millet neglect to indicate what they mean by "doctrine." They also neglect to examine the meaning and content given to that

---

8 See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zahkor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 5-6, 107.
word in the Book of Mormon. They may have assumed that "doctrine" is unproblematic, but it would seem to be a mistake to ignore the way otherwise ostensibly familiar words like "doctrine" are used in a text upon which one wishes to comment. What is currently meant by "doctrine" includes virtually everything that is taught or believed, and also perhaps whatever supports or explains what is done by Latter-day Saints. But when we look at the way in which the word is used in the Book of Mormon, we are in for a surprise.

The word "doctrine" appears in the Book of Mormon twenty-four times, always with the narrow meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. McConkie and Millet are fascinated with what they call "the doctrines within the Book of Mormon" (2:xiii). In the two page preface to the second volume, they mention "doctrines" four different times. Clearly, they assume that the book is full of various "doctrines." But when the word "doctrine" is used affirmatively in the Book of Mormon, it is always singular, though there are "points of doctrine" (1 Nephi 15:14; Alma 41:9; Helaman 11:22-23; 3 Nephi 11:28; 21:6); when plural, the word identifies foolish, vain, and false teachings that deny the gospel—that Jesus is the Christ (see 2 Nephi 28:9, 15; Alma 1:16).

The "doctrine" of Jesus Christ is declared by him to consist of the following: "And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me;... and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned" (3 Nephi 11:33-34). The Book of Mormon, of course, contains more information about both human and divine things than the fulness of the gospel, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. But the additional historical information, as well as the norms, descriptions, emblems, figures, images, tenets, categories, and instructions are never identified as "doctrine." That word is reserved for the core message that Jesus is the Christ—the Messiah, the Redeemer of mankind. Everything else is strictly subordinated to the one "doctrine of Christ," by which we may "know how to come unto Christ and be saved" (see 1 Nephi 15:14), for it is the Redeemer who is the way of salvation, the way, truth, life, light, and so forth—that being the one and only doctrine identified as such in the Book of Mormon. What we need is a
commentary on the Book of Mormon—one that begins with an examination of the conception of doctrine found in the text, and not a doctrinal or doctrinaire commentary. When we get clear on exactly what constitutes the doctrine of Jesus Christ, we are able to understand the term "anti-Christ," for they who teach false, vain or foolish "doctrines" are those who deny the doctrine that Jesus is the Christ.

"Doctrine" (usually in the singular, as opposed to the plural form, as in "false doctrines") identifies the gospel understood as faith, repentance, and baptism—how to come unto Christ to be saved. It does not identify the whole range or complex of opinions, speculation or beliefs about divine and human things, or the rites, practices, and traditions that go into the making of a contemporary Mormon; it is, instead, the most primary, elementary, plain teachings of Jesus Christ. Ironically, Doctrinal Commentary rests upon an understanding of doctrine which is foreign to the text upon which it comments. This is obviously innocent, and would be harmless except that the careless use of the word "doctrine" leads McConkie and Millet to pay inordinate attention to the details of beliefs as currently understood, beliefs they think of as crucial doctrines concerning which one must have the right opinion in order to be saved. On this matter it is instructive that after Jesus declared his doctrine to the Nephites (3 Nephi 11:31-39), he added that "whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it as my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them" (3 Nephi 11:40).

By conceiving the Book of Mormon as a source of details about matters that some may currently identify as doctrines, and hence want to include as part of a dogmatic theology that binds the Church, McConkie and Millet end up playing into the hands of those who argue that Joseph Smith, after 1835, was involved in a radical "reconstruction of Mormon doctrine" as it was set forth in orthodox Book of Mormon theology.9 The argument is as follows: additional texts claiming to be authentically ancient,

---

more revelations, additional rites and ordinances, instructions, information, as well as speculation and interpretations, obviously followed the Book of Mormon. Many of these, even those coming directly through Joseph Smith, must be read as constituting a radical shift in perspective, and are inconsistent and discontinuous with his early theology—that is, with the doctrines taught in the Book of Mormon. After 1835 there was a shift away from an essentially orthodox theology, which was basically drawn from the Protestant sectarian world, to a new "progressive theology," with a "liberal" rather than pessimistic view of human nature, and a radically different conception of God. Instead of interpreting later revelations as clarifications, elaborations, and applications of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, as plainly and emphatically set forth in the Book of Mormon, a "development of Mormon theology" is postulated which does not rest on "an unwarranted impression of continuity and consistency."10

It seems to me that clarity on exactly what has been restored as the doctrine of Jesus Christ (or the fulness of the gospel) by divine revelation, rather than what some of the early Saints believed or attempted to work out as part of their efforts to fashion a creed or do theology, would assist in overcoming the notion that a reconstruction of the doctrine, as set forth in the Book of Mormon, was undertaken by Joseph Smith. I am not denying that additional instructions, information, rites, and even additional ancient texts expanding the memory of the Saints were provided by revelation. Nor am I rejecting the notion that the understanding of the Saints was gradually expanded and modified. But this fleshing out of the core structure was not done in such a way that what came in the later revelations was, as some now claim, discontinuous or inconsistent with the doctrine taught in the Book of Mormon understood as the gospel of Jesus Christ. By failing to clarify exactly what constitutes the doctrine of Jesus Christ, it has been possible for some to assume

10 According to Alexander, "This type of exegesis or interpretation," that he accuses Joseph F. McConkie of employing, "may produce systematic theology and while it may satisfy those trying to understand and internalize current doctrine, it is bad history since it leaves an unwarranted impression of continuity and consistency." See Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 24, and also n. 1, where specific reference is made to the views of McConkie, who is cited as the example of an author who insists on reading earlier texts through the lens of later dogmas.
that a presumably sectarian Protestant "early theology," which they strive to find in the Book of Mormon, was later jettisoned by Joseph Smith after 1835, as he began to advance a different set of doctrines which constituted a liberal, progressive theology. "Mormon doctrine" (or theology) is understood in such discussions as whatever the Saints may or seem to have believed at any given point, rather than what the crucial texts mean.

Though Millet is clearly opposed to speculation about a radical "reconstruction of Mormon doctrine,"11 unfortunately both he and McConkie share basically the same understanding of "doctrine" as do the Revisionists, for they also think in terms of a complex network of dogmas answering a host of different questions. They are therefore prepared to say exactly what Mormon doctrine is on the nature of God and man, and numerous other theoretical questions. They differ from the Revisionists by holding that the vast array of statements and beliefs that Latter-day Saints have entertained on various questions must be winnowed, and the doctrines of what they call "true religion" (1:369; 2:102, 107, 115) or even "revealed religion" (1:369; 2:115) then ascertained, harmonized, and taught authoritatively. A commentary thus provides the occasion for setting forth an elaborate and detailed creed, at least partially explicaded in terms of categories quite foreign to the scriptures, upon which assent is thought to be mandatory for salvation. Labels like "true religion" and "revealed religion," like "theology," are categories foreign to the scriptures, but common to our post-Enlightenment, secularized world. Such categories form the lens through which we tend to view the scriptures, when it is the categories of the scriptures that ought to form the lens through which we view the secular world.

A careful examination of the Book of Mormon, which seems to lack much that is familiar to Latter-day Saints, perhaps because of our neglect, points in a somewhat different direction, with its narrow conception of doctrine. The Book of Mormon, with its strict focus on Jesus Christ, rather than an expansive notion of doctrine composed of a complex assortment of details about the nature of divine and human things, turns our attention away from what are clearly theoretical questions that traditionally have constituted the substance of theology. In our urge for

11 See, for example, Robert L. Millet, "The Ministry of the Father and the Son," in The Keystone Scripture, 44-72, especially 45, n. 4.
theology we are sometimes disappointed to find how little is said in the Book of Mormon that helps us fashion a system of doctrines that deal with the nature of God, or the Godhead, the Holy Ghost, original sin, the nature of man, and so forth, about which it is sometimes thought that Mormons have or at least should have detailed doctrines.

The Book of Mormon focuses our attention, when read carefully, on essentially practical issues centered on the consequences of repentance and believing in Jesus Christ, of trusting God, keeping the commandments, building Zion, avoiding the works of darkness, and so forth, which relate us to eternal life in the presence of God as that is made possible by Jesus Christ as set forth in the doctrine of Christ. I am not persuaded that anything that came in the later revelations to Joseph Smith was anything more than an elaboration and clarification of the core message contained in the initial founding revelation. And I flatly reject the now popular notion that there is a discontinuity and inconsistency between the earlier and later revelations. Nor do I think that we do the Kingdom a service by attempting to harmonize or winnow the various attempts to fashion a Mormon theology with the contents of the Book of Mormon and later revelations. Those who postulate an inconsistency between the Book of Mormon and what was taught by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo begin with the assumption that they are dealing with theology—man’s words about God. But what we are dealing with is divine revelation—God’s words to man, and quite a different thing than theology. (Plato gave us the world *theologia*, from which we derive our “theology,” in the *Republic* [Bk II, 379a] to describe the tales appropriately told by poets in a well-ordered regime.) Whenever we attempt to do theology, or fashion a system of doctrines, we end up in contention and disputation, for the entire enterprise is an exercise in arrogance and pride, against which the Book of Mormon warns.

But even as an elementary and informal account of Mormon beliefs, *Doctrinal Commentary* is flawed, since it is brief, sketchy and necessarily a random rather than an orderly or even historical explication. The end result is, for the most part, a series of didactic discourses, little sermons, or homilies prompted by phrases in the Book of Mormon, which may have little or nothing to do with the meaning of the passage or even the phrase which functioned as the trigger. These homilies tend to opine about words or phrases, but they seldom probe for the
actual meaning of the message in the text; they tend to provide informal expositions of already familiar Mormon sentiments.

At times a phrase or incident functions as the springboard for sentimentality and moralizing, either of which might have a place in some other context than in a commentary on the scriptures. Let me illustrate by citing the three entries each dealing with 1 Nephi 1:1. The expression “born of goodly parents” leads to the following statement: “The text is a testimonial for the spiritual blessings that flow from the proper use of this world’s wealth” (1:19). The expressions “many afflictions...highly favored of the Lord” yield the following homily: “Life was not intended to be easy. The path of righteousness, that leading to eternal life, is ever an upward climb and hence uninviting to many. Nephi saw afflictions and blessings as compatible companions. Surely anything that brings us nearer to God is a blessing” (1:19). Without wishing to question such sentiments and observations, which may be fine, it is clear that they have little to do with explicating the actual meaning of the text. Instead, the text merely becomes the occasion for moralizing, platitudes, admonitions, while the actual meaning of the text may be ignored. Hence, the expression “mysteries of God” in 1 Nephi 1:1 becomes the occasion for the following homily: “The mysteries of God are known only to those who have so lived as to enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost. ‘No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations,’ Joseph Smith taught, for ‘the Holy Ghost is a revelator’.... Because of his faithfulness in the face of affliction, Nephi became a rightful heir to these hidden treasures of God” (1:19).

McConkie and Millet justify their neglect of the competent literature on the Book of Mormon with dubious speculation about faith and its grounds (2:xiii-xv), as if such matters could be reduced to facile formulas, or argued with rather florid metaphors, or should be employed as grounds for dismissing the increasingly sophisticated scholarly undertakings of their colleagues and associates. It is in the competent scholarly literature generated in the last thirty-five years that we can begin to see the outlines of a more profound understanding of the prophetic message and inspired teachings of the Book of Mormon. It is lamentable that no use was made of that literature in Doctrinal Commentary.

A few examples will indicate the kind of problems that flow from the dismissal of the competent literature on the Book
of Mormon, and that afflict *Doctrinal Commentary*, and will also suggest how McConkie and Millet might have improved their efforts, even as they focus on the prophetic message.

(1) "It would appear," they say, "that King Benjamin’s mighty sermon [in Mosiah 1-6] was the forum for a large covenant-renewal ceremony" (2:175-76). Why is that so? And what is its significance? Why not cite, if not draw upon, Stephen D. Ricks, "The Treaty/Covenant Pattern in King Benjamin’s Address," *BYU Studies*, 24/2 (Spring 1984):151-62, where it is shown that, in addition to being a remarkable example of an ancient coronation ceremony, the materials in Mosiah 1-6 parallel the biblical covenant narratives and describe a covenant renewal festival which involves, among other things, a pilgrimage to the temple, where booths were erected and sacrifices offered, and instruction in the law was given, much like the ancient Israelite pattern? This festival provided a setting for explication of the meaning of the sacrifices and burnt offerings that formed part of the occasion. The Nephite festival appears to have been the ancient feast of the booths (or tabernacles). It involved the reading of the legal stipulations binding upon those entering or renewing the covenant, as well as a setting forth, in highly formulaic ways, of cursings and blessings associated with keeping or not keeping the commandments of the King or of God.

(2) The formula setting forth the cursings and blessings is described as "vintage Book of Mormon doctrine," but without indicating exactly why that is so or what it entails (1:189, commenting on 2 Nephi 1:20). McConkie and Millet neglect to mention that the formula occurs explicitly at least fifteen times in the Book of Mormon, or that the formula provides the lens through which the Nephite prophets explain what is happening to their people as they prosper and then eventually grow in arrogance or pride and turn away or forget the terms of the covenant, bringing upon themselves cursings, rather than the promised blessings. This illustrates how attention to historical and cultural matters would have materially improved *Doctrinal Commentary*, even or especially in dealing with the doctrine of Christ.

(3) The most common mistake in *Doctrinal Commentary* is the result of its being informal. In commenting on Mosiah 3:19, where King Benjamin, in describing fallen mankind as carnal, devilish, and sensual, also reports that "the natural man is an enemy of God," McConkie and Millet quaintly maintain that
“Benjamin is not teaching that man is depraved” (2:152). Of course, it is necessary and proper to distinguish Benjamin’s view of the depravity of sinful, debased mankind from the sectarian belief in a total depravity, transmitted genetically at birth to all mankind. Instead, Benjamin clearly teaches that carnality (or depravity) is “put on” by conscious choices, and can be “put off” by turning to, remembering, and trusting the merciful forgiveness made available through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But McConkie and Millet make no such careful distinctions.

(4) It is also instructive, when McConkie and Millet venture outside what they conceive as strictly doctrinal issues, which they sometimes do, to compare their accounts with those found in the increasingly competent literature on the Book of Mormon. For instance, the account they give of the name Nahom in Doctrinal Commentary (1:127) suffers in comparison with that provided by Hugh Nibley in The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (5:79; and 6:251-52), and in the F.A.R.M.S. Update for September 1986, “Lehi’s Trail and Nahom Revisited.”

Given the limitations imposed by the narrow focus and informal and nonscholarly character of Doctrinal Commentary, much of what is said is, of course, both unexceptional and by and large sound. But, unfortunately, the mode of explication of the Book of Mormon adopted by McConkie and Millet tends to draw attention away from the meaning of the text. They substitute in its place presumably authoritative statements about words or phrases taken out of context, which are then used as an excuse for the elaboration of a theology. For the most part, the authors of Doctrinal Commentary merely assert; they do not demonstrate by careful textual exegesis. And, given that particular mode of argument, they tend to settle on a meaning for a phrase or passage in the Book of Mormon by drawing upon (or fashioning) some exterior and subsequent or even unrelated statement about what are thought to be Mormon doctrines. They seem to approach the text of the Book of Mormon already knowing, from sources exterior to the text, both the questions and the answers. Hence there are really no new insights, no discoveries on the teachings found in the text, that are not already accessible from sources already familiar to the Saints. There is little indication that the authors of Doctrinal Commentary are willing to allow the text to determine the questions or the answers on the issues they raise.
Questions of culture, language, literary form, legal practices, historical details, and so forth, are, of course, clearly secondary to the prophetic message and warnings contained in the Book of Mormon. But to fasten on any one theme or thread, without due consideration for the whole, both obscures and distorts the core message. My misgivings about Doctrinal Commentary are not the result of qualms about a serious examination of the teachings and message of the Book of Mormon. We need to have our attention focused on such things. But competent, careful attention to the text is needed, if we are to begin to understand its message.

We all need to heed the warnings contained in the Book of Mormon against contentions or disputations over doctrines (e.g., 3 Nephi 11:28-30). We should not desire to dispute over doctrine, and the authors of Doctrinal Commentary clearly see themselves as settling questions, and perhaps even thereby preventing disputations, by giving simple, clear, contemporary interpretations of Mormon doctrines. The problem as I see it is that such an endeavor gratifies the desire of those who feel that what is needed is a theological system crafted out of selected statements currently found among the Saints on what they understand as crucial doctrinal matters. But it may well be that attempting to fashion such a system of doctrines is, by its very nature, one of the sources of disputation, rather than the cure, for the subtle sophistries of doctrinal and eventually perhaps

---

12 McConkie and Millet would, of course, rightly deny that their intention is to do what is commonly called systematic theology, which is usually undertaken by those with some measure of philosophical pretension and sophistication. Even though they understand the Book of Mormon as a "theological treatise" (2:2), they may also want to deny that they are doing any other type of theology. But their obvious concern with getting the details of doctrine sorted out and settled—doctrines, which they also assume to be the key to getting in the right relationship with deity and crucial for salvation—focuses attention on the necessity of assenting to the right formulas rather than on faith understood as trusting God and keeping the commandments as conditions of the covenant that makes the People of God a genuine possibility. Stress on doctrine may unwittingly call forth disputation about the minute details of what becomes a kind of creed. When we assume that salvation is somehow the product of believing exactly the right doctrines—sometimes called "doctrines of salvation"—we thereby open the door to disputes over beliefs in ways that tend to obscure our fallibility and depravity—presumptuously stressing a presumed comprehensive knowledge of divine things rather than gratefully accepting what is offered in the scriptures.
theological systematization and speculation may function as the very medium of contention.

We also need to abandon the false assumption that one must either choose to work on the question of the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon or else examine its teachings. As I have tried to show elsewhere, the two issues are logically related in ways that make their facile separation both unfruitful and eventually impossible. We are currently faced with various attempts to persuade the Saints that there was no Lehi, and hence no Moroni—that the story of the angel and the Book of Mormon was merely Joseph Smith’s rustic effort to deal with some of his youthful doctrinal quandaries by fashioning fiction which appeared to provide answers to perplexing questions. These Revisionist accounts of the Book of Mormon argue that we may find some inspiring things in the Book of Mormon, while denying that it is an authentic history.13 Unfortunately, McConkie and Millet’s ahistorical treatment of the teachings of the Book of Mormon once again plays inexorably into the hands of the Revisionist ideology. By resolutely avoiding the issue of historicity, bolstered by a confused discussion of proof (1:6-7), McConkie flatly rejects the means whereby an honest and competent response to the Revisionist position on the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon can be mounted. There are dire consequences that flow from the flat denial that historical issues are worthy of serious attention, for if they are not worthy of our study, then it seems that it does not really matter whether there was a Lehi community, and hence whether there was an angel who made available to Joseph Smith the plates upon which the history of those people was recorded. Presumably that is not what McConkie wants to say. But it is easy to go too far in attempting to focus merely on some threads in the Book of Mormon—crucial as they may be—at the expense of the whole, for the message does not hold up without the historical component, since that element is not merely the occasion for some doctrines but is a necessary ingredient in the prophetic message.14

The question that we must finally address is whether the volumes under consideration constitute a genuinely competent

14 Cf. ibid., 221-24, for an elaboration of this point.
exegesis of what is set forth in the Book of Mormon, or whether the venture is flawed. My view is that McConkie and Millet would have been more successful if they had been less concerned that the reader be coached on correct versions of what a Mormon ought to believe on a host of matters, and more concerned about attempting to get clear on the beliefs, practices, and understandings of divine things in the world called forth by the text, which necessarily includes much more than a collection of precise little doctrinal assertions or allusions, always seen through the lens of how we currently tend to understand such things. Only then would they have served well the larger end they have in view, which is bringing us to Jesus Christ through the distinctive prophetic message of the Book of Mormon. *Doctrinal Commentary* turns out to be an assortment of opinions on the teachings of the Book of Mormon, or on matters suggested by language in that text, but it is not a commentary on that book either doctrinal or otherwise. It is to be hoped that, in future volumes, the sometimes strident rhetoric found in the prefaces and introductions to the volumes currently available will be moderated by a more accurate and modest assessment of the limitations of the work, as well as a more thoughtful statement of the role of discourse about the meaning of texts, sacred and otherwise, that will reduce, rather than increase, contention and disputation over doctrinal matters among the Saints. We certainly do not need a tendentious Mormon scholasticism bathed in the style and armed with the methods of Sectarian Fundamentalism, any more than we need a Revisionist Liberalism grounded in the categories of the Secular Fundamentalism that has grown up since the Enlightenment.

In addition to some extravagant criticism of all biblical scholarship (e.g., 1:206-07, 2:xiii), *Doctrinal Commentary* contains a number of instances of intemperate and gratuitous inveighing against such things as the “the philosophies of men” (1:336) or the “philosophies of the learned” (1:345), sometimes coupled to the charge that there are “too many in the Church today” or “among us” who are false teachers, and hence there are many who have been decoyed by “many learned and adept educators who teach things that are contrary to the divine will” (1:345). How such statements help us understand the message of the Book of Mormon is not clear. And neither is it ever made clear exactly against whom or what these bromides are aimed, except unidentified historians. “There are historians of self-announced renown whose works are false, much of their writing
being harmfully speculative and out of harmony with the divine will” (1:345). One wonders why historians are singled out. Are their sins, as a group, any more egregious than those of other scholars? Granted that some historians, like any other group of Latter-day Saint intellectuals, including those who see themselves as theologians and experts on Mormon doctrine, may be confused or have strayed from the path. But until such indiscriminate language is narrowed to certain specific cases, it tends to place all historians under an anathema, which is neither accurate nor just. The effect of such broadsides is to warn the reader away from intellectual pursuits.

It seems to me to be a serious mistake to employ language, the effect of which may be to begin to drive a wedge between learning and the Restored Gospel, especially since the Book of

15 An example of such a wedge may be seen in language in Doctrinal Commentary responding to 1 Nephi 17:45. Though the passage in the Book of Mormon says nothing about prayer, McConkie and Millet make the following statement: “It is common in anti-Mormon literature for attacks to be made on prayer and on trusting one’s feelings as sources for obtaining truth” (1:137). The words “feeling” and “feel” (in 1 Nephi 17:45) are made the occasion for the following assertion by McConkie and Millet: “True religion is a feeling” (1:137). But the Book of Mormon says nothing about “true religion,” nor does it elevate the sentiments at the expense of other faculties such as actually hearing the voice of heavenly messengers and in other ways in knowing divine things. The reason Nephi offers for the condition of his older brothers is that they were both iniquitous and had forgotten the covenant they had made with the Lord—they had thereby brought upon themselves an awful curse. Nephi complains that his brothers, in spite of having been instructed by an angel, whom they had seen and heard, were “past feeling” and could no longer “feel” the power of the angelic “words” or message. McConkie and Millet simplify the matter too much by setting the “feelings” over against the presumably “erudite and sophisticated arguments” of anti-Mormons, which feelings, and not our reasoning or other evidences, somehow are shown to be false. “One does not have to be able to refute the argument to know that it is false.” The reason seems to be that merely feeling that something is true (or false) is superior to a reasoned argument. But suppose I were now to say that I feel that the position advanced by McConkie and Millet is either true or false, would it not be appropriate to ask me for reasons, or for what may have generated that “feeling”? If one is not obliged to give reasons of some sort, are we not faced with the possibility of an endless parade of assertions backed only by the presumed spiritual certitude of their authors? It turns out that “feeling” and “religion” have been linked in some mischievous ways. For example, appeals to feeling are a favorite crutch of Protestant theologians, and in sophisticated formulations, they form the ground for one
Mormon explicitly encourages learning, on the one condition that appropriate attention be given to the counsels of God (2 Nephi 9:29). That one passage by itself provides a powerful charter making learning for the Saints desirable and even mandatory, given the one limiting condition. That passage, which McConkie and Millet virtually ignore, along with certain other passages in the scriptures, furnishes the ground for the confidence that the Saints have that more and better—not less—learning will enhance faith and build the Kingdom. Confidence in learning, as chartered in the Book of Mormon, thus helps to distinguish the Saints, at least in America, from anti-intellectual Sectarian Fundamentalists. One of the more attractive consequences of the Restoration has been the manner in which the Saints have been able to find ways of providing an abode for both the counsels of God and learning within their lives. It would be a mistake to begin to allow our concern about cases of intellectual pride to justify diverting our attention from the serious pursuit of learning, as is the case among Sectarian Fundamentalists. Unfortunately, some of the language of Doctrinal Commentary leans in that direction.

Though the Book of Mormon is lavishly celebrated in Doctrinal Commentary, at times in almost worshipful language, these volumes seem to rest on the assumption that the teachings found therein are really shallow or incomplete versions of the real thing. Since the focus is on what the Saints now believe—on Mormon doctrines or on setting forth a dogmatic theology for strand of nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism. Friedrich Schleiermacher made sentiment, passion, or feeling the means of salvaging what he called "religion" from the ravages of enlightenment hostility to the contents of the Bible. He argued that those who feel deeply, especially about the absurdity of the biblical narratives and prophetic messages, are the truly religious ones, for religion is deep sentiment, which the despisers of the traditional biblical teachings have in large measure. See his On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, trans. by John Oman, introduction by Rudolf Otto (New York: Harper, 1958). Obviously knowledge touches on and invokes the passions, but to confuse our feelings or sentiments with the work of the Holy Spirit or with genuine knowledge, especially in the absence of additional reasons that are open to public scrutiny, or when we have not been appointed by God to provide authoritative interpretations, is to invite a chaos of conflicting views, as well as to remove the possibility of assessing the merits of different views other than by the emotional intensity of the rhetoric used to advance them.
MCCONKIE AND MILLET, *DOCTRINAL COMMENTARY* (MIDGLEY) 113

Mormons, such a thing can be approached more adequately through other and especially through more recent pronouncements. But given their narrow focus and obvious hostility to any other kind of literature on the Book of Mormon, these books constitute a compendium of materials one might already find being repeated, according to their authors, in sermons in Church meetings generally, as well as lessons in “Sunday School and other classes” (1:xv). That is not seen as a limitation, but is given as a justification for the entire endeavor. If the claims for *Doctrinal Commentary* were modest, if its rather severe limitations were clearly acknowledged, if the language of its homilies were less pretentious, more moderate and discriminating, and less excessively judgmental of others, and if its authors had been less inclined to contend with others over which mode of exegesis provides the one and only access to the message of the Book of Mormon, and more willing to see others as engaged in worthwhile scholarly endeavors, then these volumes would have better served the greater cause—bringing mankind to Christ—which they obviously espouse.
One approaches Hugh Nibley with a mixture of awe and anguish. He is a scholar who attempts to work in the German polymath tradition of Eduard Meyer, Mommsen, and Wilamowitz. You read all the primary sources; you read all the secondary sources; you produce more secondary sources all of your life, non-stop, all of them classics. Nibley has come close enough to achieving this ambition that the only reasonable way of regarding him is with an extremely healthy respect. I have seen his shorthand pencil marginalia throughout the vast library of the Patrologia Graeca and Latina at BYU. In *Lehi in the Desert*, he talks of reading sagas once a week for thirty years; in “There Were Jaredites,” he surveys twenty-two epics as a background against which to view the Book of Ether. You must read each epic as a whole; you cannot trust even first-rate scholars to read and analyze them for you, though you must read their interpretations. One also thinks of Nibley, spurred by the finding of the Book of Abraham Egyptian material, concentrating on Egyptian late in life, going through the plodding, undramatic steps of working through grammars, dictionaries, and texts to deal with those new documents.

In addition to this, Nibley is a master of synthesis—reading his work continually gives exhilarating overviews of history, ritual, religious symbolism, literature, even science. This combination of breadth and insight makes reading Nibley—or attending his classes—a never-failingly stimulating and inspiring experience.

On the other hand, there is the anguish. Sometimes Nibley seems as unconvincing in the small picture as he is awe-inspiring in the large. When an important passage needs a close reading and careful interpretation, he may mention the text, listing it perhaps along with six other general citations, and slide on to the next subject. Yet fundamental to Nibley’s

2 Ibid., 405.
methodology is reading texts in their original languages, and the only reason to do that is so one can read texts carefully. Furthermore, Nibley treats Mormon scripture primarily through parallels. While we need not pay any attention to those shallow critics of Nibley who merely shout "Parallelomania," as if it were a magical incantation, and reject his whole methodology and corpus out of hand (drawing parallels is a necessary technique for any scholar; one must simply judge each parallel separately to see what validity it offers—and many of Nibley’s parallels are convincing and valuable, while others are less persuasive or informative)—this technique requires careful analysis of the passages to be compared. And the difficulties of reading even a well-edited ancient text can be formidable. If many themes, motifs, rituals, and texts are as close as Nibley says they are—if they are that important—they deserve fuller analysis. The parallels will be more convincing and informative with fuller analysis. This is not to say that Nibley can’t read texts closely; he has read the Book of Mormon, for instance, more closely than any person living, I think. But it often seems as if he has not treated the nonscriptural comparands with equal explanatory depth.

It is ironic that a man’s very greatness will magnify his flaws; in Nibley’s case his brilliance and depth make his limitations all the more frustrating. When my more skeptical friends criticize him, I have to admit that some, though certainly not all, of their complaints and criticisms are true. But I use the explorer metaphor to explain Nibley. As the first scholar to compare Mormon scripture systematically and exhaustively to the documents of antiquity, he is the great pioneer. Like the pioneer, he travels from untrodden wilderness to untrodden wilderness, never settling down to domesticate a territory and create a city—but, on the other hand, leaving useful maps and trails wherever he goes, which lesser explorers and immigrants will use in settling the land. Some of the places he judges to be prime city-sites will be shown to be inadequate by later settlers, but others will be accepted; and all future settlers will be indebted to him. Thus, it will, perhaps, be we lesser academics who will make the territory mapped out by Nibley habitable; who will check his footnotes and carefully analyze the texts and parallels he has considered only briefly. But this kind of explorer can be dangerous for a certain type of settler; while the explorer may get carried away in his enthusiasm for a newly discovered territory, and describe it in glowing terms, the settler
who lives there may see it more realistically, knowing its advantages and disadvantages, after years of daily familiarity with it; and even though it is still good, habitable land, he may feel disillusioned when it does not quite live up to the explorer's description. Perhaps the explorer should have a bit more of the settler in him, and vice versa; Nibley should be a bit more careful and thorough, and we should be a little more adventurous and energetic.

The first step in this process of settling the territory mapped out by Nibley is the extremely welcome and valuable *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, published by F.A.R.M.S. and Deseret Book. Here, all of Nibley's footnotes have been checked for accuracy and relevancy—so simple errors such as wrong page numbers, confusing or incorrect bibliographical information, and so on, should be corrected (though as an editor of a former volume, I know that one cannot achieve anything approaching perfection in such a project). *Lehi in the Desert, An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, and *Since Cumorah* are Nibley's basic treatments of the Book of Mormon, and as such, occupy a central place in his work, and in Mormon studies.3 They are especially timely now, when the question of the historicity of the Book of Mormon is being forcefully raised both by critics of Mormonism and by some of its adherents. These books exemplify well Nibley's great strengths, and also some of his limitations. *Lehi in the Desert* brilliantly puts the opening books of the Book of Mormon in a context of Semitic (mostly Arabic) desert culture; its Jaredite sections examine that most mysterious of Book of Mormon books, the Book of Ether, against the background of archaic Asia and against Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, Iranian, Germanic, Celtic, and other epics. *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* was, believe it or not, a Priesthood manual, and combines aspects of *Lehi in the Desert* and *Since Cumorah*. *Since Cumorah* looks at the Book of Mormon in the light of new documentary discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. These books are classics, and serious students of the Book of Mormon, whether they agree with Nibley's approach and conclusions or not, ignore them at their peril. Naturally, some of the conclusions and bibliography in these books are now dated, especially in light of John L.3

---

3 A volume of Nibley's Book of Mormon essays, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, is soon to be published in the Collected Works Series.
Sorenson's *Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, but the substance of Nibley's research is still valuable. Aside from its scholarly value, *Since Cumorah* is one of the most powerful interpretations of the meaning of the Book of Mormon that we have, still completely relevant to modern America. As part of his interpretation, Nibley skillfully disposes of a number of popular misconceptions about this book, e.g., that it is a story of good (white) Nephites against bad (dark) Lamanites. The Book of Mormon is much more subtle than that, of course, and Nibley shows how often the Lamanites are more righteous than the Nephites (or, sometimes, less wicked). Critics of Mormonism who continue to propagate such wishful reductionism have read neither Nibley nor the Book of Mormon.

Nibley has been vehemently attacked and defended as an apologist, one who tries to prove that Mormon scripture is true. He has persistently denied that he is trying to prove anything; he just wants to open a discussion, he says—though sometimes he certainly seems to act as if his conclusions are proven. I personally would find him more convincing, even as an apologist, if he frankly admitted serious unsolved problems that obviously have cropped up in Book of Mormon studies (any historical field has serious unsolved problems; why not the Book of Mormon?). But I find Nibley most valuable, in these books, not as an apologist, but as a close commentator on the Book of Mormon.

He has read the book extremely carefully and has seen significance in tiny details we've read repeatedly, but never noticed. One wonders why he has never written a commentary on individual books in the Book of Mormon; when such a book is written some day, Nibley's interpretations and textual readings will serve as an invaluable basis for such a commentary.

Finally, we may ask how these new editions compare with the earlier ones. As we have mentioned, the footnotes are significantly improved, standardized, corrected, sometimes with added bibliographic information (titles of articles and recent

---

5 E.g., *Since Cumorah*, xii-xiii.
translations of books). In the original editions of *Since Cumorah* and *Lehi in the Desert*, footnotes appeared at the bottom of each page; unfortunately, in my opinion, in the Collected Works they have been gathered in the backs of the books, but this is only a minor inconvenience. *Lehi in the Desert* has a whole section, "There Were Jaredites," added to the text of the original book. *Lehi in the Deseret* and *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* now have indexes, a vast improvement, and Scripture Reference sections as well. If one has not bought these books previously, these are the editions to get; if one already has the earlier editions, they will probably be adequate for the general reader; but for those settlers consulting these works as reference books and working through the footnotes of the great pioneer, the Collected Works editions are definitely the versions one should work with.

Reviewed by John L. Sorenson

This 106-page book was compiled to help readers of the Book of Mormon "visually see the names of peoples and places and travels in relation to each other" in order to contribute to their interest in and understanding of the scriptures. The format has a map, generated on a computer, on each right-hand page facing a text consisting of a 10-70 word synopsis of each chapter of the Book of Mormon (more historical and geographical than the chapter synopses in the present edition of the scripture). For example, Map 9 refers to synopses of Alma 5-15 which face it. On the standardized base map(s) are marked sites and routes referred to in that section of the text with brief action notes adjacent on the map. No maps are provided to accompany the synopses between Helaman 5 and 4 Nephi 1:47, nor is one given for the Book of Ether. At the end are chronological and alphabetical lists of scriptural "clues" used to construct the maps.

Heavy paper covers and a rugged spiral binding which allows the pages to lie flat make the little volume very functional. The text is easy to read (there are a few typos), the maps less so, although even they are usable by a determined student with unhampered eyesight.

A specific disclaimer is given at the beginning that there is no intention to identify places in terms of present-day geography, since "the whole face of the land was changed" at the time of Jesus' crucifixion (although three of the maps date after that event and display the same features as those dating B.C.).

When the maps are viewed as a purely internal geography, as the author intends, we immediately see how complex Book of Mormon geography is. Errors, omissions, and arbitrary assumptions show through despite the years of study the author must have put into preparing the work. Joseph Smith, of course, handled the subject far more consistently in the few weeks he spent dictating most of the book!

Some physical features are placed on the map quite arbitrarily. For example, the river Sidon is shown beginning almost at the east sea coast, where no mountains are indicated...
even though the head of the river was “away up” (Alma 16:6). The river then flows northwest to exit into the west sea, despite the lack of any hint of that in the text.

The maps also fail to accommodate many “clues” or requirements from the scriptures. A few examples are (1) the map’s placement of Shemlon (within sight of Nephi, Mosiah 11:12; 19:6), Shilom, and Lehi-Nephi does not square with the account in the book of Mosiah of Lamanite armies from Shemlon coming “up” through or around Shilom to attack Zeniff’s people in Lehi-Nephi (Mosiah 10:7-8, 20; 19:6). (2) While the people of Ammon were moved into Melek to protect them against Lamanite attack, Maps 16 and 17 have them completely vulnerable in their new land, as an enemy army passes almost over them. (3) Regarding the city of Aaron, linked geographically to both Ammonihah and Nephihah (Alma 8:13; 50:14), the author inserts two separate Aarons, without textual warrant. (4) The cities of Judea, Antiparah, Cumeni, and Zeezrom are in the same “quarter of the land” with Manti (Alma 58:1, 30-31), and all are strategic points keeping Lamanite armies from moving down on Zarahemla (Alma 56:14-15, 24-25); Map 21 fails completely to make sense of this. (5) The distance separating Zarahemla, the hill Amnihu and Gideon (one long day’s travel—Alma 2:15-16, 20, 26-27) shows up as at least twice the three-day distance between Melek and Ammonihah (Alma 8:6). (6) Limhi’s exploring party, which reached the Jaredite battleground, is neither mentioned nor mapped, presumably being “too hot to handle.”

Perhaps these geographical difficulties do not harm the author’s purpose, but the alert reader’s faith in the author’s mastery of his subject and of the reliability of the maps generated may be undermined as a result.

Reviewed by L. Gary Lambert

Isaiah promised in the Old Testament that the Lord "will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth," following which "they shall come with speed swiftly" (5:26). The identical promise is found in Nephi's Small Plates, where he deliberately transported it. Found in both places, the promise creates an uncanny cultural and spiritual link between the two testaments, bonding them through language, message, and purpose. With his newest book, Monte S. Nyman has explored even another reason for their kinship.

The word "ensign" in English derives from Old French (enseigne), which traces its roots to Latin (insigne); its meaning has remained remarkably constant over the years: a mark, a sign, a signal for identifying some thing. The word has had its own peculiar meaning within the Church, serving somewhat like a sign within a sign. For example, during Joseph Fielding Smith's presidency, the name of the Church's monthly magazine was changed to the *Ensign*; the magazine then became both the ensign of the Church and an ensign for the Church. Even before, the word had come to represent to most Latter-day Saints all that the restoration brought back to earth: "This ensign [the one referred to in Isaiah] is the new and everlasting covenant, the gospel of salvation; it is the great latter-day Zion; it is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Now, with Nyman's book, the meaning and connotation of Isaiah's use of the word are expanded to include, specifically, the Book of Mormon.

Since President Ezra Taft Benson's tenure as head of the Church began, he has reminded members to read and reread the "keystone" of their religion. Until the Book of Mormon is taken seriously, he warns, "the condemnation—the scourge and judgment" the Church has lived under since the book was first published in 1830, will not be lifted. In the October 1988 General Conference, he reiterated the warning, this time

---

1 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 228; see also D&C 64:41-42.
appealing to "Church writers, teachers, and leaders" to "let us know how it leads us to Christ." An Ensign to All People does just this: it illuminates the keystone's world message for Church members. It is a pleasure therefore to welcome this latest work.

Through a meticulous study of scriptural sources gathered from the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, and principally from commentary in works by Joseph Fielding Smith, Nyman has mounted a case for his belief that the ensign in Isaiah also "refers to the Book of Mormon specifically" when it is not referring to "the Church or the work that will grow out of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon" (p. 3). Providing considerable evidence for his reader, he refers to the Book of Mormon as Isaiah's promised ensign to "all people."

Following three opening chapters—where he first introduces his thesis, next explores Joseph Smith's prophetic role with the Book and Mormon, and then sets the stage for the necessity of an ensign through the allegory of Zenos—Nyman plumbs five separate ways the book realizes its destiny as an ensign. Essentially, chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 form the heart of Nyman's work; this is where his thesis finds its muscle and where five groups surface as appointed spiritual targets for the Book of Mormon's own message. These groups are still-scattered Ephraim, the Gentiles, the Lamanites, the Jews, and the Lost Tribes. Two concluding chapters speak about the New and Old Jerusalems and how the sacred city of Old Jerusalem is an ensign itself; these chapters square only obliquely with the main thesis of the book. Nevertheless, Nyman enriches the discussion and explanation of these two cities with suggestions of who will build them, where, and what must happen before their construction.

The idea of the Book of Mormon as an ensign to the five groups strikes ore, particularly in view of the Church's regathering commission. It makes sense for the keystone of the Church to be the guide in the regathering effort, the attention-drawing banner for missionary work. Through these five central chapters, then, Nyman helps his reader better appreciate the singularity of the Book of Mormon as both a testament and an ensign for regrouping Israel. By underscoring the need to draw the Book of Mormon to the world's attention, he elucidates the reasons for "the condemnation—the scourge and judgment" when the book is not taken seriously by Church members. In doing so, Nyman enriches the application and interpretation of
both Isaiah’s sacred promise and of the latent possibilities in the word *ensign* as well.

In its narrative style, however, the book is not always reader-friendly. A too frequent repetition of proper nouns (i.e., Joseph Smith, Moses, Lamanites, Israel, New Jerusalem) and a defensive posture prone to proving rather than describing (i.e., “further verifies,” “further shows,” “certainly fulfills,” “leave(s) no question”) make reading the text more difficult. The cadence and rhythm of the sentences are without much variation, and because of copious references instead of citations integrated into the text and then explicated, the problem is also compounded. These are perhaps as much matters for the attention of the publisher as for the author.

Nevertheless, Monte S. Nyman’s work is useful and timely in that it may well have signaled the beginning of a new awareness of the Book of Mormon’s sacred message and mission to all people.

Reviewed by Daniel C. Peterson

This volume contains some twenty-one papers presented at the Second Annual Book of Mormon Symposium held at Brigham Young University during the Fall of 1986. It is the tendency of such "proceedings" volumes, as of any composite work, to be uneven in quality, and this book is no exception. However, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the variation is not extreme. While several of the papers are not particularly distinguished, and while a few are merely pedestrian rehashes of what the Book of Mormon already clearly says, none of the papers is truly bad. And some are very good indeed. The editing appears generally competent as well, although oddities like "comarable" (for "comparable," p. 252) and "inacapable" (for "incapable," p. 304) did manage to creep through, as did the plural verb "produce" in the first full paragraph of p. 236, where it should clearly have been singular. But these are trivial matters which do not affect the overall quality of the book. Besides, as the still quite fallible editor of the present Review, I should be very careful when throwing stones.¹

I would rather throw bouquets, and I shall. The reviewer of a volume with multiple authors, if he would be briefer than the book under consideration, has little choice but to race through the various chapters making inadequate comments on

¹ I will nonetheless admit that the apparent misuse of "inferred" for "implied," on p. 233, seems a bit more serious, even though it is a common mistake and is sanctioned even (and most distressingly) by the *Oxford English Dictionary*. (See OED *sub voce* "infer," definition 4.) The logical processes of implication and inference are quite distinct, and should remain so. For the record, the general sense of the verb "to imply" is "to involve or comprise as a necessary logical consequence; to involve the truth or existence of (something not expressly asserted or maintained) ... to express indirectly; to insinuate, hint at." (See OED *s.v.* "imply.") "Inference," on the other hand, is defined by the OED as "the action or process of inferring; the drawing of a conclusion from known or assumed facts or statements; *esp.* in Logic, the forming of a conclusion from data or premises either by inductive or deductive methods; reasoning from something known or assumed to something else which follows from it."
them. I shall mention those articles which caught my attention, and for which I would recommend this volume to friends.

Truman G. Madsen’s “B.H. Roberts: The Book of Mormon and the Atonement” is, of all the papers making up the book, the one least clearly related to First Nephi. This is not merely because of its concern with Elder Roberts, but also because its treatment of the Book of Mormon ranges over the whole of that book instead of limiting itself to, or even particularly emphasizing, the early pages. Still, Madsen’s article is of great interest. In distinction to many of the other chapters, its focus is somewhat theological. (In an article entitled “The Mysteries of God Revealed by the Power of the Holy Ghost,” Gerald N. Lund does raise theological questions of the sort which have occupied first-rate minds for centuries. Is God in time? Is his foreknowledge compatible with human freedom?) Madsen is persuasive in his demonstration that, despite the controversy which has recently swirled about him, B.H. Roberts occupied himself both seriously and faithfully with the Book of Mormon right up until his death. Still, the article leaves this reviewer, at least, unsatisfied. For more than a decade now, Truman Madsen has tantalized us with glimpses of B.H. Roberts’s last great project, his fifty-five-chapter manuscript masterpiece, “The Truth, the Way, and the Life.” Will we never see that work in print? Elder Roberts surely represents one of the finest intellects the Restoration has yet seen. Will we never get a chance to study at firsthand the writings he worked at so long, and considered his best?

Daniel H. Ludlow subjects “The Title Page” of the Book of Mormon to a rare but richly deserved close reading. Proposing a new view of the authorship of that short text, and suggesting a somewhat different paragraph structure for it than appears in our current printed editions, Ludlow offers a new and possibly richer understanding of its meaning. Philip M. Flammer brings a historian’s perspective to the Book of Mormon’s statements on the Americas as “A Land of Promise, Choice Above All Other Lands.” He briefly treats the explorations of Columbus, seen as divinely inspired by both Nephi and the admiral himself, as well as the influence of “Divine Providence” in the career of George Washington. “The birth and growth of the United States is easily one of the more astonishing events in human history,” he writes, “strong support indeed for the concept of divine assistance during that trying period” (p. 226).
Some of the articles in *Doctrinal Foundation* do not perhaps yield spectacular new breakthroughs, but are nonetheless valuable either as workmanlike synopses of fairly complex data or as accounts of the current state of particular questions. Rex C. Reeve, Jr., for example, contributes a handy conspectus on "The Book of Mormon Plates," while Paul R. Cheesman summarizes the work of several previous writers on the route and conditions of "Lehi's Journeys" in Arabia—a subject of particular interest to me. In his "Stela 5, Izapa: A Layman's Consideration of the Tree of Life Stone," Alan K. Parrish leads us through the work of M. Wells Jakeman and V. Garth Norman on that stela, which has been argued by some to contain a representation of Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life as recorded in 1 Nephi 8. It is an interesting and well-informed piece, although I would personally have liked to see a discussion of the criticisms which have been levelled against the Lehite explanation of the stela by such people as John Sorenson, Hugh Nibley, and Dee Green. (Parrish alludes to them, but leaves it at that.)

Another group of papers in the volume represents original research of the sort now often associated with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. This is not surprising, since some of their authors are principals in F.A.R.M.S. John W. Welch does a fine job, in "The Calling of a Prophet," of placing Lehi in his ancient Near Eastern and Israelite contexts. In doing so, he not only gives aid and comfort to those who accept the Book of Mormon as a historically authentic ancient document—how could Joseph Smith possibly have stumbled onto these things? how many of us could have done it, even with our superior educations and greater access to primary and secondary sources of information?—but demonstrates how historical approaches can shed light on the meaning of scriptural texts. John L. Sorenson's article, "Transoceanic Crossings," is a potentially path-breaking piece of work. In it, Sorenson attempts to determine just how much we really know or can confidently infer about the voyage of the Lehites to the New World. There is surprisingly much. Paul Y. Hoskisson takes a characteristically meticulous approach to "Textual Evidences for the Book of Mormon," and offers as three examples of what he terms "seemingly sufficient ... evidence" items taken, respectively, "(1) from the style, (2) from the onomasticon, and (3) from the context of the Book of Mormon" (p. 287).
Hoskisson is well-trained in ancient Semitic languages, and comfortable with a range of Indo-European languages as well; to observe his methodological rigor—something which is, alas, not always present in Book of Mormon studies—is almost aesthetically pleasing. And it is especially gratifying that he produces interim results which are favorable to the traditional LDS understanding of the Book of Mormon.

For me, one of the high points of this volume is definitely Stephen E. Robinson’s “Early Christianity and 1 Nephi 13-14.” In this essay, Robinson skillfully analyzes the Book of Mormon’s discussion of “the great and abominable church.” (This particular subject is another on which Latter-day Saints frequently have not been as careful as they should be.) His distinction between the “historical” use of that phrase in 1 Nephi 13 and its “typological” or “apocalyptic” use in chapter 14 is by itself almost worth the price of the book. But there is considerably more. Both as a medievalist and as someone who values respectful communication with those of other faiths, I am grateful for his exculpation of the Church of Rome in this matter. “The commonly held notion of shifty-eyed medieval monks rewriting the scriptures as they copied,” he remarks, “is bigoted and unfair. In fact, we owe those monks a debt of gratitude that anything was saved at all.... The Catholic ... Church of the fourth century was the result of the Apostasy, its end product—not its cause” (p. 186; see, too, the useful contribution of Robert J. Matthews, “Establishing the Truth of the Bible,” which at one point takes a related position.) Finally, Robinson’s identification of “hellenized Christianity” as the real villain—in the “historical” sense—seems to me precisely on the mark, and a major contribution to a Latter-day Saint understanding of the “falling away” of the primitive Church. (In candor, I should note that Ambrose Bierce defines “admiration” as “our polite recognition of another’s resemblance to ourselves.” As a by-product of my own studies, which treat the impact exerted by the philosophical and patristic Hellenism of late antiquity upon the subsequent tradition of Islam, I too have come to the conclusion that Hellenism was the culprit in the apostasy of Christendom. But whereas the notion existed in my mind inchoately, incarnated only in an oversimplified slogan which I still like—“Alexandria was the engine of the apostasy”—Stephen Robinson has formulated the idea with clarity and learning. And he is correct, too, incidentally, on
historical and etymological grounds, when he calls the *apostasía* of the early Church not merely a “falling away” but a “mutiny.”

On the whole, this volume is a credit to the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University and to the organizers of and participants in BYU’s Book of Mormon symposia. There is solid scholarship and good thinking among the Saints, and that is cause for rejoicing among all who care about the advancement of the Kingdom.

Reviewed by Daniel C. Peterson

This small book is even smaller than at first appears, since several pages are taken up with (often repetitive and rather wordy) moral exhortations and sketches of both author and editor. It bears the marks of its amateur production, and is marred by a fair number of grammatical and spelling peculiarities.

It is, nonetheless, an interesting little piece, which we can hope might induce someone with the requisite anthropological and other training to take a closer look at its subject matter. The first of the two legends recounted—both the author and his editor insist, incidentally, upon the spelling “Pahute” rather than the more common “Paiute” or “Piute”—is an etiological myth about “Why the Grand Canyon Was Made.” It would seem that the canyon expresses the gulf between a young Indian couple whose love was destroyed by a devil-induced jealousy. Interesting, from a Mormon point of view, are some of the details of the creation of the earth as related in this story, as well as the picture of the Pahute godhead which it yields. Before human and animal life is placed upon the earth—“trees and fruits and flowers” are already present—the senior and supreme god Tobats is represented as holding council with the subordinate god, Shinob. Together, they form the first man out of earth and stone, and then pour vapor into him to bring him to life. However, Nung-Wa is still alone, and Shinob prevails upon Tobats to create for the man a companion, a beautiful maiden. Years later, when a sinful and promiscuous mankind is dispersed into many tribes, Tobats vows to destroy all human life—which he terms “the god-kind clan”—from off the face of the earth. However, Shinob intercedes for them, another response is chosen, and they are spared.

The second myth, “The Three Days of Darkness,” has more obvious immediate relevance to the concerns of this Review. (The editor makes it clear later in the book that he believes the Grand Canyon to have been a sudden occurrence, connected with the earthquakes which, according to the Book of
Mormon, accompanied the crucifixion of Christ.) The myth purports to have taken place at Rush Lake, west of Parowan, Utah, and tells of the three days of thick darkness which fell over that area when Un-Nu-Pit, the devil, killed the younger god, Shinob. It was impossible even to kindle fire, and the people were near despair. Fortunately, the voice of Tobats pierced the darkness, and that god finally found a way to disperse the gloom. Later, in revenge, he slew Un-Nu-Pit and thereby brought Shinob back to life.

The editor expressly takes this event, as well as the previous story of the creation of the Grand Canyon, as literally historical. (He points, in this context, to the numerous cinder cones which dot southern Utah.) To do so, he implicitly rejects the uniformitarianism which is a cardinal principle of much modern science, and draws upon that catastrophism which is proposed instead by the Cooks in their *Science and Mormonism.* (Some readers of this Review will doubtless also be familiar with Venice Priddis's *The Book and the Map,* which takes a similar approach and to which appeal is made in the booklet under consideration here.) Geologists, LDS and non-LDS, would certainly have a sharp response to this move, yet the editor's supplemental pages on catastrophism in geology and Indian lore are thought-provoking, nonetheless. (He draws on the legends of the Klickitats of Oregon and Washington, who seem also to have an intercessor-god much like the Pahutes' Shinob.)

The limitations of this slender volume are obvious. We are entitled, for example, to wonder how closely the author followed his Indian informants, and how much contamination may have entered in from his own religious and historical concerns. This is especially true in the case of the second legend, “The Three Days of Darkness,” where we do not even have the written version of the author/collector (who died in 1960), but rather the gathered and harmonized reminiscences of those who heard him recount it. We would also want to know just what the relationship of these stories might be to events which may have taken place in Mesoamerica—or even, if we

---

follow Priddis, in South America! These tales—in their present form, certainly—will not do as scientific proof, and must remain suggestive at the very best. Still, they are intriguing, and their potential implications are worth attempting to puzzle out.

Reviewed by Terrence L. Szink

The story behind this book is as interesting as the book itself. One of the coauthors, Thomas Ferguson, founded a research organization named the New World Archaeological Foundation, which has among its purposes the exploration of Southern Mexico and Central America in hopes of finding materials which would "prove" the Book of Mormon as a true historical document (a brief history of this organization and its findings is contained in Appendix A of this book). Apparently in his latter years, although he remained active in the Church, Ferguson lost his testimony regarding both the Book of Abraham and the Book of Mormon. His family and friends claim that before his death he returned to a belief in the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. With an eye toward supporting this claim, Ferguson's son Larry hired Bruce Warren, an archaeologist at BYU, to edit and update his father's One Fold and One Shepherd, originally published in 1958. The examination of Ferguson's life must be left to his biographers; here we can only review the resultant book.

The idea behind the book is a simple one—to find parallels between the cultures of the New World and the ancient Near East and Christianity, specifically between the accounts of the New World deity Quetzalcoatl and the story of the visit of Christ to the ancient inhabitants of America as recorded in the Book of Mormon. Efforts are focused on the area of Mesoamerica, the region currently espoused by many Book of Mormon scholars as the homeland of the Nephites and Lamanites.

The book contains some interesting material which should be looked at by anyone interested in the Book of Mormon as it relates to Mesoamerican archaeology. However, it also has some serious problems. The book is very uneven. Bruce Warren had a difficult task since he had to take a book which had been written thirty years previously, edit and update it, and yet leave major portions of the book untouched since it was to be a "tribute to Thomas Stuart Ferguson" (see back cover). Recognizing which sections were penned by Ferguson and which by Warren is a simple matter. The former was
unfortunately not very critical in the use of his sources and his
tone lacks the caution that should accompany any work of this
type. For example, I feel he lent too much credence to reports
by Spanish explorers regarding elements of the New World
culture which are similar to Christianity. It should be
remembered that these explorers were Christians themselves and
tended to view things in Christian terms. If the explorers had
been Hindus from India I suspect we would read of how
“Hindu-like” the culture of New World inhabitants was.
Ferguson tended to use words like “prove” and “identical with”
where the evidence presented does not warrant the use of these
words; he should rather have used “suggest” and “similar to.”
Finally, he used the “shot-gun” approach; instead of focusing on
a specific topic with intensity and caution, he blasts away at it
with a wide range of universalisms, hoping to hit it somehow.
The problem with the “shot-gun” approach is that, although he
does hit the target occasionally, much of his ammunition is wide
of the mark.

A specific example will illustrate many of these difficulties.
At the beginning of chapter two he claims that the date of
Christ’s crucifixion and ascension is “confirmed” by Don Carlos
de Siguenza y Gongora (1645-1700), an expert on ancient
Mexican history who “must have known [that] Quetzalcoatl was
the true Shepherd” (pp. 29-31). The evidence Ferguson gives
for Siguenza’s alleged confirmation is very feeble. The book in
which Siguenza is supposed to have revealed his belief
“mysteriously disappeared at the time of his death and has never
been found” (p. 30). Ferguson relies on a second-hand account
of the book written some two hundred years after Siguenza’s
death in which Siguenza is said to have believed that the Apostle
Thomas preached in the New World. Ferguson claims that
Siguenza only “pretended to give the apostle Saint Thomas credit
for establishing Christianity in Mesoamerica” (p. 30) and is
using “‘coded’ or disguised language [to] tell us that
Quetzalcoatl was the resurrected Messiah of the Bible” (p. 29).
He bases his conclusion on the title of Siguenza’s long-lost
book, Phoenix of the West, claiming that the word Phoenix
refers to the resurrected Christ. The problem is that the word
Phoenix could just as well refer to any number of other things.
Any time an author must resort to the invention and breaking of
“coded or disguised” language, a signal should go off in the
head of the reader.
There are many more examples of this kind of scholarly malpractice throughout the book which cannot be treated here. What should be mentioned is the solidness of Warren’s contributions. For example, his examination of volcanic activity in Mesoamerica around the time of the death of the Savior in the Old World is cautious, even-handed, and very interesting. But even Warren is aware of the limitations of this book. In the preface he writes that “this book still depends too much on lists of words and technological traits that are removed from the proper language and cultural contexts necessary for final acceptance by the scholarly community” (p. xiv). Thus, in part this book demonstrates the methodological advances made in Mormon archaeological studies in the last thirty years, i.e., in the interval between Ferguson’s writing and Warren’s writing and edition. This means that readers must be discerning in their use of this book. I agree with the statement of John L. Sorenson, on the book cover, that “the careful reader of this work is bound to discover a good deal of valuable new information” (emphasis mine), as long as it is understood that the crucial operative word in that statement is “careful.”
Book of Mormon Bibliography

Books


Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Volume 1—First and Second Nephi* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987).


**Articles**

“BYU Professor Terminated for Book of Mormon Beliefs,” *Sunstone* 12/3 (May 1988): 43-44.

“Is the Mormon Figure Lehi Connected with Prophetic Inscription near Jerusalem?” (containing a letter from Donna Cochran and a response from the editor), *Biblical Archaeology Review* 14/6 (Nov.-Dec. 1988): 19.
Letters to the Editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review* on the "International Timeline" and the Book of Mormon:


About the Reviewers

*Lavina Fielding Anderson* is a professional free-lance editor in Salt Lake City.

*John E. Clark* is an archaeologist with the New World Archaeological Foundation, based at Brigham Young University.

*Todd M. Compton*, Ph.D., teaches Greek and Latin at California State University, Northridge, and at the University of Southern California.

*William J. Hamblin*, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Southern Mississippi, in Hattiesburg.

*L. Gary Lambert*, Ph.D., is Professor of French at Brigham Young University.

*Louis C. Midgley*, Ph.D., is Professor of Political Science at Brigham Young University.

*L. Ara Norwood* is a researcher, speaker, and sales trainer in southern California.

*Donald W. Parry* is a doctoral student in Hebrew at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies of the University of Utah.

*Daniel C. Peterson* teaches Islamic Studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University.

*Stephen D. Ricks*, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages at Brigham Young University.

*John L. Sorenson*, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Brigham Young University.

*Terrence L. Szink* is a doctoral student in Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations at the University of California at Los Angeles.

*John W. Welch*, J.D., is Professor of Law at the J. Reuben Clark Law School of Brigham Young University.
Camille S. Williams teaches on a part-time basis for the Philosophy Department at Brigham Young University.

Mark V. Withers is a student at the J. Reuben Clark Law School of Brigham Young University.

David P. Wright, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Hebrew at Brigham Young University.