

The Most Correct of Any Book on Earth

A Summary of Evidences Supporting the Antiquity and Authenticity of the Book of Mormon

On Sunday, November 28, 1841, the Prophet Joseph Smith spent the day in council with the Twelve Apostles at the home of Brigham Young and conversed with them on a variety of subjects. He said on this occasion, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”¹

To state that any book is “the most correct of any book on earth” is a bold claim. Many Bible believing Christians would consider this statement to be blasphemy. If the Book of Mormon is what Joseph Smith claims it to be, then there must be evidence to support this bold declaration.

The greatest evidence is found through application of Moroni’s promise, “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”² Only through the power of the Holy Ghost can one know in his heart that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and that he truly ought to abide “by its precepts.”

Since the earliest days of the Church there have been many who have asserted that the Book of Mormon is not what it claims to be. Some say that Joseph Smith wrote the book or that he altered the Solomon Spaulding manuscript. Others say that Oliver Cowdery or Sidney Rigdon wrote the Book of Mormon. These detractors point out fallacies or poorly written passages within the Book of Mormon. And yet, none have been able to present evidence that shows that the Book of Mormon is other than what it claims to be.

Surely, if the Book of Mormon is a translation of an ancient record, brought forth by the hand of God, then there must also be evidence pointing to its authenticity that supports the vital witness of the Spirit. What follows is a brief summary of evidences I have come across in my personal studies. It is by no means all-inclusive of the great wealth of information available.

Biblical Prophecy

The prophet Ezekiel recorded the following, “The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.”³

¹ Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), p. 194.

² Moroni 10:4-5.

³ Ezekiel 37:15-17.

What are these sticks of which Ezekiel speaks? The Bible Cyclopaedia indicates that many ancient writings were made on skins. “The roll of skins joined together was rolled on a stick.”⁴ Ezekiel writes of two sticks or writings. The first writing is for Judah. The Bible is primarily a record of the tribe of Judah or the Jews. Ezekiel speaks of a second record for Joseph. Nephi says that he and his family are descendants of Joseph.⁵ Thus, the Book of Mormon is a writing of the tribe of Joseph. As Ezekiel prophesied, these two records have become one in the hands of modern missionaries as they go out to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Prior to his death, Jacob called his sons together and gave each of them a blessing. In his blessing to Joseph, he said that Joseph would be “a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall.”⁶ He also said that these blessings to Joseph would extend “unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.”⁷ This was a great blessing given to Jacob’s favored son. We see its fulfillment in the Book of Mormon. Joseph became exceedingly fruitful through the descendants of Lehi. And where did they dwell? The land of “everlasting hills.” The Americas. Is there not a spine of “everlasting hills” that runs through North and South America?

Isaiah beheld the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Isaiah saw in vision a place like Ariel or Jerusalem. He saw that the inhabitants of this place would “be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.”⁸ The Book of Mormon came forth from the “ground.” Many converts testify that the Book of Mormon brought them into the Church because they found there “a familiar spirit” of truth.

Later in this same chapter, Isaiah made the following prophecy, “And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.”⁹ In February 1828, Martin Harris took a copy of a few of the characters on the plates and the accompanying translation to a Professor Charles Anthon in New York City. When Martin reported the source of the characters, Anthon suggested that Martin bring the plates to him for translation. Martin replied that part of the plates were sealed and he was forbidden to bring them. Dr. Anthon replied, “I cannot read a sealed book.”¹⁰ Joseph Smith was the one who was “not learned.” He accomplished this remarkable translation in a relatively short period of time through the power of God.

The Savior, himself, spoke of the Book of Mormon peoples during his ministry. He said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”¹¹ After his resurrection, the Savior appeared to his followers on the American continent and taught them, “And verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they

⁴ A. R. Fausset, Bible Cyclopaedia (Hartford: The S.S. Scranton Company, 1905), p726.

⁵ 1 Nephi 6:2.

⁶ Genesis 49:22.

⁷ Genesis 49:26.

⁸ Isaiah 29:4.

⁹ Isaiah 29:11-12.

¹⁰ Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 7 vols (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951), 1:119-120.

¹¹ John 10:14-16.

understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching.”¹²

Witnesses of the Gold Plates

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, “Whenever the Lord has established a dispensation by revealing his gospel and by conferring priesthood and keys upon men, he has acted in accordance with the law of witnesses which he himself ordained. This law is: ‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.’ (2 Cor. 13:1; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:15-16; John 8:12-29.)

“Never does one man stand alone in establishing a new dispensation of revealed truth, or in carrying the burden of such a message and warning to the world. In every dispensation, from Adam to the present, two or more witnesses have always joined their testimonies, thus leaving their hearts without excuse in the day of judgment should the testimony be rejected.”¹³

The Lord provided witnesses to the original gold plates. In today’s legal system, if one eye witness to a criminal activity can be found, chances are that the accused will be convicted. If two or three eyewitnesses testify, conviction is almost certain. The Lord provided twelve eyewitnesses to the existence of the gold plates. If these witnesses can be found as credible, any court would have to declare that the gold plates did in fact exist. Consider the twelve witnesses.

Witness 1 – Joseph Smith

The key witness is Joseph Smith. It was he who claimed to have conversed with an angel. It was he who claimed to have found the plates in the ground. It was he who claimed to have translated the plates. It was he who claimed to have spoken with God. The attacks on his claims are best summarized in his own words, “I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise.

“So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? for I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation.”¹⁴

Joseph never denied the testimony of his visions, the origins of the Book of Mormon, or the work that he began. His testimony remained firm through legal trials, being tarred and feathered, spending a winter in a cold and dark jail, and seeing some of his closest associates turn against him. He was true to his witness until the end of his life. When Joseph consented to go to Carthage, he said to

¹² 3 Nephi 15:21-22.

¹³ Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 436.

¹⁴ Joseph Smith – History 1:24-25.

those around him and his guards, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am as calm as a summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all men. If they take my life, I shall die an innocent man, and my blood shall cry from the ground for vengeance, and it shall be said of me, ‘He was murdered in cold blood’.”¹⁵ On the afternoon of June 27, 1844, Joseph Smith sealed his testimony with his blood.

THE THREE WITNESSES

Witness 2 – Oliver Cowdery

After Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery is the most important witness of the plates and the work of restoration. Consider his role in the Restoration:

- While a school teacher in Palmyra, New York, Oliver first learned of Joseph’s story. He felt impressed that he should go to Harmony, Pennsylvania, and assist Joseph in the work. On April 7, 1829, Oliver began as Joseph’s scribe in the translation. Most of the Book of Mormon was transcribed by Oliver as Joseph translated.
- Oliver was present with Joseph on the banks of the Susquehanna when the Aaronic Priesthood was restored by John the Baptist. He was also with Joseph when Peter, James, and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood.
- He was one of the Three Witnesses who was shown the gold plates by the Angel Moroni.
- Assisted with the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830. Ordained Second Elder in the Church. Preached the first discourse in the Church a few days later.
- Chosen as a member of the first High Council in Kirtland, Ohio.
- On December 5, 1834, Oliver was ordained by Joseph Smith, at the command of the Lord, as an assistant President of the High Priesthood, to hold the keys of presidency with Joseph Smith.
- In 1835, with the other two witnesses to the Book of Mormon, chose and ordained the first quorum of Twelve Apostles.
- Part of the committee to prepare the revelations for publication as the Doctrine & Covenants.
- Present with Joseph after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple when the Lord, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared restoring essential priesthood keys.

Oliver was present with Joseph at virtually every important moment during the restoration of the Church. If Joseph Smith was perpetrating a fraud, Oliver was part of the conspiracy.

In September 1837, in a general letter to the brethren, the Prophet stated that Oliver Cowdery “had been in transgression,” but hoped that Oliver would humble himself and magnify his calling.¹⁶ Oliver did not obey Joseph. In April 1838, charges were presented to the high council at Far West and Oliver Cowdery was ex-communicated from the Church. After his ex-communication, he expected Joseph to come with an offer of reconciliation. When this did not occur, Oliver stayed aloof from the Church for more than ten years. Most of this time he lived in Tiffin, Ohio, where he practiced law. He also served as a politician, a journalist, an educator, and a civic servant.¹⁷

Now that Oliver had been removed from the Church, he was a man with a reason to expose Joseph Smith as a fraud. No one could have done greater damage. Oliver was a prominent man in the communities where he lived and did not need the burden of being listed as one of the Three Witnesses

¹⁵ Smith, History of the Church, 6:555.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:511.

¹⁷ Leonard J. Arrington, “Oliver Cowdery’s Kirtland, Ohio, Sketch Book,” BYU Studies 12 (1971-1972):412.

listed in the Book of Mormon. Oliver may have left the church, but he never denied his witness of the Book of Mormon and his role in the restoration.

It has been reported that Oliver was once asked by a lawyer and friend the following question, “Mr. Cowdery, I see your name attached to this book as one of its special witnesses. Do you believe this book?” His response was, “No, sir.”

Did Oliver deny his testimony? Oliver’s full response, “No, sir. My name is attached to this book, and what I then said is true. I did see this, and I know I saw it. Belief and faith has nothing to do with it as a perfect knowledge has swallowed up the belief and faith I formerly had in the work, knowing as I do that the work is true.”¹⁸

At one time Oliver was serving as county attorney. During his service in that position, he was the prosecuting attorney at a murder trial. After making opening statements to the jury, the attorney for the defense arose and began speaking, “May it please the Court, and gentlemen of the jury, I challenge Mr. Cowdery, since he seems to know so much about this poor defendant, to tell us something about his connection with Joe Smith, and the digging out of the hill of the Mormon Bible, and how Mr. Cowdery helped Joe Smith to defraud the American people out of a whole lot of money by selling the Mormon Bible and telling them that an angel appeared to them from heaven, dressed in white clothes.”¹⁹

The attorney for the defense continued on in this manner and then looked to Oliver for a response. This would have been an opportune time for Oliver to expose Joseph Smith as a fraud and deny his testimony. There were not any Mormons present. Most, if not all, were unaware of Oliver’s connection to Joseph Smith. How did Oliver respond?

“If your honor please, and gentlemen of the jury, the attorney of the opposite side has challenged me to state my connection with Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon; and as I cannot now avoid the responsibility, I must admit to you that I am the very Oliver Cowdery whose name is attached to the testimony, with others, as to the appearance of the angel Moroni; and let me tell you that is not because of my good deeds that I am here, away from the body of the Mormon church, but because I have broken the covenants I once made, and I was cut off from the church; but, gentlemen of the jury, I have never denied my testimony, which is attached to the front page of the Book of Mormon and I declare to you here that these eyes saw the angel, and these ears of mine heard the voice of the angel, and he told us his name was Moroni; that the book was true, and contained the fulness of the gospel, and we were also told that if we ever denied what we had heard and seen that there would be no forgiveness for us, neither in this world nor in the world to come.”²⁰

Oliver returned to the Church in 1848 and spoke to the Saints at a meeting in Kaneshville, Iowa on October 21, 1848. He testified that he penned almost the entire Book of Mormon as it fell from the lips of the Prophet. He then bore this testimony, “I beheld with my eyes, and handled with my hands, the gold plates.... I also saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the ‘holy interpreters.’ That book is true.... It contains principles of salvation; and if you, my hearers, will walk by its light and obey its precepts, you will be saved with an everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God on high.”²¹

Oliver planned to migrate to the Salt Lake Valley, but it was too late in the season. He and his wife and daughter journeyed to Richmond, Missouri, to visit with his wife’s relatives, the Whitmers. There he died on March 3, 1850. Phineas H. Young was present at Oliver’s death. He reported, “His last moments were spent bearing testimony of the truth of the Gospel revealed through Joseph Smith and the power of the holy Priesthood which he had received through his administrations.”²² In 1878, David

¹⁸ Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: A. Jenson History Company & Deseret News Press, 1901-1936), p. 249.

¹⁹ B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 1:140-142.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:142.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1:139-140.

²² Jenson, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, 1:246.

Whitmer related to Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith the details of Oliver's last moments, "After shaking hands with the family and kissing his wife and daughter, he said, 'Now I lay me down for the last time, I am going to my Savior,' and died immediately, with a smile on his face."²³

Witness 3 – David Whitmer

David Whitmer, a young man like Joseph, became acquainted with Oliver Cowdery while Oliver was a school teacher in Palmyra. Oliver and David became friends, and Oliver shared the story of Joseph Smith. After Oliver went to Harmony to assist the Prophet in the translation he wrote David of the difficulties they were having in the Harmony area. David came to Harmony, where he met the Prophet. He then helped the Prophet move to his family home in Fayette, where they could find sufficient peace to finish the translation.

- David was present with Joseph and Oliver when the angel Moroni appeared to show the plates.
- Assisted with the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830.
- David Whitmer served as a missionary, a teacher of doctrine and church policy to the branches of the Church, and as head of the church in Missouri. He suffered persecution in Jackson County and after his exile helped found a new town and gathering place known as Far West.

The day following the excommunication of Oliver Cowdery, the high council met again and considered five charges against David. David refused to appear before the council. He sent a letter to the council desiring to withdraw from the fellowship and communion of the Saints. The council sustained the charges and voted David no longer a member of the Church. After leaving the Church, David moved to Richmond, Missouri, where he lived the rest of his life. He served two terms as the mayor of Richmond.

Again, here was one of Joseph Smith's closest associates and one who could destroy the Church by denying his testimony. Did David Whitmer ever deny his testimony of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon?

On September 7, 1878, David Whitmer, in the presence of Joseph F. Smith, Orson Pratt, and others, bore this testimony, "He (the angel) stood before us. Our testimony as recorded in the Book of Mormon, is strictly and absolutely true."²⁴ David reaffirmed his testimony to Elder Edward Stevenson in 1886, "As sure as the sun shines and I live, just so sure did the angel appear unto me and Joseph Smith and I heard his voice and did see the angel standing before us."²⁵

David Whitmer was accused by one of his Missouri neighbors of having denied his testimony. Reports of that denial were published in two encyclopedias. David replied to that report in 1881 with a statement published in the Richmond Conservator, the New York Times, and the London Times, "Unto all nations, tongues, and people unto who these presents shall come: It having been represented by one John Murphy of Palo, Caldwell County, Missouri, that I in conversation with him last summer, denied my testimony as one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon; to the end thereof that he may understand me now if he did not then, and that the world may know the truth, I wish now, standing in the very sunset of life and in the fear of God, once for all to make this public statement: I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof. I have always adhered to that testimony. I do again affirm the truth of all my statements as then made and published. It was no delusion. In the spirit of Christ I submit these statements unto the world, God being my judge as the sincerity of my motives. Signed and sealed: David Whitmer."²⁶

²³ J.M Sjudahl, An Introduction to the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927), p. 50.

²⁴ Joseph Fielding Smith, Life of Joseph F. Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1969), pp. 243-244.

²⁵ Jenson, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, 1:269.

²⁶ Ibid., 1:268-269.

Published along with David's response, is the following statement signed by twenty-one prominent business and professional men of Richmond, "We the undersigned citizens of Richmond, Ray Colesville., Mo., where David Whitmer Sr. has resided since 1838, certify that we have been long and intimately acquainted with him, and know him to be a man of highest integrity and of undoubted truth and veracity. Given at Richmond, Missouri, this March 20th A.D., 1881."²⁷

On the evening prior to his death, David Whitmer made this statement, "Now, you must all be faithful in Christ. I want to say to you all, that the Bible and the Record of the Nephites (Book of Mormon), are true, so you can say you have heard me bear my testimony on my deathbed."²⁸

Witness 4 – Martin Harris

Martin Harris was a farmer living in the Palmyra area at the time of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He was regarded as a fine neighbor and a cautious man. He was not wealthy, but had sufficient means. He became acquainted with Joseph Smith about two years earlier than Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer. He assisted Joseph with the early translation.

- Martin took the characters to New York to have them examined by Dr. Anthon & Dr. Mitchell.
- Shown the plates by the angel Moroni.
- Mortgaged part of his farm to raise the \$3,000 necessary to print the first 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon.
- Served on the first high council of the Church.
- Went on several missions.

Along with many others, Martin became disaffected from the Church in 1837 and was excommunicated in December of that same year. Four years later he was rebaptized, but shortly thereafter joined the Strangites and went on a mission to England for that group.

Martin was separated from the Church for thirty-three years. He lived near Kirtland most of that time. As an elderly man he was caretaker of the Kirtland Temple. He was poor and ill-kempt. If Joseph Smith had been a fraud, Martin would have had sufficient cause to expose him. Did Martin ever deny his testimony?

On one occasion, a number of Martin's old acquaintances treated him to wine. When he began talking glibly, they asked him, "Well, now, Martin, we want you to be frank and candid with us in regard to this story of your seeing an angel and the golden plates of the Book of Mormon that are so much talked about. We have always taken you to be an honest, good farmer and neighbor of ours, but could not believe that you ever did see an angel. Now Martin, do you really believe that you did see an angel, when you were awake?"

Martin soberly replied, "No, I do not believe it. Gentlemen, what I have said is true, from the fact that my belief is swallowed up in knowledge; for I want to say to you that as the Lord lives I do know that I stood with the Prophet Joseph Smith in the presence of the angel, and it was in the brightness of day."²⁹

In 1869, Martin was brought to Utah by Edward Stevenson. Upon his arrival he was rebaptized by Edward Stevenson and confirmed by Orson Pratt. Martin Harris died at Clarkston, Cache County, Utah on July 9, 1875, at the age of 93. Shortly before his death, Martin made the following statement to visitors at his home in Clarkston, "The angel stood before me and said, 'Look!' When I gazed upon him, I fell to the earth, but I rose to my feet again and saw the angel turn the golden leaves over and over, and I said, 'That is enough, my Lord and my God.' Then I heard the voice of God say, 'The book

²⁷ Ibid., 1:269.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ William E. Berrett, The Restored Church (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1953), pp. 75-76.

translated from these plates is true and translated correctly.’

“As sure as you are standing here and see me, just as sure did I see the angel with the gold plates in his hand as he showed them to me. I have promised that I will bear witness of this both here and hereafter.”³⁰

THE EIGHT WITNESSES

A few days after the three witnesses were shown the plates by the angel Moroni; Joseph Smith showed the gold plates to eight others. These witnesses had the opportunity to both view and hold the plates. That same evening they held a meeting at the Smith residence and composed the testimony which has appeared in all editions of the Book of Mormon.

Witness 5 – Christian Whitmer

Christian was baptized, along with his wife, the Sunday after the Church was organized. He was the first to hold the office of teacher. He was chosen as a member of the high council in Missouri. While there he endured much in the way of mob persecution. He remained faithful to the Church and true to his testimony until the he died. He died at the age of thirty-seven as a result of an ugly sore on his leg. He sealed his testimony with his death.

Witness 6 – Peter Whitmer

Peter viewed the plates at the age of nineteen. He joined Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson on their one thousand mile journey to the western frontier to deliver the Book of Mormon to the Indians. Peter remained faithful to the Church until he died. He passed away at the age of twenty-seven of consumption, most likely as a result from the hardships he endured when forced from his home by mobs in during winter weather.

Witness 7 – John Whitmer

John lost his membership due to misunderstandings with the Prophet and other leading brethren. He joined the enemies of the Saints and with them harassed and abused his former brethren. He never denied his testimony of the plates. At one time, John joined the mob in harassing Theodore Turley. Turley questioned John about his testimony, to which John replied, “I now say, I handled those plates; there were fine engravings on both sides.” Turley said that John acknowledged all relating to the plates.³¹

Witness 8 – Jacob Whitmer

Like his brother, John Whitmer, Jacob also lost his membership due to misunderstandings with the leading brethren. He also never denied his testimony. Philander Page, his nephew, said, “Jacob, John, and David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery died in full faith in the divinity of the Book of Mormon. I was with all these witnesses on their deathbeds and heard each of them bear his last testimony.”³²

³⁰ Sjodahl, Introduction to the Book of Mormon, p. 59.

³¹ Smith, History of the Church, 3:307

³² Jenson, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, 1:277.

Witness 9 – Hiram Page

Hiram, like his brothers-in-law, John and Jacob Whitmer, fell by the wayside and lost his membership. He never denied his testimony. His son, Philander, reported, “I knew my father to be true and faithful to his testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon until the very last. Whenever he had an opportunity to bear his testimony to this effect, he would always do so, and seemed to rejoice exceedingly in having been privileged to see the plates and thus become one of the Eight Witnesses.”³³

Witness 10 – Joseph Smith, Sr.

The father of the Prophet was true to his testimony and supported his sons in the Lord’s work. He was driven from his home in Missouri following the extermination order of Governor Boggs. Weakened from the toils and exposure of the Missouri experience, he sealed his testimony with his death in 1840.

Witness 11 – Hiram Smith

Hiram was absolutely faithful to his brother Joseph and his testimony throughout his life. After spending several months in Liberty Jail, he bore this testimony, “I had been abused and thrust into a dungeon, and confined for months on account of my faith, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. However I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to.”³⁴ Hiram sealed his testimony with his blood on that fateful day in Carthage Jail in June 1844.

Witness 12 – Samuel Smith

Samuel, the Prophet’s younger brother, went on the first mission of the Church in June 1830. He was chosen as a member of the first high council in Kirtland. Always faithful to the work and his testimony, Samuel sealed his testimony with his death on July 30, 1844. He died as a result of a fever caused by overexertion in escaping the mobs when his brothers were killed a few weeks earlier.

President Heber J. Grant stated, “I do not believe that in any court of justice in the world if a man was being tried for murder and twelve reputable citizens testified of their knowledge of the circumstances leading to the murder, and there was no one who could testify against what they said, there would be a failure to convict the man. We have the testimony of Joseph Smith and the testimony of three witnesses to the effect that God gave them a knowledge regarding the Book of Mormon, that an angel of God declared from heaven that the book had been translated by the gift and power of God. These men were Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris. They left the Church, but to the day of their death they maintained their testimony regarding the declaration of the angel, and that they were commanded to bear witness of the divinity of this book, and they did so. Eight men, some of whom were excommunicated from the Church, maintained their testimony that they had seen and handled the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and they remained true to that testimony to the day of their death. The disbelief of all the world does not prove that those men did not tell the truth, because there are no witnesses on the other side.”³⁵

³³ Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), p. 72.

³⁴ *Times and Seasons*, vol 1 (November 1839 – October 1840), p. 23.

³⁵ *Conference Report*, April 1929, p. 128.

Evidences of the Antiquity & Semitic Origins of the Book of Mormon

Language of the Book of Mormon

In the opening verses of the Book of Mormon, Nephi wrote, “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father.... Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.”³⁶ Near the end of the record Moroni, the last of the Nephite prophets wrote, “And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.”³⁷

It appears that reformed Egyptian was a scribal language, possibly a type of shorthand. Hebrew is more compact than English. A typical English sentence of fifteen words will often translate into seven words of Hebrew. And reformed Egyptian was more compact than Hebrew. Imagine the difficulty of any man, scholar or not, attempting to crack that language.

There are three key language groups in the world: Indo-European, Afro-Asian, and Semitic. The Semitic languages include Syrian, Hebrew, ancient Egyptian, Arabic, and Aramaic. Arabic and Hebrew are the only Semitic languages spoken today. According to Nephi and Moroni, the language of the Book of Mormon would be Semitic. If we can find characteristics of Semitic culture and language in the Book of Mormon, it would be ample evidence that the Book of Mormon was not authored by Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, Solomon Spaulding, or anyone else living in the early 1800s in the United States. Could any of them have had sufficient knowledge to include in the Book of Mormon the characteristics listed below? Could they have written the book in sixty-three days and included the complexities of Semitic language and culture, along with information concerning the rise and fall of two major civilizations, a complex study of their governments, their wars, their methods of production of goods and services, a complex money system, and a detailed study of Mesoamerican warfare?

Characteristics of Semitic Language

Clues from the Manuscript

Bible-scholar John E. Remsburg wrote about ancient Hebrew, “It was *written from right to left*; the words contained no [written] vowels; there were no intervening spaces between words, and *no punctuation marks*... As there were no spaces between words, it was sometimes hard to tell where a word began or where it ended; and as there were no punctuation marks, and no spaces between sentences, paragraphs, or even sections, it was often difficult to determine the meaning of a writer after the words had been deciphered.”³⁸

Consider the following comments about the translation and manuscript. Joseph Smith stated, “I wish to mention here that the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general.”³⁹

³⁶ 1 Nephi 1:1-3.

³⁷ Mormon 9:32.

³⁸ John E. Remsburg quoted in “Hebrew: An Ancient Forgotten Language With No Written Vowels,” at <http://einhornpress.com/hebrew.aspx>.

³⁹ Smith, History of the Church, 1:71.

Dean C. Jesse wrote, “One characteristic of the Cowdery writing in the manuscript that almost never appears in his other writings is the complete lack of punctuation and paragraphing--a peculiarity that applies to the other two scribes as well. The lack of such detail, however, by one whose usual mode of writing did not preclude this, adds credence to the claim of a dictated text for the Book of Mormon.”⁴⁰

E.B. Grandin (publisher of the first edition) had John H. Gilbert go through the manuscript to add punctuation and paragraphing. This was done to give the text a semblance of order and structure. “The printer’s manuscript was delivered to the typesetter by Hyrum Smith a few pages at a time. All the punctuation and paragraphing was supplied by Gilbert as he set the book in type.”⁴¹

Use of Many “Ands”

Donald W. Perry wrote that “Biblical Hebrew uses the equivalent of the conjunction and much more than English uses and, especially in historical narrative and prose but also in poetry and direct speech....

“The Book of Mormon corresponds to the Old Testament in its use of many *ands* throughout its historical and prose sections.... Helaman 3:14, with its eighteen *ands* in a single verse, is a good example of how an awkward construction in the English translation of the Book of Mormon makes perfectly good sense in Hebrew and reflects the ancient character of the book:

“But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbings, and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.”⁴²

If Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon, most likely he would be consistent in all of his writing. And yet in the Doctrine in Covenants he recorded the following passage utilizing only one and: “And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.”⁴³

Consider an example utilizing the words “and” and “his.” Russell Anderson wrote that in “Hebrew, pronouns used for possession and direct object are ordinarily attached as suffixes to the noun (in case of possession) and verb (in case of direct object). In instances of possession, therefore, one cannot say ‘his house and family and friends, etc.’, but rather, one is obliged to say ‘his house and his family, and his friends’.”⁴⁴ An example of this can be found in 1 Nephi 2:4:

“And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left HIS house, and the land of HIS inheritance, AND HIS gold, AND HIS silver, AND HIS precious things....”

⁴⁰ Dean C. Jesse, “The Original Book of Mormon Manuscript,” BYU Studies, vol. 10 (1969-1970), Number. 3 - Spring 1970, p. 276.

⁴¹ Peter Crawley, “A Bibliography of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in New York, Ohio, and Missouri,” BYU Studies, vol. 12 (1971-1972), Number 4 - Summer 1972, p. 472.

⁴² Donald W. Perry, “Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon” in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon, eds. Donald W. Perry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), pp. 177-178.

⁴³ D&C 4:5.

⁴⁴ Russell Anderson, “Hebrew Writing Styles and Idioms,” LightPlanet.com, 2009, <http://www.lightplanet.com/response/idioms.htm>.

Cognate Accusative

Consider the use of the cognate accusative, where the verb and noun are matched. Paul Y. Hoskisson, an assistant professor of ancient scriptures at Brigham Young University, wrote: “While studying Near Eastern languages, I discerned a Semitic flavor in the Book of Mormon that was foreign to English. For instance, it is not common in English to use cognate accusatives; that is, using objects of the verb that are derived from the same root, such as ‘sing a song’ or ‘live a good life.’ English contains a few cognate accusatives because no acceptable synonyms are available, but on the whole, English usually avoids them. The Book of Mormon uses them quite often—for example, ‘I have dreamed a dream’ (1 Ne. 3:2) and ‘I did teach my people to build buildings’ (2 Ne. 5:15). This frequent usage is indicative of the book’s Near Eastern heritage.”⁴⁵

And It Came to Pass

The phrase, “And it came to pass” is found frequently throughout the Book of Mormon. Donald W. Perry, “The expression and it came to pass is the translation of a Hebrew expression used frequently in scriptural histories and chronologies and far less frequently in poetry, prophecies, or direct speech. Although in its Hebrew form the expression is found in the Hebrew Bible some 1,200 times, it was translated in the King James Version as ‘and it came to pass’ only about 727 times. The King James translators probably found the expression redundant and cumbersome, which would explain why they often translated it as ‘and it became,’ ‘and it was,’ or ‘and.’ On a number of occasions they simply ignored the expression altogether.

“Given the Semitic background of the Book of Mormon and the fact that it contains histories and chronologies comparable to those of the Old Testament, it is not surprising that and it came to pass is a characteristic feature of the book.”⁴⁶

Idioms

An idiom is an expression that is peculiar to a particular culture and cannot be translated directly. One dictionary gives this definition, “A speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements.”⁴⁷ Perfectly acceptable idioms may seem illogical if taken literally or may violate established rules of grammar. Some idioms we are familiar with:

- He gave himself away
- He gets under my skin
- A poker face

Book of Mormon scholar Sydney B. Sperry wrote, “Literal translations of Hebrew idioms are prevalent in the Book of Mormon, as are literal renditions of compound Hebrew prepositions. Parallels can be found in the Old and New Testaments, especially in the Hebrew translation of the Old Testament.”⁴⁸ Brother Sperry provides some examples:

⁴⁵ Paul Y. Hoskisson quoted in “New Developments in Book of Mormon Research,” *Ensign*, February 1988, p12.

⁴⁶ Donald W. Perry, “Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon” in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 163-164.

⁴⁷ *The Free Dictionary*, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/idiom>, 2009.

⁴⁸ Sydney B. Sperry, “Hebrew Idioms in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 4, Iss. 1, p. 218.

- “By the hand of” indicates agency or instrumentality. Example: “And they shall be afflicted *by the hand of* their enemies” (Mosiah 11:21).
- “To stiffen the neck.” Example: “And after they have hardened their hearts and *stiffened their necks* against the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 6:10).
- “From the mouth of.” Example: “Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth *from the mouth of* a Jew; and when it proceeded forth *from the mouth of* a Jew it contained the plainness of the gospel of the Lord” (1 Nephi 13:24).

These are only a few of the idioms found in the Book of Mormon that can be found in Hebrew or Semitic literature. Brother Sperry’s article provides additional examples and comparisons to Hebrew literature.

Construct State

Brother Russell Anderson wrote, “Another usage not common in English is the construct state, wherein two nouns are placed one after the other because they are in close grammatical relationship one to another. An example would be ‘the book of Jack’ instead of ‘Jack’s book.’ In Hebrew, we find such expressions as these, extracted from numerous verses in the Book of Mormon:

altar of stones	mist of darkness
state of probation	plates of gold
words of plainness	night of darkness
land of promise	rod of iron
plates of brass	bands of death
chains of hell	voice of the people

“There are no occurrences in the Book of Mormon of more common English equivalents such as: stone altar, dark mist, iron rod, brass plates, gold plates. This last one is particularly interesting since in Joseph Smith’s history he only uses the phrase ‘gold plates’.”⁴⁹

Other Evidences of Semitic Culture & Language

Semitic names

The Book of Mormon contains over 180 names unique to the English language. All or nearly all can be shown as Semitic names. Hugh Nibley has given this topic extensive treatment to Book of Mormon names in his book *Lehi in the Desert*. Consider a few Book of Mormon names and their Semitic equivalent:

- Korihor: A political agitator who was seized by the people of Ammon. Kherihor: Great high priest of Ammon who seized the throne of Egypt at Thebes, cir. 1085 B.C.

⁴⁹ Anderson, “Hebrew Writing Styles and Idioms,” LightPlanet.com.

- Nephi: Founder of the Nephite nation. Nehi, Nehri, famous Egyptian noblemen. Nfy was the name of an Egyptian captain. Since the Book of Mormon insists on “ph,” Nephi is closer to Nihpi, original name of the god Pa-nepi, which may even have been Nephi.
- Manti: The name of a Nephite soldier, a land, a city, and a hill. Manti: Semitic form of an Egyptian proper name, e.g., Manti-mankhi, a prince in Upper Egypt cir. 650 B.C. It is a late form of Month, god of Hermonthis.
- Pahoran: A great chief judge. Son of the same. Paheran: Ambassador of Egypt in Palestine, where his name has the “reformed” reading Pahura; in Egyptian as Pa-her-y it means “the Syrian” or Asiatic.⁵⁰

Hugh Nibley writes of the use of pendant names in the Book of Mormon. “But the most striking thing about the names of Laman and Lemuel is the way they go together.... The musical pair certainly belong together and are a beautiful illustration of the old desert custom of naming the first two sons in a family with rhyming twin names, ‘a pair of pendant names,’.... The Arabs particularly seem to enjoy putting together such assonant names Yagug and Magug for Gog and Magog, Harun and Karun for Aaron and Korah, Habil and Kabil for Abel and Cain.... These names never go in threes or fours but only in pairs, designating just the first two sons of a family with no reference to the rest.... One could not ask for a better illustration of this little-known and, until recently, unsuspected practice than we find in the Book of Mormon where Lehi names his first two sons Laman and Lemuel.”⁵¹

Joseph Smith was criticized for use of the name Alma, which has been used as a female name in western culture. Yigael Yadin, a prominent Israeli archaeologist, while investigating a cave by the Dead Sea found an ancient document which bore the name Alma son of Judah.⁵²

Olive Culture

The fifth chapter of Jacob presents the allegory of the tame and wild olive trees. The methods of horticulture described in this chapter are consistent with those used anciently in the Near East. Daniel Peterson wrote that the “lengthy allegory of the olive tree... betrays a knowledge of olive cultivation considerably beyond what Joseph Smith, growing up in the cool, wet deciduous forests of the American Northeast, likely possessed. In fact, the allegory is remarkably consistent in detail with what we learn from ancient manuals on Mediterranean olive culture.”⁵³

Chiasmus

This literary form is used primarily in Near Eastern cultures and it was used by the Hebrews. It is an inverted type of parallelism. There is the arranging of a series of words or ideas in one order and then repeating them in reverse order. Chiasmus provided structure prior to the usage of paragraphs, punctuation, capitalization, and other devices. The western world knew little of this form until the mid-

⁵⁰ Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert- The World of the Jaredites - There Were Jaredites, John W. Welch, ed. (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co., Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1988), p. 25-26.

⁵¹ Hug Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co., Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1988), p. 291.

⁵² Daniel C. Peterson, “Evidences of the Book of Mormon,” The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship online, 2009, <http://mi.byu.edu/publications/transcripts/?id=1>. For additional information on names see John A. Tvedtnes, “Hebrew Names in the Book of Mormon,” Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research (FAIR) online, 2009: <http://www.fairlds.org/pubs/HebrewNames.pdf> and Paul Y. Hoskisson, “What’s in a Name,” Maxwell Institute online, 2009: <http://mi.byu.edu/publications/jbms/?vol=13&num=1&id=349>.

⁵³ Daniel C. Peterson, “Not Joseph’s, and Not Modern,” in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon, p. 198.

1800's and then it was confined to Europe. The Book of Mormon comprises some of the most intricate selections of this literary art.

A simple example from 2 Nephi 29:13:

- a. The **Jews**
 - b. shall have the **words**
 - c. of the **Nephites**
 - c. and the **Nephites**
 - b. shall have the **words**
 - a. Of the **Jews**

Consider this more complex example from Mosiah 5:10-12:

- a. Whosoever shall not take upon him **the name of Christ**
 - b. must be called by some other **name**;
 - c. therefore, he findeth himself **on the left hand of God**.
 - d. And I would that ye should **remember** also, that this is the **name . . .**
 - e. that **never should be blotted out**,
 - f. except it be through **transgression** therefore,
 - f. take heed that ye do not **transgress**
 - e. that the name **be not blotted out** of your hearts . . .
 - d. I would that ye should **remember** to retain the name . . .
 - c. that ye are not found **on the left hand of God**.
 - b. but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall **be called**.
 - a. and also, **the name** by which he shall call you.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ For additional information on Chiasmus see John W. Welch, "How Much Was Known about Chiasmus in 1829 When the Book of Mormon Was Translated?" [The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship](http://mi.byu.edu/publications/review/?vol=15&num=1&id=465) online, 2009, <http://mi.byu.edu/publications/review/?vol=15&num=1&id=465> and Jeff Lindsay, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," [JeffLindsay.com](http://www.jefflindsay.com/chiasmus.shtml), 2009: <http://www.jefflindsay.com/chiasmus.shtml>.

Other Evidence of Antiquity

Ancient Warfare

There seems to be an excess of war within the pages of the Book of Mormon. And yet, in ancient times, war was considered inevitable. It was a way of life. War in the Book of Mormon fits the general pattern of what was common throughout the world in that period. In a specific one thousand year period there were 180 wars in Greek history, 140 in Roman history, and 80 in Hebrew history. The Book of Mormon mentions over 100 wars.

Within the pages of the Book of Mormon there is no mention of modern methods of warfare. There are no violations of ancient patterns. There are differences in ancient American warfare from that in the ancient Near East. The Book of Mormon conforms to these American differences. Consider this example: The Book of Mormon describes considerable leg wounds. In Biblical battles, the ancients wore greaves, a type of leg armor. The Book of Mormon armies were highly mobile. The armies often pursued one another from one location to another. Leg armor would have impaired them. Could Joseph Smith know about this difference? There was no accurate information on early American warfare until after 1965.

Daniel Peterson wrote about the use of guerilla warfare in the Book of Mormon by the Gadianton robbers, "I was teaching a Gospel Doctrine class in the Jerusalem branch in Israel, and we were reading Helaman and 3 Nephi. Suddenly, I realized that what I was seeing there in the Gadianton robbers was a textbook instance of both success and failure according to the rules that Giap, and Guevara, and Mao Tse-tung had outlined.... All this written by a young man, supposedly, as critics would say, who knew nothing about guerilla warfare and whose idea of military activity was, at least later on in his life, to get on his black horse Charley and parade in a nice uniform, romanticizing the wars of American history."⁵⁵

One other interesting note: As the Book of Mormon account progresses; there is no more mention of steel. The twenty-fourth chapter of Alma mentions the staining of swords. It is difficult to stain a steel sword, but not one made of wood. When the Spaniards first arrived in America, the Indians were armed with a sword made from a hardwood with sharpened obsidian embedded on either side of the flat wood.⁵⁶

Wordprints

Each person writes in a characteristic pattern that identifies the writer, much like a finger print. Wordprints require a computer to make this analysis. There are a variety of methods that can be used to identify a wordprint. Over the years several researchers have developed wordprint models. One such test by John L. Hilton compared texts from the writings of Nephi, Alma, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Solomon Spaulding. "The results showed that the wordprints of Nephi and Alma are distinct and significantly different from each other and from the wordprints of Smith, Cowdery, and Spaulding. The original findings were therefore confirmed, rendering it, in Hilton's words, 'statistically indefensible' to claim that Joseph Smith or one of his contemporaries was the author of the Book of Mormon."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Peterson, "Evidences of the Book of Mormon."

⁵⁶ For more information see Jeff Lindsey, "Metals, Weapons, and the Book of Mormon," Light Planet online, 2009, http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/response/qa/bom_metals.htm.

Daniel C. Peterson, "Evidences of the Book of Mormon," The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship online, 2009, <http://mi.byu.edu/publications/transcripts/?id=1>.

⁵⁷ Noel B. Reynolds, "By Objective Measures: Old Wine Into Old Bottles," in Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon, p. 135.

Native Accounts of the Great White God

The great American historian H.H. Bancroft stated in his *Native Races*, published in 1893, that one cannot find a tribe of Indians which does not have the legend among their people of the Great White God who was the son of God.

Jack West, in his *Trial of the Stick of Joseph*, tells of visiting with an old Indian patriarch in his little hut in the Yucatan. His guide had him tell the old Indian about our “gold Bible.” When Brother West got to the part of Christ coming down from heaven, the old Indian responded, “Si, es verdad. Si, es correcto!” (Yes, that's true. Yes, that's correct!) After Brother West completed the story of the Book of Mormon, he listened to the legends of the old Indian's people for two hours. Brother West states, “Point after point of his story tied in perfectly with the Book of Mormon story.”⁵⁸

How is it that the Aztecs, the Incas, and others were so easily conquered by Europeans? Consider the following:

- With only a few hundred men, Cortez landed on the Mexican mainland, where he made allies among the native tribes. Cortes marched his army inland to Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec empire. “Because of an Aztec prophecy about the return of Quetzalcoatl, a legendary god-king who was light-skinned and bearded, Cortés was believed to be a god and was received with honour.”⁵⁹
- “The death of Huayna Capac in 1525, before he could name his successor, divided the [Incan] empire. Two of his sons, the half brothers Huáscar and Atahualpa, each desired the throne, and the ensuing bitter struggle between them, which ended in 1532 with the capture of Huáscar, seriously weakened the empire. At this critical moment the Spanish adventurer and explorer Francisco Pizarro arrived on the coast with firearms and a force of about 180 men. Unopposed by the Inca, who assumed the fair-skinned Spaniards were returning Incan demigods, Pizarro and his tiny band gained control of the vast, highly centralized Incan state simply by making Atahualpa, its head, a prisoner in his own house.”⁶⁰

At first, these peoples thought that their conquerors were the returning White God. Millions of Aztecs were murdered by a much smaller group of Spaniards. The Aztecs could have conquered Cortez, but let him continue his atrocities because they believed he was the returning White God. Eventually, the people came to believe that the Cortez was not their God.

The old Indian said to Brother West, “Yes, many finally believed he could not possibly be a God, but they also had the legend from their ancient people that a white race had to conquer us before our true religion would come back to us again.”⁶¹

One cannot equate Quetzalcoatl with Jesus Christ, but is it possible that this Aztec god evolved from a belief in the Savior? Many American tribes had similar beliefs in a God similar to Jesus Christ as evidenced in L. Taylor Hansen's *He Walked the Americas*.

Archeological Evidence

This survey is too brief to begin to consider the enormous amount of archeological evidence supporting ancient American civilization. This evidence includes the ancient ruins of cities in Central and South America, the knowledge of science and medicine known to these ancient cultures, peculiar

⁵⁸ Jack West, *The Trial of the Stick of Joseph* (Sacramento, California: Rich Publishing Company, 1974), p. 58.

⁵⁹ “Hernán Cortés,” *Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia*, 2009: http://uk.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761561161/Hernan_Cortes.html.

⁶⁰ “Inca,” *History.com*, 2009: <http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?articleId=212604>.

⁶¹ West, *The Trial of the Stick of Joseph*, p. 59.

similarities to structures in the Near East, and specific archeological relics such as the Lehi stone. To date, a “smoking gun” has yet to be found. However, the question I would ask is this: How much could an uneducated young man, living in western New York in the year 1830, know about such complex civilizations of ancient America?

Summary

The evidence presented on these few pages presents amazing documentation regarding the antiquity and authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Many years ago, Jack West was attending law school. In one of his classes, each student was to defend or prosecute a case of his choosing against the balance of the law class. Brother West chose to defend the Book of Mormon against the charge of fraud. At the conclusion of the case, the instructor/judge rendered his decision in favor of the defense and made the following statement to the class, “You have not even established a toe hold, much less a foothold, in breaking down the marvelous evidence for the authenticity of the Stick of Joseph much less have you given any evidence that would show it to be a fraudulent work.” Later the judge said to Brother West, “I want to tell you something. In all my years in law, I don’t think I have heard a law case more nearly perfect than this one. When you started out, I wouldn’t have given you a plugged nickel for your chances of proving that book to be true through legal procedure.”⁶²

Some of the evidence presented in this summary came from Brother West’s defense. The amazing thing is that Brother West did not have access to the majority of the evidence presented here. It did not exist at the time he attended law school. What would the judge say today?

I must confess that my interpretation of some of this evidence may be incorrect. Those who stand against the Book of Mormon will point to this evidence or that evidence and provide possibilities as to how Joseph Smith knew such things. What cannot be explained is how Joseph Smith was able to combine so many unique characteristics into the book. In 1829 even a team of the best scholars in America could not have assembled such a vast array of characteristics that make the Book of Mormon a work of antiquity. Within this summary, I have touched upon only a few of the available evidences.

And yet, with all this evidence, few in the world are interested. Why? The reasons are too many to be discussed here. True conversion only comes through the Spirit. A person’s life will not change until he engages Moroni’s promise. This evidence might lead one to consider the Book of Mormon, but real testimony is only revealed through divine revelation after thoughtful study and prayer.

I would like to conclude with the words of Parley P. Pratt and his discovery of the Book of Mormon. At the time he came across the Book of Mormon, Parley was on a mission for the Campbellite faith. He was lent the Book by an old Baptist deacon. Said Parley, “I opened it with eagerness, and read its title page. I then read the testimony of several witnesses in relation to the manner of its being found and translated. After this I commenced its contents by course. I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

“As I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true, as plainly and manifestly as a man comprehends and knows that he exists. My joy was now full, as it were, and I rejoiced sufficiently to more than pay me for all the sorrows, sacrifices and toils of my life.”⁶³

⁶² West, *The Trial of the Stick of Joseph*, p. 3.

⁶³ Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1973), p. 37.

This summary prepared by William C. Beardall, July 1996. Updated in December 2003 and August 2009.