



# The Witness

Newsletter Of The Foundation For Research On Ancient America

MARCH 12, 1984

NEWSLETTER No.45

## COMALCALCO - LIBRARY OF THE ANCIENTS

**C**OMALCALCO IS A CLASSIC Mayan site found in the state of Tabasco on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. It covers 200 hectares, or approximately 500,000 acres.

In this vast area are 300 pyramids. Comalcalco calls attention to itself in that it is the only excavated site of Mesoamerica which in its entirety is built of baked brick.

At the time of the Spanish conquest Comalcalco was a thriving Mayan port. It has since collapsed and now can only be reached by road. The water route has completely stagnated.

Of the bricks which make up the site, 3% were found to have incising on them. Approximately 25% of the bricks carry inscriptions that deal with some aspect of Quetzalcoatl. 18% carry one of two glyphs associated with him. In addition to strange inscriptions on many of the bricks which do not in any way relate to Mayan hieroglyphics, we found four drawings of ships, two drawings of elephants, and several other items which could not be pure Maya. Many of the drawings show Old World items which would be unknown to an isolated New World civilization.



Comalcalco is the only excavated site of Mesoamerica which in its entirety is built of baked brick.

Though many of the bricks contain fine art work, they were all used as part of the construction just as any other brick. Therefore, the art is not visible. This point was important in the analysis of the bricks.

Yet to be answered is the question: Why should one go to the trouble to make a well-drawn brick only to later cover it with mortar?

In 1979 the author was shown ten of the bricks by the head archaeologist of the 1977-78 excavation. Upon seeing them he suspected that some of the incisions were a form of writing. It was obvious that they were not classical Mayan. At the same time it seemed that they were not scribbling, magical signs, or meaningless meanderings as claimed by the people involved.

In 1981 permission was granted by a Mexican government agency, the Institute of Anthropology and History, to photograph all the incised bricks in order to form a catalog. By early 1982 the Foundation for Research on Ancient America became involved and photographs were taken. For the first time all the bricks were

brought together and seen as a whole.

A complete set of photographs was taken to San Diego to the Headquarters of the Epigraphic Society. There we were told that the following language alphabets were present: Arabic, Libyan, Phoenician, and possibly Egyptian. Other languages which remain to be confirmed include Ogam, Tifinag, Chinese, and Burmese.



Most linguists contacted at this point agree with these preliminary analyses, while most archaeologists disagree. This was expected. We realize that

much help is needed in the areas of translation and financing further excavations. Only 1/2 of 1% of the Comalcalco site has been excavated. There are at least four similar sites in the area.

One basic problem has occurred. All the Old World inscriptions appear to be dating from the time of Christ to 200 A.D. while the site itself is dated from 700-900 A.D. This difference needs to be resolved.

There exists a possibility that the bricks may have been taken from an early building which was torn down to build the present structure. But we have no conclusive evidence of this.



Research continues as funds are available. With new discoveries, learned men have had to change their views. But the Book of Mormon remains unchallenged. Truth will prevail!



Neil Steede, Director of the Precolumbian Investigations Center, employee of the Mexican Government, Department of Agriculture, SARH, anthropologist, president of the Latin Chapter of the Epigraphic Society, author art historian and deacon in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.



TEMPLE OF QUETZALCOATL AT CHICHEN ITZA

## THE MARVELOUS BOOK OF MORMON

by Thelma D. Stevens

**M**Y TEXT, *Bible Studies*, had been so well received that I was asked to write something comparable to it on the Book of Mormon. My prompt response was that I never could write anything worthy of that marvelous book, but an inner prompting kept me from outright refusal. Instead, I went to Brother Hubert Case and asked him for a special blessing for that undertaking. Beautiful words of encouragement and promise were spoken to me by that servant of God, giving me courage to undertake the task of writing a textbook on the Book of Mormon. Still realizing my own inadequacy, I promised the Lord that I never would attempt to do any work on the book without first praying for guidance and help. Also, I promised that I would fast from breakfast until the book was written, even though I remembered that nine years and more had gone into the writing of *Bible Studies*.

At that time I was working full time at Leadership Training in the Department of Religious Education (as it was called then), and it was Floyd McDowell, director of that department, who asked me to write this book. He explained that the text on the Book of Mormon was needed, and they would like for me to write it, but also that, since I did not have a private office, I do much of my writing at home or at the office when there would be the least distraction.



Under these circumstances, with fear and full knowledge of my own inabilities, my work began on what turned out to be *Book of Mormon Studies*.

The work was done with such unexpected

speed that I could do no other than give full credit to God for it. Of myself I never could have organized the material, correlated the lessons and turned out a text of many printings, which has been used since 1947 by thousands of students.

In six months (less three days), my manuscript was completed and turned over to the First Presidency for approval.

Each day as my writing began with fasting and prayer, thoughts presented themselves to me and lessons

developed with amazing speed. With those thoughts which came, supporting scriptural references were crowded into my mind during those amazing six months. Indeed, the work was accomplished so fast that when the task was completed, I had the feeling that I wanted to start at the beginning and study the whole text myself.

Many stimulating experiences blessed me during this time of writing. There were many groupings of scriptures which I had not previously used or seen used, giving me precious understandings and testimonies that the Book of Mormon is not the work of Joseph Smith or any one man or group of men, but that all who contributed throughout the ages, even to the coming forth of the record were working for God toward a divine objective. No man or group of men could possibly have woven into the book of Mormon the things which God has placed there, as many outside evidences bring more and more to our attention. Even with years of studying this marvelous record, each time I sit down to read or to study it, prayerfully, new insights envelop me, and my soul cries out with thanksgiving for what God has given to me and to all mankind through the scriptures.

A scene looms bright in my consciousness which I shall never forget. It was the day on which I laid down my pen and called my manuscript finished. As I picked up my Book of Mormon, it fell open at Ether 5:40. I read:

Now, I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment seat of Christ . . . And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face in plain humility . . .

Tears blinded my eyes and I could read no more.

In the final battle of the Lamanites against the Nephites, Moroni was the only righteous survivor (Mormon 3:13; 4:2-6). His father Mormon had been slain by their enemies and Moroni was left without "father . . . kinfolds . . . friends . . . whither to go." Yet, God had required him to remain on earth for approximately twenty years in this extremely lonely state to complete his assigned writings and care of the records. It was during this time that he wrote that Christ had visited him.

Christ, who had come to earth at the bidding of the Father, had performed every part of his assignment without failure. Nothing forgotten. Nothing left undone. No mistakes made. All done in perfection. Finally, the supreme sacrifice for mankind. Surely, if any being who ever lived on earth had the right to be self-elated and proud of his accomplishment, it was Christ! Yet, Moroni wrote that he had come to visit him in "plain humility."

How dare puny man ever feel any self-esteem or egotism over any little thing he might be given to do!

There was seared into my being at that moment the meaning of the word *humility*.





TEMPLE OF THE INSCRIPTIONS, PALENQUE

## ONE YOUTH WITNESSES

Information by Todd Smith

**T**ODD M. SMITH of Independence, Missouri, is a talented youth who has great love for the Book of Mormon. He has great desires to witness for Jesus Christ.

Todd has talent for sketching and drawing. At an early age, his drawing ability was apparent and Todd's parents, Dale and Vivian Smith, encouraged him to develop this talent. Currently Todd is studying portrait painting under Robert J. Farley, as also is Thelona Stevens.

Recently, Todd, observing Thelona's work, asked whom the painting represented. In response to the reply that it was the prophet Mormon, Todd quickly said, "I would like to do Jared and his brother or maybe Ether."

Since the teacher was not quite ready to start Todd's lesson, he sat upon his high stool with a big copy of the Book of Mormon on his knees and began reading in the Book of Ether. Another member of the class asked some questions which resulted in her acceptance of a copy of the Book of Mormon to read.

Todd is talented not only in art but also in music. He is a member of the Enoch Hill choir.

He was one of forty students invited by their instructors in mid-American high schools to tour Europe with the Mid-America Youth Chorale. They visited eight European countries, singing religious songs.

Currently Todd has recently completed a year's course in Surgical Technology, and is currently employed at the Independence Sanitarium and Hospital in the Dietetic Department as a stepping stone in his education.

Todd's talents and desires, together with his basic home training, including the Scriptures, opens the way for him to give invaluable service to the Lord. We are especially interested in his love for the Book of Mormon.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO WITNESS?

**O**NE OF THE STRONGEST ambitions of FRAA is to draw young people of the church into activity in research, writing, art, or any other field of talent. Here is an opportunity for your talents to work both ways--for the church and for you!

1. For the church--in that whatever you do for the Lord in humility with true intent to contribute to His work is bound to bear good fruit. No good thing done for Christ is ever lost!
2. By responding to God-given impulses you will be blessed. God requires obedience "for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you" (Mosiah 1:58).

God's blessings, of course, take many forms, one of which may be the opportunity to become acquainted with other youth of similar desires and perhaps similar talents. Strong and lasting friendships and relationships have developed for many individuals by reading church literature, corresponding, and perhaps meeting in unexpected ways. Those of like interest and desires have a way of gravitating and becoming associated.

Why not begin now by telling someone about the Book of Mormon--member or non-member?

Why not think seriously about what you can do for Christ, to promote his work through the Book of Mormon?

Why not write of your experiences, hopes, or whatever you wish to share (in 500 words or less) and send to FRAA?

Why not put God's promises to the test--that working for him brings special blessings, and joys not experienced otherwise?

### Have you a question?

**WRITE THE EDITORS.** We cannot answer each question personally, but will print those which we think would be of most interest to THE WITNESS readers.



# BOOK REVIEW

By James Van Biber, Jr.

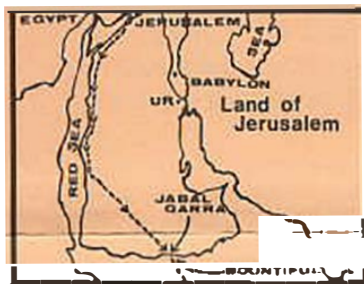
## BOOK OF MORMON AUTHORSHIP: NEW LIGHT ON SNVIRNY OTIHINS

Edited by Noel B. Reynolds

**T**HIS BOOK IS A COMPILATION of current articles and recent developments in archaeology or studies related to the Book of Mormon. Several of these were extremely interesting to me.

Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon by John W. Welch and 'Nephi's Outline by Noel B. Reynolds are a study of an ancient literary element- the chiasmus. The chiasmus, simply stated, is an inverted type of parallelism. This literary form, not studied or noted in modern times until ten years after the death of Joseph Smith, Jr., was a basic element of ancient literature, particularly the ancient Hebrews. This form is found throughout the Book of Mormon. Its usage gives substance to the claim that the Book of Mormon was a product of ancient Hebraic writers.

Two Shots in the Dark by Hugh W. Nibley presents the discovery of the Lachish Letters. The Lachish Letters were written on potsherds and showed a story of the pre-destruction time that is very similar to Lehi's and show the need for his flight from Jerusalem. It also gives an interesting study in names and history of that time. Joseph Smith, Jr., could have had no way of fabricating a story that would match actual historical finds so accurately unless the Book of Mormon was truly a translation by actual eye witnesses or participants. Mr. Nibley also brings out the discovery of very early Christian writings that deal with Christ's teachings to his disciples after the resurrection. These writings parallel the testimony of Jesus in Third Nephi.



Through the Arabian Desert to a Bountiful Land: Could Joseph Smith Have Known the Way? by Eugene England gives a study of the information available to Joseph

Smith. Using this, he could not have made up a story acceptable to the people of his time. The Book of Mormon account, when compared with actual geography, is extremely accurate. The physical and plant conditions are descriptive of what Lynn M. and Hope Hilton found and documented in their book In Search of Lehi's Trail.

Who Wrote the Book of Mormon?: An Analysis of Wordprints is by Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher. The authors studied the Book of Mormon claims that it was authored by many writers over more than a thousand years. They used a computer and statistical analysis to analyze the styles and word usages which give a "wordprint analysis" - idiosyncratic subconscious patterns of an author. Their conclusions were that the Book of Mormon was written by many authors and no Book of Mormon passages resemble any of the suggested 19th century authors. They also show Mormon probably wrote many passages which were copied verbatim from records and do not show his

wordprint. A technique called "Manova" - as well as Cluster Analysis and Discriminate Analysis were used. This is a very interesting article to modern day scholars and not dependent on archaeology - an internal proof.

The Credibility of the Book of Mormon Translators by Richard Loyd Anderson studies the testimonies of the translator of the Book of Mormon and his scribes in reporting and living up to the claims of means of translation and the spiritual restoration given them during this time. It compares their testimonies at the time with how they lived their lives and their testimony of these events throughout their lives.

This book was especially interesting to me because of the many different ways the Book of Mormon was studied and the fact that no fault could be found with its claims. Historically, geographically, statistically, and archaeologically the Book of Mormon came because of the power of God moving in men for thousands of years. Read for yourself and see if these articles give additional insight and encouragement to you as they did to me.



## RECOMMENDED READING by Ray Treat

The World of the Ancient Maya by John S. Henderson. Cornell University Press, 1981. \$12.95. Hardcover, 271 pp., index. This is a well written, up-to-date, undergraduate level introduction to the ancient Maya, who represent the main part of the Book of Mormon.

The Maya, by Michael D. Coe. Revised and Enlarged Edition. Thames and Hudson, 1980. \$9.95. Softcover, 180 pp., index. Very well written for a general audience.

Prehistoric Mesoamerica, by Richard E.W. Adams. Little, Brown and Company, 1977. Hardcover. 370 pp., index. An excellent and highly recommended introduction to the entire Book of Mormon area (Mesoamerica) by a leading archaeologist.



## YOU ASKED US

**Q.** Why is so much of Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon?

**A.** Nephi, the first leader of the Nephites, was responsible for the teaching of his people. He was well acquainted with the scriptures on the brass plates, which they had brought with them from Jerusalem. From them he taught his people the laws of God. He wrote,

I did read many things to them, which were engraven upon the plates of brass, that they might know the doings of the Lord in other lands, among the people of old . . . which were written in the book of Moses; to believe in the Lord their Redeemer. I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah.

--1 Nephi 6:1-4.

My soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn; yea, and my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah.

--11 Nephi 11:7,8.

**Q. Why is the Book of Mormon necessary in our day?**

**A.** The biblical scriptures, having been copied and translated so many times through the ages, have undergone many changes. The Preface to the Inspired Version contains quotations from Dupin, Origen, Theodotus and others admitting that several have taken liberty to add thereto, to RETRENCH and correct divers things. . . It cannot be said that no fault has crept into the scriptures by the negligence or inadvertency of the transcribers, or even by the BOLDNESS of those who have ventured to strike out, ADD, or change some words . . . (Preface, p.4)

Although there is a standard English edition of the Bible, there is no standard Hebrew or Greek text for the original by which to make a comparison in order to restore that which has been lost.

Nephi, in his great vision, saw that "many parts which are plain and most precious" were taken from the word of God, thereby causing that "an exceeding great many do stumble" (1 Nephi 3:175).

In his vision, Nephi also saw that Jesus Christ would visit his people in Ancient America.

Behold, saith the Lamb, I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall manifest unto them, which shall be plain and precious. And after thy seed shall be destroyed and dwindle in unbelief, . . . these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles by the gift and power of the Lamb, and in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation.

These last records which thou hast seen among the Gentiles shall establish the truth of the first . . . which are of twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them.

--Nephi 3: 184-186-192.

- T.D.S.



## I LOVE THE BOOK OF MORMON

By Henry W. Schaefer

**T**he Book of Mormon has been a stumbling block for many people, and yet it is one of the richest treasures to those who love all truth

During World War II I met a doctor, Dr. Anderson, in Independence, who knew that I belonged to the same church to which his wife belonged. He told me that he might have been willing to investigate our church if it had not been for "that Devil's book, the Book of Mormon." I asked him what he found so wrong in that book, and he replied that we were "adding to the Scriptures, which God had forbidden in the last chapter of Revelation."

I explained to him that this was referring to each revelation that God had ever given; that God had never said this

was the last time he would speak. If God had ever spoken, then he must continue to speak, because he loves and cares for all people the same. He is no respecter of persons. I asked if he believed that God is unchangeable? He said, "yes." I answered, "This is impossible because you believe God used to speak, but now his words are only in a book, so he does not have to speak any more. Why, oh why, did Jesus put a prophet at the head of his church?"

This really surprised him. Then I asked if he believed the whole Bible, and he said, "Every word."

"Let me see if you really do," I said. "Do you believe the prophet Ezekiel's words (Ezek. 37:16) about the stick of Judah?"

"Oh, yes. That is in the Bible, and it comes from the Jews."



HENRY W. SCHAEFER

When I asked him what the stick of Joseph is, he said this is the New Testament. I reminded him that the New Testament is a part of the Bible, written by converted Jews. The stick of Joseph would have to be writings by the descendants of Joseph. When Joseph received his patriarchal blessing by his father, it was prophesied that his seed would go over the wall (the sea) (Gen. 49:22-26; Isa. 16:8). Brother Hubert Case introduced the Book of Mormon to some Indian tribes. As they became familiar with it, they said, "This is our book," for their heritage goes back to Joseph who was sold into Egypt.

I also told Dr. Anderson how people came to Ancient America at the time the Lord confounded the language and scattered the people over the whole earth (Gen. 11:1-5). America was part of the earth, and was known to God. He did not have to wait for Columbus to discover it for him. He brought some people here, and he loved them and did for them the same as for his people in the Old World. If this is true, then it must be in harmony with the Bible.

After explaining this, Dr. Anderson said that he was willing to read the Book of Mormon. But that he was willing to do it for one purpose only--to pick out everything that he could find that was not in harmony with the Bible to show me later. He set three weeks. I thought this was good and agreed to wait three weeks.

When I went to visit him, he said that he had covered the Book of Mormon twice. I asked how many discrepancies with the Bible he had found, and he said, "Not one."

My comment was that it could not be any other way, for God is always the same, and so is his plan of redemption, the same for all people everywhere.

**We do not claim that the Book of Mormon takes the place of the Bible, but it is another witness that Jesus is indeed the Only Begotten Son of God, the only name given under heaven by which we can be saved.**

This book is a record of God's dealings with the people on this continent; the Bible is the record of his dealing with the people over there. Jesus 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" (John 10:16). We have the joy of knowing this was all fulfilled when Jesus visited the people of ancient America (1 Nephi 3:14-23). It is

hard for me to understand what meaning people can give to Isaiah 29 without believing on the Book of Mormon.

Although Dr. Anderson did not join this church, he had an altogether different attitude toward the Book of Mormon.

I know that the Book of Mormon is true. It sets such a high moral and spiritual standard that I am sure if I live up to its teachings, I shall inherit eternal life, which is the greatest treasure one can attain.

May the Book of Mormon yet spread to the ends of the earth to be enjoyed by every soul!



## ABOUT THE FOUNDATION. . .

### HISTORY:

**T**HE FOUNDATION for Research on Ancient America (FRAA) was begun in 1952, as a research committee on the Book of Mormon, approved by the First Presidency of the RLDS Church. Roy Weldon, of Warrensburg, Missouri, was its first chairman.

Organized in 1966, as a not-for-profit corporation, the Foundation and its members continue to seek to serve the Church by advancing the use of the Book of Mormon through archaeological research, testimonies, articles, and related projects.

### OFFICERS:

President: Thelona D. Stevens  
Vice-President: James Van Biber, Jr.  
Secretary: Rebecca E. Roberts  
Treasurer: Donna Weddle

### PUBLICATION OF NEWSLETTER:

Three issues annually

### DISTRIBUTION:

Forty-five states  
Six foreign countries

### MEMBERSHIP IN THE FOUNDATION:

● Open to all persons  
Supported by volunteer contributions of its members

### PHOTOGRAPHY:

Frederick O. Weddle

### ART DIRECTOR:

Craig Warner

### MAILING ADDRESS:

## TAPES ARE AVAILABLE

**D**ESPITE ICE, snow, and extreme cold, attendance was good to hear Neil Steede's address December 29. Many who were unable to get to the meeting have inquired about tapes. Tapes are available, as also is the tape of Neil's August 28 meeting. These and all recordings of all FRAA speakers may be obtained by writing Fred Weddle, 410 N. Pleasant, Independence, Mo. 64050. All tapes are \$2.50 each.



## YOU ARE INVITED. . . . .



WORLD CONFERENCE

to Meet With Us at the  
1984 Conference  
Luff Auditorium,  
Stone Church  
Daily, Tuesday  
through Friday  
4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

- April 3 - Speaker: Richard A. DeLong  
Subject: "Hebraic Literary Form  
in the Book of Mormon"
- April 4 - Speaker: T. Evan Thomas  
Subject: "The Testimony of  
the Book of Mormon--Jesus Christ"
- April 5 - Speaker: Roy E. Weldon  
Subject: "Isaiah"
- April 6 - Speaker: Ray Treat  
Subject: "Recent Book of  
Mormon Developments"

## CORRECTION OF INFORMATION IN OUR LAST NEWSLETTER:

At the October 20 meeting in Cardenas, there was only one dissenting vote. Later, however, some archaeologists voiced approval of the project, while others were against it. Leaflets will be distributed in Cardenas at some future time. The photographs of the bricks have been copyrighted.



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