

# The Witness

DOUBLE ISSUE

SPRING/SUMMER 1996

NUMBER 90/91

Plain and Simple Truths  
of the  
Book of Mormon

Christ's Promise  
to Our Day



Foundation for Research on Ancient America

BOOK OF  
MORMON  
STORIES



# The Witness

SPRING/ SUMMER 1996 NUMBER 90/91

### Editorial Committee

J. Michael Friend  
Dale Godfrey - Chairman  
Linda Guin  
Marlin Guin  
Pat Elliott Heady -Copy Editor  
Renee Wersching

### Officers

Michael Gatrost, President  
Dale Godfrey, Vice President  
Linda Trimble, Secretary-Treasurer

*The Witness* is published quarterly by the Foundation for Research on Ancient America, 210 W. White Oak, Independence, Missouri 64050. Tel: (816) 461-FRAA (3722) FAX: (816) 461-5850

The Foundation for Research on Ancient America is a nonprofit corporation composed of individuals who desire to promote the Book of Mormon and its witness of Jesus Christ.

Through research, publications, seminars and related projects, members of FRAA seek to assist in bringing forth the light contained in the ancient scriptures of the Book of Mormon. A contribution to the Foundation for Research on Ancient America is tax deductible.

Articles and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of FRAA or the editorial committee. Unsigned articles are attributable to the committee.

© 1996 by the Foundation for Research on Ancient America.

Layout and Design:  
Sue Teaverbaugh (Midwest Pre-Press Services, Inc.)

Cover:  
"Like Nephi of Old"- Used by permission.  
© Liz Lemon and Foundation Art  
800-366-2781. Prints by Liz Lemon may be purchased at the FRAA Bookstore.

## Message from FRAA

In our last issue of *The Witness* we said that it would no longer be possible to send every issue of *The Witness* to all of the nonsubscribers on our mailing list. That is still true.

For many years FRAA has offered *The Witness* free of charge to all those wishing to receive it. Because of increasing costs of publication and mailing, FRAA is unable to continue this practice. We decided to make this a double issue in order to reduce production and mailing expenses and give all 17,000 households receiving *The Witness* **one more opportunity to subscribe.**

At present subscriptions to *The Witness* pay only a small fraction of the costs associated with publishing the magazine. Therefore, FRAA uses other donations to meet the publication costs. This seriously limits FRAA's ability to carry out its many other worthwhile Book of Mormon-related activities (see pages 16 and 17).

We are sending this issue to you as an act of faith. We know that as a Book of Mormon believer or inquirer, you realize how vital it is that the message of the Book of Mormon be shared with the world in these latter days. If you have not already made a donation to support *The Witness*, we are now asking for your help and financial support. If you have contributed, please send an additional donation so that we can reach out through this magazine to others who may not be able to contribute. We thank you for your interest in and willingness to share the good news of the Book of Mormon. We have enclosed an envelope for your convenience.

Dale N. Godfrey  
Vice President

## Contents . . .

Endure to the End .....	3
by J. Michael Friend	
Tantalizing Glimpses-Faint Whispers .....	5
And it came to Pass .....	6
by Barbara Smith Wilkinson	
The Most Simple Truth in the Book of Mormon.....	8
by Raymond C. Treat	
The Beauty of Book of Mormon Simplicity.....	12
by John Henderson	
Bearded Foreigners .....	14
by Diane E. Wirth	
You have asked .....	19
Promises of the Last Days .....	28
by Gary R. Whiting	
The Book of Mormon and the Purpose of the Church .....	30
by Cecil Abbott	
Would You Like to Write for The Witness?.....	32

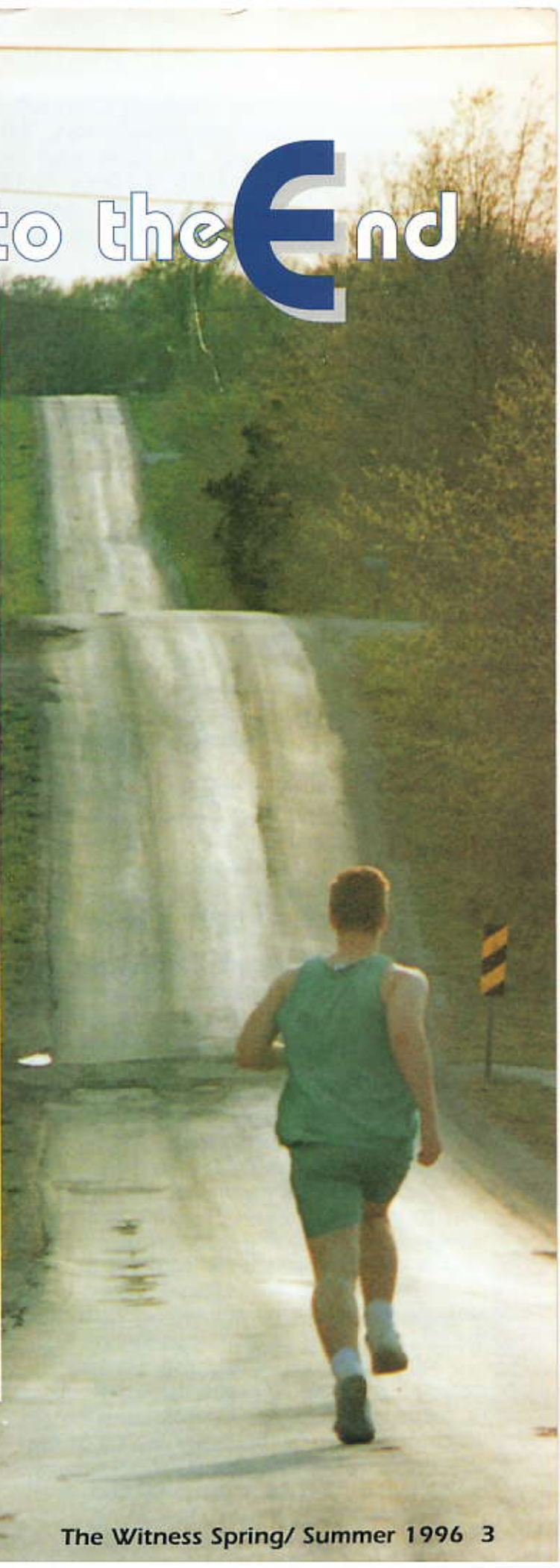
# Endure to the End

by J. Michael Friend

*Endure.* (Greek definition) *hup(o)(n), hoop-om-en'-o; to stay under (behind), i.e. remain; fig. to undergo, i.e. bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere: -abide, endure, (take) patient (-ly), suffer, tarry behind. From hup(, hoop-(ë); under,... of place (beneath),... (the agency of means, through); (with the acc.) of place (whither [underneath] or where [below] or time (when [at]): -among, by from, in, of, under, with. In comp. it retains the gen. applications, espec. of inferior position or condition, and spec. covertly or moderately.*

The Bible, Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants are replete with guidance on the subject of "enduring to the end." In fact, all three books emphasize endurance as a prerequisite to salvation. Such treatment of the subject comes in stark contrast to the prevailing notion that followers of Christ have but to declare their allegiance to his sovereign nature and then merely live out their lives as good, clean Christians. In other words Christianity, as espoused by the general religious community, and endurance, as defined in the scriptures, may not be compatible.

In the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 13 RLDS, 2 Nephi 31 LDS), Nephi begins a discourse on Christlike living by describing the gate through which we all must enter. He says that Jesus, although without sin, fulfilled the will of the Father by humbling himself and witnessing "...unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments..." (2 Nephi 13:9 RLDS, 2 Nephi 31:7 LDS) by being baptized of water and the Spirit. Nephi goes on to say that we who would be followers of Christ must also be obedient and follow him through this very same gate. If Nephi stopped the discussion here, most of us would not have a problem - getting through the gate is one thing;



however, following the path on the other side is quite another.

Nephi, knowing man's tendency to leave the path when the journey gets difficult, says, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (2 Nephi 13:20 RLDS, 2 Nephi 31:15 LDS). He then describes the essential qualities needed in our lives to ensure success while on the journey.

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, if all is done? Behold...nay; for ye have not come this far, save it were **by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save;** wherefore, ye must **press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.** Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, **feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end...**Ye shall have eternal life. (Emphasis added) (2 Nephi 13:27-30 RLDS, 2 Nephi 31:19-20 LDS)

It is easy to endure when things are going well-when our health is good, we have sufficient money to do what we want to do, our children are not in crisis, or world events are not negatively influencing our lives. It's when life's crushing blows hit that we begin to question the value of enduring to the end.

One of the most difficult concepts to get across to my children has been the idea that life is not fair. When money is tight, we lose a loved one in the prime of life or our home is destroyed by some natural disaster, it's hard to believe that God is good and endurance is a worthy command.

I have often heard Christian endurance referred to in a contemptuous manner as, "O great, in order to have eternal life, I not only have to obey all the commandments, but I also have to hang in there through every miserable event God chooses to inflict upon me." Unfortunately, such thinking misses the point of both obedience and endurance. The "Hang on, Friday is coming" mentality may take the sting out of a week of doing unpleasant tasks, but it also focuses our attention on the reward (the weekend) while robbing us of significant opportunities to grow through the events of the week.

The Apostle Paul often referred to life's struggle to endure by calling our attention to the athletic games of the Greco-Roman world.

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of

our faith: who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,...For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Hebrews 12:1-3

Paul realized that in our struggles we need encouragement. So he points us in the direction of all those worthy saints who have gone before and tells us to take heart "...for without sufferings they could not be made perfect [sanctified]" (Heb. 11:40). Further, the very nature of their lives (a great cloud of witnesses) testifies that we, too, can have the power to become the sons of God-not in spite of our struggles, but because of them.

At the heart of endurance is discipline, and nowhere is discipline more needed than in the arena of Christian living. Using the race as his metaphor, Paul exhorts the saints to exercise self-discipline to "...lay aside every weight, and the sin..." so that we can run the race unencumbered.

The baggage we often carry isn't too hard to handle if we are standing still, but in the race of Christlike living, we need to get rid of the *weights* that often hamper our ability even to enter the race, let alone endure and win.

Paul also realized that Christlike living is a costly matter. No one enters a race without paying some kind of price to get to the end. With Jesus, it was the cross. Certainly he didn't just walk up to that event and say, "Let's get on with it!" He endured incredible pain and suffering (especially in his final days) to reach the ultimate goal. Paul asks (paraphrasing), "Can we do any less?"

Jesus is truly the beginning and the end (author and finisher) of who and what we are. If we can fix our eyes on him (not on the goal line, but on him) then no struggle will be too great for endurance. However, we can't stand still and we can't become weak in spiritual matters if we are to win the race. If we fix our eyes on that which is of value, the race won't seem so difficult, nor will it seem so long. If our attention is diverted, even for a moment, we may stumble and fall. The resulting injury may take its toll, in terms of making the race more difficult to complete.

Racing in the twentieth century is not much different than it was in Paul's day. Today, in the 40-yard dash, the sprinter focuses on the goal and with a *burst* of speed races to the finish line. In this event, the sprinter's paramount concern is to reach the goal line first. In effect, all of the runner's energy is exerted for a short-term result. The distance runner, however,

# FINISH LINE

while focused ultimately on the finish line, must draw from deep internal resources if he is to run the course and win the race. To be prepared, he must exercise his muscles, heart and lungs on a daily basis—he must practice. He must care for his body by eating, sleeping and stretching properly. He must listen to the counsel and direction of his coach, and he must be willing to run the defined course. Failure to address any of these areas will mean defeat for the distance runner. He simply won't have what it takes to reach the final goal.

It's important to recognize that these same factors must be present in followers of Christ if we are to endure to the end. If we do not endure the spiritual training of our coach (the Master), run the defined course and feed ourselves properly with the good food and rest of the Spirit, we simply won't make it to the end. We will always run out of steam, set our own course and compromise the integrity of the race.

One of the wisest pieces of counsel I ever heard from a football coach was offered by Lou Holtz in one of his motivational speeches to his Notre Dame athletes. He said (paraphrasing): "One thing I can always count on in life is that it has its ups and downs. I know for a fact that in life I will be to the top and I will be to the bottom again and again. Knowing this, then, I can accept whatever comes my way as a learning experience and with an awareness that a power greater than mine is in charge."

We, too, as sons and daughters of God, must recognize that life is not "fair," but the God we serve is good, and he allows those things in our lives that will best serve our spiritual well-being in the race of life. Endurance is not simply "hanging in there" until something better comes along. It's recognizing with a sense of joy that God is in charge, and we are participating in the big race. If we will just stay the course, we will come out on top as winners.

## Tantalizing Glimpses - Faint Whispers \*

### "And It Came To Pass"

The phrase "and it come to pass" occurs in the English translation of the Book of Mormon 1,381 times. It appears 202 times in 1 Nephi alone. The book with the highest number of uses of "it come to pass" phrases is Alma with 431. In contrast, the Book of Moroni makes no mention of it. Sometimes the phrase is recorded as "NOW it come to pass" (Alma 29:45 RLDS, Alma 62:37 LDS) or "FOR BEHOLD, it come to pass" (Alma 20:4 RLDS, Alma 43:4 LDS) or "BUT BEHOLD, it come to pass" (Alma 24:70 RLDS, Alma 53:16 LDS). A prophetic form of the phrase, such as "and it SHALL come to pass" (2 Nephi 12:71 RLDS, 2 Nephi 29:13 LDS), is recorded another 95 times in the Book of Mormon. Only the small books of Jacob, Enos and Omni do not use this in a prophetic sense.

"And it come to pass" is not unique to the Book of Mormon. The King James version of the Bible includes the same introductory phrase. "And it came to pass" or one of its derivatives, occurs 526 times in the Old Testament and 87 times in the New Testament. This suggests the phrase is Hebrew in origin and correlates with Nephi's statement, "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" (1 Nephi 1:2 RLDS, LDS).

\* Title used by permission

# AND IT CAME *to pass*

by Barbara Smith Wilkinson

Once again I woke up at three o'clock in the morning, crying because Max, my Alzheimer husband, was so bad. I was frustrated because he was way over-medicated. The doctors insisted he wasn't, that he was in the advanced stages of the disease.

For the umpteenth time, I poured out my soul to the Lord for help, wisdom and comfort in Max's and my behalf. Once again a peace settled over me, and I knew the Lord was aware of our terrible problems.

The next morning while driving over to visit Max, I listened to a sermon on the car radio. The minister said that the night before he had spent the whole evening with his new computer, determining what was the most common phrase in the Bible. My instant guess was "And it came to pass." It is the most common phrase in the Book of Mormon, so I expected it to be the most common phrase in the Bible, too.

I was thrilled when he verified that I was correct, not with pride because I knew so much but because it was an added testimony to me of the divinity of the Book of Mormon.

It took a theologian a full evening using a computer and a concordance to figure that out, so I knew it was impossible for an ignorant farm boy to know enough to use that phrase the most in the Book of Mormon if, as the world says, he wrote the book instead of translating it. That is just one of many proofs that it is a divine book of ancient origin, translated from the plates as Joseph Smith testified until the day he died.

But the Lord had an additional understanding for me in that sermon. The minister's understanding



Max and Barbara Wilkinson

of the phrase was totally different from mine. I understood it to mean "And it happened that" or "The next thing that happened was...." The minister said this phrase didn't say, "And it came to stay" but "... it came to pass." He explained that no matter how good or bad life is right now, it will soon change. I had never thought of that meaning, and it was strangely comforting to me at the time. I realized that Max's awful condition would change. I was again reassured that the Lord was aware of Max's suffering and my heartache.

Just as the minister said, Max's situation soon changed. Within a few days, Max just stopped breathing. There was no struggle at all; he had received the promise, "And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them..." (D & C 42:12f RLDS, D & C 42:46 LDS). I couldn't be sad for him; he had graduated to paradise with the Lord.

The disease was diagnosed when Max was only 56 years old. The medical staff continually told me he could spend 20 to 30 years in long-term care because he had gotten it when he was so young. My continual prayers had been that when Max had to go into long-term care, he would go quickly.

Praise the Lord, he answered my prayers. Max was in long-term care only seven months. The medical staff had never seen anyone with Alzheimer's disease deteriorate so quickly.

Of course I miss Max. He was my best friend and my spiritual partner, but the scriptures tell us, "...we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). "All" takes in the good and the bad. I have to trust that even Max's early death was planned by the Lord to work good in both our lives.

A scripture I have learned to cling to throughout the troubles of life is Proverbs 3:5-7, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." But last year while I was reading through the Bible, I found that the next phrase after this scripture stood out boldly: "Be not wise in thine own eyes..." (Proverbs 3:7). Why, I wondered, was God teaching me this eternal truth now? I soon learned why.

Overnight, Max went into the advanced stages of Alzheimer's. Unfortunately, we were in California, 2,000 miles from home. The doctor was doubtful that we would ever be able to get him home. I must admit I had my doubts, too, but

reminded, "Be not wise in thine own eyes," so I turned it over to the Lord.

My wisdom told me it was impossible for Max to go through two large, crowded airports and sit quietly on a plane for four or five hours, since every waking hour he paced, refusing to go into areas where there were more than one or two people. But I was reminded that 90-year-old Sarah scoffed when she was told she would bear a child. The angel then asked her, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:13 IV, Genesis 18:14 KJ). I had to admit that over the centuries God has done many miraculous things, so I was going to have to trust him on this one.

One evening, I listed seven miracles that would have to happen for us to get Max home without accident or incident. I prayed about that and then stuffed the list in my Doctrine and Covenants. Like so many of our prayers or thoughts, I forgot all about it as I worked with Max and the staff. With time, we laid out a plan for getting him home, and it worked perfectly.


After we were home about two weeks, I found the list. All seven miracles had occurred during that trip, exactly as I had requested them. So be assured God is still a God of miracles!

So often during Max's stay in hospitals and long-term care, I would think I had the answer to a problem. The Lord would admonish me, "Be not wise in thine own eyes." I would then wait on the Lord. In each instance, when the answer came, it was far superior to what I would have done.

As I look back over the six years that I took care of Max, I see that I made a lot of mistakes, causing Max heartache and frustration. The Book of Mormon says: "When they are learned, they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves; Wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness, and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good, if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 6:59-61 RLDS, 2 Nephi 9:28-29 LDS). How often did I do things wrong because I didn't counsel with the Lord, thinking I could handle it without his help?

I pray the day will come when I will no longer be wise in my own eyes, but seek the Lord's counsel in all things.





# The Most Simple Truth In The Book of Mormon

*by Raymond C. Treat*

The most simple truth in the Book of Mormon is the idea of a covenant. We know that the Book of Mormon has a reputation for being plain and simple. My experience has been that if we understand the concept of a covenant relationship, it becomes even more simple because the term expresses the real purpose for the Book of Mormon. Once that is understood, other things fall into place. For example, the term provides an insight into the meaning of the name "Mormon" and gives us the reason for the Restoration. It is true that the more we understand the word of God, the more simple it becomes. This also applies to the Book of Mormon. Once we appreciate the importance of the covenant, we have a major key to understanding it.

The first two verses in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 1:1-2 RLDS, 1 Nephi 1:1-3 LDS) form a seven-part chiasm (a form of Hebrew poetry in which the first half of the poem is repeated in reverse order in the second half). The words "knowledge, record, language, learning of the Jews, language, record, knowledge" appear in that order. The central point is the most important point in a chiasm. Therefore, in this instance, the phrase "the learning of the Jews" is important and even more so because it appears in the first two verses of the book. The Lord seems to be telling us that the learning of the Jews is a key to understanding the Book of Mormon and underscores it by placing the concept within a chiasm, which, in itself, is a manifestation of the learning of the Jews.

In the fourth chapter (fifteenth chapter LDS) of 1 Nephi, the Book of Mormon tells us that the word "Jews" in this context means "house of Israel" (1 Nephi 4:27, 32 RLDS, 1 Nephi 15:17, 20 LDS). In other places it explains that the house of Israel is made up of those who have a covenant (1 Nephi 4:17 RLDS, 1 Nephi 15:14 LDS; 2 Nephi 6:1, 12:42 RLDS, 2 Nephi 9:1, 29:1 LDS; 3 Nephi 7:29, 9:63, 13:56 RLDS; 3 Nephi 16:5, 20:25, 29:3 LDS; Mormon 2:42 RLDS, Mormon 5:14 LDS). Therefore, the Book of Mormon is telling us in its first two verses that the learning of the house of Israel, or those who have a covenant, is a key to its understanding.



There is no more important "learning" from the house of Israel than the concept of a covenant.

In fact, the concept of a covenant relationship is the most basic truth in *all* the word of God. We are told in Hebrews 9:14-17 that Jesus came to die to establish the covenant (see also Helaman 5:68 RLDS, Helaman 14:14-15 LDS). As Book of Mormon believers, we need to understand this. If we had understood the importance of the covenant, we would have known that the main purpose of the Book of Mormon was to restore a knowledge of the covenants to the Lamanites (Indians).

Let me illustrate. If you would ask your Book of Mormon-believing friends, "What is the main purpose of the Book of Mormon?" most of them would say to convince the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ. This is a purpose of the Book of Mormon, but not its *main* purpose. Three references (Title Page, 3 Nephi 10:1-7 RLDS, 3 Nephi 21:22-28 LDS and Mormon 2:39-41 RLDS, Mormon 5:12-14 LDS) tell us that its main purpose is to restore a knowledge of the covenants to the Lamanites. By missing this, we miss two significant things: the importance of the covenant relationship *and* the importance of the Lamanites.

We can not assist in restoring the covenant to the Lamanites, however, if we do not understand and live the covenant lifestyle ourselves. Covenant people obey the Lord. They do not trifle with the words of Christ (Mosiah 1:39 RLDS, Mosiah 2:9 LDS). Therefore, if we are told to take the Book of Mormon to the Lamanites, then we must do it. We are told in (Section 3:15b RLDS, Section 10:62 LDS) of the Doctrine and Covenants that when we take the Book of Mormon to the Lamanites, they will receive it, build it up, and "bring to light the true points of my doctrine."

According to 3 Nephi 9:92 RLDS, (3 Nephi 21:6 LDS), one of the true points of Christ's doctrine is to make a covenant with him. (To "come unto me and be baptized" is to make a covenant.) Apparently, the tribe of Manasseh (the Lamanites) has something to offer the tribe of Ephraim (most of the rest of us). Could it be that Native Americans know more about covenants than we do? If we would start by being obedient in taking the Book of Mormon to the Lamanites, then perhaps we would be ready for a deeper understanding of the meaning of the covenant relationship.



Here is something else to consider. Take this mental test. Fill in the blank in this sentence: The Book of Mormon is named after \_\_\_\_\_ . Most people would write Mormon. But why should the Book of Mormon be named after a man when the Bible and the Doctrine and Covenants are not? Mormon tells us that he was named after the land of Mormon (3 Nephi 2:96 RLDS, 3 Nephi 5:12 LDS). He characterizes it as "the land in the which Alma did establish the church among this people."

Alma established the church by restoring the covenant relationship (Mosiah 9:41, 44 RLDS, Mosiah 18:10, 13 LDS) between God and his people, and the book was named after the land where that happened. This took place after about two hundred years of spiritual decline among the Nephites. Therefore, spiritually speaking, the name "Book of Mormon" means "Book of the Restoration of the Covenant."

On a similar note, the title Doctrine and Covenants incorporates the word "covenant" in its title. Indirectly, the Bible does as well. The term "testament" in "Old and New Testaments" is the old English word for covenant. Thus, all three books emphasize the word in their titles, validating it as the most important concept in the word of God.

We are told in 2 Nephi 12:42 RLDS, (2 Nephi 29:1 LDS) that the purpose of the Restoration, this "marvelous work," is "that I may remember my covenants." This means that if we treat the covenant lightly, we will miss the Lord's definition of his church, which is those who have a covenant. In 1 Nephi 3:230 RLDS, (1 Nephi 14:14 LDS), we have two parallel synonymous phrases:

...upon the saints of the church of the Lamb,  
and upon the covenant people of the Lord,...

Both saints and church are defined as those who have a covenant. This phrase "covenant relationship" catches up all spiritual concepts and therefore truly helps make the Book of Mormon a plain and simple book. It is the single, most important truth in the Book of Mormon and can be summed up in the words of Omni:

Yea, come unto him  
And offer your whole souls  
as an offering unto him,...

-- Omni 1:47 RLDS

-- Omni 1:26 LDS



# The

The advertisement for a well-known mechanism said, "50% fewer moving parts." The implication was that the contrivance would be less costly, more reliable, and easier to master. The same idea might apply to language.

Recently a lady asked me what I was working on. I simply handed her the manuscript I had written. She looked at it for a moment, then said, "My, what a vocabulary." Far from feeling flattered or complacent, I knew I had failed. I thought, "Oh no! I'm going to have to rewrite that again." I knew that if I had done my work well, it would have opened the concept I was writing about in simple and direct words without impressing a reader with how extensive my vocabulary or education might be. The focus needed to be on clearly transmitting the idea I was sending to the reader without getting myself tangled in the story. Good writing is like fine photography: you can clearly see the details of a good picture without thinking of the photographer.

It is true that certain words create sharper images than words in common usage, but that is not true if the reader has only a vague understanding of what the words mean. Mark Twain once told an aspiring writer, "Anyone can write; the words are all in the dictionary." The skill of a communicator is not measured in a demonstration of the words at his command. It is measured by how well he can transmit his message to the reader or listener. To be successful, the vocabulary he uses must be determined more by the vocabulary of the receiver than by his own.

The reality of this is demonstrated by Rigoberto Menchu in her book *I, Rigoberto, An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. She said the natives were forced to attend a Catholic church where the scriptures were read in Latin. The only message they got was that the church was the authority and they had better do as instructed or they would be in deep trouble. She became one of the few natives who learned to read, and she began reading the Bible for herself and to others. They loved the book because it was such a wonderful story of God's love and his help for the oppressed. She said when it was read in words they could understand, they related well to it because it was the way they believed and lived but not at all what the priests had been telling them.

This explains why the Wycliffe Bible Translators live with native people, sometimes as long as 20 years, to learn the exact meaning and inflections of their words so they can translate the Bible into words that convey the precise meaning of the scriptures.

Nephi was aware that the message of God needed to be plain and easily understood. He says, ...I must speak, concerning the doctrine of Christ: wherefore I shall speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying. For my soul delighteth in plainness: for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding: for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding.

-- 2 Nephi 13:3-5 RLDS  
-- 2 Nephi 31:2-3 LDS

# Beauty of Book of Mormon Simplicity

by John Henderson

Nephi put his finger on perhaps the central point regarding the beauty of the Book of Mormon. It had been buried, hidden from men, so it did not go through endless translations and interpretations by generations of men. Its original meanings come through to the reader in simple, direct words that do not require a Ph.D. to interpret. Jesus uses words a grade-school student can understand so that even the *doctrine* he is teaching is easy to grasp. Since the words and phrases are understandable, the message goes directly to our minds and creates mental pictures of what the Lord is telling us.

One of the most moving passages of scripture in the Book of Mormon is in Third Nephi. Our hearts are deeply touched by the Nephites' experience. Jesus' words could not be spoken or written, but the people were given the gift of understanding so his message penetrated their hearts. Nephi tells us:

It came to pass that he (Jesus) went again a little way off, and prayed unto the Father: and tongue can not speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. And the multitude did hear, and do bear record, and their hearts were open, and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed, that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man.

--3 Nephi 9:32-34 RLDS

--3 Nephi 19:32-34 LDS

The Lord considers it so important for everyone to know the fullness of the gospel that he promises in the Doctrine and Covenants that "...it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fullness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language,..." (Section 87:4 RLDS, Section 90:11 LDS). His own tongue is his native language, the language that he uses and understands.

# Bearded in *Abeso*

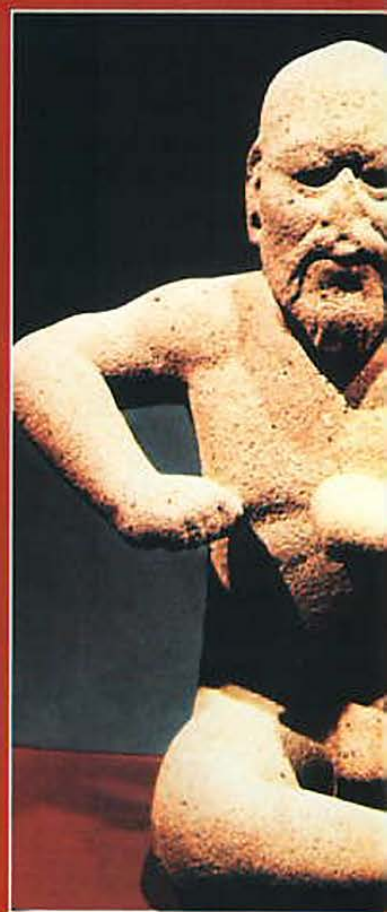
by Diane E. Wirth

There are two schools of thought as to how the Americas were populated. More generally accepted among scholars is the theory of *isolationism*, which holds to the tenet that Siberians crossed the Bering Land Bridge thousands of years ago, eventually filtering down through North, Middle and South America. This isolationist paradigm is the standard view taught in academic institutions today. The other hypothesis is the theory of *diffusionism*, which is a mixing of cultures as a result of early voyages to the Americas long before Columbus made the claim of being the first. This theory is not widely accepted, although mounting evidence is becoming quite impressive.

Those who adhere to the theory of diffusionism collect data which they believe contributes to the plausibility that Pre-Columbian voyages were not only possible, but indeed did take place. Diffusionists do not exclude the Bering Land Bridge as a route to the Americas, but maintain that in addition to this small group of early travelers to the Americas, people from other cultures came across the seas. Most of the evidence is of a tangible nature, such as flora, fauna, inscriptions and artifacts—many having counterparts in the Old World.

The isolationists, however, explain these things away by declaring either that the so-called evidence is a result of deception, or if validated, that any parallel developments are merely coincidental and perhaps a result of the human psyche, or what the famous psychologist Carl Gustav Jung has termed "the collective unconscious." The latter theory of chance similarities attributes cultural preferences common to both the Old and New Worlds to certain innate qualities that are part of human nature; and that being the case, these parallels may occur anywhere in the world in complete isolation or influence from other cultures.

A wise choice would be to advocate both the theory of *diffusionism* as well as that of *independent invention*. What needs to be investigated are the many similarities in traditions of all ancient cultures. Those that prove to be exactly the same,



# Foreigners america



oceans apart, cannot always be attributed to coincidence, isolation, or the human psyche.

From an anthropological point of view, several studies on blood types of native Americans compared to blood types of other world cultures are worthy of mention. G.A. Matson (1967: 188), a blood grouping specialist, found that "the American Indians are not completely Mongoloid." It has been determined that peoples from Mongolia have a predominance of type B blood. If Native American ancestors come primarily over the Bering Land Bridge from Asia, type B would be prevalent; however, this is not necessarily the case. These studies report Native Americans generally have blood type O. In fact, less than 1% are type B, which type one would expect to be in abundance if their ancestors were of pure Mongol stock (Beals 1961:78). Researchers find that, except for the Eskimos and some other Athapaskan groups such as the Apache and the Navajo, blood group B is next to nonexistent among Native Americans throughout North, Middle and South America (Eustache 1981: Boyd 1950: 21).

Skeletal remains support this hypothesis, as well. For example, Andrzej Wiercinski (1972: 232-248), a craniologist at the University of Warsaw, analyzed a great many skulls from major Mesoamerican sites and discovered a variety of races. He found the Amerindian stock to be composed of not only Asians, but many with features "introduced by ... migrants from the Western Mediterranean area." Like Matson, he noted that "ancient Mexico was inhabited by a chain of interrelated populations which cannot be regarded as typical Mongoloids."

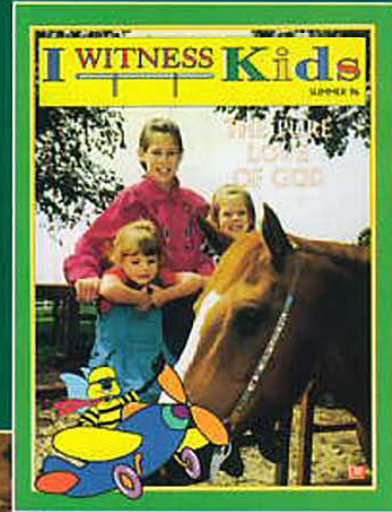
The area of Mesoamerica is of special significance to this article and covers an area where high cultures existed in Pre-Columbian times, stretching from north-central Mexico to Costa Rica. Studies of this part of the world are relatively new, whereas the study of ancient Near Eastern cultures has long had well established theories regarding traditions.

*(cont. on page 20)*



### FRAA INTERNSHIP

FRAA is building leaders for tomorrow. Forty-seven young adults have completed the program since its beginning in 1992.



### THE WITNESS

FRAA is reaching 17,000 homes with The Witness. In 1996 it was redesigned to provide a more attractive, interesting and professional publication.



### BOOK OF MORMON DAYS

FRAA is bringing the Book of Mormon directly to the people by sponsoring Book of Mormon Days.



### FRAA HEADQUARTERS

FRAA has been able to provide expanded services since the acquisition of this facility in 1990. The building houses FRAA's administrative offices, a research library, classroom facilities, and a bookstore.

# FRAA '96

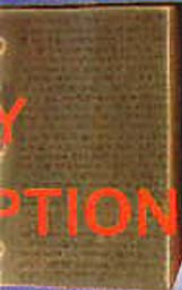
These are some of the programs your contributions have made possible in 1996.

**I WITNESS KIDS**

FRAA is creating new tools that encourage children to explore the Book of Mormon.

I Witness Kids is designed for children ages five through twelve.

**PRESENTS:**



... as taught in  
... rmon

**BOOK OF MORMON**

... g the  
... n message  
... eople by  
... k of  
... nationwide.

**L**ook where  
we're  
going in '97

Your ideas for the FRAA '97 program include Book of Mormon instructional classes, archaeological tours to Mexico, increased outreach opportunities by publishing the Book of Mormon, expanded youth programs, and development of educational programs.

# NO FUNDS



## NO PROGRAMS! ...Unless

YOU make a financial commitment to make it happen, these programs cannot continue. To do your part to ensure the continued success of FRAA's efforts to promote Jesus Christ through the Book of Mormon, send your contribution or monthly pledge to:

FRAA  
210 W. White Oak  
Independence, MO 64050

Contact FRAA at (816)461-3722 to receive additional information or to request your monthly contribution packet.



## You have asked ...

**Question:** *What is the significance of the phrase "plain and precious" found in the Book of Mormon?*

**Answer:** The phrase "plain and precious" is unique to the Book of Mormon. It is found in seven (RLDS) and six (LDS) verses. All references to this phrase are contained in 1 Nephi chapters 3 and 5 (RLDS) and 1 Nephi chapters 13 and 19 (LDS).

Its significance centers around the Book of Mormon's claim to contain the plain and precious things that were taken away from the gospel before it went forth to all the nations of the Gentiles. These basic truths were physically removed, altered, or obscured in meaning by the "great and abominable church."

The Book of Mormon uses plain and simple language to restore these basic truths to those who are prepared to study with a sincere heart. Its beauty and simplicity remove the barrier of complexity that often confuses us. We then become spiritually receptive, which allows the Holy Spirit to teach us.

What are the basic truths the Book of Mormon restores? We can't address them all in this answer but would suggest you begin with the study of "authority" (3 Nephi 5 RLDS, 3 Nephi 11 LDS) and the "doctrine of Christ" (2 Nephi 13 RLDS, 2 Nephi 31 LDS). We encourage you to visit the FRAA bookstore or review our catalog for more study materials on these subjects. May the Lord bless your desire to grow in spiritual knowledge!

If you have questions regarding FRAA or the Book of Mormon, please write to us.

When I was finishing high school, I spent summers in Michigan with my sister and her family. There I met a very handsome young man who was a member of a strange church. When he began to tell me about the Book of Mormon, I thought, This is fantasy land!

One day Dan asked me to read the Book of Mormon. No way, I thought. It's a dangerous sin to add to or take away from the Bible. He said he'd never marry a girl who wasn't a member of his church. I decided I should read it and find the obvious errors so that this intense young man could be convinced to put it aside and move on to something that made sense.

My mother warned me that his religion was a cult. My brother-in-law hated the Book of Mormon so much he threw it down a flight of stairs. Worse, my own fear caused me to hesitate. I decided to pray. I asked God to remove my desire to read the Book of Mormon if it had power to lead me away from him. Instead, he removed the fear which held me captive.

Something urged me to compare the message of the Book of Mormon with the message of the Bible. By the time I finished the last page, one simple exactness stood out: the Book of Mormon teaches of the same God the Father; Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Ghost!

When that realization hit, I knew I did not have to prove the truth to anyone. My life would be my witness. I became a new creature. Now I seek God's approval, and he has the power to cause my family, friends and people of the world to approve of what they see in me. Praise be to God forevermore.



Bonnie Loeding

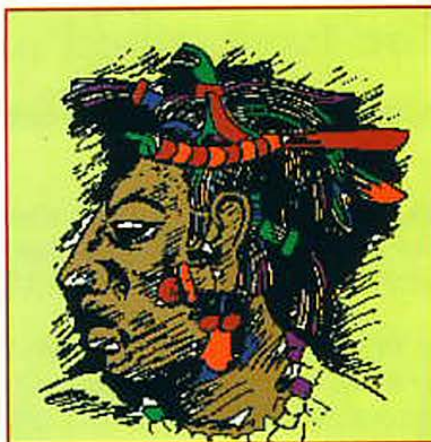


Fig. 1: Maya ruler, Chac Zut, Tablet of the Slaves, Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico.

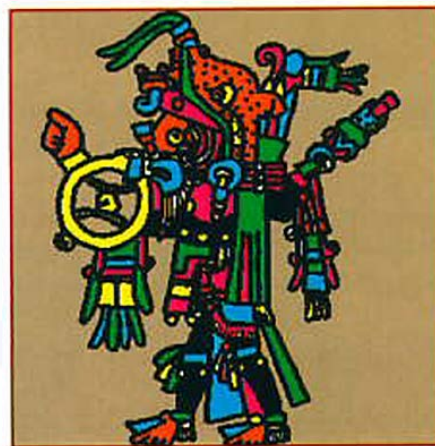


Fig. 2: False Beard on Mixtec Warrior (redrawn after the Codex Nuttall).

A test performed on the Maya of Chiapas, Mexico, indicated non-Mongolian ancestry for these people (Reed 1971: 11). An analysis of ear wax, the consistency of which is determined largely by a simple pair of genes, determined a different genetic make-up for these Maya than those people who would have migrated over the Bering Strait from Northeast Asia.

Seldom seen in general books on Mesoamerica or in exhibits of Mesoamerican art are bearded figures that appear to be a cultural enigma. Natives of the western hemisphere cannot grow beards except for a few sparse hairs, which in ancient times were usually plucked (Schellhas 1904: 599). As a rule, scholars make no special comment regarding these men with beards, but on occasion refer to them as "elderly" or "wise." However, there is little basis for such statements. If a man is portrayed with a beard and wrinkles, he is old; but not all of these sculptures have men with wrinkled skin. Men who can grow a beard in the elderly years, can also grow a beard by the age of 18-25. Except for a scanty growth of facial hair, Native Americans, young or old, do not grow a sufficient amount of hair to produce a full beard.

Although early portraits of bearded men are in the minority, hundreds have been found in the ancient ruins of Mesoamerica, supporting the existence of a foreign element in this part of the world. A typical Maya Indian (Fig. 1) has a malformed head (intentionally deformed while an infant), a large but soft curving nose, and a hairless chin. The other portraits shown herein are from various cultures throughout Mesoamerica (Figs. 2-6). A few clearly wear false beards as was also the custom among rulers in Egypt and China (d'Auria, Lacovara, and Roehrig 1988: 164). Perhaps some Mesoamericans wore false beards to emulate lineages for whom facial hair was a natural phenomena. This is particularly true of the Mixtec of Oaxaca, Mexico, whose history is documented as early as A.D. 692. One of their accordion-like picture books called the *Codex*



Fig. 3: Bearded terracotta head from VeraCruz, Mexico (drawn after photograph, Von Wuthenau, 1965: 135).

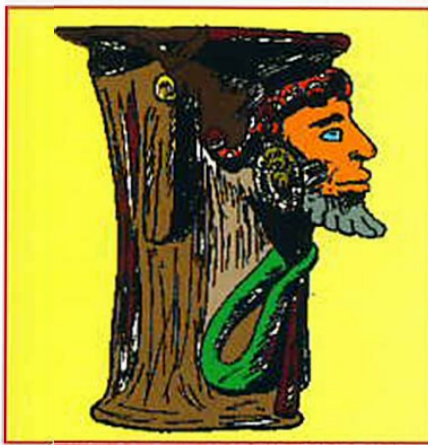


Fig. 4: Bearded man on terracotta incense burner, Iximche, Guatemala, (drawn after photograph, Musee de l'Homme, Paris).

*Nuttall* is filled with such portraits (Fig. 2); however, a great many of the beards in Mesoamerica are natural.

A study by Kirk Magleby (n.d.) shows that there was a preponderance of bearded figures in the Classic Period (A.D. 300-900) of Mesoamerica, with a diminishing number appearing after that time.

Apparently none remained by the time of the Spanish Conquest in A.D. 1521. Any foreigners from across the sea may have been absorbed by the original natives through marriage, or they may even have been annihilated through war, disease, or other unknown factors. Whatever the demise of these bearded foreigners, some of their customs and traditions became infused with those of indigenous Mesoamerican cultures.

Although not a diffusionist, Irene Nicholson expressed her opinion regarding obvious parallels peculiar to Mesoamerica and the Old World. In her book, *Mexican and Central American Mythology* (1967: 19), Nicholson is befuddled over the wide variety of ethnic groups found in Mesoamerica, noting a possible influence of Judaism and Mediterranean cultures.

Since these foreigners had beards, they most certainly were not Mongols who traveled via the Bering Land Bridge from Siberia. Mongols also do not have the prominent hooked nose as do most of these bearded Mesoamericans. A specific answer cannot be given as to which part of the world these bearded men came; but an analysis of cultural traditions leaves a string of clues. Parallels found in the Near East and in Mesoamerica are quite impressive, three of which will be considered.

### Wheeled Statuettes

The first wheeled objects found in the 1880's in Mexico and El Salvador were given to European museums and were not taken seriously by anthropologists. In fact, some sixty years passed before students of ancient Mesoamerican cultures acknowledged the existence of wheeled statuettes in this part of



Fig. 5: Vase with bearded man from Quirigua, Guatemala (drawn after photograph, St Louis Art museum).



Fig. 6: Bearded man on Stela 3, La Venta, Tabasco, Mexico.

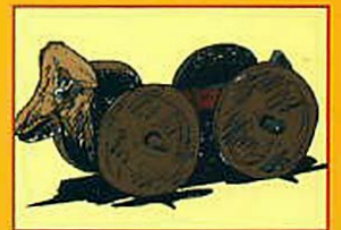


Fig. 7: Wheeled animal with flat-bed back, Nahualac, Mexico. Housed at Musee de l'Homme, Paris (drawn after photo, Boggs 1973: Fig. 1).



Fig. 8: Wheeled dog, Tres Zapotes, Veracruz, Mexico. (housed at Museum of Jalapa, Veracruz).

the world. Since 1940 over seventy wheeled terracotto figurines have been found (Boggs 1973: 3). The age of these objects dates to as early as 100 B.C., while most were constructed between A.D. 500-900.

The three areas where most of the wheeled pieces were discovered are Western Central Mexico, Veracruz, and El Salvador (Borhegyi 1970: 24). However, no wheeled carts, wagons, or other mobile vehicles were in use on a functional scale at the time of the Spanish Conquest; and most scholars of Mesoamerican studies believe the wheel was never used other than on small ritual objects.

Standing animal effigies mounted on four solid disk wheels attached by means of wooden axles was the character of these objects; but due to the fragile organic nature of wood, no axles have survived to our day. It has been determined that there were five ways to attach wheels (Ekholm 1946: 222-228; Borhegyi 1970: 18-25). This is very significant and suggests that early Mesoamericans were not novices in the use of the axle.

Whether they chose to use the wheel to transport people or goods for a portion of their history, is something we may never know, but what is noteworthy is that besides the typical fully-formed animal with attached wheels, some have a body that transforms into a flatbed or platform (Fig. 7). Why is this done if not intended to transport something or someone?

Today some books written by uninformed authors still describe these wheeled objects as children's toys. However, given the context in which they are often found (in burials), it is obvious these objects have a funerary ritual function, and are accepted as such by most scholars. As will be seen, the wheel had great significance to the Mesoamericans' understanding of the life cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

Perhaps the wheel had no everyday utilitarian relevance, but rather was symbolic, employed in a religious atmosphere, and considered sacred. Buried with the dead, it is now understood that these wheeled objects were considered vehicles of transport for the dead. Like the sun, the deceased would descend into the Underworld, pass through it and be reborn in the morning. The solar cycle of the sun, the calendar round, and the cyclic belief of life in Mesoamerican thought, all point to the shape of a sacred wheel. The question is, "Was the symbol of the wheel so revered by the Mesoamerican community that its use in the mundane activities of man would have been considered sacrilegious?" To the native Mesoamerican, the real world was a supernatural, religious world. Things of a functional nature were secondary to the outlook of his/her existence in the cosmos. Few aspects of life were not infused with religious meaning; in fact most art forms in Mesoamerica have a significant supernatural connotation.

Frances Gibson, who lived among the Maya and studied their ways, found a religious importance behind the symbol of the wheel. Today, many of the Maya in remote areas of

Guatemala walk and choose to carry heavy loads rather than use a cart. Gibson asked the Maya why they still do this after having been exposed to wheels for over four hundred years. Their response was that "the wheel was a symbol of the ancient sun god and as such it was a sacred symbol" (Gibson 1974: 63).

Although these figurines portray a variety of animals, with one example actually humanoid, the majority of these pieces are dogs (Fig. 8), and dogs have a special meaning in Old and New World mythologies in conjunction with the afterlife. The primary function of the dog was to act as an escort through the Underworld, where the deceased must pass through in order to be reborn. This was especially held as a tradition in Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome. The dog in Mesoamerica was not only considered a valuable companion and guide for the deceased (Miller and Taube 1933: 80), but was symbolic for the night sun (Fig. 9). Being closely associated with the sun, the dog knew the way through the dark and foreboding Underworld.

Other animals depicted on these wheeled figurines were deer, jaguars, and monkeys, also associated with the sun in Mesoamerica (Figs. 10 and 11). Oddly enough, lions and baboons were identified with the sun in Egypt, and the deer with the sun in much of the rest of the ancient Old World.

Whether or not these wheeled objects found in Mesoamerica were ever used in a utilitarian manner, one needs to ask, "Where did they get such an idea in the first place?" Could this possibly have been an independent invention in light of their knowledge of the various ways they knew to employ an axle? Once again we must look to the Near East, because this is where wheeled religious funerary cult objects were made since early times, and its practice continued for thousands of years (Littauer and Crouwel 1979). In fact, Gordon Ekholm noted: "Miniature clay vehicles in the form of animals have been found in Mesopotamia and they are remarkably similar to those from Mexico" (Ekholm 1946: 227).

### Horned Altars & Incense Burners

Exodus 30:2 mentions the use of a horned altar comparable in style to that in Fig. 12, found in Megiddo. Similar altars were also found in Ekron (Tel Miqne), a Philistine city, dating from the seventh century B.C. Some scholars believe the horns may have supported a bowl of incense, but it is not known exactly how these four-horned altars were used (Nielsen 1991: 29). Incense pottery stands with a bowl at the top (Fig. 13), were found in Megiddo and used in connection with religious rituals, as were the altars. Kjeld Nielsen, who has studied Old World altars and burners, writes: "What appear to be small incense altars have been found in Egypt, South Arabia and Mesopotamia" (Nielsen 1991: 29, 33). Most of these altars are made of limestone, but one ceramic altar was found just north of Jerusalem (Haran 1995: 31).



Fig. 9: Dog with sun disk collar (drawn after Codex Vaticanus 3773).



Fig. 10: Wheeled deer, Cihuatlan, San Salvador (drawn after photo, Boggis 1973: Fig. 8).



Fig. 11: Wheeled monkey, Veracruz, Mexico (drawn after photo, Borhegyi 1970: 23).



Fig. 12: Limestone Horned Altar, Megiddo, circa 1000 B.C. (drawn after photo, Nielsen 1991: 28).



Fig. 13: Pottery Incense Stand Megiddo, circa 1200 B.C. (drawn after photo, Nielsen 1991: 29).

Some modern scholars, like Nielsen, believe these horned altars may have been used for the burning of incense, while other researchers see them as receptacles for offerings, such as grain or the meat of a sacrificed animal (Haran 1995: 32, 34). Sacrificial birds may have been placed on small altars, but because it was economical, grain and bread cakes were one of the more popular offerings. Menahem Haran writes: "A little frankincense may have been added to the cakes' dough...". In Israel, sometimes these cakes were left lying in place, while at other times, they were burned in fire (Haran 1995: 36). Incense was used on a wide scale in Mesoamerica as well; in fact, it was often mixed with grain, as was the practice in ancient Israel (Tozzer 1941: 104, 142).

A most interesting incense burner was found at Monte Alban, Oaxaca, Mexico (Fig. 14). The lower portion not only has the four horns of the square-shaped altar, but is divided in two, which was a standard feature of altars in the Near East. In addition this particular piece from Mesoamerica appears to incorporate the shape of clay incense burners found in the same area as Near Eastern horned altars. The four-horned base has slits for the smoke to escape, while the upper portion has a cylindrical tube topped by a bowl-like shape. Is this an altar-incensario combination derived after Near Eastern styles? In addition to the Mexican burner, Stephen Borhegyi (1956) reported on a Guatemalan horned stand for an incense burner, similar to the type of setup used in Israel.

### Star of David

Commonly referred to as the "Star of David," the sign composed of two equilateral triangles sharing a common center and pointing in opposite directions did not become widespread as an emblem of Judaism until the 19th century, although its earliest appearance in a Jewish context is from the 7th century B.C. (Edelstein 1990: 34). The truth of the matter is that this emblem was used in the Near East as early as the Bronze Age by many cultures. Although we do not know its mystical significance, of which many opinions have been offered, we are able to analyze the various elements that are frequently associated with the design.

At Ein Yael, a site five miles from Jerusalem, an interesting Roman Villa with mosaic floors was fortuitously and unexpectedly discovered. Ein Yael has a perennial spring that issues from a hillside cave, making this site an agricultural belt. Remains of a 2nd century A.D. Roman bathhouse stand at this villa. Most of mosaics contain marine scenes complete with many varieties of fish. Considering the location of Ein Yael, together with its natural springs and the nature of a bath house, the water motifs are appropriate. Many of the mosaic designs are encircled with a rope border--ropes often being associated with nautical themes. In a circular room of the lower bath house, a most amazing mosaic design was found containing a double-twisted



Fig. 14: Horned Incense Burner, Monte Alban, Oaxaca, Mexico, circa 1500-100 B.C. (housed in National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City).



Fig. 15: Mosaic Star of David in bath house of Roman villa, Ein Yael (drawn and reconstructed after photo, Edelstein Nov/Dec 1990: 33).



Fig. 16: Rope-like Star of David, frieze at synagogue, Capernaum (drawn after Reifenberg 1950:100).



Fig. 17: Star of David on Tombstone, southern France (drawn after Colas 1923: Fig. 742).

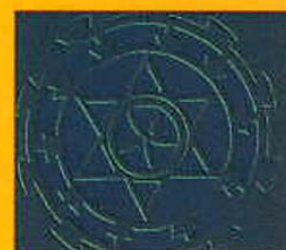


Fig. 18: Maya Star of David Flower, Guatemala (housed at National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Guatemala City).

rope forming the familiar six-pointed Star or Shield of David (Fig. 15). At the center of the star is a six-petalled rosette, and encompassing the whole, another rope in-the-round. What this symbol meant to the Romans is not known.

Erwin R. Goodenough, a scholar of Near Eastern symbols and traditions, suspects the Star of David evolved from the ancient rosette motif. He has adequately demonstrated that this star is interchangeable with the rosette form, and of course, sometimes the rosette is contained within the center of the star. From ancient times the rosette was associated with gods, royalty, and authority from on high. It was therefore quite apropos to be connected with the Hebrew Kings, David and Solomon. Goodenough also suggests that this "seal" or "shield" became a Jewish sign for protection. (Goodenough 1953-68: Vol. 8: 198).

The double triangle, with or without a rosette at the center like that found at Ein Yael, is apparently timeless. A rope-like ring encircles a soft-laced star with a smaller ring inside on a frieze at a synagogue at Copernoum, built during the Roman period (Fig. 16). Later in history, an outside circle enclosing a double-star with rosette center was engraved on a 17th century tombstone in southern France (Fig. 17). These are but a few of similar examples of the same motif.

While at the Notional Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala City, I saw a carved shell with Star of David motif in a circle with a rosette center (Fig 18). Shell gorgets such as this were not worn by commoners--they were worn by royalty. When I asked a Mayan art historian what she thought of this piece, she said, "It's a flower," and she is absolutely right.

However, everything in Mayan art has meaning, and moreover, why on earth does a flower design in Mesoamerica look as though it come from the Near East when there are hundreds of other ways to portray a flower?

Another interesting six-pointed star has petals on the outside, as opposed to an inside rosette, and at the bottom is a pennoted tail (Fig. 19). The long feathers pendent at the bottom were a motif in art styles of the ancient Near East (Fig. 20). These feathers are often connected to a ring (sometimes rope-like), which may enclose a rosette or deity.

An interesting stela dating to the 7th century A.D. was found in Campeche, Mexico, and may depict a Star of David design on an earflare (Fig. 21). This man, sporting a beard, may represent a dignitary from across the sea. The earflare design appears to be a partially submerged double star in the waters, the whole of the design encircled by a rope. Iconographers often brush this off as an "imbricated-ray" Year Sign (also known as "trapeze and ray" or "A-O sign"), a popular Mexican motif (Fig. 22a). But, is this really the case? The Mexican Year Sign is extremely varied in form and usage. It has been associated with the rain god, headdresses, war and

# Mesoamerica



Fig. 19. Star of David with Pennated Tail, Uxmal, Yucatan, Mexico (drawn after Holmes 1993: Pl. 57, No. 5).

Fig. 20: Assyrian Winged Disk with Pennated Tail.



Fig. 21: Bearded Man with partial Star of David Earflare, Stela from Campeche, Mexico (housed at National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City).



Fig. 22(a): Typical Mexican Year Sign (drawn after Miller and Taube 1993: 113).



Fig. 22(b): "Year 1 Rabbit," including Mexican Year Sign (drawn after Miller and Taube 1993: 113).

the calendar, the latter being the most significant application.

The Mixtec of Mexico named their years and bound them into fifty-two year cycles. For example Fig. 22b would read, "Year 1 Rabbit," the dot over the rabbit being their symbol for "one." According to Mary Ellen Miller and Karl Taube of Yale and the University of California, respectively, it is very likely the Mexican Year Sign derived from a bound bundle of grass (Miller and Taube 1993: 113). The earflare on the Campeche ruler does not resemble anything that is bound.

In support of my hypothesis that the Campeche stela design is a Mexican Year Sign, we must make a comparison. The typical Year Sign encompasses only the upper one-third of a Star of David type motif, as opposed to Campeche carving, which shows better than one-half of the star. In addition, Year Signs are often cut off by a straight bar (representing a tied knot), one-third from the top, which is too short to show the presence of an inner circle. But on the Campeche carving, one can detect a partial loop, perhaps to indicate a circle, as is the case with the Uxmal example (Fig. 19). The Campeche star also has a possible water pattern starting more than half way down the star, as opposed to the usual Mexican Year Sign bar higher up on the design. Many stelae immortalize rulers, and if this earflare is truly a partial Star of David sitting in the waters of the sea and encircled by a nautical rope, it would be plausible to suggest that this bearded man, or his ancestors, came from the Near East.

The Mexican Year Sign became quite popular throughout Mesoamerica and was even used by the Maya to denote military prowess and authority. Whether or not this sign evolved from the Star of David, which is doubtful, its significance is similar in that it was related to authority and power. If the earflare on the stela from Campeche (Fig 21), is not related to the Near Eastern six-pointed star, the complete Mesoamerican Star of David (Fig. 15), should be able to stand on its own, in that it is identical in form to those of the Near East.

#### ---Bibliography---

- d'Auria, Sue, Peter Lacovara, and Catharine H. Roehrig, 1988, *Mummies & Magic*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA.
- Beals, Carleton, 1961, *Nomads and Empire Builders*, Chilton, Philadelphia, PA.
- Boggs, Stanley H., 1973, "Salvadoran Varieties of Wheeled Figurines," in *Contributions to Mesoamerican Anthropology*, Pub. No. 1, Institute of Maya Studies of the Museum of Science, Miami, FL.
- Borhegyi, Stephen F., 1956, "El Incensario de 'Tres Asos' de Kominoljuyu," in *Anthropologia e Historia de Guatemala*, 8 (2). 1970, "Wheels and Mon," in *Archaeology*, Vol. 23, January.
- Boyd, William C., 1950, *Genetics and the Races of Man*, Boston.
- Colas, Louis, 1923, *La Tombe Basque*, Biarritz.
- Edelstein, Gershon, 1990, "What's a Roman Villa Doing Outside Jerusalem?", in *Bible Archaeology Review*, Nov/Dec.
- Ekholm, Gordon F., 1946, "Wheeled Toys in Mexico," in *American Antiquity*, Vol. 11, 4.
- Eustache, Francois, 1981, "North American Genesis," in *Frontiers of Science*, Vol. III, No. 3., Washington, D.C.
- Gibson, Frances, 1974, *The Seafarers: Pre-Columbian Voyages to America*, Dorrance & Co., Philadelphia, PA.
- Goodenough, Erwin R., 1953-68, *Jewish Symbols in a Greco-Roman Period*, Vol. 8, Bollingen Series XXXVII, Pantheon Books.
- Horan, Menohem, 1995, "Altar-ed States," in *Bible Review*, February.
- Holmes, William, 1883, "Art in Shell of the Ancient Americas," in *Second Annual*



Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, Washington D.C., No. 5.

Littauer, M.A., and J. H. Crowel, 1979. *Wheeled Vehicles and Ridden Animals in the Ancient Near East*, Leiden: Brill.

Magleby, Kirk A., n.d., *A Survey of Mesoomericon Bearded Figures*, (unpublished manuscript).

Motson, G. Albin, et al., 1967, "Distribution of Hereditary Blood Groups Among Indians in South America," in *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 27.

Miller, Mory, and Karl Taube, 1993, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, Thames & Hudson, New York.

Nicholson, Irene, 1967, *Mexican and Central American Mythology*, Poul Homlyn, New York.

Nielsen, Kjeld, 1991, "Ancient Aromas," in *Bible Review*, June.

Reed, Erik, K., 1971, "Commentary: Section I," in *Man Across the Sea*, Carroll L. Riley, et al., eds. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Reifenberg, A., 1950, *Ancient Hebrew Arts*, New York.

Schellhas, Paul, 1904, "Comparative Studies in the Field of Maya Antiquities," in *Central American Antiquities, Calendar Systems, and History*. Translated by Charles P. Bowditch, Smithsonian Institution, Bulletin 28, Washington D.C.

Tozzer, Alfred M., Translator and editor, 1941, "Londa's Relacion de las Cosos de Yucatan," in *Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology*, Vol 18., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Von Wuthenau, Alexander, 1965, *The Art of Terracotta Pottery in PreColumbian Central and South America*, Crown Publishers, New York.

Wiercinski, Andrzej, 1972, "Inter- and Intropopulational Racial Differentiation of Tlatilco, Cerro de las Mesas, Teotihuocan, Monte Alban and Yucatan Mayo", in *Act os, Documentos y Memorias, 36o Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*. 1970, Instituto de Estudios Peruonos, Limo.

Article used by permission  
The Ancient American  
P.O. Box 370  
Colfax, Wisconsin 54730



## Discover the Mysteries of the Past



~~Subscribe to~~

## "THE ANCIENT AMERICAN"

- An open forum for the avocationalist and the professional to share current finds.
- A magazine to raise the public's awareness of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas.
- A new magazine focusing on the prehistoric mysteries found in the Americas.
- A 4-color and black/white format that allows maximum visibility of the sites and artifacts shown.

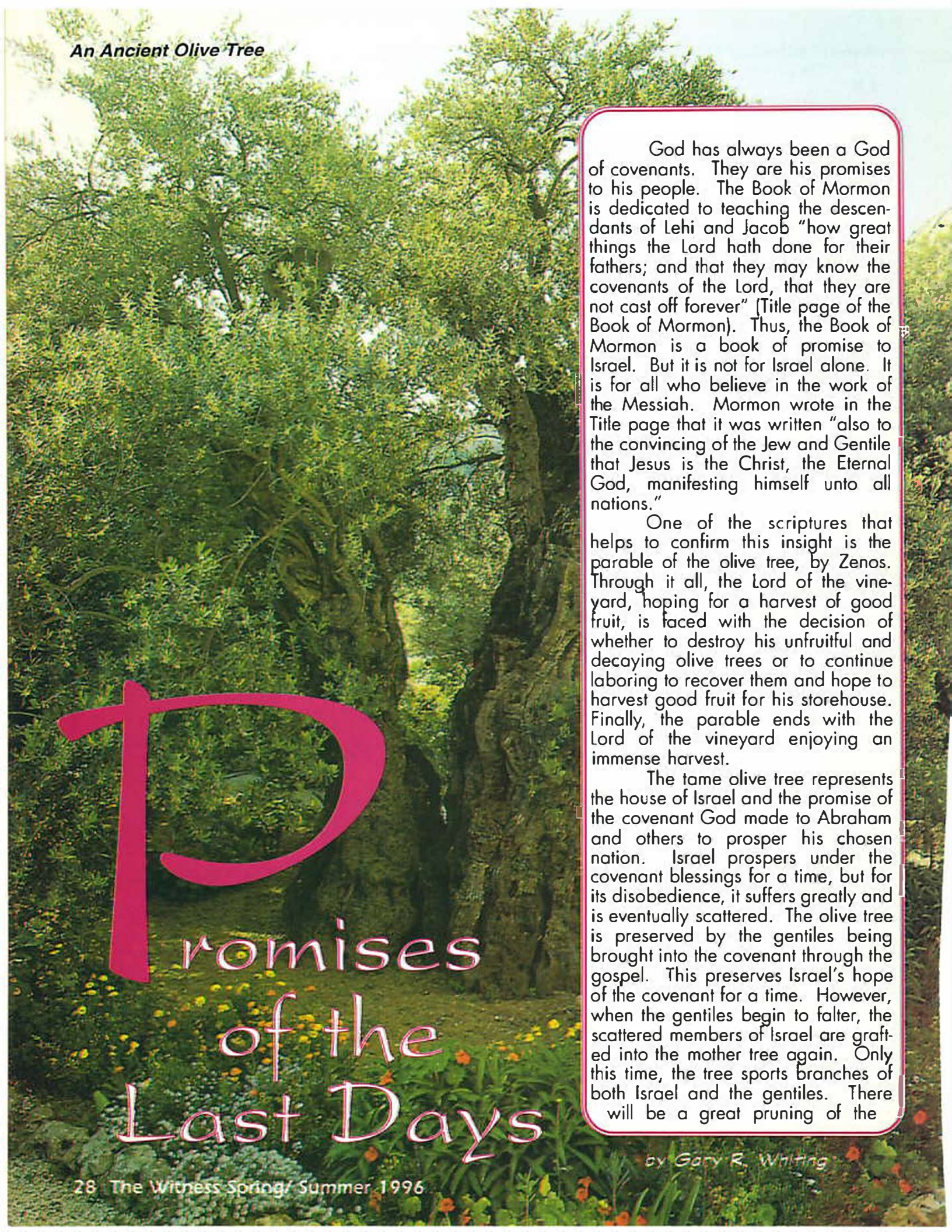
Send check or money order for \$24.95 to;

**The Ancient American**  
**P.O. Box 370**  
**Colfax, Wisconsin 54730**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_



Promises  
of the  
Last Days

God has always been a God of covenants. They are his promises to his people. The Book of Mormon is dedicated to teaching the descendants of Lehi and Jacob "how great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever" (Title page of the Book of Mormon). Thus, the Book of Mormon is a book of promise to Israel. But it is not for Israel alone. It is for all who believe in the work of the Messiah. Mormon wrote in the Title page that it was written "also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations."

One of the scriptures that helps to confirm this insight is the parable of the olive tree, by Zenos. Through it all, the Lord of the vineyard, hoping for a harvest of good fruit, is faced with the decision of whether to destroy his unfruitful and decaying olive trees or to continue laboring to recover them and hope to harvest good fruit for his storehouse. Finally, the parable ends with the Lord of the vineyard enjoying an immense harvest.

The tame olive tree represents the house of Israel and the promise of the covenant God made to Abraham and others to prosper his chosen nation. Israel prospers under the covenant blessings for a time, but for its disobedience, it suffers greatly and is eventually scattered. The olive tree is preserved by the gentiles being brought into the covenant through the gospel. This preserves Israel's hope of the covenant for a time. However, when the gentiles begin to falter, the scattered members of Israel are grafted into the mother tree again. Only this time, the tree sports branches of both Israel and the gentiles. There will be a great pruning of the

by Gary R. Whiting

limbs, and the tree will bear much fruit just before the end of the world.

This parable is full of hope and promise for us. We are living in the days of the decline of the gentiles and the rise of Israel's belief in the Messiah. These are the days of Israel's hope and longing. Contrary to what many people are teaching, this is Israel's greatest hour. While her people will endure hardship, the destination of their journey is the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel. God is fulfilling his word to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in this very day and hour. The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah and others are coming to pass right now. What a glorious day to rejoice and thank God for his faithfulness and endurance. By the Lord's faithfulness to the covenant with Israel, everyone can take heart that the Lord is a covenant keeper and is able to complete the work he has begun in us (Philippians 1:6).

This is the day when the role of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration will be expanded. When Moroni delivered his message to Joseph Smith in 1823, he spoke at length regarding the restoration of the house of Israel. God's covenant is being fulfilled; he is remembering Israel and turning back the yoke of her oppressors. The Restoration and the Book of Mormon were brought forth for just such a day. Zenos' parable testifies that these covenants will all be fulfilled, and it instills hope in our hearts that the purpose of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration shall yet be accomplished.

The last days are full of danger for the wicked. This is revealed as the Doctrine and Covenants describes a day when everyone will be at war with his neighbor except those living in Zion. Though the gentiles are declining, yet many of them shall also be saved by faith in Christ. These gentiles will be those who have been among the wicked but who are unwilling to fight and kill their neighbors (D & C 45:13a,b RLDS, D & C 45:68-69 LDS). Out of the wickedness of the day, many will flee to Christ and join Zion. Zenos says the Lord of the vineyard will harvest fruit from his vineyard "for a long time" (Jacob 3:148 RLDS, Jacob 5:76 LDS). How large a harvest will it be? Isaiah wrote that the "abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, and the forces of the gentiles shall come unto thee" (Isaiah 60:5). John saw "a great multitude, which no man can number" being clothed in white robes (Revelation 7:9). The Lord promises a great harvest and blessing to those who labor with him in the work (Jacob 3:147 RLDS, Jacob 5:75 LDS).

The parable also suggests there is a work that all of us can do. Many tasks are described in the parable. Cutting branches, hauling and burning, digging, fertilizing, watering and harvesting are a few. No one can do them all, and yet all are necessary and equally important to the Lord's work. Through the Restoration the Lord has shown that, indeed, "if ye have desires to serve God, ye are called to the work" (D & C 4:1c RLDS, D & C 4:3 LDS).

The role of the Lord's chief servant in this parable is striking. He is perpetually found pleading for mercy on behalf of the trees. Every time the Lord is moving toward destroying the trees, the servant intercedes, recommending that more patience and time be given. He pledges to prune and dig around and dung the trees to encourage their growth of good fruit. Until the end of the vineyard's day, this servant is an advocate for the trees.

Jesus Christ is the advocate for his people (D & C 45:1c-e RLDS, D & C 45:3-5 LDS; Hebrews 7:24 IV, Hebrews 7:25 KJ). This role of Christ is so clearly demonstrated in the parable. He is, in my understanding, the chief servant of the Lord of the vineyard who intercedes for and labors to recover the tame olive tree.

What an unspeakable gift of God. O that it would cause us to fall on our knees to worship him! "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). Faith in the Son of Man holds the promise of eternal life, and in the parable Christ's redeeming ministry is powerfully declared.

Redemption implies and guarantees the defeat of Satan and the destruction of evil. When the vineyard (the world, see Jacob 4:5 RLDS, Jacob 6:3 LDS) is finally burned, Satan's dominion shall be destroyed forever. Satan will have no hold on the hearts of the children of men who exercise faith in Jesus Christ. This parable helps us to see and believe in the power of the atonement to fulfill all that the Father has promised. By faith in the power of Christ's atoning blood, we have the promise of Christ's kingdom, his defeat of evil and the rescue of his people from sin forevermore. This is the promise God gives us in the parable of the olive tree:

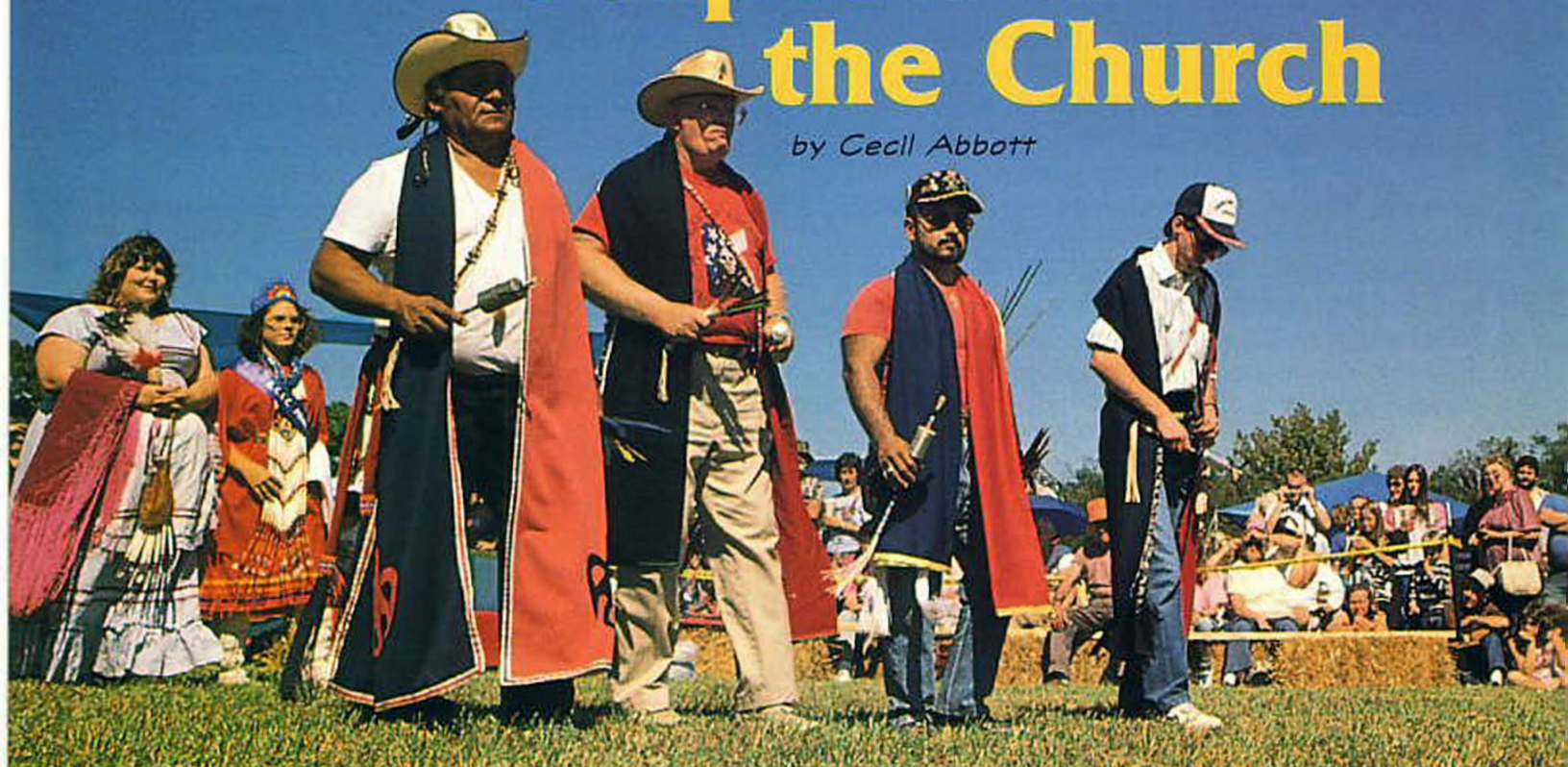
Wherefore, my beloved brethren,  
I beseech of you in words of  
sobriety, that ye would repent,  
and come with full purpose of heart,  
and cleave unto God as he cleaveth  
unto you.

-- Jacob 4:8 RLDS

-- Jacob 6:5 LDS

# The Book of Mormon and the Purpose of the Church

by Cecil Abbott



"I write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord."  
Moroni 1:4 RLDS-LDS

Have you ever questioned the purpose of Christ's restored church? Over the past fifty years, I have been exposed to many perspectives on the subject. Opinions have included such purposes as restoration of priesthood authority, restoration of ordinances and sacraments, restoration of doctrine, restoration of the church after apostasy and so on.

My intent is not to challenge the importance and validity of these points but to suggest that their significance lies in their relationship to the true purpose of the church. They are supporting pillars to a greater calling. The calling of the church is found in the scriptural commission to take the Book of Mormon to the heritage people (the Lamanites). Its primary purpose is to be the vehicle to fulfill the promises and covenants the Lord made to the House of Manasseh.

Some scriptures to support this claim can be found in D & C 2 and 3 RLDS (D & C 3 and 10 LDS).

The Book of Mormon also sheds light on this in its preface wherein the Lord states that the plates were preserved for this very purpose. God responded to the prayers of the holy prophets of ancient America who desired that their seed would receive this sacred record. The Lord promised that it would come to pass because of their desire and faith.

How has the church responded to this calling? Let's look at three areas to determine the answer.

First: In October, 1830, Parley P. Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer and Ziba Peterson were commanded to go into the wilderness among the Lamanites. The mission ended in failure. They were driven out by the Indian agent and the army. Why would the Lord send missionaries on a mission that would fail? This result does not make sense as we examine the words found in 1 Nephi 5:59 RLDS (1 Nephi 17:3 LDS) which state: "And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God, he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them." We must therefore assume that these missionaries failed because they disobeyed the Lord.

Parley P. Pratt wanted to stop at Kirtland, Ohio, to evangelize and baptize. The missionaries spent eight weeks in Kirtland followed by another week at Cincinnati, Ohio. A severe snowstorm delayed them two more weeks at St. Louis, Missouri. Eleven weeks were lost because these men decided they would do other things than what the Lord had specifically commanded. (This is the reason we all fail to accomplish the Lord's work. We want to do it our way.) The window of opportunity the Lord had prepared closed quickly and insured failure.

This disobedience brought a cloud of condemnation upon the whole church that was expressed in D & C 83:8b RLDS (D & C 84:56-57 LDS). The Lord said, "And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all; and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written." The purpose of the church was never again pursued at the level the Lord required and it continues to bring God's judgment.

Second: The early church changed the emphasis from taking the Book of Mormon to the Lamanites to building Zion and taking the gospel to the whole world. It is important to understand that taking the Book of Mormon to the Lamanites and building Zion are inseparably connected. They are also sequentially dependent in the order in which they will occur. (Ether 6:4-10 RLDS, Ether 13:4-10 LDS) tells us that the New Jerusalem will be built upon this land by the remnant of the house of Joseph, and that they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord. This scripture is referring to Ephraim and Manasseh, who are the sons of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt. The lineage of Ephraim (the church) is already in place to assist. The lineage of Manasseh (the Lamanites) is waiting for the Book of Mormon to be brought to them so they can take their place in the process. The Lord wants the church to accomplish this purpose so the grand design of these last days can proceed according to plan. His plan awaits the response of the church.

Third: In 1829, the Lord commanded that twelve apostles be searched out and ordained. The special witness of these men, through their missionary calling, was needed to aggressively pursue the purpose of the church. One can only imagine the impact they might have had in taking the Book of Mormon to the Lamanites. Instead, these offices were not filled for more than five years. During that time the direction of the church shifted to other areas and the original focus was lost.

Walter Weldon's books, *The Purpose of the Book of Mormon* and *Tell My People*, do a wonderful job of reminding the church of its purpose and pointing its people to the spiritual life necessary to accomplish it. They are worthy of our study to determine where the church stands, what it takes to move forward and where it needs to go.

We are at a point in history where the church must be brought to a remembrance. All believers in the Book of Mormon are challenged to a renewed understanding of the purpose of the Restoration. An intense desire coupled with a focused commitment to the Lord's purpose for the Book of Mormon will flood the church with the blessings of heaven. These blessings will insure the success of those who make the journey of faith. There is much depending on our decision.

*Cecil Abbott, member of  
Indian Ministry Council  
of the Americas*



## Would You Like to Write for *The Witness*?

*The Witness* editorial committee invites its readers and interested persons to submit articles for publication within the following guidelines:

Articles may address archaeology, theology or personal experience. Length: 1,200 words or less. Short contributions of 300 words or less are also welcome. Send a hardcopy of your manuscript and a 3.5 diskette (PC) if available. These will not be returned.

Illustrations and photos with appropriate identification should also accompany your manuscript and will be returned only if requested. Please inform us if your material is under copyright.

### 1997 THEMES

Annual Theme - The Prophetic Voice of the Book of Mormon

Winter - The Book of Mormon Witness of the Savior

November 15, 1996\*

Spring - The Ministry of Jesus Christ

January 15, 1997\*

Summer - Prophecies of the Latter Days

March 15, 1997\*

Fall - It Came to Pass

June 15, 1997\*

\*Deadline for submitting articles for the issue.

Other Book of Mormon-related articles will be considered for publication in later issues of the magazine. The editorial committee reviews submissions for relevance, style and content. If approved for publication, the committee reserves the right to make changes that are consistent with accepted editorial standards.

Articles should be written from a positive viewpoint. *The Witness* is not only directed toward Book of Mormon believers but also serves as a witness to those being introduced to the Book of Mormon for the first time.

Send manuscripts to the Foundation for Research on Ancient America, 210 West White Oak, Independence, MO 64050. Tel: (816) 461-FRAA (3722) Fax: (816) 461-5850.

*The Witness*



FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON ANCIENT AMERICA  
210 W. White Oak, Independence MO 64050

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Magazine Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Independence, MO  
Permit No. 123