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"And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word . . ." Alma 9:18

Mormon's Hidden Message

By Raymond C. Treat

Book of Mormon Geography

One evening about four months ago while preparing to teach a church school Book of Mormon class, I was reviewing the major verses dealing with geography. While going over Alma 13:68-14:1 I noted, as I had in times past, that it was Mormon himself who had inserted this geographic information while abridging from the large plates of Nephi. Even though I had been intellectually aware for some time that this was the case, at this particular moment, the true significance of this fact was quickened in my spirit and I became excited.

The next day I made the statement to the class that Mormon was the leading geographer of his day because he was the leading general. This was the first time I had ever had this



thought. In fact, I was astounded to hear myself say it. Immediately I thought to myself, "Why yes, that's true!" Later, after thinking about it, I was amazed that this idea had not occurred to me before since all of my early training, before I became an adult convert in 1960, was in military science. In college I had studied every significant battle in the history of mankind. The idea that a successful general had to have an intimate, thorough knowledge of geography had been well ingrained in me.

Needless to say, this quickening of my intellect by the Holy Spirit with this simple but profound concept has made me much more interested in and excited about the study of Book of Mormon geography.

For many years most Book of Mormon believers have stayed away from a serious study of Book of Mormon geography. There are probably two basic reasons for this lack of interest:

1) It has been assumed that geography is not essential to an understanding of the doctrine of the Book of Mormon; and

2) We have assumed that the great upheaval at the time of the crucifixion of Christ so changed the topography of the land as to make it impossible to identify any particular land or city.

Let's look at the first assumption, i.e. that geography is not essential to an understanding of doctrine. In order to obtain an adequate understanding of any scripture we must ask ourselves five basic questions:

• **Who is speaking?**

- **To whom is he speaking?**
- **What is being said?**
- **When is it being said?**
- **Where is it being said?**

The usual approach to study includes the first three points—**who** is speaking, **to whom** is he speaking and **what** is being said. Because more effort is required to learn the when and where, these points are usually the last to be considered. However, the doctrine of the Book of Mormon or of any scripture can only be properly understood within the total framework of the five questions above including when and where. In other words, time and location (geography) are essential to a full understanding of any scripture. I believe Mormon and the other record keepers shared this viewpoint as they

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were careful to note time and location throughout the records.

The second assumption for a lack of interest in Book of Mormon geography was that the great upheaval made identification of lands and cities impossible. This viewpoint is probably based on the following verse among others:

"... for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempests, and the whirlwinds and the great quaking of the whole earth..." III Nephi 4:10

It has been assumed that because the whole face of the land was changed, we could not locate with any degree of confidence any of the cities or lands mentioned in the Book of Mormon. To deal with this question adequately we must take a close look at Mormon's life.

Mormon was born in the land northward and commissioned by Ammoron at the age of 10 to observe the things of his people and to record these observations on the large plates of Nephi at about the age of 24. He was also given the responsibility for the care of all the other records. At the age of eleven he was taken to the land southward:

"... I, being eleven years old, was carried by my father into the land southward..." Mormon 1:7

At the age of 16 he became the leader of the Nephite armies:

"And not withstanding I being young, was large in stature, therefore the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader, or the leader of their armies." Mormon 1:22

With the exception of about 15 years (about A.D. 362-377), he remained the leader of their armies until his death in A.D. 385. Mormon continued to lead the Nephite armies in the land southward until A.D. 350 when the Nephites were restricted by a treaty with the Lamanites to the land northward (the land north of the narrow neck of land). Thus Mormon lived in the land northward about 45 years and the land southward about 30 years. Therefore, we can safely say that Mormon, the leading general of the Nephites, was also the leading geographer of his day and was intimately acquainted with the geography of both the land northward and the land southward.

Mormon was also the chief abridger, or we might say, the chief editor of the Book of Mormon. He had many records at his disposal from which he compiled the Book of Mormon. This was probably done sometime during the years A.D. 380 to 384 while at Cumorah preparing for the final battle which occurred in A.D. 385. Like any editor, he had opportunity to add his own comments from time to time, which he did.

While abridging the story of the four sons of Mosiah on their missionary journey to the Lamanites, Mormon inserted his own exposition on geography (Alma 13:68-80) which we now recognize as the main reference on geography in the entire Book of Mormon. This remarkable passage identifies and gives the relative location of the following important geographic locations in the Book of Mormon:

- Land of Nephi
- Land of Desolation
- Narrow strip of wilderness
- Small neck of land
- Land of Zarahemla
- Land Northward

- River Sidon
- Land Bountiful

- Land Southward

This is the main geographic reference because it is the only one which describes all the major lands and their relationships to each other. Even more importantly, it was Mormon himself, the leading geographer, who was the author of this information. Mormon was abridging from the large plates of Nephi when he paused in his work of editing and inserted the geographic description of Alma 13:68-80. This becomes clear if we compare Alma 13:68 and Alma 14:1.

"And it came to pass that the king sent a proclamation throughout the land, amongst all his people..." Alma 13:68

"Behold, now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people..." Alma 14:1

The verses are the same. After engraving the first part of Alma 13:68 from the large plates, Mormon inserted his own information on geography and then picked up the account from the large plates by repeating the same passage in 14:1. This means that all the information between these two verses was written by Mormon. This is verified in verse 82 of Alma 13:

"And now I, after having said this (referring to verses 68:81) return again to the account of Ammon, and Aaron, Omner, and Himni, and their brethren."

In addition, it should be pointed out that the almost 400 geographic references in the Book of Mormon passed across the "desk" of the editor, Mormon. Mormon had the expertise to know whether these references were still valid at the time he was working on the abridgment more than 300 years after the upheaval.

Why did Mormon insert this major reference to geography? There are several possibilities to consider:

1] To aid the Gentiles in locating the remnant.

The geographic references make it possible for the Gentiles (us) to locate and identify the present-day posterity of Lehi. By identifying the original locale for the Book of Mormon story we can trace the movements of succeeding generations to locate the remnant today. This is necessary in order to complete the commission given to us by Mormon to take the record to the remnant.

2] To locate the hill Cumorah.

Mormon clearly indicates that Cumorah is the depository of all the sacred records. Because of its strategic military position, it was also described geographically and thus made easier for us to locate. Although no one will obtain these records for personal gain (Mormon 4:18,19), why would Mormon give so much information concerning the location of the records? The apparent reason seems to be to confirm the faith of present-day believers when the Lord begins to reveal these records to those for whom they were promised. While the method of revelation is not known to us, many believe it will come by means of the scientific world in a manner similar to the Dead Sea Scrolls and more recently the library at Ebla.

3] To provide an historic base similar to the Bible.

By including geographic references in conjunction with

In the spring of 1972 I was searching. I wanted to believe in Jesus Christ, but I was having problems. My basic question seemed to focus on the Book of Mormon, the record of Christ in ancient America. Because of the influence of my parents and the church I had always believed the spiritual teachings of the Book of Mormon were of the highest order and comparable in every way to the teachings of the Bible. What was troubling me was the question, "Is the Book of Mormon historically accurate?" It seemed to me if it were not historically accurate, it would have no more significance than a parable or a fable, and would have little or no value as scripture. To say the Book of Mormon was only a parable would be quite different from saying the stories told by Jesus were parables. Therefore, I viewed it as essential to determine if the Book of Mormon was historically true. If not, then I wanted no part of the Restoration movement.

Although I was in college at the time, I began to read the Book of Mormon and examine it critically to see what flaws I could find. I had read it before with my family, but this time the Spirit really began to work in me and the story came alive. I became totally caught up in the book. I carried it around with me and read whenever there was an opportunity. In two weeks I finished it.

Many times while reading, the Spirit reaffirmed my faith in the spiritual value of the book. However, I was still puzzled in regard to its historical accuracy. I was unable to find any inconsistencies in the genealogies or chronologies given in the text, but the geography didn't fit the traditional Book of Mormon geography I had been taught as a child. A piece of the puzzle was missing and I didn't know what it could be.

A short time later I went to hear an old friend preach. His name was Neil Steede and he was studying archaeology in Mexico. Neil bore a testimony in which he

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAP

A TESTIMONY OF BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY

By Ralph Lesh



described seeing and speaking to one of the three Nephites (who were disciples of Christ in ancient America). Part of Neil's testimony involved a new way of looking at the geography of the Book of Mormon—the very thing that had been bothering me. With the Book of Mormon story still fresh in my mind, everything Neil said fell into

place. I knew intuitively he was right and that his testimony was true. However, I wanted more than feelings upon which to build my faith.

I began a notebook of Mesoamerican archaeology and made many trips to local libraries. I wanted to determine if Neil Steede's theory (which he had based on Verneil Simmons' research) could be supported on a scientific basis. For the first time in my life I had more than a passing interest in ancient history. My library studies began to gain momentum along with my interest. I knew I had to learn more.

Neil Steede stayed in Independence that summer and I called him many times, asking many questions which he patiently attempted to answer. Gradually I began to see that by applying the geographical principles Neil had outlined in his sermons, a sound case could be made in support of the historical accuracy of the Book of Mormon. I was ecstatic for I began to realize that my faith in the Book of Mormon didn't have to be based solely on emotions but that science and logic could also play an important part.

On Thanksgiving week-end, 1975, I went with the priesthood of East Alton congregation on a pilgrimage to the Kirtland Temple. We were blessed with a powerful spirit of reconciliation and I rededicated myself to the work of deacon. For the rest of that retreat and during the long bus ride back to Independence, I thought about what I could do as a priesthood member to help in establishing the Kingdom of God. I decided since I was a cartographer for the Jackson County Planning Department, I might be able to make a map of Book of Mormon lands, incorporating the things I had learned.

I had attempted such a map earlier but had given it up, not knowing how to proceed. However, this time in a moment of insight the necessary procedure was unfolded to me and the Spirit bore witness. I understood that I should follow certain steps in my research. Basically the steps were:

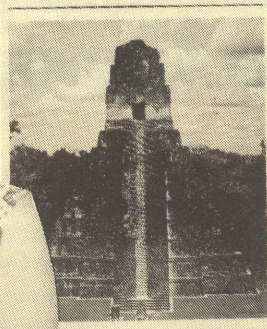
- 1) Read the Book of Mormon and write down all the verses which had anything to do with geography.
- 2) Index those references on 3x5 cards.
- 3) Using the index cards as a guide, write a paragraph describing each geographical feature.

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SOON
FROM ZRF



PEOPLES, PLACES
AND PROPHECIES
BY VERNEIL W. SIMMONS



PEOPLES, PLACES AND
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BY VERNEIL SIMMONS

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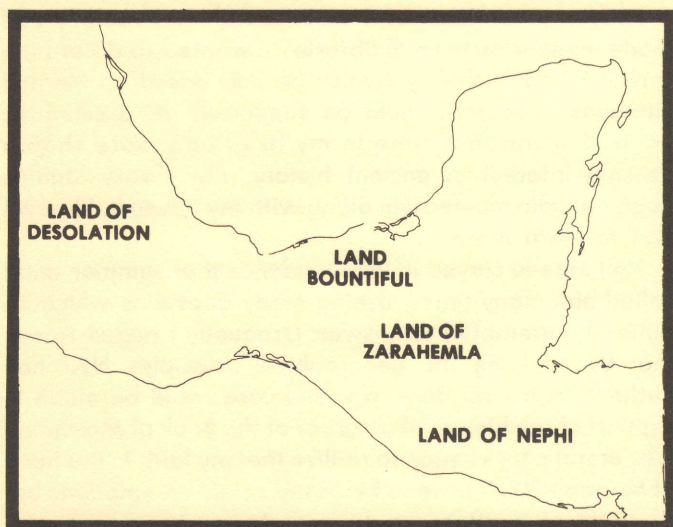
HIDDEN MESSAGE—from page 2

specific time periods, the entire claim for the book is raised from one of possible allegory or myth to a definite claim for historicity. The book claims to be a history of a specific people for a specific time period in a specific place. Mormon knew that to consider this record an allegory would condemn it and make it as useless as though it were a fraud.

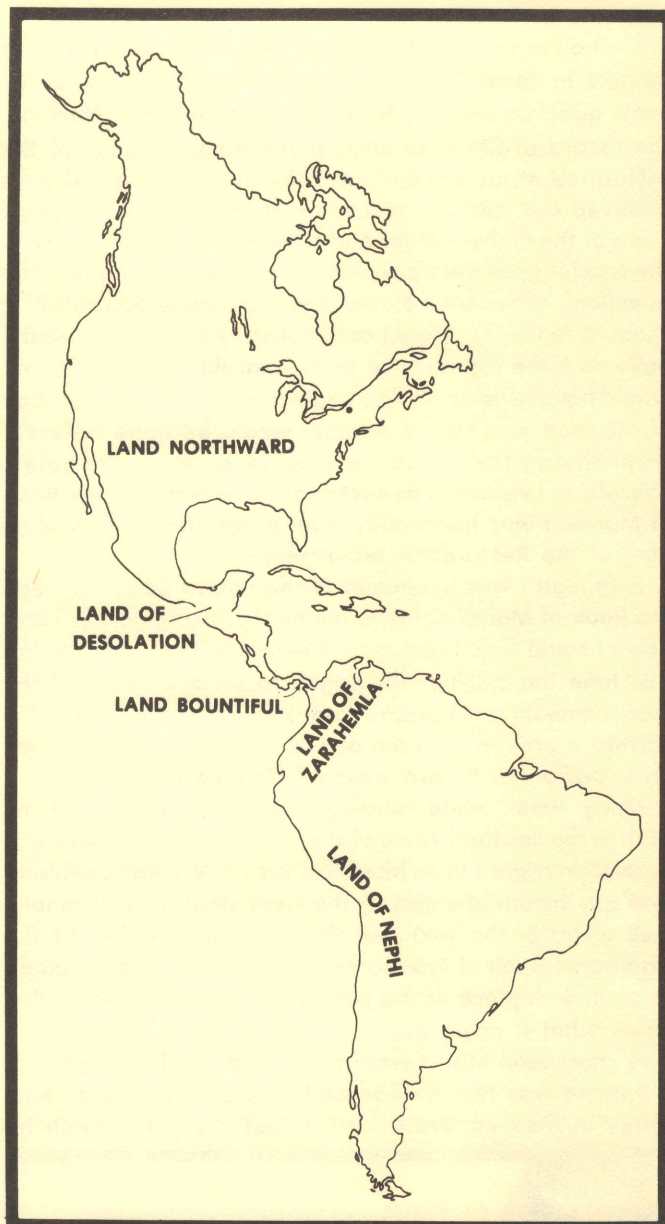
4] To enrich the understanding of the reader.

As stated previously, when we seek the fullest understanding of scripture we must provide the elements of time and place. This was very carefully provided for us by the record keepers. They desired for us to have the total picture.

The only possible conclusion we can reach is that the study of Book of Mormon geography is a valid and timely subject. We should no longer relegate it to a secondary position but recognize we have a clear mandate to pursue this topic. Mormon's hidden message gives us the assurance that our efforts will be fruitful. ■



The 1980 Book of Mormon geography map.



A rendition of the Book of Mormon geography map prepared by the Committee on Archaeology in 1894.

Book of Mormon Geography

By Paul M. Hanson

Editor's note: Although the reprinting of articles is not normally part of ZARAHEMLA RECORD policy, an exception has been made with this classic article by Paul M. Hanson, former president of the Council of Twelve. It was originally printed in the Saint's Herald, January 8, 1951. Generally the viewpoints presented in this article continue to be supported by study of the internal evidence and by the advances in archaeology in the last 30 years.

New evidence concerning the geography of the Book of Mormon suggests that maps prepared by the archaeological committee selected by the church in 1894 should be clarified (see the renditions of the 1894 and the 1980 maps above). The effect of the committee's contribution

was far-reaching and resulted in a general stimulation of interest in the Book of Mormon, but it should be clearly understood that there was no freezing of thought or research on the subject by the church. The canon of writings on Book of Mormon geography was not declared closed. The church was wise in anticipating facts the future might disclose, for in dealing with American archaeology one enters an inexhaustible and difficult field. The committee doubtlessly was pleased that the church did not officially endorse the maps as correct. There has been no official endorsement by the church of any interpretation of Book of Mormon geography.

A rapidly growing body of students today believe the landing place of Lehi and his colony, one of the three groups divinely led to America, was in Central America,

not on the coast of Chile in South America as indicated on the maps prepared by the committee. In accordance with the theory of the South American landing place, the lands and cities of the Nephites and Lamanites are located by the Committee in the vast area which is now Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, the Isthmus of Panama, Central American, Mexico, and the northeastern part of the United States.

Which is the more probable landing place of Lehi and his company, Chile or Central America? It is at once recognized of importance in the study of Book of Mormon geography, whether one starts the civilization of the Nephites far down in South America or in Central America.

The region where Lehi landed was known in Book of Mormon times as the "land of Nephi," and was "south of the land of Zarahemla."¹ As the land of Nephi was "divided from the land of Zarahemla by a narrow strip of wilderness,"² if the land of Nephi were in South America, so would be the land of Zarahemla. We read:

"And thus the land of Nephi, and the land of Zarahemla, were nearly surrounded by water; there being a small neck of land between the land northward, and the land southward."³

View a map of South America and discover if you can, how the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla, represented on the maps of the committee as extending from Chile to the northwestern part of South America, could be "nearly surrounded by water." It is no answer to say the whole continent of South America is nearly surrounded by water with the Isthmus of Panama keeping the water divided; for the record says the "land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla," not the continent, were "nearly surrounded by water."

Alma, writing about 65 B.C., twice refers to a "narrow pass which led by the sea into the land northward, yea, by the sea, on the west and on the east,"⁴ and Mormon, writing about A.D. 360, refers to it as "the narrow passage which led into the land southward," the "narrow pass which led into the land southward."⁵

In a book just off the press by Milton R. Hunter and Thomas Stuart Ferguson, entitled **Ancient America and the Book of Mormon**, page 183, is the following:

"At the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, adjacent to ancient Hue-hue-Tlapallan (ancient Bountiful land), is a narrow pass meeting all the requirements of the pass referred to by the Nephite historians. It is on the Gulf of Mexico side of Tehuantepec. One of the writers studied and photographed it from a Cub plane in 1948. It runs by the sea for about seventy miles in a general northwesterly-southeasterly direction."

It appears this "narrow pass" was a notable route of migration between the land southward and the land northward by the seashore at the narrow neck of land. Mormon's reference to it in A.D. 360 establishes that it remained practically unchanged by what occurred in the earth at the time of the crucifixion of Christ, and also leads to the conclusion that probably no change of great importance occurred in the coastal contour of the near-by lands southward, Zarahemla and Nephi, which were "nearly surrounded by water."

Is the Isthmus of Panama, as indicated on the committee's maps, the "small neck of land" separating

what the Book of Mormon calls the "land northward" from the "land southward"? There are many reasons why this isthmus cannot be the "small neck of land." The question then arises, Where is the "small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward," the location of which is of the utmost importance as a key to Book of Mormon geography? It is not sufficient just to find a narrow neck of land. There are a number of such regions, such as the isthmuses of Panama, Honduras, and Tehuantepec.

The prophet Alma refers to the "narrow neck which led into the land northward."⁶ It should be noted that not only did this narrow neck separate the land northward from the land southward, but here the people multiplied and spread "insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth from the sea south, to the sea north, and from the sea west, to the sea east."⁷

J. A. Washburn and J. N. Washburn, of the Mormon church, whom I consider high among the best writers on Book of Mormon geography, say:

"Where was the narrow neck of land? Have the readers of the Book of Mormon in the past been right in assuming that the present Isthmus of Panama is the place?"

The present writers doubt this very seriously. They feel confident that the narrow neck of land was farther north. One of the foremost authorities in the church placed it at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and a number of other students have agreed with this. The present writers have no objection though this is the result of a feeling rather than any definite evidence. But, then, is there any proof that the Isthmus of Panama was the narrow neck of the Book of Mormon? There is none.

For want of something better the writers tentatively accept the view that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was the narrow neck."⁸

The Isthmus of Panama does not meet the requirements, as does the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, of being the "narrow neck of land" separating the land northward from the land southward, the region being surrounded by north, south, east, and west seas.

Locating the "narrow neck of land" at the Isthmus of Panama leads to trouble. This isthmus is over four hundred miles in length. We read that because of a "great dearth upon the land" and the inhabitants' flocks fleeing before poisonous serpents "towards the land southward, which was called by the Nephites, Zarahemla," the people went into the "land southward to hunt food for the people of the land."⁹ This would mean going the whole distance through a humid, tropical area for food, and returning with it. And animals went from the land northward into the land southward "for food."¹⁰ Did animals also travel four hundred miles for food?

The Isthmus of Panama is narrower than the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, but it does not follow from this that the choice should go to the Isthmus of Panama as the narrow neck separating the land northward from the land southward. One can envisage the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as the "narrow neck of land," Mexico as the "land northward," Central America as the "land southward," and the people spreading out "from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east."

Miguel Covarrubias says of this area:

"Powerful arts and impressive techniques were developed there

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together with an inner drive to erect monumental cities and colossal sculptures . . .

A great and mysterious race of artists seems to have lived since early times on the Isthmus (of Tehuantepec), partly around Los Tuxtlas and the Coatzacoalcos River Basin. Everywhere there are archaeological treasures that lie hidden in the jungle and under the rich soil of southern Vera Cruz, burial mounds and pyramids, masterfully carved colossal monuments of basalt, splendid statuettes of precious jade and sensitively modeled figurines of clay, all of unprecedented high artistic quality. The tantalizing presence of a great and remote past in what is now uninhabited, impenetrable jungle is all the more puzzling because most archaeologists now agree that these artistic masterpieces date back to the beginning of the Christian Era. Appearing suddenly out of nowhere in a state of full development, they constitute a culture that seems to have been the root, the mother culture, from which the later and better known (Maya, Totonac, Zapotec, etc.) cultures sprang."¹¹

I know of no student who says there were no Nephites in South America. The Book of Mormon speaks of "many of the Nephites" entering a "large ship" built by Hagoth, 54 B.C., who took their course northward¹² and there may have been many who moved into South America.

The legend of four brothers conducting the first inhabitants of Peru toward the valley of Cuzco, in which the "younger of the brothers, who, according to tradition, was at the same time the most skillful and hardy, wishing to enjoy alone the plenitude of power, rid himself of two of his brothers, by enclosing one of them in a cave, and throwing the other into a deep hole, and caused the third to fly to a distant province,"¹³ appears to be a distorted tradition of the famed four brothers of Book of Mormon history: Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi, a tradition that could have been carried to South America by colonists from Central America.

The Book of Mormon indicates the movement of Nephite civilization was northward, but this does not necessarily mean the Nephites moved from Chile northward. The movement could have been northward from a point in Central America.

The committee on its maps locates the place of the final battle resulting in the destruction of the Nephite civilization in Cumorah, New York. This location is challenged by many students of Book of Mormon geography. Because the plates of the Book of Mormon were found there, that does not establish that the last great battle of the Nephites was fought there. The hill Cumorah where the battle was fought was "in a land of many waters, rivers and fountains." This region appears to be located by the seashore slightly northward of the narrow pass. Here is an intricate system of lagoons, lakes, and great rivers meeting the requirements of the record in the Book of Mormon. The evidence does not support the theory of two large armies going the immense distance from the land southward, to New York to fight what proved to be the destruction of the Nephite civilization. Clark Wissler says:

"In North America, no stone carving worthy of the name occurs north of the Rio Grande."¹⁴

The question arises, Did the original Book of Mormon current of civilization flow from South America to Central America and Mexico, or from Mexico and Central America to South America? South American influences are known

to have extended north of the Isthmus of Panama, and there is evidence of Central American influence in South America. There is evidence of both South American penetrations in Middle America, and Middle American penetration in South America.

Aldred Kidder II, who has served as tutor in anthropology at Harvard and research associate of Peabody Museum, in an article, "South American Penetrations in Middle America," presents a statement of the problem:

"Although there are numerous traits of culture common to both Middle and South America, in most cases the place of origin is uncertain. It is reasonable to suppose that an interchange of ideas, techniques, and actual objects had been going on for many centuries prior to the Conquest. Some of the later introductions into Middle America are undoubted. Further in the past, however, it becomes increasingly difficult to find satisfactory evidence for the time or place of origin of given traits, and the direction of dispersal from a center. Thus the question of penetration, viewed broadly, entails the entire problem of the origin, development, and history of the higher culture of the New World."¹⁵

Note that Mr. Kidder says some of the later introductions into Middle America are undoubted, but that "further in the past it becomes increasingly difficult to find satisfactory evidence for the time or place of origin of given traits, and the direction of dispersal from a center."

Philip Ainsworth Means, a member of the Yale Peruvian Expedition of 1914-1915, gives his opinion that culture was brought into the Andean area from Central America, one route of which he suggests was by following the shoreline of the Pacific Ocean to Panama and thence along the western shore of South America. He believes that "between about 1000 B.C. and the beginning of the Christian Era, people of the archaic culture were filtering into the Andean area."¹⁶

Thomas A. Joyce, who organized archaeological expeditions to British Honduras in 1906, 1927, 1930, and directed them personally on each occasion, and was president of the Royal Archaeological Institute, 1931-33, says:

"While there are traditions of a southerly and southwesterly movement of peoples, there is no single account of a movement in the reverse direction."¹⁷

Some readers of the Book of Mormon believe that across the "narrow neck of land" was the "distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite." Therefore, they may ask, how can the Isthmus of Tehuantepec be the "narrow neck of land?" We read:

"And now it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful, and the Land Desolation, from the east to the west sea."¹⁸

It should be observed that this text does not say the "narrow neck of land" separating the land northward from the land southward was the "distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite;" it says the "line"—boundary line—between Bountiful which was part of the land southward that bordered on the narrow neck of land, and Desolation, the land northward, was the distance stated. And the text does not state that the "line" extended from the east sea to the west sea, but "from the east to the west sea."

Note similar language in the following quotation:

"It came to pass that the Nephites had inhabited the land Bountiful, even from the east unto the west sea.¹⁹

And the Nephites were driven even into the land of Bountiful; and there they did fortify against the Lamanites, from the west sea, even unto the east; it being a day's journey for a Nephite, on the line which they had fortified and stationed their armies to defend their north country."²⁰

The Nephites fortification against the Lamanites was not on the whole line separating Bountiful from the land northward, but "from the west sea, even unto the east," it "being a day's journey for a Nephite, on the line which they had fortified."

In the foregoing quotations, composed of precise language, in none of which sea follows east, may not "east" mean simply eastward, which would suggest that the boundary line between Bountiful and Desolation did not extend entirely across the "narrow neck of land," but from "the east to the west sea"—such line being the "distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite"? If the boundary line did not extend from sea to sea, it was this line, and not the "narrow neck of land," which was in width a "day and a half's journey for a Nephite."

The record of the flocks fleeing from the land northward before poisonous serpents "towards the land southward, which was called by the Nephites, Zarahemla," implies that both Bountiful and Zarahemla formed the division line between the land northward and the land southward.

The appearance of Wiracocha, the white and bearded personage who looms prominently as a deity in Peruvian traditions, on the Island of Titicaca, in Lake Titicaca, is strongly supported by traditions reported by trustworthy Spanish historians who arrived in Peru very soon after the Spanish conquest. As Jesus appeared after his resurrection to groups of Israelites in widely-separated regions of Palestine, he could have appeared to the believing Israelites in Mexico and South America. The following words of Christ addressed to his people in the land Bountiful reveal that in his resurrected state he would minister to people in several separated areas:

"And verily, verily, I say unto you, that I have other sheep, which are not of this land; neither of the land of Jerusalem; neither in any parts of that land round about, whither I have been to minister."²¹

If it be thought that Central America and Mexico are too small in area to contain the Book of Mormon peoples, reflect upon the country in which the main events recorded in the Bible took place:

"We are astonished when we learn the actual size of the mainland of the Bible, Palestine. It is only one and one-half times as large as the state of Connecticut, one of the smallest states in the union . . .

From Egypt to Palestine, a distance in which Israel spent forty years, is less than three hundred miles. From Dan to Beersheba, in the opposite extremes of Palestine, is one hundred and fifty miles. From Jerusalem to Moab, where Naomi spent so many lonely years, and from which it was such a great undertaking to return, is about thirty miles. Hannah, who lived at Ramah and went once a year to see her son Samuel, traveled fifteen miles each way. David and the Philistines were separated by twenty-five miles!

And when the Master, driven from Nazareth, went to Capernaum to make that the center of his ministry, he walked some twenty miles across the hills."²²

The Bible is a record of God's people in a small land, and the area may not be very large in which the events occurred as chronicled in the Book of Mormon. ■

1. (Alma 22:7)
2. (Alma 13:68)
3. (Alma 13:77)
4. (Alma 22:35; Alma 24:10)
5. (Mormon 1:61,69)
6. (Alma 30:6)
7. (Helaman 2:8)
8. (Book of Mormon Geography page 198)
9. (Ether 4:35,66)
10. (Alma 13:75)
11. (Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec, pages XXV, 79-80)
12. (Alma 30:6-7)
13. (Peruvian Antiquities, James Von Tschudi, 1854:52)
14. (The American Indian, 1938:141)
15. (The Maya and Their Neighbors, 1940:441)
16. (Ancient Civilizations of the Andes, 1931:43,45)
17. (South American Archaeology, 1912:11)
18. (Alma 13:76)
19. (Alma 13:78)
20. (Helaman 2:39)
21. (III Nephi 7:24)
22. (A Pilgrimage to Palestine, Harry Emerson Fosdick, pages 10-11)

MAP—from page 3

4) Using the descriptive paragraphs as a guide, draw sketch maps of each geographical feature.

5) Beginning with the most complex sketch maps, transfer the sketch maps to a comprehensive map of Book of Mormon lands.

6) Finally, re-read the Book of Mormon geographical references and compare them to the comprehensive map to check for errors.

The locations of specific sites were not revealed to me. What was revealed was this method by means of which I could determine the geographical relationships contained within the Book of Mormon itself.

Upon returning home I began to work on the new project in my spare time. At times I would get side-tracked (sometimes for months at a time), but always I would have an experience which would cause me to return. Many times while working on the map, the Holy Spirit testified to me of the historical truth of the Book of Mormon. There was no longer any doubt in my mind concerning the book. I had become a detective in the case of the missing Book of Mormon lands and I could hardly wait to find a solution.

After I had indexed the data, my father asked me to develop a presentation on the geography to share with his church school class. This was a good experience for me because it helped me organize my findings into a more logical sequence.

At one point when I was feeling very discouraged, I was spoken to under the Spirit through an elder in our congregation. I was told my future ministry would involve "teaching." While this is subject to interpretation, I feel this entire geography project is a fulfillment of that counsel.

On the same day that I completed my sketch maps, I learned of a new book on the archaeology and geography of the Book of Mormon entitled **Peoples, Places and**

(Continued on Page 8)

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Prophecies by Verneil Simmons. I decided I should read Sister Simmons' book before attempting to draw a comprehensive map. So the next day I rushed out to Herald House and bought a copy. I became totally engrossed with the book and read it whenever I had a chance. I'm sure the people at work must have grown tired of hearing about it.

After finishing the book I wrote Sister Simmons regarding a difference of opinion on the location of the Mulekite landing. After receiving her reply I agreed with her location. She suggested I write Raymond Treat who was a Mesoamerican archaeologist and the founder of a Book of Mormon research foundation. I wrote Brother Treat and attempted to give a detailed description of what I was doing. Then I began to develop the comprehensive map.

On the same day I completed the map I received a reply from Brother Treat. He said he would be in Independence to attend the 1978 World Conference and would like to see what I was doing. As it turned out, I had exactly enough time before conference to re-read my references and check the map for mistakes.

Saturday morning before the opening of conference I presented my notes and diagrams to the Treats. Brother Treat said that because of the methodology I had followed the Zarahemla Research Foundation, which he headed, would be interested in publishing my map. This was an answer to prayer, for I had been worried that I would not be able to distribute the map to interested people after having invested so much time and effort into it.

It was also suggested I write a booklet explaining how I had determined the positions of the various features on the map. After some hesitation I set to work, writing during lunch breaks and on week-ends. Once again, the process of writing helped to clarify the historical elements of the book for me.

About this time my wife and I were invited to make a trip to Mexico with the Terry Andersons. Terry speaks and teaches Spanish. I had always wanted to see the ruins, so for two weeks in May, 1979, we traveled all over Mexico. We found it to be a great place. The people were friendly, the terrain absolutely rugged and the traffic chaotic (in a bustling, freedom-loving sort of way). We traveled as far south as Palenque and were able to visit many sites

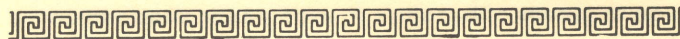
related to the Book of Mormon. Everything I saw supported the historicity of the Nephite record and my geography project's accuracy.

When we passed through the town of Cardenas in the state of Tabasco, we stopped to visit Neil Steede and his wife, Coty. Neil was working for the Mexican government as an anthropologist, studying several Indian tribes living in the jungle on an island between two rivers. Eventually his findings will help the Mexican government know how to improve the agriculture, nutrition and health of these people without destroying their culture in the process.

Neil rode with us into Villahermosa and helped us find a hotel. We stayed up very late talking about my map project and Neil's work and the meaning of the Book of Mormon. In spite of imprisonment, lack of money and senseless red tape, he had remained true to his commitment to the Book of Mormon and its people. Neil's critique of my map provided some valuable insights I was able to incorporate into the final version. Even though we didn't agree on every detail, we were able to agree on the most basic things. It was the most meaningful part of the entire trip for me.

I know that my experiences while working on the map are only the latest link in a chain of events that stretches back into the past. There are forces at work here that transcend the efforts of individual people. I am not the first person to develop a map of Book of Mormon lands, nor will I be the last. At each step along the way, God has assisted me in bringing forth this map. I am very thankful for I know that without that assistance it would have been impossible.

Editor's note: This map was published in April, 1980. It is available from ZRF for \$1.50 plus postage.



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EDITOR: Mary Lee Treat

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Wayne E. Simmons
Raymond C. Treat**

Layout: J. Robert Farley

Credits: Maps, p. 4, Ralph Lesh



Zarahemla Research Foundation
P.O. Box 1727
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