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Abstract: This article gives logical evidences that support the Book of Mormon, including the short amount of time it took Joseph Smith to translate the Book of Mormon, the Three Witnesses testified of its truth to their dying day, archaeological discoveries, and more.

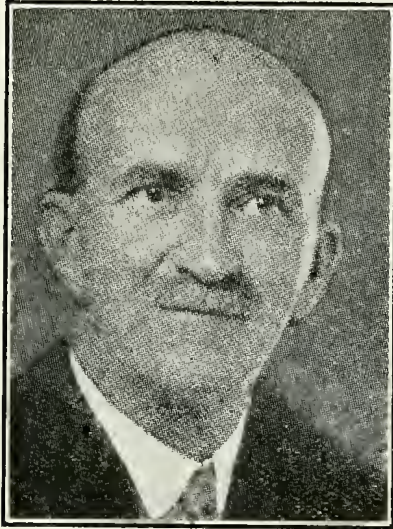
A NEW SCRIPTURE

By DR. FREDERICK J. PACK

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THE Book of Mormon is of especial importance in connection with the history and teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Indeed the founding of the Church is intimately related to the origin of the Book.

Those of my readers who are familiar with the life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, will recall that when he was a mere youth, in the fifteenth year of his age, he made an appeal for divine guidance in the matter of choosing a church with which to affiliate himself. As a result of this prayer, both God the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ, appeared to the youthful inquirer and counselled him not to join any of the existing churches, adding that in due course of time the Gospel would be restored in its original simplicity and fulness.



Dr. Frederick J. Pack

Cites some irrefutable proofs.

Three years later, Joseph Smith was visited by another heavenly personage, who introduced himself as Moroni, a former-day prophet and keeper of records, who lived on the American continent some four hundred years after the death of the Saviour. Moroni witnessed the near extinction of a mighty race of people whose ancestors had come to America from the region of Palestine several hundred years prior to the birth of Christ. Moroni informed Joseph Smith that at a later time the

records of these people would be entrusted to him, and that through the inspiration of the Spirit of God he would be able to translate them into the English language.

In harmony with this promise, some four years later the records, in the form of gold plates, were entrusted to his keeping. Shortly thereafter they were translated by the gift and power of God, and came from the press under the title, "The Book of Mormon."

The narrative of the Book of Mormon tells of three groups of people who left the Old World and colonized America, one about 2,000 years B.C., and the others some 1,400 years later. It traces the development of these people until one of them is annihilated by civil war. The other two united and subsequently divided into strangely opposing factions—the Nephites and the Lamanites. Moroni, the angelic prophet who visited Joseph Smith, was the last surviving member of the Nephite race. Lamanitic blood is present in the veins of many of the American Indians of today.

Basic to its general narrative, the Book of Mormon contains the account of God's dealings with these early American peoples. It tells of numerous prophets who arose among them and taught them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Most important, it tells the

story of the visit of the Master subsequent to His crucifixion and resurrection on the eastern continent. It relates that He remained among them several days, teaching the truths of the Gospel and bestowing authority upon chosen men to administer in His stead.

The Book of Mormon is thus a new Scripture—the history of God's dealings with His people on the American continent—similar in many respects to the Old and New Testaments, except that the latter have to do with the Old World and the Book of Mormon with the New. The religious teachings of these two Scriptures are essentially identical, except that in many respects those of the Book of Mormon are less abstruse and therefore more easily understood. Indeed, precisely this should be expected, since the Bible has undergone numerous translations and revisions, while the Book of Mormon has undergone but one, and this was done under the direct inspiration of the Spirit of God.

When the Book of Mormon came from the press in 1830, it was met with instant acclaim by some and derision by others.

It is safe to say that practically every criticism aimed at Joseph Smith was prompted by the assumption that angelic visitations are impossible in modern times. It scarcely seems possible, however, that professed believers in Christ should take this stand, for the very heart of Christianity itself is founded on divine revelation. Surely it is no more unreasonable that angels should visit the earth today than 2,000 or 4,000 years ago.

Almost innumerable evidences support the claims of Joseph Smith. For example: When the work of translating the Book of Mormon was nearing completion, the Lord made it known to Joseph Smith that witnesses to the verity of what he was doing would be supplied. Accordingly, at an appointed time, the Prophet and three others repaired to a wooded spot near the home of Peter Whitmer at Fayette in Western New York, and petitioned the Lord for a manifestation of His will. The Angel Moroni appeared before them with the records in his hands. He turned the leaves one by one and invited the witnesses to examine the characters engraved upon them. This they did, and subsequently signed a testimony to this effect, which has since been published in connection with every copy of the Book of Mormon.

His Forefathers

“THE REDMAN”—a characterization of the American Indian—is the theme of the *Millennial Star* cover. The story of his forefathers is an absorbing one. They migrated to the New World from Jerusalem centuries before Columbus' great adventure. Their history is recounted in a new Scripture, which Dr. Pack treats in this sermon.

Dr. Pack, for many years a writer and speaker on Gospel themes, is listed among *Who's Who in America* as an eminent geologist. An author of several books on geology and Latter-day Saint doctrine, he is a fellow of the Geology Society of London, among other noteworthy scientific groups. For nearly thirty years he has been a professor at the University of Utah. Indeed Dr. Pack's lucid, pithy treatment of the fascinating subject of the Book of Mormon comes from a scientist who knows whereof he speaks.

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Now, each of these three witnesses—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris—subsequently became estranged from the Prophet Joseph Smith ; indeed with his full concurrence two of them were excommunicated from the Church, and the third disfellowshipped. Surely, if these men were not sincere in their former testimony, they would have denied it now, but even during this period of acute unfriendliness they remained true to what they had said. Long after the Prophet's death, two of the witnesses returned to the Church ; the third did not. To the time of their death each of these men solemnly declared that their testimony concerning the Book of Mormon is true.

The extremely short period of time consumed in translating the Book of Mormon is certainly not without weight in any effort to evaluate its claims to divine origin. It is a matter of historical record that the work of translation began on April 7, 1829, and that it was nearly completed in the early part of June of the same year. The entire work of translation consumed considerably fewer than one hundred days, and in addition during the same period numerous revelations were received and other work attended to.

NOW, the Book of Mormon is a volume of approximately 300,000 words. This means that on an average Joseph Smith translated more than 3,000 words per day, counting Sundays and numerous other days during which he was not engaged in the work of translation. Any of my readers who is familiar with the task of preparing manuscripts for publication will readily admit that the preparation of 3,000 words per day for a period of 100 days, would be a prodigious undertaking, and yet this is precisely what Joseph Smith accomplished.

But this is not all. It must be remembered that Joseph Smith was only 23 years of age, without technical training, and totally unfamiliar with the work of writing and editing manuscripts for the press, this being his first production.

Now I venture the assertion that if any of my readers believes that Joseph Smith, unaided by Divine inspiration, wrote the book himself in the time indicated ; I say, if there are any such, they are not familiar with the work of preparing manuscripts for publication, and they are not familiar with the Book of Mormon and its message.

The Book of Mormon is not in any degree disharmonious with American archaeological discoveries of modern times. In fact, it places practically all of America's prehistoric civilization precisely where modern science has found it, namely in Central America and Mexico, with more sparsely settled areas as far north as the Great Lakes. Surely, without Divine aid, Joseph Smith would have been unable to outline the geographical culture of an extinct race, especially at a time when practically nothing was known even of its existence.

The Book of Mormon is an account of God's dealings with certain people who came to America from Asia. It contains in simple and pristine purity the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the World. In its closing chapter it contains God's positive promise that He will manifest the truth of it to all of those who seek Him with sincere desire.—(Adapted from a radio sermon delivered over Station KSL in Salt Lake City.)