

Roundtable

THE PROSPECTS FOR NEW WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY

Participants: Cyrus H. Gordon
Dee F. Green
John L. Sorenson

An exciting new era of scholarship has opened up which will involve both Mormons and others in a dramatic growth in understanding of the origins and cultural history of ancient Americans. This Roundtable examines some of the reasons for a largely profitable past and some of the evidence and new discoveries that point directions for a much more promising future. Dr. Cyrus H. Gordon, Chairman of the Department of Mediterranean Studies at Brandeis University, first examines why the academic establishment has resisted study of contacts between developing civilizations in the Old World and the New World and presents some of the most impressive recent evidence for such contacts, especially his own extremely important demonstration (cf., TIME, May 24, 1968) that a Canaanite inscription from a stone in Brazil is genuine — the record of a voyage from the Gulf of Arabia to America in the sixth century B.C. Professor Gordon lectures and publishes on a rich variety of aspects of Ancient and Modern Near Eastern Studies and Pre-Columbian America; his books include THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST (Norton, 1965), EVIDENCE FOR THE MINOAN LANGUAGE (Ventnor, 1966), and FORGOTTEN SCRIPTS (Basic Books, 1968). Dee Green, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Weber State College, who studied archaeology at Brigham Young University, then gives a critical survey of the work of "BOOK OF MORMON Archaeologists," pointing out why their "proofs" are largely illusory and suggesting authentic directions that can be taken in the future to relate the scientific effort to understand Ancient America to the BOOK OF MORMON record. Finally, John Sorenson, a member of DIALOGUE's Board of Editors, who was trained in anthropology at UCLA and then taught at Brigham Young University before joining General Research Corporation in Santa Barbara, surveys the wealth of evidence showing connections between ancient civilizations in the Old World and America and discusses the significance of this data for New World Archaeology and for the BOOK OF MORMON.

TOWARD A HISTORY OF ANCIENT AMERICA

Cyrus H. Gordon

If there is no history of ancient Antarctica, there is a valid reason for it. Stone Age man penetrated every continent except Antarctica, and until modern times, Antarctica was unexplored. Where there have been no men to leave behind any records of their achievements, there can be no history in the humanistic sense. But America — specifically Mesoamerica — is quite different. Anyone who visits the antiquity sites and museums of Peru, Central America, and Mexico is dazzled by the splendor, magnitude, and abundance of the legacy of the pre-Columbian civilizations. But though we know much about the ancient history of Asia, Europe and parts of Africa, the history of our own continent in antiquity is yet to be written, even in outline.

THE FAILURE OF ESTABLISHED SCHOLARSHIP

How have we come to know ancient Egyptian or Mesopotamian history? Certainly not by regarding the forgotten scripts as undecipherable; nor by viewing the monuments and art in isolation, detached from world history; nor again by accepting the prejudices of the Establishment as the badge of intellectual respectability. The pioneers in opening up the ancient history of civilized man in the Old World squeezed out the essential elements of information from Hebrew, Greek, and Latin writings, and applied them as opening wedges to make mute stones tell their story. That is how Grotefend cracked cuneiform in 1801; how Akerblad cracked Demotic Egyptian in the same year; how George Smith cracked the Cypriote form of the Aegean syllabary in 1872. Building on the breakthroughs of such pioneers (whose work, of necessity, had to be crude), Champollion, Rawlinson, and Ventris raised Egyptology, cuneiform studies, and Mycenology to higher levels so that they could become in time scientific disciplines, yielding facts out of which history could be reconstructed.¹

While the pioneers achieved epoch-making results with little or no help or encouragement, the academicians often did everything they could to denigrate, ridicule, and obstruct. When intelligent and educated men challenge the dogmas of the Establishment, it is usually the challengers who are correct and ultimately prevail. But there is some pathos inherent in the word "ultimately." Young Grotefend submitted his paper on the decipherment of cuneiform to the Göttingen Academy in 1801; the Establishment decided to pub-

I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Grant, Mrs. George Ellis and Mrs. Helen S. Slosberg for their help in enabling me to undertake a long-range study of cultural diffusion, of which this article is a part.

¹Cyrus H. Gordon, *Forgotten Scripts: How they were deciphered and their impact on contemporary culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

lish it as a milestone in scholarship only in 1893, long after Grotefend had gone to his eternal rest. It is interesting to note that the authoritative book on Old Persian still calls the flaws in his achievement "sorry stuff."² Pedantry dies hard.

The thesis of this article is that pre-Columbian America was not isolated from the rest of the world, but for thousands of years had been in contact with the Eastern Hemisphere. At times the contacts were sustained and strong, at other times in abeyance, but the process over the millennia was creative. The interrelationships of Old and New World cultures make it possible to begin outlining the ancient history of America, and to process the scripts of America for decipherment by using Old World scripts as opening wedges against a background of available collateral evidence. Sterile perfectionists may cry, "But we don't have all the evidence!"; to which pioneers can only reply, "You've got to begin somewhere, and you can only do it with what is available." In important matters — and the history of mankind is important — it is less reprehensible to do too little than nothing at all.

How are we to explain the paucity of native American tradition concerning Old World contacts? First we must recognize the phenomenon of collective amnesia. The Egyptians and Iranians had completely forgotten their ancestral scripts, so that outsiders in the nineteenth century had to decipher hieroglyphs and cuneiform and retrieve those peoples' ancient history from oblivion. The Iranians, including the native scholars, were unaware of their ancient kings Cyrus and Xerxes, who were known to every educated Westerner from the Bible and classical authors. It takes hundreds of generations to build a great tradition, but only one to forget it. Let us not lose sight of the fact that when the Spaniards discovered and conquered Mesoamerica they were in the grip of the benighted Inquisition. They burned the codices of the Indians, melted down exquisite jewelry for the gold and silver, and did all they could to crush the spirit and destroy the civilization of the natives. Nevertheless glimmerings of historic memory survived; notably the tradition that a bearded white being from the East had sailed across the Atlantic to bring agriculture, metallurgy and other arts of civilization to America. The Aztecs called him Quetzalcoatl, the Mayas called him Kukulcan, the Incas called him Viracocha. The tradition is consistent; only the names are different. Natives of the Mesoamerican cradles of civilization looked toward the Mediterranean and adjacent parts of the Old World for the roots of American culture.

A VISIT FROM CANAAN

The essential correctness of the native traditions has been supported factually in various publications.³ The one thing that seemed to be lacking was evidence of specific contact that could be pinpointed in time and place.

²Roland G. Kent, *Old Persian* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1950) pp. 10-11.

³Constance Irwin, *Fair Gods and Stone Faces* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963); and Pierre Honoré, *In Quest of the White God* (New York: Putnam, 1964).

Actually such evidence turned up in 1872 when the copy of a Canaanite text was mailed to the Instituto Historico in Rio de Janeiro by a person who claimed in the covering letter that his slaves had found the inscribed stone on his plantation at Pouso Alto near Paraíba. There are two Paraíbas in Brazil, one near Rio de Janeiro, and the other far to the north where Brazil protrudes eastward toward the bulge of West Africa. For external geographic reasons, it seemed logical that the northern State of Paraíba was the place, whereas the internal evidence of the text points to the Region of Paraíba in the south near Rio de Janeiro. The inscription describes the locale as "a land of mountains." Since Canaanite mariners would dig in not too far from the sea, their mountainous base should be in the southern Paraíba, where there are high mountains near the coast, rather than in northern Paraíba where the mountains are neither high nor near the sea. In any case the find-site is now being sought in the southern Region of Paraíba by Estanislau Vera, a jurist in Rio de Janeiro, who reappraised the internal and external evidence and concluded that the nineteenth century scholars had not found the site for the simple reason that they were searching in the wrong Paraíba.

In any event the failure to locate the original stone contributed to the decision of the scholars to brand the inscription as spurious. But such would have been the verdict in any case of an Establishment which was not willing then, and is not happy now, to see ancient America brought into world history. Why should this be so? Specialists, such as Semitists, do not want their fields taken out of isolation, because doing so means revising their corporate views. Americans — Anglo-Saxons as well as Latins — tend toward hemispheric culture isolation for another reason. Most of us are descended from people who left the Old World because it was bad for them, and they sought a home in a New World, uncontaminated by Old World evil. For this reason we tend to resist taking the native Indian cultures out of their supposed hemispheric purity.

AUTHENTICATING THE TEXT

Thanks to Professor Jules Piccus, of the University of Massachusetts, who discovered an unpublished 1874 transcript of the Brazil text, the question of authenticity was re-evaluated in 1968. Piccus sent me a Xerox copy of the 1874 facsimile for my opinion. It soon became evident to me that the text was full of data that were unknown to scholars in the 1870's but which have come to light since then in Northwest Semitic inscriptions. This holds not only for vocabulary and grammatical forms, but for the very literary structure of the inscription as a whole. It is a non-funerary commemorative text in three parts: (1) an introduction identifying the author(s), (2) the body of the text narrating the event(s) commemorated, and (3) a finale invoking divine favor. This tripartite format for non-funerary, commemorative Canaanite texts is now known to be authentic from the Karatepe inscription found in 1946. This is the translation of the Brazil text:

We are Sidonian Canaanites from the city of the Mercantile King. We were cast up on this distant shore, a land of mountains.

We sacrificed a youth to the celestial gods and goddesses in the nineteenth year of our mighty King Hiram and embarked from Ezion-geber into the Red Sea. We voyaged with ten ships and were at sea together for two years around Africa. Then we were separated by the hand of Baal and were no longer with our companions. So we have come here, twelve men and three women, into "New Shore." Am I, the admiral, a man who would flee? Nay! May the celestial gods and goddesses favor us well!

The Hiram in question is not Hiram I (tenth century), nor Hiram II (eighth century), but Hiram III (553–533 B.C.). This follows from several considerations, including the script. The year of embarkation was therefore 534 B.C.; two and a fraction years later, when the ship reached America (aptly called "New Shore" — like "Carthage" which means "New City"), it was 531 B.C. (with a few months as the margin of error). Accordingly, in the sixth century B.C. we know of one vessel that crossed the Atlantic with fifteen people from Canaan. "From the hand of Baal" (which means "by an act of God") does not necessarily imply that the crossing was accidental and due to a storm. It could also signify that lots were drawn to see which ship should sail to America and this particular vessel drew the divinely-inspired lot to head for "New Shore," whereas the others were directed to set up posts or stations along the African coast. In any event we have reason to believe that this was not the first successful crossing effected by Near East mariners. Brazil, which is still largely uncharted, was probably even less explored then; but its coastal areas were already known to the great maritime peoples of antiquity such as the navigators of Canaan.

Who were the Canaanites? The term has two meanings in Biblical Hebrew. As a common noun it means "merchants"; as a proper noun it designates a group of linguistically related inhabitants of Lebanon-Syria-Palestine embracing Phoenicians, Hebrews, Edomites, Moabites and others. We often make the mistake of imagining people in terms of stereotypes. Thus all Phoenicians project the image of being sailors, whereas in fact many of them were craftsmen and even farmers. The Hebrews are often fancied to be a nation of Yahwistic landlubbers; but the Bible tells us they frequently lapsed into pagan usages (including Baalism and occasionally human sacrifice) and that three of the tribes (Dan, Asher and Zebulun) were nautical (Genesis 49:13; Judges 5:17). The language of the Brazil text is more akin to Judean Hebrew than to Sidonian Phoenician. This is not surprising for a Canaanite dialect emanating from Ezion-geber (in Edom but on the fringe of Judah) where Israelites had been the sea-faring partners of Phoenicians for over four centuries (i.e., since the days when Solomon and Hiram I embarked on joint overseas trading missions). The text mentions Baal and human sacrifice, both of which ring true for pagan Canaanites and their errant Jewish neighbors (against whom Prophets inveigh).

We do not know the exact ethnic and religious background of the fifteen people who reached America in 531 B.C., but the thing to remember is that crews were picked then (as now) not because of denominational or ethnic affiliation, but because they were skilled and able-bodied seamen. By the same

token, the scribe was not selected because he was a Sidonian, Jew, or Edomite, but because he could write Canaanite. Do we insist today that unless a man comes from a certain part of the Anglo-Saxon world (USA, or Canada, or England, or Scotland, or Wales, or Ireland, or Australia, etc.), he cannot be employed as a teacher of English nor given a contract to write a book in the English language? The fifteen people aboard the ship may have been quite as heterogeneous as those on Jonah's ship, which had aboard people of various backgrounds (who respected each other's religions) including the Yahwistic Hebrew, Jonah (see Jonah 1:15-16). It is our business to point out the range of possibilities in interpreting the Brazil inscription, whenever we cannot pinpoint the meaning and eliminate the alternatives. There may have been Hebrews aboard, but it cannot as yet be proved from the inscription itself. The Canaanite speech-community embraced both Yahwists and Baalists. The text mentions Baal but not Yahweh.

The importance of the Brazil text need not mislead us into oversimplifying the origin of Mesoamerican civilization, which was stimulated by trans-oceanic contacts from both east and west. Alexander von Wuthenau has observed that the myriads of ceramic sculptures from ancient Mesoamerica portray no American Indian types prior to 300 A.D. but only Far Easterners, African Negroes and various Caucasians — especially Mediterranean types, including Semites.⁴

THE NETWORK OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

As soon as we bring America into the global picture of antiquity, new vistas begin to open before us. For example, by the sixth century B.C., the Near East had achieved considerable finesse in mathematics, astronomy and calendrical calculations. Conceivably, sound conclusions in such fields can be based on observations made in one region (such as the Near East), but it is much easier to explain an advanced astronomy and sophisticated calendar through global observations. For instance, the cycle of eclipses (within which all of them recur) is eighteen years, plus eleven and a fraction days. But from cycle to cycle, the same eclipse need not appear in the same part of the world. That is one of the reasons why modern astronomers require observatories in various parts of the globe. The 18+ year cycle, known as the Saros Cycle of Eclipses, can be established through observation only if data are gathered from at least three longitudes, 120° apart. If the observations are limited to one region, the cycle would appear to be 54+ years long. It is striking that the Mayas established the most exact calendar ever devised for any civilization, including our own. They had observatories on step pyramids resembling the ziggurats of Mesopotamia. And Mesoamerica is about 120° west of the Near East. If we go 120° east of the latter, we run into the Solomon Islands to the south and the Kuriles of Japan to the north. (It is suggestive that the pre-Japanese population are Caucasian Ainu.)⁵ The de-

⁴Alexander von Wuthenau, *Altamerikanische Tonplastik* (in the series *Kunst der Welt*), (Baden-Baden, Holle Verlag, 1965).

⁵Dr. von Wuthenau has shown me a Mesoamerican figurine portraying a typical Ainu.

velopment of ancient science, especially astronomy and calendrical calculation, is much more comprehensible against a background of global observations processed in creative centers like the Near East, Mesoamerica, and China.⁶

Cultural influence is always a two-way affair. Even if one side is far ahead of the other, there is still some contribution that the less advanced makes to the more advanced. The Founding Fathers of our country were more developed than the local Indians, yet Indian influence is evident at every turn in the USA: the canoe, corn, tomatoes, potatoes, tobacco, countless place names, etc. We may be sure that even a region of major magnitude in the evolution and dissemination of culture such as the Near East received important impulses from the outside. An objective method for starting further investigation is the analysis of metals and stones found in Near East excavations, to determine their places of origin. Impurities and trace metals can tell a great deal.

The mariners of antiquity were, from at least the Middle Bronze Age, more like a mobile international guild than members of a single ethnos. How could a network of mariners plying their trade on the Seven Seas be otherwise? We speak of the alphabet as a Phoenician invention. The role of the Phoenicians in adapting and disseminating the alphabet is paramount, but the invention of the alphabet has aspects that completely elude those who regard it merely as a graphic device developed by a single people.

The alphabet was not simply a means of spelling words, making it possible to record speech graphically with very few signs. Each letter had a numerical value. The Hebrew-Phoenician alphabet has the following names, phonetic values and numerical values:

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Phonetic Value</u>	<u>Numerical Value</u>
1.	<i>alef</i>	'	1
2.	<i>bet</i>	<i>b</i>	2
3.	<i>gimel</i>	<i>g</i>	3
4.	<i>dalet</i>	<i>d</i>	4
5.	<i>he</i>	<i>h</i>	5
6.	<i>waw</i>	<i>w</i>	6
7.	<i>zayin</i>	<i>z</i>	7
8.	<i>het</i>	<i>h</i>	8
9.	<i>tet</i>	<i>t</i>	9
10.	<i>yod</i>	<i>y</i>	10
11.	<i>kaf</i>	<i>k</i>	20
12.	<i>lamed</i>	<i>l</i>	30
13.	<i>mem</i>	<i>m</i>	40
14.	<i>nun</i>	<i>n</i>	50
15.	<i>samek</i>	<i>s</i>	60
16.	<i>cayin</i>	<i>c</i>	70
17.	<i>pe</i>	<i>p</i>	80
18.	<i>ṣade</i>	<i>s</i>	90
19.	<i>qof</i>	<i>q</i>	100
20.	<i>resh</i>	<i>r</i>	200
21.	<i>ṣin</i> (or <i>shin</i>)	<i>ṣ</i> (or <i>sh</i>)	300
22.	<i>taw</i>	<i>t</i>	400

⁶That celestial observations made by Phoenician mariners in distant climes, got back to the Near East is illustrated in Herodotus 4:42.

So deepseated are the numerical values that the Arabic alphabet, which deviates radically from the Hebrew-Phoenician order of the letters, nevertheless retains the old numerical values tenaciously. For example, *y* is the last letter in the Arabic alphabet (of twenty-eight letters), but it retains the old numerical value of "10"; and so with all the letters.

The alphabet was fraught with meaning for the ancients. The rabbinic *Sefer ha-Yesirah*, "The Book of Creation," represents the alphabet as antedating the Universe, with God creating the Universe by means of the alphabet.

In an important article, David H. Kelley⁷ points out that in the New as well as in the Old World there are names for the days of the month. Moreover, these names are linked with the alphabet. For example, the series *k-l-m* (in Hebrew *kaf* "hand," *lamed*, *mem* "water"; in Greek, *kappa*, *lambda*, *mu*) is reflected in the successive Yucatec Maya day-names *Manik* (which is written with the glyph depicting a "hand"), *Lamat* (the same name as Hebrew *lamed*, because *Lamat* has no general meaning in the Mayan languages) and *Muluc* (cf. *Ixil mu*) (the equivalent of the Aztec "water" day). Kelley goes on to show that half the names of the Aztec days recur in Eurasia in the correct sequence as constellation names. It is generally agreed that the alphabet was spread by traders and merchants; but Kelley goes on to propose that the merchants were mariners who used a set of guiding stars, and then adjusted the symbols for these stars into an alphabet.⁸

The most useful invention of man, the alphabet, is the product not of one people or one area but of international merchant mariners. This has a significant bearing on the origin and character of world culture.

Let us approach a specific problem within this framework. The oldest form of the alphabet that has come down to us in its fixed traditional order is the Ugaritic ABC of about 1400 B.C. It consists of thirty letters consistently listed in the following order:⁹

a b g h h d h w z h t y k s̄ l m d n z s c p s̄ q r t ḡ t i u s̄

None of the letters are interchangeable except *s* and *s̄*, which are the same phonetically. For instance *ssw* ("horse") can also be written *ssw*. Thus the alphabetic principle is adhered to strictly (i.e., one and only one sign for each distinctive sound in the language) throughout the first twenty-nine letters, but the thirtieth was appended as an optional letter. To state things differently: twenty-nine letters take care of the phonetic needs of Ugaritic; the thirtieth is there for some non-phonetic reason. Everything makes sense if we correlate the letters of the Ugaritic alphabet with the days of the lunar month. A lunar month is always longer than twenty-nine days but shorter than thirty. Consequently in a lunar calendar (such as the Neo-Babylonian

⁷"Calendar Animals and Deities," *Southwest Journal of Anthropology*, 16 (1960), pp. 317-337.

⁸I wish to thank John L. Sorenson for calling my attention to Kelley's work, and for showing me a preliminary draft of his own forthcoming monograph on Near East contacts with Mesoamerica.

⁹Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), p. 11.

calendar still used by the Jews), a month has twenty-nine or thirty days (with months of twenty-nine and thirty days usually alternating.) In the Ugaritic alphabet, each of the necessary twenty-nine letters could stand for the minimal twenty-nine days of the month, with the extra *š* available for that extra thirtieth day in the long months.

NEW VISTAS

We are entering a new era in the study of civilization. Old World history is so much better known that it will provide opening wedges for deciphering the languages and dispelling the mysteries of ancient America. But increasingly, as time goes by, the ancient New World will elucidate Old World history.

What we call Western Civilization is not the creation of one people, one race or one region. It is the product of intercontinental stimulation maintained to a great extent by traders who traversed the seas since the Bronze Age. We must get over our conceit that only modern Western man (whatever that means) was capable of noteworthy achievement. The seminal foundations of the exact sciences (such as mathematics and astronomy) as well as the humanities (such as the alphabet, the Ten Commandments, and Homeric Epic) are rooted in antiquity. The role of the merchant is much more significant and noble than most of us realize. Traders need international peace if they are to flourish. Solomon's commercial empire in the tenth century B.C. exposed Israel to contacts with the world at large and paved the way for the universal doctrines of the Prophets whose message unfolded during the subsequent centuries. One of their doctrines was that the world would not become a place fit to live in until "nation would no longer lift sword against nation, nor study the art of war anymore" (Micah 4:3). Israel learned this in the First Early Iron Age from her traders, including those who sailed the oceans with the merchant mariners of Hiram. But Israel was a late comer in Near East antiquity. In the tenth century B.C. she was catching up with the lessons that her Bronze Age predecessors had learned two millennia earlier.

BOOK OF MORMON ARCHAEOLOGY: THE MYTHS AND THE ALTERNATIVES

Dee F. Green

Church members, from some General Authorities to some Sunday School teachers, are generally impressed with and concerned about "scientific proof" of the Book of Mormon. As a practicing scientist and Church member, I am singularly unconcerned about such studies — in fact, when it comes to such matters, I am hyper-conservative. To suggest that Book of Mormon archae-

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ology is largely useless — even a delusion — and that there are far more important things for Church anthropologists to worry about is not currently popular in the Church. Nevertheless, the conservative position needs a hearing.

My task is to assess the past and current status of Book of Mormon archaeology and point some directions for the future. This assessment is admittedly critical, but I hasten to assure everyone that the criticism represents my differences of opinion with regard to individual's ideas and positions and not with regard to their personalities nor their testimonies. I should also like to point out that I do not feel that we are dealing here with matters of doctrine. As far as I am concerned, "proving" (or "disproving") the historicity of the Book of Mormon will in no way change the atonement of Christ, or the plan of salvation.

The three periods — past, present, and future — can perhaps best be characterized by three approaches to Book of Mormon archaeology. These are the Geographical-Historical Approach, which has been popular all through the history of the Church and while, in my opinion, largely sterile, still commands a large following; the Back-Door Approach which, as nearly as I can tell, is the current "official" approach of the Church; and the Anthropological Approach, which has not yet been tried.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH

Since the early days of the Church, some interest in both the geography of the Book of Mormon and its historical authenticity has been apparent. A special interest was generated in 1841 with the publication of John Lloyd Stephen's book, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, which resulted in articles in the *Times and Seasons*.¹ Attacks on the Book of Mormon itself, as well as on Joseph Smith's account of its origin, resulted in various apologists arising in the Church to defend the book on internal as well as external evidence. However, as far as the use of archaeology was concerned, statements on both sides were naïve, since the Church has not had a professionally trained archaeologist until recent years,² and little of any scientific validity was known of New World archaeology until the 1930's.

The last few decades have seen Church members focusing on two related topics: the *geography* of the Book of Mormon and *trait comparisons* between either the Book of Mormon and the New World or the Old World.

¹October 1, 1842.

²Strange as it may seem, the first active Church member who can really be called an archaeologist with a Ph.D. degree and professional standing is Ray T. Matheny, whose degree was awarded in 1968. Others who may claim priority are clearly not archaeologists. They may be historians or dilettanti; they may think and talk about archaeology; but they have never been through the whole process of being trained as archaeologists. Nevertheless both Bruce Warren and Gareth Lowe, while lacking advanced degrees, have been highly respected as Mesoamerican archaeologists for a number of years and both are in the process of finishing graduate work.

The geographical interest has centered primarily on internal re-construction, followed by speculation as to geographic placement on the Western hemisphere of places mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Two points of view have been widely expressed. The more traditional, equating the Book of Mormon's "narrow neck of land" with the isthmus of Panama, may be reviewed in Reynolds and Sjordahl.³ The second position is that which for over twenty years has been championed by M. Wells Jakeman and was strongly identified with the former Department of Archaeology at Brigham Young University. While most L.D.S. archaeologists agree very broadly with Jakeman in identifying Mesoamerica as the region in which Book of Mormon events most likely transpired, attempts to arrive at closer identification have been hampered by Jakeman's failure to publish his long-awaited geography of the Book of Mormon. Jakeman's core ideas with regard to Book of Mormon geography were known over twenty years ago. Nothing new has come out of L.D.S. scholarship since then except for one abortive attempt to identify the Book of Mormon city Bountiful,⁴ a few wildly speculative suggestions by such individuals as José Dávila, and a modicum of knowledgeable and reasonable but private correspondence by Sorenson, Lowe, Warren, and others. Furthermore, the University Archaeological Society (now the Society for Early Historic Archaeology), which provides the house organ for the Jakeman position, has consistently refused to conduct a symposium on Book of Mormon geography, despite the fact that such a symposium has been suggested to its officers a number of times by a number of people in the past ten years. A great deal of interesting progress could now be made on the question of geography except that dialogue is not possible, and other approaches are preferable.

The second topic, that of trait comparison, which has been of interest to L.D.S. students of the Book of Mormon, has suffered from two problems. The first is related to geography in that if one wishes to compare Book of Mormon traits with New World archaeology, one must first locate the proper area of the New World in order to make such comparisons. The uninformed Mormon might assume that essentially the whole New World is Book of Mormon country, so that traits from anywhere in the hemisphere are all right as long as they fit. This assumption, based as it is in our folklore and not on analysis of the Book of Mormon itself nor an understanding of New World archaeology, has, together with the second problem, that of unsophisticated comparison techniques, already produced what John Sorenson has rightly

³George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjordahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1958), Vol. III.

⁴Thought by Jakeman to be the site of Aguacatal in Campeche, Mexico, and defended by Christensen on various occasions (see UAS Newsletter 22.02, 46.0, 47.3, and his numerous public declarations at Leadership Weeks). After excavating at Aguacatal in 1961 and conducting the only study yet made of the artifacts and data recovered, Ray Matheny, then a graduate student at BYU, privately demonstrated that Aguacatal is not Bountiful. The UAS Newsletter has never recognized Matheny's contribution. Jakeman has also identified the site of El Cayo on the Usumacinta River in Southern Mexico as Zarahemla. Others who have visited the site find it too small, and some preliminary archaeological testing shows its main occupation to be too late in time for such an interpretation.

called “kooky” results.⁵ Some of the results which are more popularly known among Mormons bear a few words of comment.

Those volumes which most flagrantly ignore time and space and most radically distort, misinterpret, or ignore portions of the archaeological evidence are the popular Farnsworth volumes.⁶ Also inadequate, from a professional archaeologist’s point of view, are the well intentioned volumes by Milton R. Hunter⁷ and a number of smaller pamphlets and works by various authors. On a slightly more sophisticated plane is Ferguson’s *One Fold and One Shepherd*, but while he is conscious of the geographic and time problems, he gets caught in the trait comparison snare. His list of 298 traits⁸ (most un-referenced) are at times so generalized that the list could just as well prove that Book of Mormon peoples wound up in Southeast Asia. His knowledge of New World archaeology is better than that of either Farnsworth or Hunter but still too shallow to avoid getting him in trouble. Much the same can be said for a variety of authors and articles published in the various symposia of the University Archaeological Society on the archaeology of the scriptures.⁹

New World – Old World comparisons have been less popular but equally fraught with problems. The best known examples are the two volumes by Nibley which suffer from an overdose of “Old Worlditis.”¹⁰ In Near Eastern philology and history, Nibley has no peers in the Church – and probably few outside it – but he does not know New World culture history well, and his writing ignores the considerable indigenous elements in favor of exclusively Old World patterns. Part of this is also due no doubt to Nibley’s not unjustifiable concern over the state of New World scholarship in the Church.

A final warning should be issued against Jakeman’s *Lehi Tree of Life Stone*,¹¹ which has received wide publicity in the Church and an over-enthusiastic response from the layman due to the publication’s pseudo-scholarship. The question which should really be asked about Izapa Stela 5 is “Did the artist or artists have Lehi’s vision in their minds when the stone was sculptured?”, a question which, I submit, cannot be answered short of talking with the artist. The next question, then, is what are the *probabilities* that

⁵See Sorenson’s article, this Roundtable, footnote 2.

⁶Dewey Farnsworth, *The Americans Before Columbus* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 3rd Edition, 1965), and *Book of Mormon Evidences in Ancient America* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company), 1953.

⁷Milton R. Hunter, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1956), Vol. I, and *Christ in Ancient America: Archaeology and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1959), Vol. II.

⁸Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *One Fold and One Shepherd* (San Francisco: Books of California), pp. 57–72.

⁹See especially papers of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth annual symposia published by BYU Extension Publications and a review of the fifteenth symposium volume by John Sorenson in Vol. 1, No. 1 of *Dialogue*.

¹⁰Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), and *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952). See also Bruce Warren’s review of this latter volume in UAS Newsletter 27.0 June 1, 1955.

¹¹M. Wells Jakeman, *Stela 5, Izapa Chiapas, Mexico: A Major Archaeological Discovery of the New World* (University Archaeological Society, Special Publications No. 2, 1958).

the artist had Lehi's vision in mind when he carved the stone. I don't know the answer to that one either, but then, neither does Jakeman, and his publication is more of a testimony as to what is not known than to what is known about Stela 5. As Nibley has pointed out¹² in his own inimitable style, Jakeman errs at every turn in the publication. The basis of Jakeman's evidence is his own hand-drawn version¹³ from a photograph of the stone. He makes unsupported assumptions about the canons of ancient art; he fumbles over elements of the dream which are not included and items on the stone which have no place in the dream; he displays ignorance of his linguistic data and most unfortunately reverses the scholarly method by presenting his data with a rash of "evidentlys," "probablys," "appears," and "apparentlys" — but offers his conclusions as unarguable facts. As Nibley so appropriately puts it:

Science does not arrive at its conclusions by syllogisms, and no people on earth deplore proof demonstration by syllogism more loudly than real archaeologists do. Yet Mr. Jakeman's study is nothing but an elaborate syllogistic stew. The only clear and positive thing about the whole study is the objective the author is determined to reach. With naïve exuberance, he repeatedly announces that he has found "exactly what we would expect to find." Inevitably there emerges from this dim and jumbled relief exactly what Mr. Jakeman is looking for.¹⁴

Sorenson's article in this Roundtable, while partaking of the trait comparison syndrome, is considerably more sophisticated than those endeavors listed above. In the first place it is not the "trait" but rather the "trait-complex" which is looked at, and, secondly, Sorenson's work is more for a belling of the Near East-New World diffusionist cat than a representation of his approach to Book of Mormon studies. Those of us who know him well also know that his ideas are much broader, and Sorenson himself has warned against uncontrolled trait comparisons.¹⁵

¹²In a privately distributed review of Jakeman's Stela 5 publication.

¹³The author was present during much of this drawing period and can personally testify that plate 5 in Jakeman's Stela 5 publication was drawn from a photograph of the monument and not from the monument itself. That Jakeman's drawing is not accurate can be shown by careful comparison with the photograph (Plate 3) in his own publication and by comparison with drawings made of the stone itself by unbiased draftsmen. For example, Figure 14 in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, Vol. 2, (Robert Wacchope, General Editor, University of Texas Press, 1965); also, a photograph of an artist's rendering in my personal collection and various drawings and detailed photographs in the possession of Mr. Garth Norman, who is completing a detailed analysis of the Izapan stone monuments for publication by the BYU-NWAF. Do not compare photo 109 in Ferguson's *One Fold and One Shepard* nor the plaster reproduction of Stela 5 in the BYU Archaeology Museum since Ferguson's photograph is of the cast and the cast itself has been altered by Jakeman after his interpretation.

¹⁴See footnote 13.

¹⁵See Sorenson's *What Archaeology Can and Cannot Do for the Book of Mormon*, mimeographed for private distribution, in which he cites the German scholar Kugler "who collected 17 pages of 'striking parallels' between the history of Louis IX of France and Gilgamesh, the Babylonian mythological hero. Surely this was enough to 'prove' that the two were identical if comparisons alone could turn the trick."

The gist of these overly brief reviews is that the Geographical-Historical Approach has proven to be essentially sterile. Among the morass of archaeological half-truths and falsehoods which we have perpetrated in the name of Book of Mormon archaeology, only Jakeman's suggestion of a limited geography and Sorenson's insistence on a cautious, highly controlled trait-complex approach are worth considering. The ink we have spilled on Book of Mormon archaeology has probably done more harm than good.

I am not impressed with allegations that Book of Mormon archaeology converts people to the Church. My personal preference in Church members still runs to those who have a faith-inspired commitment to Jesus Christ, and if their testimonies need bolstering by "scientific proof" of the Book of Mormon (or anything else for that matter), I am prone to suggest that the basis of the testimony could stand some re-examination. Having spent a considerable portion of the past ten years functioning as a scientist dealing with New World archaeology, I find that nothing in so-called Book of Mormon archaeology materially affects my religious commitment one way or the other, and I do not see that the archaeological myths so common in our proselytizing program enhance the process of true conversion.

THE BACK-DOOR APPROACH

What I have chosen to call the Back-Door Approach is characteristic of the Brigham Young University New World Archaeological Foundation, an organization begun in the middle 1950's by Thomas S. Ferguson. It was eventually taken over by the Church and based at BYU, with a special Church committee under the direction of Elder Howard W. Hunter given jurisdiction over its direction and finances. Considerable embarrassment over the various unscholarly postures assumed by the geographical-historical school resulted in the Church Archaeological Committee's attitude that interpretation should be an individual matter, that is, that any archaeology officially sponsored by the Church (*i.e.*, the monies for which are provided by tithing) should concern itself only with the culture history interpretations normally within the scope of archaeology, and any attempt at correlation or interpretation involving the Book of Mormon should be eschewed. This enlightened policy, much to the gratification of the true professional archaeologist both in and outside the Church, has been scrupulously followed. It was made quite plain to me in 1963 when I was first employed by the BYU-NWAF that my opinions with regard to Book of Mormon archaeology were to be kept to myself, and my field report was to be kept entirely from any such references. I welcomed the instruction as refreshing after my earlier days at BYU when everything the archaeology department did had to be "scripturally" related.

Some of my colleagues and students, both in and out of the Church, have wondered if perhaps the real reason for the Church's involvement in archaeology (especially since it is centered in Mesoamerica with emphasis on the Preclassic period) is to help prove the Book of Mormon. While this may represent the individual thinking of some members of the Church Archae-

ological Committee, it has not intruded itself on the work of the foundation except to limit its activities to the preclassic cultures of Mesoamerica. Regardless of individual or group motives, however, the approach of the BYU-NWAF has been outstandingly successful. My numerous non-Church colleagues in Mesoamerican archaeology hold high regard for the work of the foundation and for most of its staff. Gareth Lowe, director of the BYU-NWAF, is as good a Mesoamerican archaeologist as there is in the country, and the foundation's outstanding publication series (which never mentions the Book of Mormon) consistently received good reviews in the professional literature.

Just how much the foundation is doing to advance the cause of Book of Mormon archaeology depends on one's point of view about Book of Mormon archaeology. There have been no spectacular finds (from the Book of Mormon point of view), no Zarahemlas discovered, no gold plates brought to light, no horses uncovered, and King Benjamin's tomb remains unexcavated. But the rewards to the Church of the foundation's work, while a little elusive to the layman and the "seekers after a sign," will prove to be considerable in the perspective of history.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

In assessing the future relationship of the Book of Mormon to archaeology, one must first consider how long it will take us to rid ourselves of the unfortunate myths we have built up around the relationship. For the general Church membership my prognosis is unfortunately pessimistic. However, some rays of hope can occasionally be seen, and perhaps a mention of what I consider to be the areas which most need changing will help.

The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists. Titles on books full of archaeological half-truths, dilettanti on the peripheries of American archaeology calling themselves Book of Mormon archaeologists regardless of their education, and a Department of Archaeology at BYU¹⁶ devoted to the production of Book of Mormon archaeologists¹⁷ do not insure that Book of Mormon archaeology really exists. If one is to study Book of Mormon archaeology, then one must have a corpus of data with which to deal. We do not. The Book of Mormon is really there so one *can* have Book of Mormon studies, and archaeology is really there so one can study archaeology, but the two are not wed. *At least they are not wed in reality since no Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern topography.* Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where

¹⁶Fortunately now changed to the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, with such qualified men as Merlin Myers, Ray T. Matheny, and Dale Berge giving students a sound and realistic education in anthropology.

¹⁷With the single exception of Ross T. Christensen, no individual ever educated in the former BYU Archaeology Department considers himself a Book of Mormon Archaeologist. In fact, most of those who graduated have not pursued careers in anthropology nor its sub-discipline archaeology, and those few of us who have become professionals have consistently found our early BYU training highly inadequate and the points of view expressed there largely uninformed and sterile.

Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any other location for that matter) were or are. It would seem then that a concentration on geography should be the first order of business, but we have already seen that twenty years of such an approach has left us empty-handed.

Another myth which needs dispelling is our Lamanite syndrome. Most American Indians are neither descendants of Laman nor necessarily of Book of Mormon peoples. The Book itself makes no such claim, and there is ample evidence in the archaeological record to show that this hemisphere was widely populated by peoples of Asiatic stock crossing the Bering Strait long before Book of Mormon peoples were supposed to have arrived on the scene. Furthermore, how many other kinds of peoples (see Cyrus Gordon's article in this Roundtable) may have reached the New World is unknown. Actually, the current usage of the term "Lamanite" by the Church membership is most unfortunate. It has racial overtones, subtle though they may be, and is coupled with a general meaning denoting cultural and spiritual inferiority. The term is rightfully resented by American Indians in or out of the Church. Technically, if we stick to Book of Mormon usage of the term, especially in the closing centuries of that record, we find that it applies to those individuals who were not partakers of the gospel. Hence, it was the equivalent of our term, gentile. An American Indian, therefore, who is a member of the L.D.S. Church cannot be a "Lamanite" since he has presumably accepted the gospel, and genealogically there is no assurance that he is a descendant of Laman. After all, many who were not genealogical descendants of Laman survived the last battle.¹⁸ Early in the Book of Mormon account the terms Nephite and Lamanite had genealogical significance, but they soon dropped that meaning for a cultural one meant to separate members of the ancient church from anyone else, regardless of his parentage. Our continual misuse of the term has unfortunately helped perpetuate myths about the cultural heritage of the American Indian.

Finally, I should like to lay at rest the myth that by scurrying around Latin America looking for horses and wheels we can prove the Book of Mormon.¹⁹ The mention of the wheel in the Book of Mormon and finding wheeled toy vehicles in Mexico is not proof of the Book. The mention of horses in the Book of Mormon and finding petroglyphs of horses (especially the ones with Spanish saddles) carved on stone in the southwestern United States is not proof of the Book. The mention of "fine linen" in the Book of Mormon and finding beautifully woven textiles in Peru is not proof of the Book. The mention of roads in the Book of Mormon and the finding of the Yaxuna-Coba *sacbe* in Yucatan is not proof of the Book. I sometimes get the depressing feeling that every member of the Church who has taken a Cook's tour

¹⁸Doctrine and Covenants, Section 3, Verses 16-18.

¹⁹See for example a recent article by Jack E. Jarrard and Paul R. Cheesman in the *Church News*, April 26, 1969. The article in general is a good example of the geographical-historical approach. It is vague where it should be positive and positive where it should be vague. It contains such obviously erroneous statements as "The culture (sic) . . . called Monte Alba (sic) . . . is a composite of Olmec, Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec, and Aztec."

to Latin America, seen three pyramids, read two travel guides, and unlimbered his 35mm camera on some unsuspecting "Lamanite" returns as an expert on Book of Mormon archaeology with pocketsfull of "proof" seen by his own eyes. Rest assured that we are not accumulating a great flood of "proof" or "evidence" which will in a few years burst the dam of secular resistance to the Book of Mormon and flood Zion with hordes of people demanding baptism. True personal commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ (even among Mormons) comes by very different avenues.

CULTURAL HISTORY: AN ALTERNATIVE

What then, ought to be our approach to the Book of Mormon? In the first place it is a highly complex record demanding knowledge of a wide variety of anthropological skills from archaeology through ethnology to linguistics and culture change, with perhaps a little physical anthropology thrown in for good measure. No one man outside the Church, much less anyone inside, has command of the necessary information. Furthermore, it isn't just the accumulation of knowledge and skill which is important; the framework in which it is applied must fit. Such a framework can be found only by viewing the Book of Mormon against a picture of New World culture history drawn by the entire discipline of anthropology. Singling out archaeology, a sub-discipline of anthropology, to carry the burden, especially in the naïve manner employed by our "Book of Mormon Archaeologists," has resulted in a lopsided promulgation of archaeological myth.

The Book after all purports to be a history of people, not of things, and archaeology recovers things (artifacts). Artifacts are made by people and as such have some things to say about the way people behave. But the interpretation of what artifacts can tell us about people is dependent on a broad, functionally integrated view of the whole way of life of a people. This is the provenience of anthropology. This is what anthropology is all about and what anthropologists care about. They seek to understand man and his culture, in all their complexity, and to arrive at generalizations about man's behavior and how it changes. Anthropologists' concerns and values are not unrelated to those of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, they are very germane.

We have never looked at the Book of Mormon in a cultural context. We have mined its pages for doctrine, counsel, and historical events but failed to treat it as a cultural document which can teach something about the inclusive life patterns of a people.²⁰ And if we are ever to show a relationship between the Book of Mormon and the New World, this step will have to be taken. It is the coincidence of the *cultural* history of the Book of Mormon with the cultural history of the New World that will tip the scales in our favor.

To trace accumulation of this trait and that trait willy-nilly around the New World is a blind alley. We are not about to uncover a sign tomorrow

²⁰Nibley is the only scholar who has ever approached this concept for the Old World portion of the record. The major effort needed with regard to the New World is represented by only four brief working papers prepared several years ago by John Sorenson.

or the next day or a year or ten years from now pointing the way to Zarahemla. Several years ago John Sorenson drew an analogy with the Bible which bears repeating:

Playing “the long shots,” looking for inscriptions of a particular city, would be like placing the family bankroll on the gambling tables in Las Vegas. We might be lucky, but experience tells us not to plan on it. After 10, these many years of expensive research in Bible lands, there is still not final, incontrovertible proof of a single Biblical event from archaeology alone. The great value of all that effort has been in the broad demonstration that the Bible account fits the context time after time so exactly that no reasonable person can suppose other than that it is genuinely historic. Twenty years or less of systematic “painting the scenery” can yield the same sort of convincing background for the Book of Mormon, I believe.

For too long Mormons have sought to “prove” the Book of Mormon authentic by what is really the most difficult kind of evidence — historical particulars. In the light of logic and the experience of Biblical archaeology it appears far safer to proceed on the middle ground of seeking general contextual confirmation, even though the results may not be so spectacular as many wish. In any case such a procedure — the slow building up of a picture and a case — will leave us with a body of new knowledge and increased understanding of the times, manner, and circumstances when Book of Mormon events took place which seems to some of us likely to have more enduring value than “proof.”²¹

I strongly suspect that the Lord, at least for some time to come, will still require faith, not “proof,” — and Moroni 10:4 (“he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost”), not archaeology, will continue to be the key for those who really care to understand the contents of the Book of Mormon and desire to know of its truth.

ANCIENT AMERICA AND THE BOOK OF MORMON RESISITED

John L. Sorenson

Secular scholarship and L.D.S. studies of archaeology and the Book of Mormon have had a discordant dialogue for some time. The scripture asserts, for example, that the civilizations it describes in ancient America had their fundamental inspiration in migrations from the Near East. Yet for three generations the most prestigious professors have claimed that the high cultures of this hemisphere — such as the Aztec, Maya, Inca and their predeces-

²¹See footnote 15.

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²¹See footnote 15.

sors in the Mesoamerican and Andean areas — owed nothing essential to the cultures of the Old World.

Attempts to open up the question have been made at various times (e.g., by G. E. Smith, Harold Gladwin, Robert Heine-Geldern, and Gordon Ekholm) but have provoked no major change in the accepted view. In recent years a certain softening has occurred so that most professional scholars today are no longer scandalized by the question, although their conclusions are hardly less firm than they were. The reason for the new, more open attitude is that a limited but interesting body of logical argument and factual evidence has appeared in print since about 1947 pointing to the possibility of some trans-oceanic voyaging earlier than the age of discovery by Europeans. Very few scholars, however, concede even today that the effect of such voyages was more than embroidery on the indigenous cultural fabric of the Americas.

The Mormon contribution to study of this problem has been trivial. Little serious scholarship has been carried on by Latter-day Saints in connection with the problem of American origins, and furthermore, no one in the scholarly establishment has had reason to be influenced significantly by the little which has been done. What few solid contributions have been made, have not been written in a manner, nor used data of a type which would be credible to professionals. In fact the views of Mormon writers on the topic, particularly the more colorful ones, are a subject of quiet amusement among professional Americanists.¹

In situations where sources of religious and secular authority conflict with each other, a Latter-day Saint sometimes finds himself in a quandary. He has been assured by a folklore transmitted in lessons, talks and church literature² that archaeologists (usually Gentiles) are steadily proving the Book of Mormon authentic, while through his formal education and secular literature he has become aware that in actuality “the experts” seem to contradict the scripture.

For most of two decades I have been both privately and professionally concerned with this problem. The scientifically orthodox case — for the complete separation of the culture histories of the two hemispheres — has always seemed to suffer from serious logical problems. The argument from evidence is also weak, for its thrust is negative: that we have *not* (yet at least) found this or that cultural item in America which immigrants could have brought

¹See especially Robert Wauchope's *Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962, (Chap. 4, “Lost Tribes and the Mormons.”) Wauchope displays, besides amusement, ignorance of the actual range of Mormon thought and work, an ignorance quite general and quite understandable in the anthropological profession to which he belongs. For hostility to be mixed with the ignorance is more rare, but see V. W. Von Hagen's *The Aztec: Man and Tribe* (Mentor Books, 1958, pp. 2 and 208) for a strong condemnation of Sorenson as a typical Mormon apologist!

²Most L.D.S. literature on “archeology and the Book of Mormon” ranges from factually and logically unreliable to truly kooky. In general it appears that the worse the book, the more it sells (the Farnsworth picture books top the list, of course), which seems to say something about Mormons as an audience. Of course popular secular works on archaeology are also frequently full of nonsense. Perhaps it is the pictures that sell both types.

with them from civilized lands of the old World. But negative evidence is always weak evidence. Thus intellectually dissatisfied as well as religiously challenged, for years I filed away facts relevant to the problems as I encountered them.*

In 1968 an invitation to present a paper to a Symposium on Problems of Trans-Oceanic Contacts (at the annual meetings of the Society for American Archaeology) led to my making a new, comprehensive review of the state of the evidence. At last the nature and amount of evidence seemed to justify professional attention. The paper prepared for that occasion constituted a new departure in the interpretation of Old and New World cultural relations. The present article summarizes and interprets for *Dialogue* readers some of the points made in the technical paper.³

THE UNITY OF CIVILIZATION IN THE OLD WORLD

One striking result of the extensive historical and archaeological study which has been carried on during the last few decades has been to demonstrate a fundamental interrelatedness among the various centers of civilization in the Old World. The fact is particularly well documented for the last two millennia, when written records were common in certain areas, but increasingly it is clear that similar linkages prevailed long before written history. Where once it was permissible to think of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India or the Aegean as sites where independent civilizations "arose," now each of those cultural manifestations must be seen instead as more nearly a regional stylistic variant — a special local structuring — of symbols, ideas and techniques which were generally shared throughout the most culturally complex portion of the world. A. L. Kroeber termed this advanced culture or civilized sphere the "oikoumene" (or "ecumene").⁴

"Civilization," the highest manifestation of man's cultural activity, appears to have originated as a result of a single process. Its crucial develop-

³To be published under the title "The Significance of An Apparent Relationship between the Ancient Near East and Mesoamerica" in the symposium volume, to be issued by a major university press next year.

⁴See especially Kroeber's "The Ancient Oikoumene as a Historical Culture Aggregate," in *The Nature of Culture*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1952, 379-395. To the Greeks the "oikoumene" was the civilized world known directly to them; Kroeber expanded that meaning to eliminate their subjectivity as to the boundaries in favor of an objective determination of the limits in terms of cultural trait distributions. Gordon Hewes elaborated the concept and the supporting data in "The Ecumene as a Civilization Multiplier System," *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers*, No. 25, 1961, 73-109. Congruent with this concept is Hugh Nibley's "The Hierocentric State," *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 3, 1951, 226-253.

*This is not to say that my religious beliefs were consciously allowed or made to shape the substance of my scholarship. Truth is good enough; it needs no direct assistance from hope. Rather, belief served as a stimulus, in the sense that Dr. Gordon had in mind when he wrote, "On the modern scene the only large reservoir of humanistic scholars with enough drive and stamina to master a whole complex of difficult sources is the intellectual upper-crust of Bible students." (*An Introduction to Old Testament Times*, Ventnor, N. J., Ventnor Publishers, 1953, v.) Mormon beliefs drive some of us in parallel fashion (though not nearly hard enough, as Hugh Nibley keeps telling us).

ment occurred between about 7000 and 3500 B.C. in the zone between the Aegean Sea and what is today Iran. From that southwest Asian heartland, knowledge of the advanced cultural components at the root of "civilization" spread outward, stimulating local adaptations as it went. By the 15th century A.D. this basic cultural heritage prevailed in all the more populous centers in a broad band stretching from Gibraltar to Japan. Concepts and objects, from the abacus, alfalfa, and algebra to zero, and zodiac, and zoomorphic art, were widely distributed throughout "this great web of culture growth," combining and recombining in stylistic variants in each ecologically suitable region. Beyond its boundaries, and after within it in enclaves, cultures of substantially less complexity were to be found.

The evidence for intercommunication within the Old World makes it impossible to say that civilization arose in that hemisphere more than a single time. Now, if one wishes to learn more about the process of man's becoming civilized — about the conditions under which man has made high cultural advancement — this situation is disappointing, for one is left with but a single case to study, and general principles cannot be developed from single cases. For this reason some students of history look to the New World for a second comparative case of independent culture growth.

THE ECUMENE AND THE NEW WORLD

It appeared to Kroeber that "the story of major civilizational growth in America . . . gives no indication of integrating with the corresponding story in Eurasia. The two are not, so far as we can yet see, parts of a single plot." (1952,392) This question now deserves to be rechecked with somewhat greater exactness.

Hewes' elaboration of Kroeber's initial work offered a list of more than 200 cultural features which were widely shared throughout the ecumene in the 15th century. If a substantial number of those features were also present in pre-Columbian America, it would suggest that ancient New World civilization did relate directly to the Old World tradition.

Examination of the Hewes list reveals that Mesoamerica (southern Mexico and northern Central America, the cultural zenith of pre-Columbian America) shared with the ecumene a significant, though not large, number of traits — about one out of eight in Hewes' list.⁵ This is enough to indicate some sort of communication between the two areas, although it obviously could not have been extensive or enduring.

SHARED PATTERNS: MESOAMERICA AND THE NEAR EAST

When we turn from considering features which occurred widely throughout the ecumene to compare the cultures of the Near East and Mesoamerica

⁵These include: observatories, eclipse records, nonpermutating eras and year counts, the zero concept, a zero sign, paper, papermaking, "royal" (conspicuous display) tombs, the sacrifice complex, fermented drink offerings, concepts of paradise and hell, the parasol, the litter, the loom, cotton, textiles, resist dyeing, lost wax casting, the true arch, walled cities, fired brick, merchant class or caste, caravans or organized trade expeditions, and corvée labor. From 10 to 20 additional features may, on further examination, prove to be shared.

directly, stronger conclusions can be drawn. Complex, highly specific, similarities are found to link the two areas.

Precisely that kind of evidence is required if a convincing case is to be made for cultural transmission from one era to any other? Sufficient evidence exists to prove that peoples in different parts of the world do sometimes come up with surprisingly similar inventions or discoveries quite independently of each other. For a critical person to accept that a cultural parallel between two areas is due to some historical movement from the one place to the other, he must be struck by the unusual or arbitrary nature of the feature compared. To say, for example, that "pyramids" were built in both Mexico and Egypt carries little weight in persuading us of an historical cultural connection between the two, because the feature is too general or vague. After all, sizable "pyramids" of a sort were developed in the Society Islands a number of centuries ago, probably without benefit of contact with any other area.⁶ Thus we cannot honestly be convinced of an historical link on the basis of such weak evidence.

Our impression is different when we are told that in both the Near East and Mesoamerica, large pyramidal platforms were built as foundations for temples, that the platforms were thought to represent mountains, that climbing the elevation stood for an ascent to heaven, that in temples a partitioned-off area was considered an especially holy spot where contact with the heavenly powers could be made, that subterranean waters were believed to be sealed up or confined beneath the spot, and so on. These features make the comparison so specific and complex that our judgment tends to reject the view that similarities in such arbitrary concepts could arise by mere coincidence.

The persuasive power of comparisons increases with the number. Three or four parallels could be due to chance. Even a dozen might conceivably be. What we have in the comparison made below, however, is well over 200 shared cultural features, many of them combined with each other in intricate ways to constitute patterns. Such bodies of evidence are characteristic of two areas which have been in serious, even fundamental, communication. No historical claim of the cultural independence of the two areas from each other is credible in the face of it.

SOME COMPARATIVE EVIDENCE

The following listing is intended to convey to the reader most of the range and some of the quality of parallels known between the cultures of the Near East and Mesoamerica. Since it is impossible to explain with full clarity some of the ideas mentioned, the entries may appear cryptic, but limitations of various kinds make impossible a fuller treatment here. Again because of the brevity required, some of the items are stated without those qualifications ("sometimes," "probably," etc.) which make a scholar comfortable.

⁶K. P. Emory, "Stone Remains of the Society Islands," *B. P. Bishop Museum Bulletin* 116, Honolulu, 1933, pp. 38-41.

And of course further detailed research on some of the points may demonstrate that the parallelism is distorted or that information on which I have based the statements was erroneous. By no means have I pursued all the items in depth. The technical paper of which this article is a summary contains extensive documentation which would enable an investigator to begin to pursue further in the literature the various cultural comparisons quickly skimmed over here.

In the list, each statement implies that at some period, the cultural item mentioned was present in some part of both Mesoamerica and the Near East. The greatest concentration of Near Eastern data refers to Palestine and Syria, between around 1500 and 300 B.C.

A. *Pyramidal temple platform.*

1. The pyramidal platforms represented mountains. Atop each elevation was a temple or other scene for sacred rites.
2. Ascent up the pyramid signified ascent toward the cosmic upperworld or "heaven." A stairway ran up the center of one side.
3. The temple structure was partitioned inside to form a "holy of holies" section, which was a contact point with heavenly powers.
4. This point of contact at the temple and pyramid was the distinctive feature which conferred on the site the name "navel of the world."
5. Subterranean waters were capped or confined by the temple. At the pyramid at Cholula in Mexico, probably the largest of all native American structures, when Cortes was attacking, native priests made an opening in the side anticipating (in accordance with "a tradition") that water would flood out and cover the attackers. The temples at Byblos and Jerusalem were believed to be over the watery abyss, confining the water there from bursting forth. (Compare Ezekiel 31.)
6. This holy point was thought of as a cosmic axis — a point at which heavens, earth and underworld were all accessible.
7. As such, the pyramidal platform was a desirable and logical spot for burials, and prominent persons were sometimes interred there.
8. The platform was constructed in levels so as to leave terraces.
9. The various levels — usually 3, 4, or 7 in number — represented parts of the cosmos. Some of the terraces were gardened.
10. Sacred sites were oriented to cardinal or solar directions. In particular, temples faced east to meet the rising sun; the term for "south" meant "on the right hand" in both Maya and Hebrew.
11. Directional orientation around the cosmic axis defined world quarters each of which was symbolized by a color.
12. The world quarters were represented in various ways, including on the board of the pachisi/patolli game (our Parcheesi), and by the swastika, the pattee cross, and the cross-within-a-cross designs.

B. *Astronomy, calendar, and writing*

1. Astronomy was highly developed and of central importance.
2. Nonpermutating eras and year counts were employed.

3. Separate calendar counts were based on sun, moon and stars; all three were articulated with each other. A year of 360 days plus five unusual extra days was shared (by Egypt and Mexico.)
4. A seven-day cycle was in use, among others.
5. Days were measured from sunset to sunset.
6. Observatories and eclipse records were in use.
7. The list of Maya day names correlates with the Semitic alphabet and the related "lunar houses"; similar names and animal associations occur in the same sequence. David Kelley (*Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 6, 1960, 317-337) has shown, among many other interesting data, that Maya day name *manik* was represented by a hand glyph, probably pronounced *ke*, corresponding in sequence to the position in Near Eastern alphabetic listing to Hebrew letter *k*, which probably originally represented a hand, pronounced *kaph*. (Compare Yucatec Maya *kab*, or Mam Maya *kop*, hand.) *Lamed* is the next Hebrew letter; the next day name in the Yucatec Maya list is *lamat*. Then comes Maya *mulu(c)*, a day ruled by the shark and with the Aztec equivalent "water." The alphabetic sequence has Greek *mu* (perhaps from Assyrian *mu*, "water") or Hebrew *mem*. Kelley became convinced that the calendar and deity symbols which he found parallel between Mesoamerica and the ecumene of the Old World could best be explained by supposing a direct transmission of calendar knowledge from Eurasia to Mesoamerica between 700 and 400 B.C.
8. Animals associated with Mesoamerica day names are comparable in many ways to animals linked with the constellations (see Kelley, 1960, 332). Half the named animals associated with Aztec days recur in Eurasia in correct sequence in connection with the constellation list.
9. The concept of zero, a zero sign, and place value notation were all employed.
10. Hieroglyphic writing systems (Egyptian and Mayan at least) were based on similar principles; each had about 750 signs and used ideographs, the rebus principle, affixes, etc.
11. Records were kept on paper, and a papermaking process was employed. The paper sometimes used lime sizing as a surface preparation.

C. Burial practices

1. Tombs were placed in pyramidal platforms or other artificial elevations, with or without a temple atop; the burial chamber sometimes was reached via a hidden entry.
2. A rich assortment of domestic and luxury products was placed in tombs in a kind of conspicuous display to the dead. Such burials are often called "royal" on the assumption (perhaps incorrect) that only nobility could command such luxury to be interred.
3. Tombs reached only by way of a very deep vertical shaft were in use. A kind of bench was built along the walls of some tombs, and niches were constructed in walls at points.
4. Families (or other groups) re-used tombs for multiple burials. Ancestor heads were preserved for veneration.

5. Fires were built over burial sites after important persons were interred.
6. Retainers were sacrificed to be buried with notable personages whom they apparently served in life.
7. Children were sacrificed and buried in a dedicatory manner beneath the foundations of buildings.
8. Urns were used as burial containers for small children.
9. A hollowed stone sarcophagus was occasionally used, with a low relief carving of a rope decorating its outside.

D. *Incense*

1. Use of incense was greatly emphasized and occurred in connection with practically all ritual.
2. Smoke of incense symbolized the ascent of the soul (cf. C. 5 above). It also symbolized prayer.
3. Incense was thought to purify and to serve as a sweet, attractive offering to the gods.
4. The smoke from censers placed in front served to hide from view a holy object within the temple.
5. "Holy" or special fire was required to be used for incense burning.
6. Incense was frequently a gum procured from trees by persons ritually prepared for the task. The gum was considered the "blood" of the tree.
7. Rain and fertility were associated with the idea of censuring.
8. The serpent was also associated with incense use. (Incense, as a bloodless form of "sacrifice," was favored by Quetzalcoatl, the Mexican god, who was represented as a feathered serpent; frankincense was gathered from trees in South Arabia which were supposedly guarded by winged serpents. There are further associations also.)
9. Tall, cylindrical ceramic burner stands were horned, white surfaced, and constructed with rows of "windows" in their bases in the shape of inverted triangles.
10. Incense altars of limestone were also used which were decorated with feline or human feline hybrid motifs which connoted fertility.

E. *Standing stones (stele) as cult objects*

1. Series of such large stones were placed in rows on ceremonial sites, possibly for astronomical purposes.
2. There is evidence that they served to commemorate historical events and/or calendrical anniversaries.
3. They also probably had memorial and mortuary functions.

F. *Figurines*

1. Human, female, ceramic figurines were abundant. Apparently they had a connection, which remains obscure in detail, to cult concepts and practices having to do with fertility. One specific form is of a pregnant woman holding her breasts.
2. Sometimes they were placed in burials.
3. One type of figurine had movable limbs.
4. Animal figurines were also constructed, having cultic rather than toy significance.

5. One type of animal figure was provided with wheels.
6. Ceramic models of cultic scenes were constructed.

G. *Sacrifice complex*

1. Animals were slain on an altar in a ceremonial area and then burned wholly or in part as offerings.
2. Celebrants of the rite consumed part of the sacrifice with a sense of communion.
3. Censing accompanied the sacrifice. In fact one type of offering consisted of incense mixed with cereal.
4. Parched grain or meal served as another type of offering.
5. Blood was offered as a sacrifice.
6. Blood was scattered over the sacrificial area and participants.
7. Fermented and non-fermented drink offerings were employed.
8. Libation vessels were of very similar shape.
9. A (substitute) human was sacrificed when a prominent person was near death.
10. Children were sacrificed with some frequency. The child of a leader might be sacrificed at a time of national danger.
11. A scapegoat was thought to bear away the people's sins.
12. Human sacrifice was sometimes accomplished by throwing the victim down from an elevation.
13. Persons sacrificed their own blood, for which purpose they cut themselves.
14. A form of circumcision was used which had sacrificial connotation about it.

H. *Lustration (ritual washing)*

1. A representation from a Mexican pre-Columbian document (Codex Borgia) compares with a standard scene from Egyptian art as follows: (a) a central figure is shown beneath (b) crossed streams being poured (c) from vessels held by (d) divinities at either side. Conventionalized symbols used to mark the streams signify "life." The figures at the sides in the Mexican codex are Mictlantecuhtli and Mitlancihuatl, lord and lady of the region of death. Egyptian scenes show Horus and either Thoth or Seth; Thoth signifies the direction west, the region of death. Seth is of the north and was associated with the ideas of illness and evil. The Mexican divinities are also connected with the north. Ixtlilton, the center figure in the Borgia scene, was a god of healing; Thoth was emblematic of healing in Egyptian medicine. Nethys, wife of Seth, was sometimes queen of the night and of the dead, the same as Mictlancihuatl.⁷
2. Rites involving sprinkling water over a person with an aspergillum were thought to purify him and also to signify renewal or rebirth.

⁷In private correspondence, the most respected of American orientologists said some years ago, upon seeing these ritual scenes and learning of their associations, that in his opinion had the Mexican scene come from some place near Egypt — say, Mesopotamia, where transmission distance was no issue — there could be no question that an historical connection existed between the representations.

J. *Divination*

1. Astrology was highly elaborated.
2. Astrological almanacs were constructed and used.
3. Divination by gazing fixedly in a mirror (captotromancy) was employed.

K. *Illness*

1. Illness was thought to be caused in some cases by the breaking of taboos.
2. Confession of sin was believed to bring about a cure of illness.

L. *Snake symbolism*

1. The serpent symbolized wisdom and knowledge, healing, and fertility.
2. It was thought to inhabit and to be connected symbolically with water holes, springs, etc.
3. Another association was with death and the underworld.
4. A feathered, "flying" snake representation was an object of devotion.
5. A specific artist motif of an undulating serpent was similar in detail.
6. A seven-headed serpent was represented in art and connected with the idea of rain and fertility.

M. *A dragon or great water monster was thought to inhabit the waters and to symbolize them.*

N. *Feline symbolism*

1. The lion or jaguar represented power, dominance and rulership.
2. Also these felines in some settings symbolized fertility, rain and abundance.
3. The lion (jaguar) was lord of the underworld, symbolizing the night aspect of the sun, which was thought to enter the underworld at night.
4. Art representations of the feline sometimes showed a radial whorl design at the joint of the leg. (H.O. Thompson considers this feature in Asia to indicate deity.)
5. Hybrid human-feline representations have already been mentioned in connection with incense burners.

O. *Various water-connected features*

1. A mountain/rain/cloud divinity controlled life through dominating the regularity of rain. He was thought to dwell on a mountain, was full-bearded, and grasped a lightning bolt in his hand. (Striking comparative illustrations are shown in C. Irwin's *Fair Gods and Stone Faces*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1963, 171-173).
2. An overflowing vase motif was related to the concepts and symbols of the sacred tree and the waters beneath the earth.
3. The lotus or water lily symbolized emergent life, or primeval and ultimate abundance.
4. The guilloche (double S) sign not only occurred in both areas, but was associated with the idea of rain or water.

P. *Trees*

1. The cedar of Yucatan was called *kuche*, "tree of God" and was preferred as the wood for carving idols. In Babylonia the sacred cedar had the name of the god Ea written in its core, while at nearby Susa the cuneiform sign for cedar tree was part of the name of the dominant deity.
2. Scenes showing the "tree of life" regularly included not only the tree in the center, but also one (or two) personages facing it from either side, a serpent/monster element associated usually beneath the tree, or other winged feature above.
3. The sacred tree was supposed to bear leaves or fruit of precious blue or green stone (jade in America, lapis lazuli in Mesopotamia).
4. Trees served to represent peoples or tribes, which sometimes bore the name of a tree.
5. A great world tree, rooted at the cosmic axis, was thought to spread its limbs protectively over the earth. Furthermore the tree was considered a route for travel up or down to other cosmic levels.

Q. *Various cosmological and related features*

1. A "paradise" was anticipated for certain persons after death.
2. An underworld in the sense of "hell" was also believed in.
3. Upper-and underworld were considered divided into hierarchical layers above and below the earth's surface.
4. The concept of dualism was strong.
5. Earth, air, fire and water were considered basic elements.
6. There was belief in a deluge which was produced by rain and from which only a few persons were saved in a vessel they had constructed. A bird was sent from the vessel to check on the drying up of the land.
7. A (pyramid) tower was believed constructed for safety against a deluge, however the structure was blown down by a great wind.

R. *Assorted motifs and esthetic features*

1. The double-headed eagle.
2. A winged disc or globe, or the sun as the body of a bird.
3. A pennated tail dependent from a circular feature.
4. The "star of David," intertwined triangles.
5. A representation of a ring (or plate), which shows a pentad on its face transfixing from below by a stick.
6. A ritual bag or bucket held by a divine or priestly figure in a ritual scene.
7. Floating figures, or "angels," in art.
8. Frontality in representations of the human figure, that is the head being in profile while the eye, torso and shoulders are shown full front.
9. A horseshoe-shaped, curl-end motif, either alone or in the form of hair curls of a female deity. This deity, called "Mother" or "Lady," was associated with childbirth, with vegetational fertility, and with Venus as the Morning Star. (Many of the figurines noted earlier are probably representations of this deity, who was Ishtar/Hathor in Mesopotamia/Egypt.)
10. Construction of mosaics, particularly using blue or blue-green stone.

11. The panpipe, as well as a variety of trumpets.
12. Both flat and cylinder stamps or seals. Sir Leonard Woolley once wrote, that "The cylinder seal is a peculiar type not likely to be invented independently in two different countries . . . Paper-using people would never invent the cylinder seal" (*Digging Up the Past*, Penguin Books, 1937, 76). The Mesoamerican peoples were paper-users.
13. An antiphonal poetic style, of which J.E.S. Thompson has said, "There are close parallels in Maya transcriptions of the colonial period, and I am convinced, in the hieroglyphic texts themselves to the verses of the Psalms, and the poetry of Job," (*Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: Introduction*, Carnegie Institution Publication 589, Washington, 1950, 61-62). Other early western semitic peoples employed the same style.

S. *Kingship complex*

1. The king concept
2. Divine mandate
3. Throne
4. Canopy over the throne
5. Parasol as a sign of dignity and rank
6. Sceptre
7. Crown or diadem
8. Gold necklace as a sign of office
9. Heraldic devices
10. A litter for transport of the king
11. Deference by bowing and casting down the eyes.

T. *Technology*

1. Loom-made textiles were elaborately developed.
2. Clothing included the turban, a "nightcap" style of headdress, shoes with pointed toes, long robes, sashes, mantles, sandals, and loin cloth.
3. Purple dye was prepared from a coastal mollusk by going into the water, picking up the animal, squeezing or "milking" its body, then replacing it. The coloring was of high value and had an elite connotation.
4. Scarlet dye had much the same connotation, though of a lesser degree, and was manufactured from the body of a plant louse.
5. Resist dyeing was practiced.
6. Cotton was widely used.
7. In weaponry and armor, a kettle-shaped helmet, the sling, and thickened textile armor were shared.
8. In metallurgy not only was the lost wax or *cire perdue* method of casting particularly noteworthy, but more basically the processes of smelting, alloying, forging, hammering and gilding were shared.
9. Building features included colonnades, aqueducts, canals, highways, cement-lined reservoirs, fired brick, and city walls.
10. Both the corbelled and true arches were known. As long ago as 1944 Professor Linton Satterthwaite of the University of Pennsylvania wrote, "It has been usual to suppose that the principle of the true

arch was unknown to the American Indian, though here and there in some particular structure it has been argued that the principle, though not obvious, was really present. If the reader will turn to Figures 22 and 23 and Plates 3b and 4a of this report, I believe he will have no doubt that the Maya at La Muñeca roofed a long room with the true arch, and that they knew exactly what they were doing." (Review of *Archaeological Reconnaissance in Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Peten*, by K. Ruppert and J. H. Denison, Jr., Carnegie Institution Publication 543, 1943, in *American Antiquity*, Vol. 10, 1944, 217). More recently see "The True Arch in Pre-Columbian America?," *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 5, 1964, 328-329.)

11. The highly developed ceramics include a large number of technical and decorative features which are often considered, in regional comparisons, indicative of cultural links.
- U. *Social organization*⁸
1. Merchant class or caste
 2. Organized trade expeditions or caravans
 3. Corvee labor
- V. *Biological modifications*
1. Cranial deformation
 2. Trepanation (an operation to remove a piece of the skull)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVIDENCE

Specialists in the cultures of the Near East and Mesoamerica will recognize that many of the features listed above are central to the civilizations concerned. For the Near East, subterranean waters, the temple platform, sacrifice, censuring, the symbolism of the serpent and lion, rain and fertility ritual, and others listed were of great importance in those peoples' conception of man, nature and divinity. By no means were they peripheral. Similarly for Mesoamerica, astronomy, writing, the calendar, the platform, burials, figurines, the feline and serpent, rain symbolism, and so on were core features. Moreover, many of those elements were actually articulated into complex cultural super-patterns which can not readily be shown here. However these elements reached Mesoamerica, they assuredly did not arrive as mere "embroidery" as the traditional experts would have it.

Furthermore, much more work than I have done would probably increase the parallels, for entire topics (e.g. plants, diseases, seasonal cult practices, astronomy, mathematics, myths, etc.) were omitted altogether or were only touched upon above rather than being considered seriously.

CONCLUSION

The evidence indicates strongly that communication of importance must have been carried on between the Near East and Mesoamerica. The time

⁸Only parallels in social organization which were considered by Hewes and Kroeber are listed here, since sociological parallels are among the least reliable indicators of cultural influence at a distance.

suggested by the evidence is probably between 1500 and about 300 B.C. The route and medium of transmission is unclear. However it definitely affected even the fundamentals of symbolic life of later Mesoamerica, not just the secondary aspects of that civilizational tradition. While a great deal of work would be desirable at this point to clarify these evidences, it is difficult to see how the fundamental conclusion can be challenged that to a significant degree Mesoamerican civilization had roots in the Near East.

A broader lesson needs to be drawn, too. The array of evidence cited did not result from any dramatic new excavations or text discoveries. Nearly all the information used was in the standard literature, and presumably there is much more yet to be found there. Ekholm has asked, "Why is it that . . . seemingly good evidence for the ancient Maya having known the true arch was published over twenty years ago and since that time has been scarcely mentioned? Its significance has not been discussed, and it has not been mentioned or considered in connection with any of the more general discussions of . . . the American civilizations?" (*Current Anthropology*, Vol. 5, 1964, 329). Why indeed have many other data relevant to the American origin problem lain unappreciated for years by orthodox experts?⁹ I suggest that no investigator is likely to discover anything which is implicitly ruled out by the question he posed to begin with. All but a handful of the Americanist scholars have really been asking the question, why was there *not* a connection between the hemispheres? They have found what they sought, and little else.

Gertrude Stein is supposed to have asked on her deathbed, "What is the answer?" After only silence followed, she finally cried, "Then what is the question?" For the Latter-day Saint whose religious knowledge and secular learning seem to be in conflict, the restatement is apt. I believe that if we have the wit to phrase our questions well and then work very hard to master the relevant data, answers may not be as far away as they had appeared.

Professor Gordon has said,

Nearly always, we can know what we understand a . . . passage correctly, when its literal meaning fits smoothly into the general context. (1953, 107)

This paper has shown that the context of historical knowledge which once conflicted with one claim of the Book of Mormon (to a Near Eastern origin for part of ancient American civilization) should be modified. The change has come through re-synthesis of scholarly knowledge to correct the context. There may be other cases, of course, where a scriptural claim itself has to be reinterpreted, but the general rule (again in Gordon's words) seems to govern the present example:

⁹J. J. Sherwood and M. Nataupsky (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 8, 1967, p. 53) report finding that seven out of a set of 21 features concerning the background (e.g. number of American-born grandparents, undergraduate scholastic rank) of the psychologists who have studied the question of differences in intelligence between Negroes and whites are significantly correlated with the conclusions of their studies! I expect that a set of personal characteristics of scholars could also be discovered which would correlate with the conclusion that Old World and New World civilizations are independent.

It cannot be overemphasized that the discoveries of archaeology tend to justify the literal meaning of the text as against scholarly and traditional interpretation. This holds not only for the Bible but for ancient texts in general. (1953, 107)

The Book of Mormon is one of those ancient texts. Its accuracy is increasingly attested by scholarship.