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163.1 BOOK REVIEW. *A Challenge to the Critics: Scholarly Evidences of the Book of Mormon*. By Diane E. Wirth. Horizon Publishers & Distributors, incorporated, Bountiful, Utah, 1986. 153 pages, illustrations, index. \$10.95 (hardbound).

NEGATIVE CRITICISMS have been leveled at the Book of Mormon since its first publication in 1830. Diane E. Wirth examines several of these in her latest book.

She treats them in fourteen chapters with the following titles: Answering the Critics; The Smithsonian Statement; Metal Plates and Stone Boxes; Nephite Monetary System; Elephants, Horses, and Bees in Ancient America; The Wheel; Lehi's Tree of Life Stone; Ancient American Scripts and Reformed Egyptian; Wordprints, Chiasmi, Hebraisms, and Codices; The Ancient Ones; Mulek and Company; Descendants of Joseph; The Seven Tribes; and Jesus Christ in Ancient America.

In each chapter the author treats a specific historical claim or point made in the text of the Book of Mormon, followed by some critical counterpoints. She follows with a commentary on the point and counterpoints. The main part of each chapter provides evidence related to a historical claim of the Book of Mormon. She gives her conclusions at the end of each chapter.

Chapter 1 concludes as follows: (1) "A misrepresentation of facts not only lessens the critic's credibility as a researcher, but is unfair to the public. Assumptions, on the part of the critic, are not always valid." (2) "LDS scholars may differ in their theories, but theories are not Church doctrine. The Book of Mormon was passed on to us as a spiritual guide, not as geographical map to find archaeological ruins." (3) "Israelites were not the only ones to cross the ocean to the Americas in pre-Columbian times. Many non-LDS scholars support the contention that there were early transoceanic voyages from the Old World to the New World." This example is typical of each chapter's conclusions.

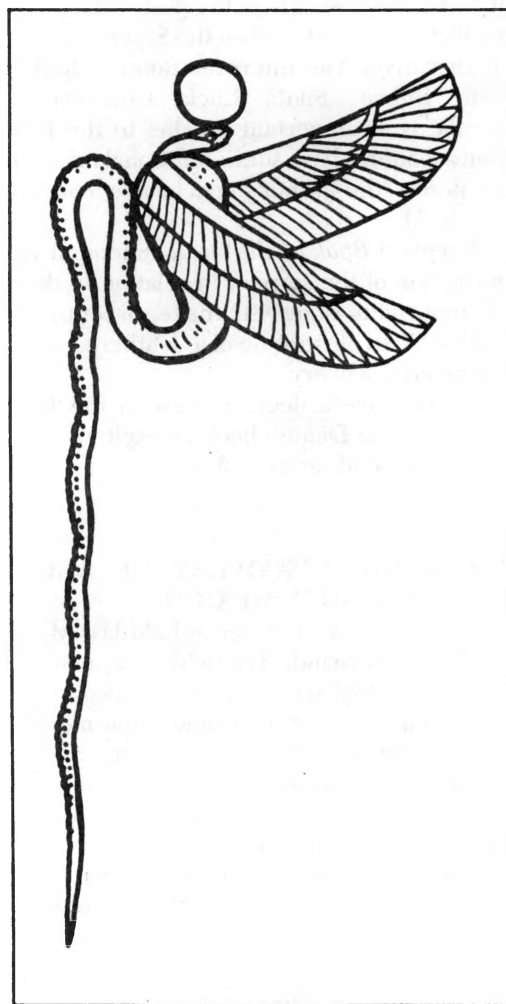


Fig. 1. The Egyptian *Book of the Dead's* "feathered serpent."

In chapter 2, the Smithsonian Institution's "Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon" item # 8 reads "No inscriptions using Old World forms of writing have been shown to have occurred in any part of the Americas before 1492 except a few Norse rune stones which have been found in Greenland." For some reason the author of this statement was not aware that the Smithsonian Institution had sponsored two expeditions that did recover such inscriptions. The first expedition at Bat Creek, Tennessee, found a small stone inscribed in the Hebrew script. The director of this 1885 expedition was the renowned Cyrus A. Thomas. The second expedition in 1891 at Chatata, Ohio, found 872 characters inscribed on a sandstone wall. A letter to Diane E. Wirth from the Smithsonian Institution dated September 10, 1979, states that their linguist was of the opinion that the Chatata inscription's characters "have a vague similarity to known letters from the Near East."

All of the chapters have new information and represent extensive research on the part of the author. I personally found chapter 13 on the *Seven Tribes* to be very informative. The interpretation of Monument 21 from Bilbao, Santa Lucia Cotzumalhuapa, Guatemala, is an important parallel to the Book of Mormon account. I have some additional information that reinforces the author's conclusions concerning Monument 21.

The Egyptian *Book of the Dead* statement on the transformation of the serpent in relation to the concept of immortality along with the tenth century B.C. *Book of the Dead* illustration of a "feathered serpent" is a significant discovery.

Those who have a deep interest in the Book of Mormon will find Diane's book an exciting addition for their personal libraries.

163.2 A MAJOR DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT MAYA (?) WRITING IN MEXICO.

At the 1988 Maya Conference held last March in Austin, Texas, Fernando Winfield, a representative of the Museum at Jalapa, Veracruz, Mexico, reported the accidental discovery of a new stone monument with about 500 hieroglyphs. The monument was being exposed by erosion along a river bank about 35 miles south of Veracruz City at a place called La Majarra near Alvarado, Veracruz.

Preliminary information indicates that a Long Count calendar date is carved on the monument and dates to about A. D. 100. Many years ago a small jade object with a few hieroglyphs and a Long Count date of 8.6.2.4.17 (14 of March A.D. 162) was found nearby.

This carved jade artifact is known as the Tuxtla Statuette.

All interested scholars are awaiting anxiously for a more detailed report and possibly a translation or partial translation of this La Majarra monument.

163.21 LEHI'S JERUSALEM: WRITING ON METAL PLATES. By William J. Adams.

Lehi sent his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain scriptures engraved on "brass plates" (1 Ne. 3-4). Later we learn that Lehi and his son Nephi kept records on "plates" (1 Ne. 6, 9). These incidents raise the question of whether others in Lehi's Jerusalem inscribed records on metal plates.

The use of metal plates for record-keeping is fairly well attested throughout the Middle and Far East from many centuries before and many centuries after Lehi, but until recently none were known from 7th-century Judea. (See, for example, Franklin S. Harris, Jr., *Book of Mormon: Message and Evidences*, Deseret News Press: Salt Lake City, 2nd ed., 1961, pp. 98-108.)

Dr. Gabriel Barkay, of the Institute of Archaeology at Tel-Aviv University, directed an excavation in the southern part of Jerusalem. In 1980, his team opened a tomb dating to the end of the 7th century or beginning of the 6th century B.C. Two of the artifacts found with the bones were rolled-up strips of silver about an inch wide and four inches long. Dr. Barkay believes that a string or leather thong had been passed through the axes of the rolls, enabling the deceased to wear them about the neck as an amulet.

By 1983, the silver rolls had been unrolled. It became apparent that texts had been inscribed on them, but only the divine name (YHWH, for "Jehovah" or "Lord") could still be read. Barkay's findings were reported in the *Biblical Archaeological Review*, Vol. IX (1983), No. 2, pp. 14-19).

163.3 ZARHEMLA GEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION: A NEW BOOK OF MORMON RESEARCH ORGANIZATION.

In May of 1985 the Zarahemla Research Foundation was started in Manteca, California. Michael M. Hobby, his wife June M. Hobby, and Troy J. Smith under the direction of Michael M. Hobby incorporated this Foundation. It is a subsidiary of California Geological Inc.: An Environmental Services Company. This latter business, headquartered in Stockton, California, was founded by Michael M. Hobby in 1984 and rapidly became a very successful business venture.

The group began publishing a periodical in 1987 under the title of *Zarahemla Quarterly*. This publication is printed on high quality gloss paper and contains many black-and-white as well as color illustrations.

The organization's name was slightly modified in 1988 probably due to an already existing Reorganized Church organization called the *Zarahemla Research Foundation*, established by Raymond C. Treat in the late 1970s. Therefore the present name of the group is the *Zarahemla Geological Foundation* with their quarterly retaining the name, *Zarahemla Quarterly*.

Preliminary perspectives gained from the first four issues indicate that the *ZGF* group rejects the dating techniques of modern science. For example, they reject the current dating for the Tepexpan Man "kill-site" near Mexico City. Instead of dating the site to the 7th millennium B.C. they prefer to date it to the Jaredite period so they can have butchered mammoths or elephants associated with Jaredite peoples. Another unacceptable dating appears in Volume 1, Number 4, where the site of Teotihuacan is dated back several centuries earlier than possible in order to make it the Jaredite city of Nehor.

Their geographical setting for the Book of Mormon ignores the best research carried out in the last 40 years. North America is the land Northward of the Book of Mormon with northwestern Mesoamerica being the land of Nehor and southeastern Mesoamerica the land of Moron of the Jaredites with Copan, Honduras, as the capital city. All these interpretations are highly suspect in light of the current status of Mesoamerican archaeology. Apparently the narrow-neck of land is Panama with all or part of South America being the Book of Mormon land Southward.

Why do Book of Mormon scholars in general have such a hard time talking to each other?

163.4 NEWS ABOUT SEHA BOARD MEMBER DALE L. BERGE.

Every spring term since 1983 Dr. Dale L. Berge has conducted a field school for archaeology at the ruins of Camp Floyd. Southwest of Lehi, Utah, a few miles is the spot where Johnson's army built one of the largest military bases in the west during the years from 1857 to the outbreak of the Civil War. Some 200 buildings were constructed mainly of adobe brick that reportedly cost one cent a piece.

Even though the army was in the area to put down the Mormon rebellion, it depended on the Mormons for most of its day-to-day supplies. In return the local Mormon economy was given a big stimulus from the presence of so many army personnel.

Dr. Berge's continuing field research is collecting a varied and fascinating collection of new information on army life in the Utah desert just before the Civil War. His final report promises to be of interest for both military and Mormon historians.

163.5 THE FORTHCOMING THIRTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL SEHA SYMPOSIUM OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

This September 9th and 10th on a Friday evening and all day Saturday the SEHA is planning to hold its thirty-seventh annual meeting stressing the Book of Mormon and the month of Moroni's visitations to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Friday evening session will be a panel of scholars who will review and discuss several recent books on Book of Mormon geography. The Saturday sessions are still in the planning stage. We are expecting to hold the meetings in room 205 of the law building on BYU campus.

163.6 QUESTION AND ANSWER.

By John A. Tvedtnes.

QUESTION: Was Mormon a member of a military class?

ANSWER: A comment by one of my students in a Book of Mormon class prompted the investigation represented by this response. He suggested that Mormon (I), the father of the abridger of the Nephite record, was a professional soldier. As evidence, he noted that the younger Mormon was eleven years of age when his father took him into the "land southward" (Morm. 1:6) and that "in this year there began to be a war between the Nephites ... and the Lamanites ... And it came to pass that the war began to be among them in the borders of Zarahemla, by the waters of Sidon." (Morm. 1:8, 10) The family's departure into the war zone hints at a military transfer.

In light of this possibility, I suggest that the historian/general/prophet Mormon was in fact, from a line of army leaders who belonged to a military class.

Typically, Mesoamerican peoples were divided into six basic classes or occupations: peasants, merchants, warriors, priests, judges, and government officials. Among the Aztecs, all of these except the peasants were directly involved in war. For example, the merchants formed, when necessary, their own military units. Warriors and priests replenished the ranks of the judges and other government officials and most priests began their service for a time in special military units.

Aztec boys destined for a military career were dedicated for the task at birth by their parents and trained at an early age. This fact of Mesoamerican life is reflected in the youth of the Nephite chief captains. It would explain how Mormon (II) came to command the Nephite armies at the tender age of 16 (Morm. 2:1-2).

Moroni (I), who had commanded the Nephite armies some five centuries before Mormon, was also a relatively young man when he became chief captain at the age of 25 (Alma 43:17). Moroni had given up the

command of the armies to his son Moronihah (Alma 62:43), which implies that the position was inherited. Moroni himself became chief captain in the 18th year of the judges (Alma 43:3) and his son Moronihah in ca. the 31st year (Alma 62:39). If Moronihah were born when his father was 20 years of age, he would have been only 18 when he succeeded him.

The prophet Mormon was so impressed with the faith, the military genius, and the character of the earlier Moroni that his praise of the man seems almost an exaggeration (Alma 48:11–13, 16–18). Mormon also praised another earlier Nephite warrior, Gideon (Mos. 19; Alma 1:13). It seems quite likely that he named his own son Moroni from the earlier general.

Moroni (II) was also a military captain, leading 10,000 at the great battle at Cumorah under his father Mormon (Morm. 6:12). And, like the other military leaders, he appears to have been quite young. If, for example, he was 60 years of age when he buried the plates in ca. the 410th year after Christ (Moro. 10:1), he would have been 25 in the 375th year when he fought at Cumorah (Moro. 6:5).

I suggest that Mormon's admiration for Moroni (I) derives not only from the man's character, but also from the fact that he may have been one of Mormon's paternal ancestors. This reason alone would be sufficient to explain why he would call his own son by the same name. It might also imply that the Moronihah (II) who, along with Moroni (II), commanded a group of 10,000 under Mormon (II), was a member of the same family (Morm. 6:14).

If Mormon belonged to a military class, we have, at last, an explanation of why, after having refused to continue in his position, he was later readily accepted as chief captain once again (Morm. 5:1). It was an inherited responsibility which he assumed in his youth.

If these assumptions are correct, then we can more readily understand Mormon's approach to the writing of the Nephite history, which is essentially a war record. Mormon's first recorded words in the Book of Mormon tell of the destruction of his people in the last great war with the Lamanites (W of M 1–2). Much of the account in his own record (Morm.) discusses this war, while in another place (Alma 43–62), he devotes 20 chapters to the war in the time of the first Moroni. In the latter, he places great stress on military strategy, descriptions of fortifications, and the like (See esp. Alma 48:7–9; 49:4, 13, 18, 22; 50:1–5). His listing of war casualty statistics in his own time (Morm. 6) and during earlier periods (e.g., Mos. 9:18–19; 29:19; Alma 3:26; 24:21–22, 24–27; 51:19) seems to be a waste of precious space on the plates.

Not only does Mormon spend more time describing battles than any other topic, but he also dwells on

such things as the physical stature and prowess of various Nephites and Lamanites. If Mormon's military profession was the result of a long-standing family tradition, then we can better understand his "blood-and-guts" approach to the history of his people. Ammon's slaying of the Lamanite sheep raiders (Alma 17:25–39), the lengthy and detailed account of the war led by Moroni (Alma 43–62) and even Mormon's admiration for the "large and mighty" Lamanite leader Coriantumr (Hel. 1:15–16), attest to Mormon's special interest in the subject of warfare and physical strength. When describing the battle scene, he is usually very careful to specify exactly what kinds of weapons were used by each of the armies (e.g., Alma 43:18–21) and the kinds of armor they wore. He places great stress on the "bones" of the dead Jaredites which lay strewn across the land, along with their weapons, and on the fact that the bodies of the Lamanites were often heaped up or thrown into the river to be washed to the sea. (For some of the gory details, see Alma 3:3; 43:37–38, 44; 44:12–14.)

Moroni wrote from the same background as his father. His account of Jaredite history, aside from the religious comments which he inserts in the form of personal testimony of Jesus Christ, is essentially a military history. Logic and textual evidence would dictate that the Jaredites did, in fact, enjoy many years in which battles were not waged. They could not have grown to number over two million people (Ether 15:2) had they not lived most of their time in peace and tranquility, growing crops and raising families. Yet, of the 1% of Ether's history which Moroni chose to write (Ether 15:33), virtually all of it concerns the wars of the Jaredites.

Despite the emphasis on martial history in the Book of Mormon, both Mormon and Moroni were great lovers of peace. To them, military might was to be used only for defending righteous principles. Negotiations and reliance on the Lord were preferable to fighting.

As a prime example, we note that the main reason given for the mission of King Mosiah's sons to the Lamanites was to ensure peace between the Nephites and Lamanites (Mos. 28:1; Alma 23:16–18; 24:6, 12–13, 15; 28:9). Mormon noted that converted Lamanites laid down their weapons of war and returned captured Nephite lands (Hel. 5:51–2).

Mormon ties the cycle of alternating evil and righteousness in with the cycle of alternating war and peace (e.g., Hel. 12). From prosperity came wealth and then pride, which brought about decadence and war. When the Nephites and Lamanites lived in peace for a couple of centuries following the visit of Christ, it was because there was no pride resulting from wealth (4 Ne. 1:1–18).

On moral grounds, the Book of Mormon sees defense as justifiable and aggression as unacceptable

(3 Ne. 3:20–21). War, especially in the time of Moroni (I), was justified only when the Nephites fought for their homes, liberty, families, and religion (Alma 43:45–47; 46:72; 48:10–14). Moroni and his people, we read, did not delight in the shedding of blood (Alma 48:11–16, 23),

By contrast, the Nephites of Mormon's day were not fighting the Lamanites for a righteous cause. When they lost battles, they sorrowed, cursed God and died in rebellion against him (Morm. 2:11–15). When they won, they boasted in their own strength and swore revenge and destruction on the Lamanites

(Morm. 3:9–16; 4:8, 15). Unlike their ancestors, they delighted in the shedding of blood (Morm. 4:10–11). Mormon urged them to stand and fight for their families and homes (Morm. 2:23–24) but, because they remained unrepentant, at one point he resigned as their chief captain (Morm. 3:9–16). Mormon, then, was a righteous man who fought when necessary and whose perspective of Nephite history was military in nature. It seems likely that he and his family were part of a military class. Further evidence for this comes from what is known of later inhabitants of Mesoamerica.

THE SOCIETY FOR EARLY HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY depends heavily on donations from those who are interested in the archaeology of the Scriptures, especially that of the Book of Mormon. Tax-exempt donations may be sent to the LDS Foundation, A–285 Smoot Building, BYU, Provo, Utah 84602.

The donor should ask the Foundation to restrict it to the use of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology (SEHA). The Foundation thereafter sends him or her a receipt for Income-tax purposes. At the same time the donor may wish to write the SEHA office about how he or she wants the gift spent.

Some uses of the gift could be (1) to sponsor an issue of the Newsletter and Proceedings by paying the printing cost, about \$600; (2) to sponsor an Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, usually held in September, \$300 to \$600; or (3) to add to the Society's Research Fund to help pay for important projects in the archaeology of the Scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, including excavations in Mesoamerica.

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