



Type: Magazine Article

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## Church Scholars Speak

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 63, No. 12 (December 1960)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 956, 958

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**Abstract:** This article compiles a number of excerpts from previously published articles by LDS authors that cover such Book of Mormon-related topics as the “fifth gospel,” the stick of Joseph, language, the significance of scientific discoveries, and the manner in which Alma speaks to our day.

# Church Scholars Speak

*Excerpts from  
significant articles in  
past issues of  
The Improvement Era*



## WHAT IS THE "FIFTH GOSPEL"?

... by this revelation of what God did for the people of the western world—making known the truth to them; making known the gospel to them—the covenant of everlasting life which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began; sending the Risen Christ to them, that they might hear his voice and be brought to a knowledge of God and led into the one fold of Christ—all this vindicates the justice and the mercy of God to the joy of all those who contemplate these high things, and becomes an added message concerning the hand-dealings of God toward men, that is of great value—a new-found "Fifth Gospel," to be joined to the four Gospels of the New Testament, that makes for the increase of the witness of God that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself to all nations as the Savior of the world and the Savior of men individually that dwell therein, to the praise of his Majesty and to the glory of his name forever and forever.

—Elder Brigham H. Roberts

## WHAT IS THE STICK OF JOSEPH?

It is very apparent that the Bible is the record, or Stick of Judah; moreover that it does not contain a history of the nations which were to come of Ephraim and Manasseh. That stick, or history, must be sought for elsewhere. And from where, only in America? . . .

The Book of Mormon is the record of the descendants of Joseph who were led across the "great waters" to inherit this western land, which is designated as being choice above all other lands. Surely these blessings could not be realized in Palestine. Joseph and his sons did not become a multitude of nations there; the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh did not receive a more wonderful inheritance in Palestine than any other of the tribes of Israel. There the chief honors were conferred first on Benjamin and then on Judah. Here in America all these promises were fulfilled when the descendants of Joseph possessed the land given as their inheritance.

—President Joseph Fielding Smith

## WHAT IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON?

The Book of Mormon recites in its opening verses that the history contained in its pages is engraved in the language of Lehi, which consists of "the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians." (1 Nephi 1:2.) Well along in the work, the Egyptian character of the script is noted (Mosiah 1:4) in the exhortation of Benjamin, who reviewed the history of his people and reminded them that Lehi, who left Jerusalem and was responsible for the transportation of his family to the Western Hemisphere, had carried with him the ancient brazen record of his people, likewise engraved in Egyptian characters. Lehi, he said, "having been taught in the language of the Egyptians, therefore he could read these engravings and teach them to his children." From the changes which crept into the system of writing, the language used in writing the Book of Mormon became in later years known to the Nephite people as "reformed Egyptian." (Mormon 9:32.)

—Ariel L. Crowley

## WHAT IS OUR DUTY AS CUSTODIANS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON?

Teaching the gospel to Israel is our duty and responsibility. The day is approaching when we are to discharge it; hence the need of every young man and young woman

in the Church being familiar with these great promises and realizing that the responsibility of being the saviors of the house of Israel rests upon us. Like Joseph of old, we are to come out of our isolation to be the saviors of that house of Israel—not to feed them with the physical bread as he did, but succor them with the bread of life. Greater things than have ever heretofore been accomplished, more wonderful events than have ever, up to this day, transpired, are before this Church. As the day approaches, when those events will be consummated, let us be prepared.

So that, in knowing that the Book of Mormon is true, my anxiety is that the young people of the Church will also come to know what their responsibility is and prepare themselves and be ready for the time when the Lord shall bring to pass the redemption of the house of Israel.

—Elder Melvin J. Ballard

### **WHAT HAS SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY DONE TO THE BOOK OF MORMON?**

The history of the book acclaims its greatness, but the book itself is the thing that defies all attempts to explain it away. No one can deny, that as a book, true or false, it is a stupendous reality with a marvelous origin, a gripping power for good, and a wonderful history . . . Scientific discovery, instead of destroying faith in the book, has wonderfully increased interest and confidence in it. And particularly important in this age of rapidly increasing skepticism, its harmony with the teachings of the Bible place it in the field of theology as veritably “A new witness for God.”

—George H. Brimhall

### **HOW DOES ALMA SPEAK TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY?**

As one reads the book of Alma and ponders upon its lesson, there comes the feeling that this present day with its immeasurably changed material conditions, has need of Alma's teachings. All that he taught may be applied to our day.

It is always so with spiritual truth. It is universal. The principles of the gospel are as useful behind an ox team as upon a steamer deck. It is well to remember that material achievements do not change spiritual needs.

This is a Book of Mormon year . . . Let us read and enjoy the Nephite record; it is filled with stirring history and eternal truth.

—Elder John A. Widtsoe

### **IN GREEN PASTURES**

**BY MILLIE C. KROLL**

While the hot flames fried the fire log's sap,  
She sat with the Bible in her lap,  
Reading to me as her finger moved.  
So often had those passages proved  
Her only support in hours of trial,  
I could well understand her tearful smile,  
Whenever she paused to turn a leaf—  
Knowing she was no stranger to grief.

Many since have preached that olden text  
And sought my face as if sorely vexed—  
But my heart was eons of miles away,  
And didn't hear when they said: “Let's pray!”