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## Does the Kon-Tiki Voyage Confirm the Book of Mormon?

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**Abstract:** Thor Heyerdahl, a Norwegian explorer, successfully accomplished a 4000-mile sea voyage from the coast of Peru to the Tuamotu Islands across the Pacific. The balsa raft named Kon-Tiki sailed only by wind and ocean currents. The author argues that the Kon-Tiki voyage clearly demonstrates that such voyages could certainly have been made, similar to the claims made in the Book of Mormon.

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are grateful for his willingness so to serve, and we know that the ERA's readers, worldwide, will

gratefully welcome his messages as they appear in these pages.—R. L. E.

## Benediction

THE POWER of love was made manifest in the life of President George Albert Smith, and the feelings expressed from near and far since his passing have amply evidenced it.

Two days before he died, I had the privilege of a last brief visit with him. I had not seen him for more than two and a half months, and I ventured hesitantly to his home on this last visit only on invitation. He had had a discouraging day, and his frail physical frame was soon to be left behind by the great and loving spirit and personality that were his, and that were so sincerely beloved by so many men in so many places.

At the hour at which I, with others, was there, he appeared to be slightly improved, and for a moment or two before I left I held the hand with which he had so often warmly welcomed so many of his fellow men when he was well.

The last words I heard him speak were:

"Continue the work, and keep the commandments of the Lord." They were spoken with difficulty, but understandably, and I felt that I had heard his benediction and his earnest wish for all his Father's children.

We could not close this chapter without expressing our conviction that when he returned to his eternal home, "His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord." (Matthew 25:21.)

And as he so often pleaded and prayed, God grant that all of us, and all of our Father's children, may live so that each one "will find his name written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

May our Father's blessings be with his family, and with all mankind, and may the power and principles of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, to which he devoted his life, move forward increasingly among men.—R. L. E.

## DOES THE KON-TIKI VOYAGE CONFIRM THE BOOK OF MORMON? — *An Answer*

THE MOST remarkable and fascinating sea story of modern days is the drifting of a primitive raft carrying six men from Peru in South America to the Tuamotu group of Polynesian Islands.<sup>1</sup>

Thor Heyerdahl, Norwegian scientist, leader of the party, who had spent some time in Polynesia, became obsessed with the thought that the Polynesians might have come originally from South America. Upon his return to Norway, amidst the ugly years of World War II, the thought followed him. He read all that he could find about ancient Peru. Soon he became convinced that some Peruvians in prehistoric days had drifted on primitive rafts from the American mainland to the islands of the Pacific. While this did not prove that the Polynesian Islands were first settled by ancient Americans, it did point to a much freer intercourse among the nations of antiquity than was commonly held.

As his studies progressed, the desire, despite

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By

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OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE

obvious obstacles, grew within him to try to make the trip as the Peruvians did hundreds of years ago.

The Peruvians had no boats. Their sea traffic was by rafts, the structure of which has been handed down through the centuries. The rafts were made of logs from the balsa tree, native in that part of South America. That meant that the movement of these rafts depended on ocean currents and trade winds. With such equip-

ment, crude as it seems to us, the people of Peru traveled on the oceans far and near. The historical evidence points to the drifting of these rafts from America to the Pacific Islands, a matter of more than four thousand miles.

Heyerdahl decided to try it. Five courageous men decided to join him—four Norwegians and a Swede.

Difficulties had to be met and overcome. The project seemed so visionary that the necessary money could not be obtained easily. Balsa logs were obtainable only in somewhat inaccessible places, especially since the project was launched in the rainy season. A suitable place for putting

<sup>1</sup>*Kon-Tiki*, by Thor Heyerdahl, 1950.

the raft together had to be found. Meanwhile all experienced seamen shook their heads and predicted failure. But the raft Kon-tiki was pushed on more determinedly than ever.

It was decided to build the raft like those of the days of ancient Peru. No nails were used; rope held everything together. Nine balsa logs from thirty-five feet to forty-three feet long were the foundation of the raft. Banana stalks and leaves were used on deck. A mast with a sail was provided. A cabin about twelve by fourteen feet was placed on deck. Steering was done by a large oar. When finished, the raft was a duplicate of the rafts of primitive Peruvian days.

Adequate provisions were stored in convenient places. The necessary scientific instruments were taken along. A short-wave radio, with a hand-worked generator, was also a part of the cargo.

A friend gave them a parrot; and on the voyage they adopted a friendly crab which for a long time became part of the crew.

The raft was named *Kon-tiki*, a mythological name meaning sun-god.

Thus equipped, they set out. For three months they drifted across the Pacific, depending entirely upon the ocean currents and trade winds for motive power, and at last they reached the Tuamotu group of islands. One of the notable voyages of modern times, the

may not be true. The Book of Mormon relates that one Hagoth, a Nephite, built ships and carried people into new places. One of his ships loaded with people never came back. Many believe that the settlement of the Pacific Islands was made by these voyagers of Hagoth. Of this there is no proof. It may have been so.

However, that there are currents in the ocean and winds that blow regularly in set directions, such as carried the Kon-tiki across the Pacific, is recognized by all Book of Mormon readers. Father Lehi and his party, though they had a divine compass to guide them, depended on currents and winds to move them. The Jaredites and Mulekites had nothing but sails to move them when on the sea. Without ocean currents and winds, Book of Mormon people would have made little progress on the sea. This has been pointed out with a map of important Book of Mormon ocean currents by Dr. C. Douglas Barnes.<sup>2</sup>

The crossing of the Kon-tiki proved that winds and currents lead from South America to the islands of the Pacific—over four thousand miles—and to that extent confirms the Book of Mormon story that long ocean voyages could be made by ancient men in primitive crafts.

It is interesting to note that no sooner had Heyerdahl published his theory, than other scientists called him to task.<sup>3</sup> But to believers in the Book of Mormon, it is notable, that all agree that the ocean is full of currents which may enable man to drift from place to place, from continent to continent.

The increase of knowledge confirms steadily the claims of the Book of Mormon.

<sup>2</sup>"Lehi's Route to America," *THE IMPROVEMENT ERA*, 42:26, January 1939.

<sup>3</sup>*The Geographical Journal*, 115:20-41, March 1950; 116:183-192, December 1950.

## to the Questions of Youth

book reads like a nerve-tingling epic of the sea.

Heyerdahl's theory that the Pacific Islands were settled by people from America may or

### My Creed

I would be a friend to the friendless and find joy in ministering to the needs of the poor.

I would visit the sick and afflicted and inspire in them a desire for faith to be healed.

I would teach the truth to the understanding and blessing of all mankind.

I would seek out the erring one and try to win him back to a righteous and a happy life.

I would not seek to force people to live up to my ideals, but rather love them into doing the thing that is right.

I would live with the masses and help to solve their problems that their earth life may be happy.

I would avoid the publicity of high posi-

tions and discourage flattery of thoughtless friends.

I would not knowingly wound the feelings of any, not even one who may have wronged me but would seek to do him good and make him my friend.

I would overcome the tendency to selfishness and jealousy and rejoice in the successes of all the children of my Heavenly Father.

I would not be an enemy to any living soul.

Knowing that the Redeemer of mankind has offered to the world the only plan that will fully develop us and make us happy here and hereafter, I feel it not only a duty, but also a blessed privilege to disseminate the truth.

George Albert Smith