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Scholarship and the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: Although scientific research may substantiate items discussed in the Book of Mormon, there is no need for a scientific explanation for the book.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1928

EDITORIAL

SCHOLARSHIP AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

THE MAYAS, or Mayan race, according to modern scholarship, attained the highest civilization in ancient America. They flourished in a region from Northern Guatemala to Yucatan in Central America, and have left behind them "great and numerous ruins of stone and mortar," many hundreds of ruins, in fact. The history of the Mayas, as deciphered from inscriptions on the ruins, goes back to about 600 B.C. Students agree that the Mayas gradually moved northward "during the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era" and abandoned "the previously occupied capitals to the south"; and "by 630 A. D. everyone of the great cities had been abandoned." Scholars have not been able to account satisfactorily for this northward movement, nor for the practical extinction of this ancient American people. Nevertheless the general facts are as commonplaces among those who study the subject, as shown by the current literature. In the September 21st issue of the authoritative magazine *Science*, Professor L. G. Huntley, expert in this subject, declares that a few broad facts, such as the above, upon which all are agreed, have resulted from the careful work of the past two decades; and in the October number of the *Geographical Review*, Professor H. J. Spinden, also an authority in American archæology, presents diagrams and maps and makes statements to the same effect.

Such conclusions are of especial interest to the Latter-day Saints. The Book of Mormon is chiefly a record of the descendants of one Lehi, who came out of Jerusalem about 600 B. C., and whose descendants increased to be several numerous peoples. They moved northward, and towards the middle of the fifth century after Christ, the most enlightened and advanced branch, the Nephites, was largely destroyed by continuous and bloody warfare. The Book of Mormon also gives briefer accounts of other inhabitants of ancient America, some of whom reached the New World centuries before Lehi, and others about the same time. The history of the ancient Americans, of whom the North and South American Indians are the descendants, would be long and interesting were it fully known.

When the Book of Mormon, translated "by the gift and power of God", was published in 1830, little was known about ancient America, and the story of former higher civilizations on the American continent was held to be the product of wild imagi-

nation. To-day, the Book of Mormon account is largely confirmed by our new knowledge.

Latter-day Saints make no attempt to identify any of the Book of Mormon peoples with those set up by students as a result of scientific explanation. There is no need to do so, for every step onward adds confirmation to the general truth of the Book of Mormon record.

The Book of Mormon is a repository of sacred truth for the guidance of man in his search for happiness; and it also contains a sound and truthful history of the ancient peoples from whose lives and acts the moral teachings of the book are drawn.—W.

THE LONDON CONFERENCE

THE LONDON DISTRICT autumn conference convened in the Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New Road, Camberwell Green, on Sunday, October 28th. Many new friends and investigators came to hear of the "marvelous work and a wonder" which is now challenging the false doctrines of the world.

Mission President John A. Widtsoe and Sister Leah D. Widtsoe were in attendance from the Liverpool office.

A Sunday School program was carried out by President Widtsoe in the morning, in which the subject "Jesus and the Little Child" was discussed. Faith, purity and growth are the essential differences between the child and the adult, he stated.

President Mills, in the afternoon session, gave a historical report of the District covering the past six months, showing from figures a substantial increase in the work during that period of time. A five per cent. increase in tithing and a twelve per cent. increase in fast offerings indicate that the work is progressing.

Sister Widtsoe pointed out plainly how the wisdom and foresight of the founders of "Mormonism" gave birth to a new order of colonization and made the desert to yield abundantly. The spiritual condition of the people of the Church to-day is as strong as in days past, she stated.

President Widtsoe outlined the philosophical basis of the Gospel, showing that the purpose and glory of God is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man; and that man is the literal child of God and a co-partner with Him in an eternal plan of progression.

In the evening session the Mission President declared the Church to be a Church universal—not an American institution—and that there are four foundation stones which must be laid before anyone will know of the divinity of the latter-day work, namely: first, one must have a fervent desire for truth; second, one must place oneself in harmony with truth; third, one must pray, study and investigate; fourth, one must practise that which he learns and