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Title Reinventing the Book of Mormon

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Abstract Review of "Reinventing Lamanite Identity" (2004), by Brent Lee Metcalfe.

Reinventing the Book of Mormon

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Following close on the heels of a number of articles responding to DNA issues raised by such people as Thomas Murphy, Brent Metcalfe, and Simon Southerton,[1] *Sunstone* magazine, in its March 2004 number, published some articles designed to refute the former.[2]

Brent Metcalfe's article on "Reinventing Lamanite Identity" drew my attention because I found his discussions of what he has termed a Galileo event and of Lamanite DNA too restrictive. This latest article also seems rather strange in that he cites Book of Mormon passages that suggest (to me, at least) the exact opposite of what he claims.

"Principal Ancestors"

Metcalfe begins by quoting from the Book of Mormon introduction: "The Lamanites . . . are the principal ancestors of the American Indians." To be sure, he couches it in terms of what "most Mormons likely believe," but why cite the passage without noting that the *Review* articles he attempts to refute have pointed out that the introduction is

1. See *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): 25–197.
2. See *Sunstone,* March 2004, 19–45.

Review of Brent Lee Metcalfe. "Reinventing Lamanite Identity." *Sunstone,* March 2004, 20–25.

a modern statement and therefore not part of the canon itself? Popular beliefs, longstanding or otherwise, cannot supercede scripture. Continuing, Metcalfe claims that a majority of Latter-day Saints

> hold this belief oblivious to the fact that over the last few decades LDS scholars at Brigham Young University and elsewhere have substantially altered this traditional view.
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> Findings from multidisciplinary studies of the Book of Mormon have increasingly led LDS scholars to shrink and dilute the book's American Israelite (or Amerisraelite) population. Apologetic scholars now recognize[3] (1) that Book of Mormon events could not have spanned North, Central, and South America, and (2) that modern Amerindians are predominantly of East Asian ancestry. (p. 20)

As should be clear, the limited geography view did not come about "over the past few decades" but actually began more than a century ago.[4] Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve noted in 1993 that he had been taught this view while attending BYU in the 1950s.[5] It had been taught in the Department of Archaeology at BYU even before that time and was the accepted view of the University Archaeology Society—later renamed the Society for Early Historic Archaeology—long headquartered at BYU. But antecedents go back even farther.[6]

In 1917, L. E. Hills of Independence, Missouri, a member of the RLDS Church, published a map in which he placed the hill Cumo-

3. The use of the word *now* makes it seem that "apologetic scholars" have come up with the idea only because there is much evidence against the Book of Mormon.

4. See Matthew Roper, "Nephi's Neighbors: Book of Mormon Peoples and Pre-Columbian Populations," *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): 91–128; and Roper, "Limited Geography and the Book of Mormon: Historical Antecedents and Early Interpretations," in this number of the *FARMS Review,* pages 225–75.

5. Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "The Historicity of the Book of Mormon," in *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures,* ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 238–39. This talk was first given at a Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies dinner in Provo, Utah, on 29 October 1993. See the discussion in Roper, "Nephi's Neighbors," 92–93.

6. For a survey of the various suggested models of Book of Mormon geography, see John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book,* 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992).

rah at Teotihuacán, a short distance northeast of Mexico City. He also considered the Isthmus of Tehuantepec to be the narrow neck of land separating the land northward from the land southward, meaning that most of the story of the Book of Mormon would have taken place in Mesoamerica, largely in southern Mexico and Guatemala.[7]

A number of Latter-day Saint researchers subsequently came to similar conclusions. In 1927, Janne M. Sjodahl proposed the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, in southern Mexico, as the narrow neck of land mentioned in the Book of Mormon (although he still held a hemispheric view of Book of Mormon geography).[8] Beginning in 1937, Jesse A. Washburn and Jesse N. Washburn suggested that the Nephites and Lamanites lived in Mesoamerica.[9] The idea was taken up by Thomas Stuart Ferguson[10] and ultimately acknowledged by Sidney B. Sperry in 1964.[11] But it had been taught at Brigham Young University since the mid-1940s by such archaeologists as M. Wells Jakeman, Ross T. Christensen, Bruce W. Warren, and John L. Sorenson. Fletcher B. Hammond based his 1959 book, *Geography of the Book of Mormon,* on a Mesoamerican setting.[12] But even these writers were latecomers compared to B. H. Roberts, who, in 1895, acknowledged Mexico as the region in which many important Book of Mormon events took place.[13]

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7. Louis E. Hills, *A Short Work on the Geography of Mexico and Central America from 2234 B.C. to 421 A.D.* (Independence, MO: Hills, 1917), 2–3.

8. Janne M. Sjodahl, *An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927), 368; see also 414, 417, 424–26.

9. Jesse A. Washburn and Jesse N. Washburn, *From Babel to Cumorah: A Story of the Book of Mormon,* 3rd ed. (1937; repr., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1944); Jesse A. Washburn and Jesse N. Washburn, *An Approach to the Study of Book of Mormon Geography* (Provo, UT: New Era, 1939); Jesse N. Washburn, *Book of Mormon Guidebook* (privately published, 1968).

10. Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *Cumorah—Where?* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing, 1947).

11. Sperry passed out a handout in a Religion 622 class on 31 March 1964, which appeared as "Were There Two Cumorahs?" in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/1 (1995): 260–68.

12. Fletcher B. Hammond, *Geography of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing, 1959).

13. B. H. Roberts, *A New Witness for God* (Salt Lake City: Cannon and Sons, 1895), 3:502–3.

Interpreting the Text

Metcalfe's interpretation of the Book of Mormon reflects a number of traditional ideas about the text that derive not from the record itself but from interpretations of the text by ethnocentric readers. Thus most Latter-day Saints likely see the fulfillment of prophecies by Lehi and Nephi in the arrival of European explorers and settlers to the territory covered by the United States of America.[14] Therefore, Columbus, the Pilgrim fathers, and others are often understood to be the subjects of those ancient prophecies, despite the fact that Columbus never set foot in North America and that the Massachusetts Pilgrims were but a fraction of the many people from different parts of Europe who settled North, Central, and South America. Even those passages often thought to refer to the oppression of Native Americans by the U.S. government and its people could refer to other parts of the New World (see, for example, 1 Nephi 13:14, 30–31; 22:7–8; 2 Nephi 1:11). Native Americans were persecuted and driven out of their lands throughout the Americas, and persecution continued into the twentieth century in places such as Mexico, Brazil, and Chile. The United States of America was neither the only nation that confined these natives to reservations nor the only New World nation that broke its ties to its European rulers. So while some of those prophecies may include the United States, this is not the only possible meaning.

According to Metcalfe, "In his treatment of Lehi's prophetic promise, Matthew Roper neglects this eschatological context of Amerisraelites being *scattered* and *smitten* by Gentiles" (p. 24 n. 14).[15] In fact,

14. Typical of such views are Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975); and E. Douglas Clark, *The Grand Design: America from Columbus to Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992). The former was written to commemorate the bicentennial of the United States of America in 1976, the latter to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus's first voyage to the New World.

15. Metcalfe repeats the argument in note 25 (p. 24). He argues that the 1845 Proclamation issued by the Twelve and mentioning "the tribes and remnants of Israel (the Indians)" (p. 23) had been prepared "in accordance with divine directive," noting that "Wilford Woodruff alluded to this revelation when he wrote that the *Proclamation* fulfilled an express commandment of God" (p. 25 n. 33). The commandment to prepare the Proclamation, recorded in *History of the Church,* 4:274, was the revelation, not the Proclamation itself.

Roper was dealing with the text rather than modern interpretations thereof, while Metcalfe, seemingly unaware of how Native Americans outside the United States were treated by European settlers, buys into an ethnocentric interpretation that Roper avoids.

Metcalfe assigns a different meaning to Book of Mormon passages used by Latter-day Saint scholars to demonstrate that the peoples described therein lived in a relatively small region known as Mesoamerica and that there were other peoples of unknown origin living in the land. How can this be? Can the same passages really be used as evidence for and against the Book of Mormon or the limited geography theory?

"Our Brethren"

Metcalfe's first example derives from Alma 31:35, where Alma prays for the Zoramites, saying, "O Lord, their souls are precious, and *many* of them are our brethren." While some understand this to mean that "many" but not all the Zoramites were of Israelite descent, Metcalfe argues that this "interpretation is unsound" (p. 20). He points out that the printer's manuscript and the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon use the term *near brethren,* which he interprets as meaning that "'many'—but not all—of the Zoramites were *close relatives* of Alma and some of his companions" (p. 21). To illustrate that the term *near* denotes a close relative, he cites Alma 10:7, where Amulek speaks of "journeying to see a very *near* kindred" (p. 21). On the surface, this seems plausible, but there are factors that Metcalfe does not consider. The first is that Amulek used the term *very near* in reference to his relative, not merely *near,* as in Alma's prayer for the Zoramites.

Assuming that Alma uttered his prayer in Hebrew,[16] what words would he have used? A check of occurrences of the term *near kin* in the Bible shows that, in Leviticus 18:12–13, 17; 20:19, the King James Version (KJV) actually translates a single Hebrew word, שׁאר (*šeʾēr*), which really means "flesh," as *near kinswoman,* the way it is translated

16. Some assume that the Nephites used only "reformed Egyptian," although the term is used only in reference to the abridgment plates prepared by Mormon and used also by Moroni. Indeed, Moroni indicates that Hebrew, the native tongue of the Israelites, was still used in his day (Mormon 9:32–33).

in most Old Testament passages. KJV's *near kin* in Leviticus 18:6 employs two Hebrew words (שאר, *šᵉʾēr*, and בשר, *bāśār*), but both of them mean "flesh."[17]

So in all these examples, the Hebrew text does not contain a word meaning "near," thus invalidating Metcalfe's citation of some of the biblical passages (p. 24 nn. 9–10). However, the word *near* (Hebrew קרוב, *qārōb*) does appear with שאר (*šᵉʾēr*) in Leviticus 21:2, which KJV renders *his kin that is near unto him*, while the word קרוב (*qārōb*) alone is rendered *near of kin* in 2 Samuel 19:42 and Ruth 2:20 and *kin* in Leviticus 25:25.[18] Other occurrences of *near kinsman* or *next kinsmen* in the book of Ruth (Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12 KJV) derive from the term גאל (*gōʾēl*), which alludes to a clan member with specific obligations and not to kinsmen in general. In these passages, the Hebrew employs a single word, without an additional word suggesting the *near* of the KJV, and it is interesting that elsewhere KJV renders that term *kinsman* without the word *near* (Ruth 3:13; 4:1, 3, 6, 8, 14). The term *near kinsman* of Ruth 3:12 KJV is a translation of the single word *gōʾēl* while *kinsman nearer* in the same verse is the only time we find both *gōʾēl* and *qārōb* together. Had there not been the necessity of comparison, the word *nearer* would not have been used. Dropping the word *near* in Alma 10:7 in post-1830 editions of the Book of Mormon actually produces a better correspondence to the normal Hebrew usage.

How proper is it to assume that "many" of the Zoramites were "close relatives" to Alma and his missionary companions? These companions included two of Alma's sons, three of the sons of King Mosiah, and two of the men Alma had converted in the city of Ammonihah (Alma 31:6–7). Does Alma's use of the term *brethren* (or even *near brethren*) really imply close family members? To this, we must add that the Nephites often termed the Lamanites *brethren*,[19] so one

17. The second of these is rendered "kin" in Leviticus 25:49.

18. See also Numbers 27:11: "And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him," which employs the same two words.

19. See the discussion in John A. Tvedtnes, "The Charge of 'Racism' in the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): especially 185 n. 6, in which the Book of Mormon passages are listed. Significantly, the vast majority of the passages that refer to the Lamanites as "brethren" are in portions of the Book of Mormon that predate the coming of Christ and the union of the Nephites and Lamanites that took place at that time.

would expect that there were others who were not descendants of the Mulekite and Lehite migrants.[20]

The "Land of Promise"

Metcalfe cites 2 Nephi 1:8–9, where Lehi declares that "it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations. . . . I, Lehi, have obtained a promise that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves." This, Metcalfe believes, indicates that "a careful reading of the Book of Mormon reveals that the narrative says nothing of indigenous 'others' and in fact prophetically precludes them" (p. 21). By contrast, Sorenson and Roper have used Lehi's words to demonstrate that there must have been others, both because the Lord would yet "bring [people] out of the land of Jerusalem" and because the Lord was no longer bound to provide the promised isolation from other nations since Lehi's older sons did not keep his commandments.[21] One must also note that Metcalfe seems to be reading the term *land* as if it referred to the entire New World. But people like the Nephites, coming from a Hebrew-speaking environment, would have understood it quite differently. The most common "land" mentioned in the Bible is the land promised to Abraham, which covers a relatively small territory at the east end of the Mediterranean Sea. One need not expect that the land promised to Lehi was any larger than the land of Israel from which he had migrated. Moreover, in the Book of Mormon

20. I have proposed elsewhere that the tribal affiliations of Book of Mormon peoples remained part of their culture even during times when various peoples merged. This does not preclude the adoption of other peoples into these cultures. Thus, the Zoramites whom Alma and his companions sought to recover (they being "dissenters from the Nephites," Alma 31:8) may have been descendants of the original Zoramites (Jacob 1:13) as well as others who merged with them. See John A. Tvedtnes, "Book of Mormon Tribal Affiliation and Military Castes," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon,* ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 296–326.

21. For this and related evidences, see John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper, "Before DNA," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/1 (2004): 6–23.

the term *land* most frequently denotes the territory immediately surrounding the city from which the land derives its name.[22]

Over time, the Lehite land would have expanded with migration. Thus Mosiah$_1$ led the Nephites who would follow him from the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla, where they merged with another group. The Nephites and the "people of Zarahemla" spread out to adjacent lands and only later in their history moved into the "land northward." Evidence suggests that they did not inhabit any part of what is now the United States, though some archaeological evidence demonstrates that Mesoamerican peoples moved into the Mississippi and Ohio river valleys and the American Southwest in post–Book of Mormon times. Thus Lehi could have descendants even among the mostly Asiatic inhabitants of the Americas. Metcalfe cites Joseph Smith's statement that "our western tribes of Indians are des[c]endants from that Joseph that was sold into Egypt" (p. 22). The passage seems to suggest that Native Americans in the *eastern* part of the United States were *not* descendants of Book of Mormon peoples. If so, this would confirm the archaeological evidence regarding the settlement pattern of Mesoamericans in parts of the United States.

Genealogical References

Metcalfe notes that some individuals named in the Book of Mormon claimed descent from specific predecessors, such as Lehi, Nephi, Ishmael, Zarahemla, Mulek, and Zedekiah. He takes this as evidence that all of them claimed Israelite ancestry. Not excluding this possibility, some Latter-day Saint scholars who have written on this subject, however, cite these same passages as evidence that there were, in fact, other peoples in the New World; otherwise, there would be no need for these individuals to specify their ancestry (Mosiah 17:2; Alma 10:3; preface to 3 Nephi; 3 Nephi 5:20; Mormon 1:5; 8:13).

Metcalfe notes that Jacob was the first to make distinctions between Nephites and Lamanites—he indicated the groups of which

22. See the discussion in John A. Tvedtnes, "Cities and Lands in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 147–50.

each was composed and demonstrated that all these subgroups were named from people (most of them Lehi's sons) who, according to the record of Jacob's brother Nephi, accompanied Lehi to the New World. This, he suggests, demonstrates that all these people "are universally described by Book of Mormon narrators as Israelite" (p. 21).[23] Yet he does not attempt to explain why Jacob described Sherem by saying "there *came* a man among the people of Nephi" (Jacob 7:1), which seems to describe an outsider.[24] The fact that Jacob describes him as one who "was learned, that he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people" (Jacob 7:4), might be another clue suggesting Sherem's outsider status. No one would be surprised that a Nephite knew his people's language, but an outsider would have to become "learned" in order to know how to address the people.

Metcalfe refers to Ammoron's claims of being a Zoramite and a Lamanite, but his quotation of the passage leaves out a crucial word—*now.* "I am Ammoron, and a descendant of Zoram, whom your fathers pressed and brought out of Jerusalem. And behold *now,* I am a bold Lamanite" (Alma 54:23–24). Since the Zoramites were originally part of the people of Nephi (see Jacob 1:13), the defection of Amalickiah and his brother Ammoron to the Lamanites (over whom they reigned as kings) makes them Lamanites.[25] Sorenson and Roper have argued that this is another piece of evidence that terms like *Nephites, people of Nephi,* and *Lamanites* need not refer to literal descendants and that this would allow for alliances with groups not specifically named in the Book of Mormon. Metcalfe counters by noting that the Nephites did not apply the name *Lamanite* to the "people of Zarahemla" mentioned in Omni 1:14 (p. 21). From this

23. Actually, the term *Israelite* never appears in the text of the Book of Mormon, and those who mention their genealogy in the book use other terms, usually their immediate tribal affiliation or descent.

24. For a discussion of this and related issues, see John L. Sorenson, "When Lehi's Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 1–34.

25. Tvedtnes, "Tribal Affiliation," 306, suggests that the Zoramites who became Lamanites (Alma 43:4) after dissenting from the Nephite religion were descendants of the Zoramites of Jacob's time, whom he subsumed under the term *Nephites.*

single snapshot in the millennium-long history covered by the Book of Mormon, Metcalfe suggests that this was always their practice. He does not note that this passage described events that occurred long before the great dissensions and divisions that plagued the Nephites and even much longer before the abolition of the "-ites" (4 Nephi 1:17) marked the union of all the followers of Christ.

Another factor to consider is that the group known as "Gadianton's robbers and murderers" (Helaman 6:18), who comprised both Nephite and Lamanite dissenters (including Zoramites), could have included other native peoples (3 Nephi 1:27–30). From 3 Nephi 3:3, it is clear that, in the years following Christ's visit, the Gadianton band did not consider themselves to be Nephites. In form, Gadianton appears to be a Jaredite name based on the same pattern as Morianton (Ether 1:22–23) and contains the *-ian* pattern found in Jaredite names such as Coriantor (Ether 1:6–7), Coriantum (Ether 1:13–14, 27–28), Coriantumr (Ether 8:4; 12:1), Moriancumer (Ether 2:13), and Ripliancum (Ether 15:8).[26]

Nephite Ethnocentrism

Sorenson has maintained that the Book of Mormon is a lineage history and that, as such, it has very little to say about other peoples who lived in the region. Indeed, it only mentions the Lamanites in connection with their relationship with the Nephites (e.g., in wars and missionary efforts).[27] The ethnocentricity of the Nephites is demon-

26. Some Jaredite names were used by the Nephites and Lamanites and may have come via the Mulekites. Among the ones that have the *-ian* pattern are Corianton, son of Alma (Alma 31:7; 49:30), and a Nephite named Morianton who founded a city that bore his name (Alma 50:25–36; 51:1). Compare the Lamanite military leader Coriantumr (Helaman 1:15). See John A. Tvedtnes, "A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite and Jaredite Proper Names," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* 141 (December 1977): 1–8.

27. See, for example, John L. Sorenson's article "Book of Mormon Peoples," in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 1:91, where he writes: "The Book of Mormon—a religiously oriented lineage history—is primarily a record of events kept by and centrally involving the Nephites. Since the account was written from the perspective of this people (actually, of its leaders), all other groups are understood and represented from the point of view of Nephite elites. There are only fragments in the Nephite record that indicate directly the

strated in a number of ways, many of which have been discussed by Sorenson. One that has received little attention concerns toponymns used in the Book of Mormon. Except for a few set off by terms such as "they [the Jaredites] called the name of the place," almost all the names of Jaredite sites mentioned in the book of Ether were Nephite names. This suggests that Moroni deliberately changed the Jaredite place-names to their Nephite equivalents, except for Old World sites (e.g., Moriancumer and Zerin) and New World sites with which Moroni was unfamiliar.[28]

The phenomenon is also known from the history of the city and land of Nephi, named after the first Nephi (2 Nephi 5:8). In the time of Mosiah$_1$, the righteous Nephites abandoned their first city, and it was subsequently taken over by the Lamanites (Omni 1:12–13). A generation later, Zeniff returned to the land of his fathers with a group of Nephites and convinced the Lamanite king to allow them to resettle the city of Nephi (Omni 1:27–30; Mosiah 7:9, 13, 21; 9:1–10). At this point, the Book of Mormon calls the place "the land of Lehi-Nephi" and "the city of Lehi-Nephi" (Mosiah 7:1–4, 21; 9:6–8). This might be because the Lamanites, after taking over the region, changed the name from "Nephi" to "Lehi," not wanting to perpetuate the name of the hated leader of the people who bore his name. Thus, while the Zeniff colony remained in the land, they called the place "Lehi-Nephi," while subsequent Book of Mormon writers reverted to the name "Nephi." It seems unlikely that the Lamanites would have used that name, so the ethnocentricity of the Nephite record could have led its scribes to employ the original name.

Based on a handful of Book of Mormon individuals who mention their ancestry, Metcalfe writes that "when ancestry is identified, *all* post-Jaredite peoples—Nephites and non-Nephites, good and bad, groups and individuals—consistently trace their pedigree back to the founding Israelite immigrants" (p. 21). One of his examples is

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perspectives of other groups, or even of Nephite commoners." See also John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 50–56.

28. See Tvedtnes, "Phonemic Analysis," 1–8.

the "Nephite dissident Coriantumr [who] 'was [also] a descendant of Zarahemla' (Hel. 1:15)" (p. 21). Metcalfe did not note that this "post-Jaredite" man bore a *Jaredite* name.[29] Indeed, this man with the Jaredite name is said to be "a descendant of Zarahemla . . . a dissenter from among the Nephites" who led a *Lamanite* army against the Nephites (Helaman 1:14–32). The story clearly shows that one's tribal affiliation could be changed. Indeed, the Lamanites converted by the sons of Mosiah adopted the name "Anti-Nephi-Lehies" to distinguish them from unconverted Lamanites (Alma 23:17).

Another example of this tribal switching occurs with the sons of the priests of the (presumably Nephite) King Noah, who deserted their wives and subsequently married Lamanite women (Mosiah 20:1–5); they were ultimately incorporated into the Lamanite empire under their leader, Amulon (Mosiah 23:30–39). We subsequently read "that those who were the children of Amulon and his brethren, who had taken to wife the daughters of the Lamanites, were displeased with the conduct of their fathers, and they would no longer be called by the names of their fathers, therefore they took upon themselves the name of Nephi, that they might be called the children of Nephi and be numbered among those who were called Nephites" (Mosiah 25:12). These were the deserted children of the priests of Noah who had come to the city of Zarahemla with Ammon and Limhi, so they had been born before their fathers took Lamanite wives. If they had already been Nephites during the time of Noah, one might wonder why they would want to "be called the children of Nephi" under King Mosiah_2. Were these Amulonites an outside group who joined with the Nephites in the land of Nephi and subsequently came to be known as Nephites? It is clear that their half-brothers, the children of Amulon and the other priests by their Lamanite wives, later became leaders in the Lamanite army but still bore the name "Amulonites."[30]

29. Cf. Ether 8:4. The last Jaredite king bore the name Coriantumr (Omni 1:21; frequently mentioned in chapters 12–15 of Ether).

30. The sons of Mosiah had no success in converting these people (Alma 21:2–4; 23:14; 24:1, 28–29).

Idolatry

A look at Book of Mormon passages that mention idols and idolatry is also helpful in determining whether there were other peoples in the land. We read, for example, of unnamed people in Jacob's time who worshipped idols (2 Nephi 9:37). The Lamanites to whom the sons of Ammon went as missionaries are said to have worshipped idols (Alma 17:15), while others in Alma's day worshipped idols (Alma 7:6). The Zoramites of Alma's time also began worshipping idols (Alma 31:1). Later, wicked Nephites made idols (Helaman 6:31). In Mormon's day, idolatry was still known among the Lamanites (Mormon 4:21).

How did idolatry replace the worship of Israel's God among these Book of Mormon peoples? It seems unlikely that they would replace God with idols of stone or other materials. According to the Bible, some ancient Israelites also worshipped idols, but we know where they got the idea. The Israelites whom Moses led out of Egypt turned to the worship of a golden calf, undoubtedly influenced by the idolatry of their former Egyptian masters. Similarly, some of the Israelites who settled the land of Canaan adopted the idols of their neighbors. The point is that it seems odd that a people would gravitate from belief in a creator-god to the worship of things made with their own hands without outside influence. This alone suggests the presence of other peoples in the New World who were idolaters.

The DNA Issue

Metcalfe declares that "DNA analyses . . . establish an Asian, not Middle Eastern, genetic signature for the overwhelming majority of Amerindians" (p. 20). Since the sampling done to date has not been random[31] and has included only a few thousand people from Alaska and Canada to the tip of South America, it can hardly be said that "the

31. See the discussion by Peter N. Jones of the Bäuu Institute, in his "American Indian Demographic History and Cultural Affiliation: A Discussion of Certain Limitations on the Use of mtDNA and Y Chromosome Testing," *AnthroGlobe Journal*, September 2002, posted to the Bäuu Institute Web site, www.bauuinstitute.com/Articles/JonesmtDNA.pdf (accessed 29 November 2004).

overwhelming majority of Amerindians" have *any* particular genetic signature. To be sure, most Native Americans sampled to date fall into one of four mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) haplogroups,[32] which are also known (though in lesser frequency) from living Asiatic peoples. But there are other mtDNA haplogroups found among Native Americans, including X, which is mostly attested in Europe and the Middle East (and more recently detected at low frequency among the Altai of southern Siberia), and N, whose origin is presently unknown. Even more important is the fact that DNA from Native American skeletal remains has disclosed haplogroups other than these.

Metcalfe incorrectly writes that "Many LDS apologists envision the Book of Mormon's founding Israelite colonists as a small group who interacted in varying degrees with the vast indigenous populations of Mesoamerica. In time, sustained widespread exogamy with these 'others' effectively extinguished the Israelites' unique Middle Eastern genetic signature" (p. 20). There are several things wrong with this. First, since we don't know what ancient Israelite DNA looked like, there is no way to say that a "unique Middle Eastern genetic signature" was lost. Even more important is the fact that bottlenecks do, in fact, cause the loss of genetic markers and have, in the case of Native Americans, resulted in modern populations not having the same distribution as ancient skeletal remains from the same region.

Population studies employ two types of DNA. The first is mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), passed by a mother to all her offspring, but which only her daughters can pass to the next generation. The other is Y-chromosome DNA, which is passed from father to son. If you go back six generations, at a time when you have six generations, you will find that you have 32 male ancestors and 32 female ancestors. Of your 32 female sixth-generation ancestors, only one will have passed her mtDNA to you, uniquely in the female line. If you are a male, your Y-chromosome comes from only one of your 32 sixth-generation male

32. Mitochondrial DNA is passed by a mother to all her children, so those falling within a given haplogroup can be said to be related through a female line, even if distantly.

ancestors. That means that 62 of your sixth-generation ancestors contributed nothing to your mtDNA and Y-chromosome DNA.

When it comes to nuclear DNA (nDNA), we each inherit half from our mother and half from our father. That means that, on average, we receive a fourth of our nDNA from each grandparent, an eighth from each great-grandparent, and so on. Through a process known as recombination, it is possible for one of your parents to pass on more nDNA from one of your grandparents than from that grandparent's spouse. Over time, it is possible that some of your ancestors will not have passed on any of their DNA to you, but they remain your ancestors nonetheless.

Summary

Metcalfe writes that "these apologetic efforts to reinvent Lamanite identity face some formidable challenges" (p. 20). But the challenges are not as daunting as he believes, and his simplistic and cavalier dismissal of Latter-day Saint scholarship on issues such as these is unworthy of his intellect.

An editorial introduction entitled "Reframing the Book of Mormon" (p. 19) precedes the *Sunstone* articles on this subject, including that of Metcalfe. Clearly based on misinformation, it declares:

> In the wake of this new attention, LDS scholars, particularly those at FARMS and BYU, have scrambled to educate lay Latter-day Saints on where Book of Mormon studies currently stand. For the past twenty-five years or so, believing Book of Mormon theorists have been steadily attempting to work out the details of a new paradigm for the Book of Mormon—one that shifts Book of Mormon events from a full hemisphere to a limited-geography model. . . . In other words, instead of Book of Mormon events taking place in North America (the land northward), South America (the land southward) and Central America (with the Isthmus of Panama being the "narrow neck of land") as had traditionally been envisioned, scholars now suggest the Book of Mormon took place in a relatively small locale in Mesoamerica.

Employing (as had Metcalfe) the word *now* suggests recent developments, reinforced by the words "the past twenty-five years or so." "Or so" comes to more than a century of discussions on the matter. Indeed, articles published in the church's *Times and Seasons* in 1842 indicated that the Nephites lived in the region of Guatemala, as Sorenson and Roper have noted.[33]

33. Sorenson and Roper, "Before DNA," 10, and related notes.