Evaluating Book of Mormon "Geography"

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Are the verses related to geography in the Book of Mormon meant to be taken literally?[1] And if so, are these verses more than just incidental non-cohesive phrases connecting the more important doctrinal aspects of the Book of Mormon?[2] While the Book of Mormon is a story of history, full of geographical, cultural, and chronological statements, and although Mormon said that he was "commanded" by the Lord to write what he did,[3] did the Lord have a purpose in Mormon's inclusion of such geographical and cultural details?[4]

Although there has been no direct modern-day revelation on the subject of Book of Mormon geography,[5] one of the ways in which students of the Book of Mormon have sought to more fully understand the importance of geography has been to generate geographical models based on clues in the text.[6] Some have taken a purely internal approach, meaning that all insights are derived by strict analysis of the text alone before seeking external help. Others have looked for interpretive insights using a broader approach, mixing internal clues with external historical and cultural relationships. One might ask the question, is one approach superior to another? And can some standards for evaluating Book of Mormon geography be established?

According to William Hamblin, [source] there is a basic methodology that should be followed in reconstructing Book of Mormon geography. I believe his proposed steps are worthy of discussion. Let me begin with his steps 1 & 2:

> *(1) Carefully study the text of the Book of Mormon, identifying all passages of any <u>geographic significance</u>.*
> *(2) Categorize these <u>toponyms</u> according to type (cities, lands, hills, rivers, seas, etc.).*

Hamblin's methodology seems reasonable and straightforward, but Hamblin (perhaps for the sake of brevity and simplicity) has not mentioned a number of subtle complexities in such an approach. In step #2, I am somewhat confused by Hamblin's focus only on "toponyms," which the dictionary defines as "place-names." He makes no reference to those places that are not given a proper name, but are only described. In other words, how does one properly identify a descriptive place-name for sure when the passage cites, for example, a "land northward"? Do we capitalize it so that it appears "Land Northward"? Or is it meant to be directional? And what are the points of directional reference? And are there definite boundaries or limits to the extent of this "land northward? Moreover, while it might seem logical in Hamblin's step #1 to focus on passages with "any geographical significance" as a means of mapping the Book of Mormon, what specific perspectives are included in such a study of geographical spatial relationships? For the moment, I will discuss just two factors (cultural passages and chronological passages) that might affect steps #1 or #2. I will address them briefly here as they are also discussed later in my paper.

(A) Cultural Passages

In the same manner that a conceptional understanding of Book of Mormon geography should progress from a continuing collection and categorization of purely geographical passages, a conception of

cultural understanding (which also shapes and defines geography) can progress by identifying and assessing cultural passages in the text. As an example of what cultural passages might have to offer in formulating a general geographical map for Book of Mormon lands, John Sorenson has listed almost forty cultural requirements in the text that define the scope and character of the lands.[7] These cultural characteristics progressively limit (in some ways drastically) the number of possible areas on the American continent where the Book of Mormon lands could be located, even in a general way. For example, how many locations are there on the American continent where a "narrow strip of wilderness" "ran from the sea east even to the sea west" (Alma 22:27) and divided the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla, whose population ranged from hundreds of thousands to millions (Mormon 1:7), and whose advanced culture centers were situated at most some 250 miles apart (Mosiah 18-24)? According to the text, 60% of the Book of Mormon story took place within these lands. Moreover, these lands of Zarahemla and Nephi were connected to the land northward by a narrow pass which for thousands of years was uniquely important for travel, militarily important for defense, and culturally important for commerce. So cultural characteristics can progressively limit the number of geographical locations and thus influence one's ability to define geographical relationships. Thus, in addition to purely "geographical" passages, I believe that one should also make use of cultural passages in the text, even from the beginning. Our cultural knowledge is much more advanced now than it was in 1830. There is a wealth of associated cultural knowledge that not only could be helpful, but should not be avoided in evaluating Book of Mormon geography in a continuing manner from the beginning. Perhaps this is what Hamblin meant when he said "all passages of any geographic significance."

(B) Chronological Passages

Geographical boundaries and distances are inseparably related to time. In trying to assemble a map of Book of Mormon geography, it should not be assumed, or required that all spatial geographical relationships, geographical boundaries, or the definition of all geographical terms remain constant (or "consistent") over thousands of years. Yet the fact that Mormon included geographical information and attempted to correlate that information is a testament that Mormon considered the communication of geographical ideas not only possible but important to the Book of Mormon record. (For example, see Mormon's attempt to correlate Nephite, Lamanite, Mulekite, and Jaredite lands in Alma 22:27-34.) For this reason, in attempting to evaluate geographical spatial relationships, one should discuss them in their proper time frame or chronology.

THUS my initial methodological guideline #1 would be: *One should begin to identify, and continue to identify and categorize all passages that deal with geography in the text; that is, all geographical passages (toponyms and descriptive terms), all cultural passages, all chronological passages, and any other passages that help give definition to Book of Mormon geography.*

Hamblin's steps #3 and #4 are as follows:

(3) Analyze the relationships between various passages for consistency or inconsistency.
(4) Identify any type of geographical links described between the toponyms (travel times, directions, spatial relationships, etc.).

Again these steps seem reasonable. As I have outlined above, using the collected information not only on geographical toponyms, but on descriptive geographical terms, cultural passages and chronological passages as well as other passages, one is prepared to begin analyzing relationships. This informational data helps shape the process of defining these terms and spatial relationships. And this process is ongoing as our analysis progresses from the general to the specific. While hopefully this

process helps identify consistency, one should also keep in mind that this consistency, or the definition or meaning of names and descriptive terms can be affected by time, as I have previously noted. Moreover, the definition of terms can be influenced by at least four broad cultural time periods:

(A) Early Nephite Culture (affecting all occurrences of the above mentioned geographical, cultural and chronological terms in the Small Plates of Nephi). This might include Hebrew & Egyptian culture from the Brass Plates and Native American culture.

(B) Late Nephite Culture (affecting all occurrences of the above mentioned geographical, cultural and chronological terms in Mormon & Moroni's abridgement of the Large Plates.) This might include Jaredite Culture from the Jaredite records and Native American culture.

(C) The Translation Culture of the Book of Mormon (affecting all definitions of the above mentioned geographical, cultural and chronological terms in the Book of Mormon text that also appear in Dictionaries, Bibles, Bible Commentaries or Literary Works that might have affected the language used in the Translation of the Book of Mormon. In reality, it is unknown to what extent the language of the Book of Mormon text represented the vocabulary or "mind" of Joseph Smith.

(D) The Current Modern-day Culture of Collections, Publications, Analysis and Interpretation. At this point in time one doesn't need to start "from scratch." Much work has already been done in identifying textual passages related to geography and interpreting those passages. Access to this information is found on the Internet and in various libraries. This information can be quite helpful.

THUS my methodological guideline #2 would be: *Relationships between geographical terms should be analyzed in various ways---directional orientation, distance between entities, spatial relationships with other geographical features, etc. Influences from four broad cultural time periods (early Nephite, late Nephite, early 1800s, and modern-day) should be evaluated in reference to the meaning of geographical names and descriptions, directional orientation, travel times, spatial relationships, etc. One should look for consistency, but allow for cultural influences that might lead to a change in relationships.*

Hamblin's next steps are as follows:

(5) If these geographic statements are internally consistent, develop an internal ideal model of Book of Mormon geography.
(6) Apply this internally consistent hypothetical model to various potential real world settings in an attempt to formulate possible correlations.
(7) Compare the various models of real world correspondences in order to determine which, if any, forms the best correlation.

Once again, these steps appear to be logical, and my concerns with these steps have arisen not because I don't think internal clues are important, but because I don't think that one should wait for a complete internal model to be developed before bringing in external factors. From my studies, I have found that in attempting to apply a completed internal model to real world settings and historical circumstances (i.e. make the model fit), all authors of Book of Mormon maps have been forced to give additional meaning to the internal words and phrases. In other words, they have "retrofitted" back into their supposed "internal" models certain biased interpretations. To me this means that it is not bias that is the enemy, rather it is the failure of the author to fully communicate his reasoning (and bias) that leads to misunderstanding and confusion. It is this process related to the communication of ideas that I would

next like to discuss.

Hamblin has a footnote to his article which says, "For an excellent example of steps one through five, see Clark . . . " In attempting to construct a purely "internal" model of Book of Mormon geography based "wholly on the text," John Clark has written an article titled "A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geography."[8] In that article Clark says the following: "My purpose here is to suggest a simple key for evaluating any Book of Mormon geography that may be proposed." He then gives the reader a set of six assumptions that might guide reasoning.[9] Even more to the point, however, Clark states:

> The first [question about Book of Mormon geography should be] whether the geography fits the facts of the Book of Mormon—a question we all can answer without being versed in American archaeology. Only after a given geography reconciles all of the significant geographic details given in the Book of Mormon does the question of archaeological and historical detail merit attention.[10]

Thus one might assume, by Clark's approach, that in understanding Book of Mormon geography, internal geographical relationships gleaned from the text are of highest priority. Again, much like the steps Hamblin put forth, these assumptions seem logical. If the intent of Clark's approach is to propose a systematic textual analysis requirement for the establishment and teaching of any Book of Mormon geography model, I agree with him. Anyone proposing a geographic model should be willing to systematically describe in detail their textual logic in constructing such a model. What must be understood, however, is that there are some subtle complicating factors in addition to what Clark has listed that may be involved in interpreting the text. Indeed, the very fact that after 160 years of dedicated research there is a need for Clark to write such an article (or for me to write a response) may imply some inherent difficulties in this process, not only just in interpreting Book of Mormon geography, but in communicating that understanding to those readers who first try to understand the reasoning behind the model and then try to apply the theory to the Book of Mormon narrative. I believe these factors are worthy of discussion.

My main point of divergence with Clark is that I do not agree in totality with his premise that the geography of the Book of Mormon is "a question we all can answer without being versed in American archaeology." It is not that I place archaeology as my top priority; it is rather that I consider the geographical verses in the text as only **one** factor among many (culture, language, chronology, history, archaeology, covenants, literary structure, etc.) that help us to understand the complete message of the Book of Mormon. Clark stresses the fact that "only after a given geography reconciles **all** of the **significant** geographic details given in the Book of Mormon does the question of archaeological and historical detail merit attention."[11](emphasis added) But there is a subtle problem here: Who decides what is "significant"? Clark's article clearly demonstrates what is significant to him—specifically the textual verses and analysis which he uses to substantiate his model. However, after spending many years in studying a variety of different approaches to Book of Mormon geography, and personally interviewing many of the people involved in such study, it has been my perception that some scholars have been able to gain significantly different, but acceptable interpretations to the geographical scriptures from multiple internal and external sources (among which are archaeology, language, historical facts, covenants, etc.). This has led them to develop not only their own set of "significant" geographical details in the text, but also to develop a different approach to interpreting those details.[12] However, in a similar manner as that of Clark, these scholars have tended to focus primarily on what geographical details their perspective explains well, and have tended to ignore,[13] minimize,[14] or authoritatively over-ride[15] other scriptural references or interpretive approaches which their perspective doesn't explain well. Moreover, they have tended to judge (or dismiss) other theories too quickly in a biased manner rather than to seek more understanding of other perspectives.[16]

So again, who is to judge what is "significant"? Moreover, how do these people communicate

their ideas to one another (or to Clark) when certain geographical details are either interpreted differently or not considered equally significant? Can we really agree on which geographical details in the Book of Mormon are significant? And whether we agree or disagree on these details, can we ever come to an agreement on the process necessary to communicate how we interpret them? Is Clark correct? Can we judge every geographical model by his set of assumptions? Or do we continue to have multiple groups, each with its own set of criteria and priorities, flailing away at each other in disdain? I believe that some common ground rules for building and communicating Book of Mormon geography models can indeed be established. While I do not fully agree with Clark's exclusively internal approach, nor do I agree completely with his set of assumptions, I do feel that his assumptions provide a very good base for discussion. To this end, by expanding on these assumptions, I hope not only to elucidate my disagreements with Clark, but to establish a superior set of ground rules for communicating Book of Mormon geography.

To Clark's credit, rather than being oblivious to multiple perspectives and interpretations, he opens the door for further discussion with the following:

> I have been careful throughout to minimize the number of assumptions made about the meaning of a passage. As apparent . . . some inferences and guesswork are inevitable given the nature of the test. I will be explicit about these, thereby allowing others to reject those inferences which fail to meet their own standards of reasoning.[17]

So let us do just what Clark allows. Let us discuss his six assumptions and hopefully give them added perspective.

Clark's Assumption #1: *Assume a literal meaning.*

To assume that every geographical reference has a "literal meaning" seems to be a very logical statement.[18] However, there are ramifications for purely internal interpretations. I will lump these ramifications under the broad category of "internal bias," and treat each one in turn.

A. *Linkage:*
No matter how simple the internal interpretation seems to be for some geographical statements, for every primary "literal" interpretation we give to that geographical statement at the first part of the Book of Mormon, we must thereafter give a qualified secondary or tertiary "literal" interpretation to all subsequent related geographical references. This linkage creates a dilemma for Clark's Assumption #1. Let me explain.
In Book of Mormon geography, there are some geographical terms which might fall under the category of descriptive terms. Let's consider the term "wilderness." Even though we might choose to include "wilderness" areas in our internal model, we must ask what the term "wilderness" literally means. Does it mean mountains? or jungle? or desert? or uncharted territory? or sparsely populated territory? or completely uninhabited territory? And is the meaning of "wilderness" to be interpreted the same throughout the entire Book of Mormon story? It is apparent that lacking specific scriptural definition at every textual occurrence of the term "wilderness," one is left to one's own assertions.[19] This means that depending on the type and extent of the "wilderness" mentioned, distances and directional (travel) relationships may need to be altered.

B. *Oversimplification:*
Another concern in communicating a "literal meaning" in an internal environment has to do with an oversimplified perspective. Let me explain. Internal maps are usually no more than line-and-dot drawings using only the information gleaned from the text. What might seem logical in a "line and dot" format may appear oversimplified in a real setting. For example, the Book of Mormon text specifically

names only one river (the Sidon) for all of the lands occupied by the Nephites, Lamanites and Jaredites in the New World. Moreover, while mention is made of the "head," nothing is specifically said of any tributaries or branches. Where on the American continent do we find a location that fits this "internal" picture? I would hesitate even to guess. One might ask, What difference does it make if there were multiple rivers, with tributaries and branches? An answer might be that rivers affect travel time and direction, and thus distance and directional relationships may also be affected.[20] Extrapolating this oversimplification one might wonder, What other significant geographical features have gone unmentioned in the Book of Mormon--mountains? swamps? lakes? jungles? deserts? volcanic crevices? And did these unmentioned features affect travel time and direction, and thus affect distance and directional relationships? External maps show us a more complete picture of geographical relationships, even though some features may not specifically be named in the text. With a real-world setting, our perspective becomes clearer and our bias easier to see.

C. *Figurative language:*
 In Helaman 3:8 we read:

> And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the **sea south** to the **sea north**, from the **sea west** to the **sea east**. (emphasis added)

This verse mentions four different seas. If it is to be taken literally, then the shape and extent of Book of Mormon lands would reflect four seas, and thus would be different from Clark's "hourglass" internal model, which has only an east sea and a west sea. Clark has this to say about Helaman 3:8: "Explaining away difficult passages as metaphors goes against one of my guiding assumptions for dealing with the text, but in this case I think it is well justified."[21] Clark then proceeds to make a scriptural argument for a metaphoric (and not a literal) interpretation. In the middle of this argument, Clark notes that "all specific references or allusions to Book of Mormon seas are only to the east and west seas. . . . Any geography that tries to accommodate a north and south sea, I think, is doomed to fail."[22]
     While I appreciate Clark's candor, his exception to his own rules has opened a "Pandora's Box" of problems with Internal Models. For example, in view of Clark's scriptural argument and his assertions, one might be led to believe that the existence of a "sea south" and a "sea north" would be illogical and close the door to further consideration. Furthermore, what is to stop others from "adjusting" the rules on their own Internal Models? The fact that a geographical feature (in this case a "sea north" or "sea south") appears metaphorical, or is specifically referred to once (or maybe not at all), does not negate its existence.[23]

> Additionally, at the end of his internal metaphorical analysis, Clark adds:

> The main point is that the reference to north and south seas fits nicely into the Mesoamerican scene as part of a metaphor for the whole earth and was probably used in a metaphorical sense in the Book of Mormon.[24]

     Without disagreeing (or agreeing) with Clark's assessment of a metaphor, or delving too deeply into his taking exception to his own rule to "assume a literal meaning" for all geographical passages, all I will say is that he has brought the external world into his internal argument. And from that external perspective, there is also a good amount of external evidence (Mesoamerica's surrounding seas) which might lead one to accept the opposite point of view, which is that the four seas referred to in Helaman 3:8 were literal.

     In view of the arguments concerning Assumption #1, I will propose that the "literal" meaning of the geographical verses in the Book of Mormon might not be as literal as we may presume.[25] Moreover, by not accommodating for "internal bias," a strictly internal map might become a liability. The internal map becomes a liability not because it is put together in a biased way, but because many times the bias cannot be recognized easily or substantiated sufficiently.[26] Once the geographical model is placed in a real world setting, even in a general way, the problems of linkage, oversimplification and metaphorical language can be better understood and evaluated.

     Thus I would make my Rule #1 to be: *While a literal meaning for geographical terms might generally be assumed, a linking of internal and necessary external logic should be incorporated in order to illuminate internal bias.*

     Clark's Assumption #2: *Assume no scribal errors unless internal evidence indicates otherwise.*

     I hope I am not misunderstanding Clark's intent here, but in my opinion this assumption seems

flawed by an unstated premise, which has two parts: first, that there indeed might be "scribal errors" that affect geographical analysis in the text of the Book of Mormon; and second, that one can bring them to light using only "internal evidence." In other words, while seeming to disavow "scribal errors," Clark opens the door for their existence if that existence can be substantiated by "internal evidence." The problem Clark leaves us with by this unstated premise is the matter of who is to judge when there is sufficient internal evidence to declare a "scribal error."

Careful research has shown that through the various printings and editings of the Book of Mormon, incidental changes in meaning might have entered into the text.[27] More pertinent to our discussion, however, is that over and above those incidental changes specifically identified through manuscript comparison, some verses related to geography seem out of place within the scheme of certain particular geographical models. Some of these have been cited as scribal errors because they don't agree with the author's own "internal evidence."[28] This begs the question, Should this be allowed? Upon consulting the Book of Mormon, we find that Moroni said of the record, "and **if** there be faults they be the faults of a man. But behold, **we know no fault** (Mormon 8:17, emphasis added). Thus we might assume that even though incidental errors might exist in the text, Mormon and Moroni didn't know of any "faults." Someone might reply, "That's just it. That's why it is a scribal error, because Mormon and Moroni didn't pick it up." Nevertheless, I must counter that reply with the statement that "barring prophetic revelation above the ability of Moroni and Mormon,[29] we have no adequate judge upon whom we can all place our confidence to certify such errors." Clark holds that "the Book of Mormon must be the final and most important arbiter in deciding the correctness of a given geography; otherwise we will be forever hostage to the shifting sands of expert opinion."[30] However, I would have to wonder how the Book of Mormon could be "the final and most important arbiter" if someone has a right to declare a "scribal error" every time some geographical or chronological phrase contradicts the supposed "internal evidence" on which they have built their geographical model. In my view, the ability to declare "scribal errors" in such a way could enable someone to create whatever internal geography and chronology he chooses.[31] In other words, what doesn't fit someone's logical model quickly becomes a "scribal error," and the tail begins to wag the dog.

So how is my solution different from what Clark proposes? I would prefer to establish multiple standards for evaluating geographical and chronological statements, both internal (geographical, chronological, cultural, and covenant related statements, etc.), and external (geographical, archaeological, cultural, and historical statements, etc.), and allow enough time that the controversial textual interpretations (supposed "scribal errors") could be elaborated on in a broader context by the one proposing such an interpretation. This approach would not only benefit the one proposing a model by keeping open any final judgment, but it would also help those of differing opinions by keeping the responsibility of positive explanation for the supposed "scribal error" squarely on the shoulders of the one proposing the particular geographical theory. I would much rather accept a statement by a geographical theorist that, in effect, says, "I can't totally explain this one verse, at this time, relative to my theory," than to have him unilaterally assign a supposed "fault" to Mormon or Moroni (or Joseph Smith) without their opportunity for rebuttal. This approach not only fosters more expanded research, but lessens the chance for one person's internal interpretation to unfairly dominate over that of another simply because, for whatever reason, he wields more power. Thus, my Rule #2 would be: *Assume no scribal errors other than the errors associated with the various printings and editings of the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, allow time for verses that seem to be in error to be better substantiated or explained in different terms by the one proposing such an interpretation.*

Clark's Assumption #3: *"Assume no duplication of place names unless the text is unambiguous on the matter."*

Despite the fact of the many place names in the Book of Mormon, neither Mormon nor Moroni ever specifically mentions any duplication of place names in the New World (for example, we don't find any phrases like "This city named Aaron located near the city of Nephihah is not the same city as the city

of Aaron near the city of Ammonihah"). Nonetheless, for the Book of Mormon geography student, it quickly becomes evident that there are some problems in duplication.[32] These problems are most often encountered in the descriptive parts of geographical place names, and can best be illustrated by citing a few examples.

A. *Common Descriptive Terms:*
There are numerous references to "the land of Nephi" and to "the land of Zarahemla," but what does the phrase "land of" mean? Should the phrase "land of" be interpreted to mean city land, or county land, or state land, or national land? And do the boundaries of these lands remain constant throughout the entire Book of Mormon? In simpler terms, imagine if there were a nation named Nephi, a state named Nephi within that nation, a county named Nephi within that state, and a city named Nephi within that county. If the text simply says, "He arrived in the land of Nephi," the reader must ask, In which land of Nephi, at what boundary, and during what chronological time period did he arrive? Thus, for each reference that contains the phrase "land of," the reader faces a "duplication" problem that must be addressed, but about which the text is not always clear or "unambiguous."[33]

B. *Directional Terms:*
Another difficult hurdle for the "no duplication" assumption involves directional phrases such as "the land northward" as opposed to "the land southward," or "the sea east" in possible substitution for "the east sea." Since capitalization of these terms was not part of the Original Manuscript, should we be forced to believe that there is only one "Land Northward" and one "Land Southward?" Moreover, do we have both an "East Sea" and a "Sea East?" Or do directional phrases such as "the land northward" or "the south wilderness," or "the sea east," or "the east sea" refer to places that are simply northward or southward or eastward or westward from the location of the writer or the location that he is writing about?[34] Here the text is also unclear.[35]

C. *Cultural Terms:*
Culturally derived place names such as "the land Bountiful" (see 1 Nephi 17:5; Alma 22:31) and "the land Desolation" (see Alma 16:11; Alma 22:30) are also affected by the "no duplication" assumption. Alma 8:7 reads, "Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands and their cities and their villages, Yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them." Strangely, there is no evidence of this Nephite practice in the names "Desolation" and "Bountiful." Does this present an internal dilemma? We are told that the Nephites named a land in the Old World "Bountiful" because of the "abundance of fruit and also wild honey" (1 Nephi 17:5). In the New World, the Nephites referred to a land as "Bountiful" because of the **abundance** of wild animals (Alma 22:3, emphasis added). Nephi also mentions that where they first landed in the promised land, the people of Lehi planted seeds and "they grew exceedingly; wherefore, we were blessed in **abundance**" (1 Nephi 18:24—emphasis mine).[36] So is Nephi implying that they referred to this place where they landed as "Bountiful"? The Nephites referred to another land as "Desolation" because the people of that land had been destroyed (Alma 22:30).[37] They also referred to one other place as the "Desolation of Nehors" because of the destruction of that people (Alma 16:11). How do we "literally" interpret these names? Perhaps in the case of some references to the land Bountiful or the land Desolation, these descriptive names imply that the lands Bountiful and Desolation were not officially possessed by a people in the usual sense. In other words, perhaps the regions extended over specific official "Nephite named" lands or boundaries (according to Nephite custom) rather than being specific official Nephite boundaried lands.[38] Once again the text is lacking in details.

D. *Consolidative Terms:*
Some multiple descriptive terms in the Book of Mormon may refer to the same geographical area. If such is the case, then this creates a "negative duplication" (or consolidation) problem. For example, in

our geographical studies we find the terms "small neck of land" (Alma 22:32), "narrow pass" (Alma 50:34, 52:9), "narrow neck" (Alma 63:5, Ether 10:20), and "narrow passage" (Mormon 2:29). Do these terms refer to the same geographical feature or location? That is, are the terms synonymous or different? Let us examine them:

(A) Small neck of land: "And now, it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward." (Alma 22:32)

(B) Narrow pass: "The narrow pass which led by the sea into the land northward, yea, by the sea, on the west and on the east" (Alma 30:34). "The narrow pass which led into the land northward" (Alma 52:9).

(C) Narrow neck: "The narrow neck which led into the land northward" (Alma 63:5).

(D) Narrow passage: "the narrow passage which led into the land southward" (Mormon 2:29).

The reader should note that three of the terms (B,C,D) might imply a geographical entity that leads between a land southward and a land northward, while the fourth (A) is described as being definitely located "between" a land northward and a land southward. Thus we might say: B = C = D or at least they are similar. We can also say that A is similar to B, which is similar to C, which is similar to D, or perhaps they might all be equal.

The reader should also note that the small neck of land (A) was bordered at least on one side and maybe two sides by seas. The narrow pass (B) also "led by the sea . . . on the west and on the east" which might imply that a sea (a west sea) bordered it on the west, and a sea (an east sea) bordered it on the east. Thus we might say: A is similar to B, or perhaps A = B.

Thus we have three equations: (1) A is similar to B, which is similar to C, which is similar to D, or perhaps they might all be equal; (2) B = C = D, or at least they are similar; and (3) A is similar to B, or perhaps A = B. Therefore, do we conclude A = B = C = D (and thus have only one small-narrow-pass-passage or neck?), or do we separate these four descriptive terms into two entities (a small-narrow neck of land and a narrow pass-passage?), or do we keep them as four separate entities (a small neck of land, a narrow neck, a narrow pass, and a narrow passage?), or do we try for all the possible combinations? If we do consolidate the terms, we might have a duplication problem in reverse. The text provides no clear-cut answer to the dilemma.

In summary, I think that the interpretations of all common descriptive terms, directional terms, culturally derived terms, and consolidative terms are better left open. Therefore, my Rule #3 would read: *Any duplication of proper place names and any duplication (or consolidation) of descriptive place names should be based on logical internal and external argument.*

Clark's Assumption #4: *Assume that all passages are internally consistent and can be reconciled.*

I will assume that the ability for all geographical passages to be "reconciled" implies that there is sufficient textual evidence to construct an adequate geographical model. Although we do not even really know if we have such textual evidence (let alone in the specific internal geographical verses themselves as Clark implies), I would think we should nevertheless strive to make the best attempt possible to construct such a model.

As for the remainder of Clark's Assumption #4 ("Assume that all passages are internally consistent"), as far as I am concerned, it runs into a problem because of his Assumption #2 ("Assume no scribal errors unless internal evidence indicates otherwise"). In other words, I have a problem with the idea that someone has the authority to declare a "scribal error." My reasoning here is that if all passages are "internally consistent," then how can there be scribal errors? And if we have to reconcile the passages by declaring a "scribal error," then how can all the passages be internally consistent?

Maybe I have misunderstood Clark's intent with this assumption, but I would combine this assumption with my Rule #2, and thus my rule would then read: *Assume that all geographical passages*

are internally consistent and can be reconciled. Assume no scribal errors other than the errors associated with the various printings and editings of the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, allow time for verses that seem to be in error to be better substantiated or explained in different terms.

Clark's Assumption #5: *Assume that uniformitarian rather than catastrophic principles apply to the actual Book of Mormon lands (i.e., that the locality where the Book of Mormon events took place was not unrecognizably altered at the time of the crucifixion, that geographic details in the small plates and in the book of Ether are therefore compatible with those in Mormon's and Moroni's abridgment, and that the principles of natural science that apply to today's environments are also pertinent to Nephite lands.*

I would like to approach this assumption of a uniformitarian view of Book of Mormon lands from at least two different perspectives: catastrophic changes and directional notations.

A. *Catastrophic Changes:*

Some people have supposed that the verses mentioning "a great and terrible destruction" (3 Nephi 8:11) mean that the entire configuration of the Book of Mormon lands was changed. However, Mormon, in abridging the records of the events that followed the destruction, gives some hints that the former geography had not drastically changed: Zarahemla was rebuilt (4 Nephi 1:8), and the people "did build many cities again which were burned (4 Nephi 1:7). The destructive forces, although great, were defined in terms we can understand: lightning, earthquake, whirlwind, thunder, tempest.[39] What about the "many cities which had been sunk (by water) that could not be renewed" (4 Nephi 1:9)? We find that Mormon made a very natural observation. In other words, although the destruction was widespread, it was only irreparable around coastlines or shorelines; and rightly so, for cities cannot easily be rebuilt upon water.

Without closing the door to alternative viewpoints, it would be the responsibility of any theorist to establish justification (internal and external) for the assumption that any substantial part of the American continent was inundated with water, covered over with mountains, or altered dramatically.[40]

B. *Directional Notations:*

Did the meaning of directional terms change from the beginning of the Book of Mormon story till the end? Put another way, were the directions given on the small plates of Nephi of the same standard as the directions given throughout the large plates of Nephi? And were they the same as those used in the abridgment of Mormon and Moroni (including the book of Ether)? Moreover, when Joseph Smith conveyed the message of the plates which Moroni gave to him, did he translate the directional terms to a system he was familiar with (cardinal directions), or did he just dictate the directional terms as Nephi, Mormon and Moroni envisioned them?

In attempting to find the answers to these questions, we may do well to approach them from multiple perspectives. These perspectives should help form the foundation for a standard of directions in the Book of Mormon: (1) consistency among the recordkeepers; (2) the range of variance in directional terms; (3) directional orientation from a point of reference; and (4) the translation process.

1. *Consistency Among the Recordkeepers:*

Whether the directional ideas in the Book of Mormon were expressed in the beginning of Nephite history according to "the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:2), or whether they were expressed in the end of Nephite history according to "Hebrew" or "reformed Egyptian" which had been "altered" (Mormon 9:32-33), if these directional ideas mentioned in our present Book of Mormon didn't become standardized when they went through the editing and compiling process of Mormon and Moroni; or more important, if they didn't become standardized when they came through the mind of Joseph Smith in the "translation" process, then trying to make sense out of the geographical terms in the Book of Mormon might become very frustrating, perhaps even hopeless.

The Book of Mormon is made up from original writings of many writers:

The Small Plates: Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Enos, etc.

The Large Plates: Lehi, Nephi . . . Benjamin, Zeniff, Mosiah$_2$, Alma$_2$, . . .

Mormon₂, Moroni₂
The Jaredite History: The Brother of Jared, Ether, etc.

More to the point, in our present Book of Mormon, we find directional notations directly attributed to the following:

Nephi (1 Nephi 16:13) – Small Plates;
Zeniff[41] (Mosiah 9:14; 10:8) – Large Plates;
Mormon (Alma 22:27-24) – Mormon's Abridgment; and
Moroni (Ether 1:1) – Moroni's Abridgment.

One might ask, Were these directions from the same standard? In other words, were the directions of every writer on the Small Plates the same as the directions of every writer on the Large Plates? And was the directional system established first by Nephi on the Large Plates (1 Nephi 19:1-5) and years later by Nephi on the Small Plates (2 Nephi 5:28-34) (both from a location on the American continent) according to the same directional standard as that of Mormon and Moroni in their abridgement?

In assessing this directional dilemma, we find that although Mormon used many different geographical and directional notations in trying to describe not only Nephite and Lamanite territories but the lands of Mulekite and Jaredite origins as well (see Alma 22:27-34 for an example), he apparently did not make any mention of having to change any system of directional standards relative to any recordkeeper on the Large Plates. Nor did he mention any directional system changes relative to the authors of the Small Plates when he wrote his editorial introduction to that record (see Words of Mormon). In the writings of Moroni we find that even though he tried to correlate some Jaredite locations with those of the Nephites (hill Shim -- hill Cumorah -- hill Ramah -- see Ether 9:3, 15:11), he failed to mention specifically any major differences in directional reference systems.

Thus we have reason to believe that the directional references in the Book of Mormon are not only consistent but standardized. On the other hand, if we choose not to accept this reasoning for the standardization of directions, we are left with one or more of the alternative conclusions that

(a) Consistent directional terms were apparently not factors in keeping the records for some or all of the original Book of Mormon record keepers; and/or

(b) Mormon and Moroni, in their understanding and responsibility as abridgers and compilers to describe and transpose directional notations through the different chronological and cultural time frames of the Book of Mormon, did not choose to convey a consistent directional system; and/or

(c) Joseph Smith did not convey a consistent directional system from the writings on the plates.

2. *Range of Variance in Directional Terms*:

According to John Sorenson, "Directions and how they are referred to are cultural products, not givens in nature."[42] However, in the Book of Mormon, we are not dealing with all the cultural variations by which people orient themselves or have oriented themselves throughout history, we are only dealing first with the directional notations on the set of plates which Moroni delivered to Joseph Smith; and second, with how those directions came forth from the mind of Joseph Smith in the "translation" process.

By the use of such a term as "south-southeast" (1 Nephi 16:13), the directional system of the Book of Mormon (or at least the Small Plates) becomes divided into a minimum of eight parts with the ability to mark between them (producing roughly sixteen parts).[43] This 16-part division of direction tends to limit the range of variance in defining such specific words as "north," south," and "east."

Directional terms on the Large Plates, however, appear not to follow this specific compass-like sectioning; here we find the terms "northward," "southward," and "eastward." (The term "westward" is never mentioned, which may prove to be significant.) Thus one might wonder if these terms should also be taken in a compass-like manner,[44] or be viewed as generalized directional terms? In other words, should the term "northward" be taken to mean a direction broadly and generally north of a reference

point, or should the term "northward" be taken as a specific substitute for an intercardinal term? (For example, "northward" equals northwest, "eastward" equals northeast, "southward" equals southeast.)[45]

Because questions such as these about the meaning of different directional terms are not readily answered with certainty from a purely internal perspective, the Book of Mormon student should keep an open mind to what might be proposed. Nonetheless, it may be wise to maintain a high standard of external correlation requirements for any proposed interpretation of directional terms.

3. *Directional Orientation from a Point of Reference*:

In order to make the directions of an internal map of any value at all in the real world setting, one must be able to orient the internal directional standard with an external point of reference. In the Old World, Lehi's "valley of Lemuel" was near the northern tip of "the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 2:4-14). The Red Sea is a definite external location mentioned in the Book of Mormon to which we can correlate. If Lehi traveled "south-southeast" in "nearly the same course as in the beginning" from the valley of Lemuel until he reached "Nahom" (1 Nephi 16:33-34), then the direction of "south-southeast" can be correlated with the Red Sea. It is worth noting that the coast of the Red Sea is aligned in a south-southeast direction. It is also no small thing that the ancient Frankincense trail went in the same direction.[46] After reaching Nahom, Lehi traveled "nearly eastward" (1 Nephi 17:1), eventually reaching the land which the group called "Bountiful" by the sea, which they named "Irreantum" (1 Nephi 17:5). Thus, if the position of Nahom could be confirmed,[47] then by having the beginning point, middle point, and the ending point of Lehi's "course" of travel ("south-southeast" then "nearly eastward"[48]), a definite directional orientation and comparison could be made relative to our modern-day system of cardinal directions. If our directional assumptions prove adequate, the land Bountiful might also be found,[49] which might further verify our assumptions.

In the New World (the Americas), unfortunately, we do not know of any verified point of reference. None is specifically mentioned in the Book of Mormon text. Because of this, and other internal factors,[50] we have a problem in trying to establish an acceptable directional orientation standard that might span the whole Book of Mormon story.

4. *The Translation Process:*

We do not know the details of how the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith gave few first-hand descriptions of the process. The following is taken from page 71 of Volume 1, *History of the Church*, concerning the Title Page or Preface:

> I wish to mention here that the title page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the last leaf on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general; and that said title page is not by any means a modern composition, either of mine or any other men who has lived or does live in this generation.
>
> Joseph Smith, Jun.

Thus one is left to his own assertions as to what a "literal translation" might mean, or whether the statement that the language ran "the same as all Hebrew writing in general" implies Hebrew cultural paradigms related to geography, or whether the statement that the title page "is not by any means a modern composition" implies that the directional system is also ancient. In other words, without revelation on the matter, we cannot answer as to whether in a "literal translation" the directional terms (north, south, east, west) represent the directional system of Mormon and Moroni, or whether the directional terms represent those of the Hebrews, or whether the directional terms are those of Joseph Smith, or whether the directional terms represent all or some of the above.

In summary, taking into consideration the consistency of the record keepers, the range of variance of directional terms, directional orientation from a point of reference, and the translation process, my Rule #4 would be: *Although the standardization of lands and directions over time in the Book of Mormon story cannot be absolutely or completely documented from internal references, it is still the responsibility of*

any theorist to establish justification (both internal and external) for catastrophic changes or altered directional notations relative to Book of Mormon lands.

Clark's Assumption #6: *"The best internal reconstruction is one which reconciles all of the data in the Book of Mormon with a minimum of additional assumptions."*

After many years of study and research, I have come to believe that all Book of Mormon geography students are guilty of using additional assumptions, whether internal or external, as we attempt to fit together a model, for it is difficult or nearly impossible to finalize a model without them. Yet sometimes we become so absorbed in the absolute logic of our own additional assumptions that we fail to recognize the magnitude of their impact on our model. I would like to ask the question, Is it the number of additional assumptions that decides who has the better model, or is it the impact those additional assumptions might have on the final outcome? And who is to judge?

Perhaps the judge is the real world. The first additional assumption the Book of Mormon student is asked to accept is that this book is about real people who made covenants with a real God. What goes without saying is that these people also lived in real cities, spoke and wrote real languages, had real customs, fought real wars, and kept real records. In essence, the Book of Mormon is about people who lived in a real world that was located somewhere on the American continent between a time period which started approximately two to three thousand years before Christ and ended approximately four hundred years after Christ. The problem of Clark's map, or any internal map, comes when the map is all finished, with the least number of additional assumptions (the principle of Occam's razor), and yet according to the same principle (of Occam's razor), doesn't fit on the external map.[51] More additional assumptions then have to be made in order to give the internal map any relevance.[52] No allowance has been made for this in Clark's Assumption #6, obviously because what I have discussed are external additional assumptions. What should be apparent, however, is that accommodating relatively few internal assumptions to fit an external setting could lead to enormous consequences on the viability of a Book of Mormon geographical model. For example, by making one simple rotation an internal map in order to fit it into an external setting, every verse that contains a directional reference has to be re-evaluated. Therefore, I propose that it is not the number of assumptions one brings to his geographical model, but the magnitude of changes that result from those assumptions.[53]

Thus, my Rule #5 would be: *Additional assumptions about Book of Mormon geography, both internal and external, should not only be carefully detailed, but their combined impact should be weighed carefully against both the real world and the message of the Book of Mormon.*

Additional Suggestions:

I realize that Clark's intention was to keep things simple; however, I feel that some areas beyond his six assumptions still need some attention in order to establish the proper foundation for constructing and communicating a Book of Mormon geographical model. The following are suggestions which I would add to my rules:

Suggestion #1: *Make your bias explicit in the manner of interpreting textual punctuation, capitalization, pronoun and adjective antecedents, and parallelistic patterns of writing.*

A. *Textual Punctuation, Capitalization, and Pronoun and Adjective Antecedents:*
Although it was Oliver Cowdery's duty to make a copy of the original manuscript (printer's manuscript) and to oversee the printing process, at least some of the capitalization and much of the punctuation were apparently done by the printer.[54] The Book of Mormon also contains geographical verses with many pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs whose antecedents are difficult to ascertain. Therefore, it is up to any theorist to fully explain each phrase of scripture that refers to geography in detail. Let me give just two examples of this interpretation dilemma:

(Example #1)   . . . and **it** bordered upon the land which **they** called *desolation* **it** being so far northward that **it** came into the land which had been peopled and been destroyed of whose bones we have spoken **which** was discovered by the *people of Zarahemla* **it** being the place of **their** *first landing* and **they** came from **there** *up* into the *south wilderness*. (Alma 22:30-31, emphasis added)

In order to interpret what this scripture is saying, not only does some form of punctuation or structure need to be established, but the words "which," "their," "they," "it," and "there" must be linked with the proper noun. One must also decide whether to capitalize "desolation" and "south wilderness." One must also define "people of Zarahemla," "first landing," "up," and "wilderness." These steps are critical to interpretation and any theorist should write out his scriptural interpretation in this respect before he attempts to comment on, or illustrate his theory. For example, the above scripture (Alma 22:30-31) could read similar to the following:

. . . and **it** [the land of Bountiful] bordered upon the land which **they** [the Nephites] called *[D]esolation* **it** [the land of Bountiful] being [or extending] so far *northward* [from the local land of Zarahemla] that **it** [the land Bountiful] came into the land which had been peopled and been destroyed [or the land of Desolation], of whose bones we have spoken [i.e. the Jaredite civilization---see Mosiah 8:7-8; 21:25-26] **which** [land of Desolation] was discovered by the people of Zarahemla [originally led by Mulek] **it** [the land of Desolation] being the place of **their** [the Mulekites] first landing and **they** [ultimately the people of Zarahemla who were descendants of the Mulekites] came from **there** [the first landing and by inference a subsequent landing] *up* [or higher in elevation] into the *south wilderness* [which, by inference would be south of a subsequent landing and up in elevation from the seashore into a higher hilly or mountainous wilderness location].

(Example #2)   Consider the following list of similar phrases:
        "from the sea east even to the sea west" (Alma 22:27)
        "from the east to the west sea" (Alma 22:32)
        "from the east sea to the west" (Alma 50:8)
        "by the sea on the west and on the east" (Alma 50:34)
        "from the sea west to the sea east" (Helaman 3:8)
        "from the west sea even unto the east" (Helaman 4:7)
        "from the sea west to the sea east" (Helaman 11:20)

Whatever a theorist might assume about the meaning of these similar phrases relative to an east sea and a west sea, the reality is that one cannot even say with certainty that all the phrases relate to **both** a west sea and an east sea. Thus, a theorist must be explicit in his bias. If he needs to insert words in brackets, he should do so.

In summary, confusion can result when some geographical theorists assume as correct what past writers have given us in the way of punctuation, capitalization, or pronoun and adjective interpretation, and when some theorists don't follow these assumptions. We should be explicit in these matters.

B. *Parallelistic Patterns of Writing:*
For most of a decade, I have worked to demonstrate that the Book of Mormon text is full of ancient parallelistic patterns.[55] The question every Book of Mormon geography student has to ponder is first, whether any of the geographical phrases in the text are included in a parallelistic pattern; and second, whether the parallelistic sequence affects the interpretation of the geographical phrase. Bias in interpretation along parallelistic lines should be made explicit.[56]

Suggestion #2: *Illustrate profusely, yet make illustrations free from overzealous attempts to shape an argument through convenient omissions, distortions, or additions to what, within an "artist's privilege," rightfully should be pictured. The ultimate goal should be to chronologically illustrate every geographical passage in the Book of Mormon narrative.*

According to Clate Mask, there are over 206 different movements in the Book of Mormon that require illustration.[57] In my *Step-by-Step* study I have a list of at least 183 different sequences that need illustration. If "a picture is worth a thousand words," then any discussion of a geographical model should be loaded with sufficient pictures such that each reference to geographical movement or location is illustrated precisely. That is, we should know by the illustration just what is meant by every word in each geographical verse. The ultimate goal of any Book of Mormon Theory should be to enable the Book of Mormon reader to understand the geographical verses in the narrative. Since most all readers begin at the front of the book, the Book of Mormon story should ultimately be illustrated chronologically from beginning to end.

As much as possible, distance should be correlated with a scale, for what seems like a small slip of a pen as viewed on a piece of paper can lead to a distance or geographical scenario that might be implausible. Additionally, illustrations should be related to a background map of the real world so that external factors might be considered, at least in a general way. An illustration not only facilitates understanding, but it also highlights bias. It is sad to say that in the current state of affairs in the study of Book of Mormon geography, not only has no theorist illustrated his opinions fully, but few have even produced more than one dot-and-line map. This has left many a Book of Mormon geography student unable to fully analyze the most critical questions regarding a particular theory.

Suggestion #3: Help put travel in geographical perspective by defining indirect and direct chronological terms, constant or inconsistent direction of travel, speed of travel, and terrain conditions. Correlate these factors with general external factors if possible.

A. *Indirect and Direct Chronological Terms:*
There is a very big difference between the assumption that a group of 100,000 people could move from South America to New York and back again in one year, and the assumption that the same group could move that distance in twenty years. In analyzing historical events and travels, distance and location are a function of time. To take any travels out of their proper time sequence or to not relate the amount of time involved negates or diminishes any argument of distance or location. Any movement relating to Book of Mormon geography should always be accompanied by an explanation of the time frame for that movement (chronology).

Over 150 phrases in the Book of Mormon refer indirectly or directly to the chronology of the story (for example: "it was in the sixteenth year" (Alma 30:4), and "thus ended the eighteenth year" (Alma 44:24).[58] Interpretation of these chronological phrases is necessary in order to evaluate travel and distance.[59] So one might ask, Who makes the final judgment on what certain chronological phrases really imply? I propose that it is up to each theorist to make his bias clear.

One final point is also to be made. Why should we think that one internal map of the Book of Mormon, which covered at least 1000-3500 years, should be sufficient to illustrate all the geographical relationships that came and went during that time period? Although it is a very satisfying thing to find references to apparently the same geographical terms in various parts of the Book of Mormon, and then assemble them for analysis, geographical relationships might have changed over time Thus, complete chronological charting is essential for communicating geographical relationships and making bias clear.

B. Constant or Inconsistent Direction of Travel:
While the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, and at times in the Book of Mormon text we are given the "days" it took to get from one point to another; without exact textual

verification one cannot say for sure just what part of those "days" were spent in traveling in a straight line, let alone the specific direction. These assumptions regarding consistent direction of travel can only be made clear when all the factors affecting travel are known. Internal maps lack much of this supportive evidence, such as terrain conditions, for example. Thus it is very helpful for a theorist not only to make his bias clear, but to give his model at least a general external background.

C. Speed of Travel:

Although it is clearly apparent that different individual people and different groups travel at different rates for different reasons, one cannot assume a standard of travel speeds suitable for judging all models until such a standard is backed up with sufficient internal and external evidence. Until that time, one should not only make his bias clear, but be very wary of judging other models by the conclusions he has drawn using his own assumptions of travel speed for individuals and groups.

D. Terrain Conditions:

Distance and location are not only a function of travel time, but also a function of terrain conditions. There is a very big difference between the time it takes people to travel through vast swampland, heavy jungle or rugged mountains, and the time it takes people to travel across uninterrupted, dry flatland. Additionally, good weather is much more conducive to travel speed than bad weather. Internal descriptions of terrain conditions in the Book of Mormon are very general and very limited. Thus, the closer one gets to locating the Book of Mormon map some place on the American continent, in some specific terrain, the easier it becomes to define direction and speed of travel and thus determine distance and location.

Suggestion #4 *Authoritative LDS statements related to Book of Mormon geography and culture should be viewed as helpful insights in formulating perspectives to any projected model. Nevertheless, they should not be taken as proof.*

One of the well-intentioned, but extremely frustrating methods of establishing Book of Mormon geographical relationships (i. e., the location of lands, cities, etc.) is the use of authoritative LDS statements. The question then arises as to what statements supersede others. Does Joseph Smith take precedence over Brigham Young? Does Joseph Smith take precedence over later LDS prophets? Does an Apostle take precedence over a Seventy? Before I elaborate on the gamut of these statements, let me repeat some of the words of John Sorenson. He first notes that one major factor in addressing Book of Mormon geography is the text of the Book of Mormon itself.

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith put the principle well for Latter-day Saints: "The teachings of any . . . member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them (note 105) Whatever the Book of Mormon says about its own geography thus takes precedence over anything commentators have said of it.

In other words according to this reasoning, the words of Nephi, Jacob and the rest of those who recorded on the Small Plates of Nephi, and Mormon and Moroni, who abridged the Large Plates of Nephi and the Book of Ether, should take precedence over those of anybody else. Furthermore, these ideas passed through the mind of Joseph Smith, who in translating the plates put his interpretive stamp on the geographic language. Thus the revelation of the Book of Mormon speaks for itself. John Sorenson continues:

Overall, over 550 verses in the Book of Mormon contain information of geographical significance. Some fifteen lands are named therein, and their positions are noted, connoted, or implied. The positions of forty-seven cities are more or less characterized (thirteen of these forty-seven are mentioned only once, and that limited data fails to provide enough information to relate

the thirteen to the locations of other cities or lands). Mormon never hints that he did not understand the geography behind the records of his ancestors that he was abridging; rather, his writing exudes an air of confidence. According to his account (see the book of Mormon), he personally traveled through much of the Nephite lands. In fact, he was a military leader and strategist who was accustomed to paying close attention to the lay of the land, and he may also have had actual maps to which he could refer. [John L. Sorenson, Mormon's Map, FARMS, pp. 9-11]

So what do we do with all the modern-day authoritative statements on Book of Mormon geography? From extensive study and experience, I would have to consider them all as no more than studied insights into geographical reasoning. While they might be helpful to my own reasoning at times, I would be extremely hesitant to put them forth as geographical proof. Let me explain. As I have tried to evaluate such authoritative statements over the years, I have found them difficult to assess for a variety of reasons. For example: (1) the complete text of the quote was not always printed; (2) the source was not always adequately cited; (3) even if the source was cited, the source was not always available; (4) the circumstances under which the statement was made were not sufficiently known; (5) it was difficult to know if the authority quoted might have added to or changed his perspective over time. Not all authoritative commentary was written down; and (6) it was difficult to know all the other contemporary scholarly or authoritative thought on the subject that might have influenced the authority to say what he did. As I write, I can say that there has been much work done (including my own) in the last number of years to assemble a comprehensive chronological collection of all authoritative statements (both LDS and non-LDS), all books and articles, all events, and all illustrated models that have both shaped, and been shaped by, the various perspectives of thought on Book of Mormon geography from the beginnings of the Restoration up to the present.[60] Nevertheless, for the above reasons I have cited, I have to consider modern-day authoritative statements as only possible helpful insights into Book of Mormon geography rather than proof.

Conclusions:
I hope I have illuminated some circumstances pertaining to the methods of geographical analysis that might allow the Book of Mormon student a broader, more understandable base on which to not only build his or her geographic model, but more importantly to communicate those ideas. In summary, I would recommend the following:

I would initially approach the task by incorporating changes to Hamblin's initial methodological guidelines:

Methodological Guideline #1: *Initially, one should begin to identify, and continue to identify and categorize all passages that deal with geography in the text; that is, all geographical passages (toponyms and descriptive terms), all cultural passages, all chronological passages, and any other passages that help give definition to Book of Mormon geography should be identified.*

Methodological Guideline #2: *Relationships between geographical terms should be analyzed in various ways—directional orientation, distance between entities, spatial relationships with other geographical features, etc. Influences from four broad cultural time periods (early Nephite, late Nephite, early 1800s, and modern-day) should be evaluated in reference to the meaning of geographical names and descriptions, directional orientation, travel times, spatial relationships, etc. One should look for consistency, but allow for cultural influences that might lead to a change in relationships.*

Next, in analyzing and constructing a Book of Mormon geography model, I would propose the

following modifications to Clark's assumptions:

Rule #1: *While a literal meaning for geographical terms might be generally assumed, a linking of internal and necessary external logic should be incorporated in order to illuminate internal bias.*

Rule #2: *Assume that all geographical passages are internally consistent and can be reconciled. Assume no scribal errors other than the errors associated with the various printings and editings of the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, allow time for verses that seem to be inconsistent or incongruous with a proposed model to be better substantiated or explained in different terms by the one proposing such an interpretation.*

Rule #3: *Any duplication of proper place names and any duplication (or consolidation) of descriptive place names should be based on logical internal and external argument.*

Rule #4: *Although the standardization of lands and directions over time in the Book of Mormon story cannot be absolutely or completely documented from internal references, it is still the responsibility of any theorist to establish justification (both internal and external) for catastrophic changes or altered directional notations relative to Book of Mormon lands.*

Rule #5: *Additional assumptions about Book of Mormon geography, both internal and external, should not only be carefully detailed, but their combined impact should be weighed carefully against both the real world and the message of the Book of Mormon.*

Finally I would make the following additional suggestions:

Suggestion #1: *Make your bias explicit in the manner of interpreting textual punctuation, capitalization, pronoun and adjective antecedents, and parallelistic patterns of writing.*
Suggestion #2: *Illustrate profusely, yet make illustrations free from overzealous attempts to shape an argument through convenient omissions, distortions, or additions to what, within an "artist's privilege," rightfully should be pictured. The ultimate goal should be to chronologically illustrate every geographical passage in the Book of Mormon narrative.*

Suggestion #3: *Help put travel in geographical perspective by defining indirect and direct chronological terms, constant or inconsistent direction of travel, travel speed, and terrain conditions. Correlate these factors with general external factors if possible.*

Suggestion #4 *Authoritative modern-day LDS statements related to Book of Mormon geography and culture should be viewed only as part of the reasoning in formulating perspectives to any projected model. They should not be taken as proof.*

In conclusion, I believe that with the above guidelines, rules and suggestions, I have provided an acceptable standard for interpreting and communicating Book of Mormon geography for everyone involved in the process.

I also would like to say that although the present controversy over Book of Mormon geography lets us know that our knowledge of Book of Mormon geography is incomplete, it should also make us aware that our understanding of the whole message of the Book of Mormon is incomplete. If geography is a means to help understand that message, perhaps geography will only be understood as an overall comprehension of that message moves forward also, and so the challenge is before us.

NOTES

1. Nearly 2600 years ago, the prophet Nephi quoted the prophecies of Isaiah to his brothers. Afterward, they asked him an intriguing question: "What meaneth these things which ye have read? Behold, are they to be understood according to things which are spiritual, which shall come to pass according to the spirit and not the flesh? (1 Nephi 22:1).

Nephi answered: "Wherefore, the things of which I have read are things pertaining to things both temporal and spiritual." (1 Nephi 22:3).

I would like to think that the verses in the Book of Mormon, including the geographical verses, could be viewed in the same manner as Nephi viewed the verses in Isaiah. At the very least we should be able to accept the testimony of all the Nephite prophets that what they recorded was "true" (see 1 Nephi 1:3, 22:30; Mosiah 1:6; Alma 3:12; 3 Nephi 5:9, 5:18, 8:1, 18:37; Ether 5:3; Moroni 7:35, 10:4, 10:29).

2. See George Q. Cannon, Editorial, *Juvenile Instructor*, Jan. 1, 1890. Reprinted in *The Instructor* 73,4 (April), pp. 159-160. See also George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 1, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, p. x-xi.

3. See 3 Nephi 26:12.

4. For possible scriptural support, see 2 Nephi 11:4; D&C 52:14; Moses 6:63.

5. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency of the Church, has recently clarified the Church's position on Book of Mormon geography:

> The Church emphasizes the doctrinal and historical value of the Book of Mormon, not its geography. While some Latter-day Saints have looked for possible locations and explanations [for Book of Mormon geography] because the New York Hill Cumorah does not readily fit the Book of Mormon description of Cumorah, there are no conclusive connections between the Book of Mormon text and any specific site. (Correspondence from Michael Watson, Office of the First Presidency, 23 April 1993)

Taken from William J. Hamblin, "Basic Methodological Problems with the Anti-Mormon Approach to the Geography and Archaeology of the Book of Mormon," in Stephen D. Ricks ed. *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 2/1, Spring 1993, p. 181.

6. For a collection of many different proposed Book of Mormon geographical maps, and some brief comments on each, see John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, F.A.R.M.S., 1992, p. 37-206.

7. John Sorenson writes:

> 1. The "promised land" occupied by the Nephites was characterized for many centuries as an area of "civilization." . . .

2. The population of Book of Mormon lands over much of the period of its history totaled from hundreds of thousands up to millions. . . .

3. Many "cities" and even "great cities" are reported by the Nephite record between 1500 BC and AD 400. . . .

4. Intensive agriculture is indicated as the economic means of support, according to the record. . . .

5. Multiple kinds of grains were cultivated by the Nephites as their subsistence mainstay. . . .

6. "Flocks" and "herds" were raised at times by the Nephites and Jaredites. [This implies] a degree of animal husbandry. . . .

7. Many major public buildings, many of them of a religious nature, are referred to in the scripture as characteristic of their settlements. . . .

8. Major wars were fought among Book of Mormon peoples for well over 1,000 years; they involved over hundreds of thousands of combatants. . . .

9. Swords and "cimeters" (scimitars) are particularly referred to as weapons in the Book of Mormon period. . . .

10. Armor and shields also were in common use according to the record. . . .

11. Large-scale fortifications (of particular types) are described as being used by Book of Mormon peoples . . .

12. Roads and highways were described by the Nephite record as being built near the time of Christ. . . .

13. "Towers," obviously tall, bulky structures of earth or stone, were features in some Book of Mormon cities. . . .

14. People of Book of Mormon areas were frequently literate, in fact several scripts are reported. . . .

15. At least the Nephites are said to have possessed "many" books covering many subjects. . . .

16. The Nephites followed several different calendar systems. . . .

17. According to the Nephite record several kinds of metals were worked [metallurgy] in the original settlement areas (land of Nephi and Jaredite areas). . . .

19. There is no mention nor even hint of cold, snow or ice in the Book of Mormon account of its peoples. . . .

20. It is obvious from the description of the great catastrophe at the crucifixion of the Savior that volcanism must be involved as a natural cause (of at least the "darkness"). . . .

21.   The river Sidon is a major drainage feature that runs hundreds of miles from south to north from the highlands of the land of Nephi through the "narrow strip of wilderness" past Manti and Zarahemla to the sea. . . .

22. The battle of Alma's Nephite army on the riverbank (Alma 2) has them wade across the river Sidon to battle a combined Lamanite/Amlicite force. . . .

23. From the borders of the (immediate) land of Nephi to Zarahemla via the waters of Mormon, land of Helam and valley of Alma, it took Alma's party about 21 days. No plausible rate of travel can make that distance more than 250 miles. . . .

24. The land of Zarahemla is said to be "nearly surrounded by water" (i.e., seas). . . .

25. The land northward supported a population of millions (Ether 15:2) in late Jaredite times.

29. The kingdom dominated by the Lamanite king (Alma 22:27) ["bordered even to the sea, on the east and on the west, and which was divided from the land of Zarahemla by a narrow strip of wilderness, which ran from the sea east even to the sea west" (Alma 22:27)] . . .

31. Had New York's hill [Cumorah] been the site of the final battle, the 230,000 Nephite dead (not to mention a large number of Lamanite dead--up to half a million total corpses) would have left behind over half a million weapons. Remains on any such scale would have become obvious long since to archaeologists. . . .

36. The Nephites gathered all their people (nearly a quarter of a million of them) to the land of Cumorah (Mormon 6:3-4) for their final battle. [One] must wonder how they survived in their tents and what so many people might have eaten . . .

(John L. Sorenson, "A Whole Bunch of Reasons Why Book of Mormon Geography Could Not Have Included North America," Book of Mormon Archaeological Forum, www.bmaf.org/node/243)

To these cultural comments, I would add the following:

#1. *The scope of Book of Mormon lands.* Around 61 percent of the whole Book of Mormon story takes place in and around either Nephi and Zarahemla. That means that 61 percent of the Book of Mormon (about 600 years of history) probably took place within a 200 to 400-mile radius. All the necessary population centers, cultures, written languages, bodies of water, wilderness areas, and

strategic landmarks such as the narrow neck of land had to be circumscribed within or close to that 400-mile radius.

#2. Various ancient cultures. The Jaredite culture would have lived from about 2500 to 300 B.C. The Lamanite, Nephite, and Mulekite cultures would have flourished between 600 B.C. and A.D. 400. The Mulekite culture would have been associated first with the Jaredite culture, and then with the Nephite culture. The Lamanite culture would have continued after A.D. 400. The location of Book of Mormon lands would, of necessity, need to have ancient cultures that correlate with this chronology.

#3. To some extent, the Book of Mormon people would have left behind culturally advanced archaeological sites.

#4. The Book of Mormon scriptures make reference to "a small neck of land" (Alma 22:32), a narrow neck of land" (Alma 63:5; Ether 10;20, "a narrow pass" (Alma 50;34; 4 Nephi 3:5), and "a narrow passage" (4 Nephi 2:29) in passages that infer an importance to an area that connected the land northward and the land southward. This area was mentioned from Jaredite times to Mormon's time, which implies that for thousands of years, this geographical area was strategically important for travel, militarily important for defense, and culturally important for commerce.

8. John Clark, "A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies," in *Review of Books on The Book of Mormon*, Vol. 1, 1989, F.A.R.M.S., p. 20-70.

9. John Clark, "A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies," in *Review of Books on The Book of Mormon*, Vol. 1, 1989, F.A.R.M.S., p. 20.

10. Ibid., p. 21.

In a seemingly paradoxical manner in view of his books, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (1985), *Images of Ancient America* (1997), and *his article*, "Seasonality of Warfare in the Book of Mormon and in Mesoamerica" in *Nephite Culture and Society* (1997), John Sorenson seems even more forceful relative to the complete priority and exclusivity of an internal model:

> 160 years of ad hoc modeling or interpretation of the geography of Book of Mormon events have failed to settle much about the question of where the lands in which Book of Mormon events took place. . . . The following steps [in order to solve the Book of Mormon geographical picture] are necessary, and no other set of steps nor any other order for accomplishing them can solve our problem:
>
> 1. Purge our minds as far as possible of preconceptions about where the Book of Mormon lands were.
>
> 2. Analyze as freshly and completely as possible every geographical fact and sound inference which the texts require or make likely.

3. Realizing that in fact we cannot completely rid ourselves of preconceptions or make inferences without some factual or logical errors, we should guard against hidden biases or errors by displaying for examination by other students as much of our mental processing as we are able. This requires writing out our work in detail; only written communication permits the careful examination by others that such work demands.

4. Mutual criticism (again ideally in writing) is essential to reveal points where different students can agree or where they need to improve their thinking or information. This criticism need not be uncharitable, although truth must be the ultimate standard.

5. By this repetitive process all should move toward consensus. However, the end result may be a conclusion that the text does not provide enough information, as read at this time, to come to full consensus on a single-text based model. That can only be learned by trying.

6. So far as a single model emerges from this effort, then one-half--the prerequisite half--of the equation has been prepared. **Only after this has happened can a definitive search for external correlations be carried out. Until then anything said about external geography, archaeology, linguistics or the like for any location in America can only be prejudicial to the suspension of opinion that we ought to maintain**. (emphasis added)

(John Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, FARMS, 1992, p. 209-211.)

11. Ibid., p. 21.

12. In reviewing John Sorenson's 2000 book, *Mormon's Map* [Provo: FARMS], which dealt with the construction of Book of Mormon geography from an internal perspective, Randall Spackman had this to say:

Before reading *Mormon's Map*, I had been aware of the proposed internal or textual examinations of Book of Mormon geography primarily through Sorenson's [1992] *Geography of Book of Mormon Events;* I therefore turned to part 4 ["The Text Verse by Verse: Geographical Relationships, Extents and Characteristics, with Commentary"] of his 1992 study and counted the textual references: 725 verses. At this point, I questioned to what extent the verses identified by Sorenson matched those of Clark [1989]. I wondered whether Sorenson's 1992 study and *Mormon's Map* referred to essentially the same textual passages.

While Sorenson and Clark both started with Alma 22, they went on to examine quite different sets of verses. Of Clark's 318 verses, 85 did not show up in Sorenson's *Geography of Book of Mormon Events* and 140 verses were not cited in *Mormon's Map.* Of the 725 verses cited in *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 233 were listed in Clark's paper and 492 were "new" verses listed in *Geography of Book of Mormon Events.* That is, of the 637 verses cited in *Mormon's Map,* neither Clark nor Sorenson had identified 258 verses earlier as being relevant to Book of Mormon geography. Furthermore, of the 492 "new" verses listed in *Geography of Book of Mormon Events,* fully 291 did not receive any mention

in *Mormon's Map.* (Randall Spackman, "Interpreting Book of Mormon Geography," FARMS Review of Books, Vol. 15, Issue 1[2003], p. 27-28.)

13. For an example of Clark's ignoring a point, we can turn to Alma 50:8, which says: "And the land of Nephi did run in a straight course from the east sea to the west." One might interpret the word "west" in this verse in two ways: (1) as a directional term; or (2) as an antecedent referring to the west sea-- "from the east sea to the west [sea]." Clark fails to mention this geographical verse at any point in his entire article (it is conspicuously absent on page 31). On the other hand, he presents the reader with an illustration on page 60 entitled, "Nephite Lands and Defense System" which directly relates to this verse. However, if this illustration is Clark's answer to Alma 50:8, then it is either wrong on both counts or, at the least, worthy of an explanation.

First, the "defense line" (apparently representing a boundary line between the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi) is not drawn toward the direction of "west." Clark has this to say about directional terms:

> I do not pretend to know how Nephite "north" relates to the north of today's compass, and such information is irrelevant for my present purpose of reconstructing an internal geography. I do assume, however, that regardless of what any "real" orientation may have been, **Nephite north was 180 degrees from Nephite south, and both were 90 degrees off of east and west.** The directional suffix "-ward" is here loosely interpreted to mean "in the general direction of."

The reader will note that in Alma 50:8, the term is "west" and not "westward."

Second, if the line represents the boundary "from the east sea to the west [sea] it is not "straight."

Thus, Clark chooses to ignore the problem of Alma 50:8 while forging ahead with an illustration on page 60 that lacks complete internal scriptural substantiation. Moreover, Clark gives no illustrative internal explanation as to what kind of natural boundary (a mountain, a river, a wilderness, etc.) that might afford to be classified a "straight" line, or to be a naturally defended.

14. For an example of minimizing a point, the reader will note that while Clark deals with directions for evaluating "Nephite geographies" (only pertaining to the New World), he does not deal with directions in the Old World, which were part of the geographical details noted by Nephi in the Small Plates, and included by Mormon with his abridgment. The details on directions in the Old World tend to correlate the term "south-southeast" (1 Nephi 16:13) with the ancient incense trade routes paralleling the shores of the Red Sea, which ran in a true cardinal south-southeast direction. Although, in and of themselves, the references on the Small Plates do not definitely prove that true cardinal directions were used in the New World, by not discussing them, Clark minimizes their impact on his argument for directions in the New World. (For a more thorough discussion on the subject, the reader is referred to the section "Directional Notations" found in this paper under Assumption #5 -- see pages 6-8).

15. For an example of authoritatively over-riding a point we turn next to Clark's treatment of distance (more specifically the distance across his isthmus-defined narrow neck of land). Having minimized the internal reasoning on directions (or the lack of true cardinal directions), by his own admission Clark opens the door to a correlation of his ideas with John Sorenson's internal model (see "A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geography," p. 69). However, while Sorenson correlates his internal narrow neck of land with the external Isthmus of Tehuantepec (see Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 1985), Clark has this to say:

> The Book of Mormon apparently specifies precise travel times for this area [the "narrow neck of land"--which Clark defines as an isthmus]. But the short distances involved (one to one-and-a-half days) cannot be squared with any known isthmus (without special conditions or travel rates being specified). (p. 27-28)

The reader should be aware that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec spans 130-150 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. Such a distance, in Clark's own words, "cannot be squared" with one-and-a-half days travel "without special conditions or travel rates being specified." Thus, Clark proceeds to authoritatively over-ride this internal--external distance dilemma. He constructs his own interpretive standard of travel speed for the Book of Mormon verses which relate travel time between specified locations (see pp. 28-31). The result is "war speed."

Thus, having ignored Alma 50:8, having minimized the impact of cardinal directions, and having authoritatively over-ridden the verses relating to travel speed, Clark has structured an internal position from which he can now build a geographical model similar to Sorenson.

16. The reader should note that after Clark gets through stating his assumptions and constructing a basic internal model with his structured internal analysis, he judges ideas that are contrary to his own (see p. 22) using the principle of Occam's razor (everything being equal, the simplest solution is the best). He additionally makes the following statement: "All that this really means, of course is that I have apparently interpreted the Book of Mormon passages in a manner similar to Sorenson." (Ibid., p. 69).

What the reader should understand is that although Clark's internal model indeed bears a striking resemblance to the internal model of Sorenson (see Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, 1992), Sorenson's external model is not exactly an Occam's Razor paradigm (see Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 1985). More importantly, however, without agreeing or disagreeing with Sorenson's cultural ideas for directions, or for his explanations for how a Nephite can travel 130-150 miles in one-and-a-half days, all I am trying to say is that, by association, Clark's internal model also does not fit on the American continent without cultural accommodations. Thus, because Clark has used the principle of Occam's razor to judge ideas that are contrary to his own structured internal model, one might wonder whether Clark's perspective is exclusively internal in order to give him an advantage over other external perspectives. In other words, by focusing on an internal model, Clark can dismiss, minimize, or authoritatively over-ride the specific internal problems which relate to the specific external problems on which others of differing

perspectives might heavily focus or ultimately judge his model in an external setting using the same principle of Occam's razor.

Note* While the reader might think I am overly critical of Clark because I have cited his apparent faults and not those of other theorists, I must reiterate that **all** theorists that I have studied are guilty of similar analytical structuring. It is not the structuring that I object to, for it is necessary in order to put together a theory. Rather, it is the lack of acknowledgment by the one doing the structuring that he is guilty of any bias. Worse still is my objection to one's judgement of other theories based on one's own individual biased model. Such is the problem of communication between Book of Mormon geographical theorists, and **everyone** I have communicated with, **including myself**, suffers from this problem of bias.   I believe the solution to communicating Book of Mormon geography will be found through illuminating one's own personal bias, not in the premature judgement of others by one who assumes he has eliminated it.

17. Ibid., p. 22.

18. See note 1.

19. Clark says in his article, "Internal evidence in the Book of Mormon is **convincing** that 'wilderness' refers to mountainous regions filled with wild beasts." (p. 27, emphasis added) Yet, on page 34 of his article he says, "The city of Moroni was not right next to the seashore but was separated by a 'wilderness.' Given the setting, it may have been a swampy, lagoon-estuary 'wilderness' rather than a hilly area."

While there are scriptures that seem to associate "wilderness" with mountains at certain points (for example, the head of the river Sidon was located in the narrow strip of wilderness," see Alma 22:27), these are indirect associations and are only related to specific areas. The term "mountains" is never linked in a total direct and incontrovertible way to the term "wilderness" in describing Nephite geography. Some verses (Helaman 11:25, 28, 31; 3 Nephi 4:1) do mention mountains and wilderness in a setting that might imply that they are the same; however, I have seen the same verses used as evidence to substantiate a distinct difference between the two terms. Let me quote one which speaks of the robbers of Gadianton:

> And they did commit murder and plunder; and then they would retreat back into the *mountains*, and into the *wilderness* and secret places, hiding themselves that they could not be discovered. (Helaman 11:25, emphasis added)

Who is to say whether these terms should be interpreted in a parallel manner or as a series of separate locations. By assuming a Mesoamerican setting, however, I can equate the mountains so prevalent there with wilderness and have my bias easily understood and evaluated. One doesn't have to believe what I say, but at least he can understand where I am coming from. More important,

however, a standard is established that doesn't need to be defended at every mention, nor does it need to be argued over endlessly from different cultural perspectives. Moreover, if its meaning needs to be changed (such as to a "swampy lagoon-estuary"), the external map helps substantiate the change. Communication is taken to a higher level, and I haven't forced my logic on anyone.

20. Clark uses the idea of water [river] navigation to enhance the distance traveled in "a day and a half's journey for a Nephite" through the small neck of land. (Ibid., p. 29, 9c.; p. 63) No river is ever specifically mentioned in the small neck of land in the Book of Mormon.

21. Ibid., p. 65. Clark's metaphoric argument is found on p. 63-67.

22. Ibid., p. 65.

23. Most Book of Mormon scholars place the overwhelming cultural evidence for the Book of Mormon in Mesoamerica. Mesoamerica is nearly surrounded by seas: on the north (the Gulf of Mexico), on the east (the Caribbean Sea), on the south and west (the Pacific Ocean). In view of that perspective, and with continued effort, we might eventually find additional clues in the text that would provide us with a glimpse of a model that has more seas than just the east sea and the west sea.

If we turn to Alma 22:32 we find that "the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were **nearly surrounded by water**, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward" (emphasis added). Since the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi were both in the land southward, and since they "were nearly surrounded by water," and since the only exception mentioned was a small neck of land on their north, perhaps a "sea south" is implied.

In the middle of a description of Nephite, Lamanite and former Jaredite lands, we find the words in Alma 22:30 that "it [the land Desolation] being so far **northward** that it came into the land which had been peopled and been destroyed, of whose *bones* we have spoken" (emphasis added). These bones were apparently those of the former inhabitants of "the land Desolation," who were the Jaredites. An expedition led by Limhi stumbled on to these bones in their travels to find the land of Zarahemla. The expedition traveled apparently northward from the land of Lehi-Nephi, ultimately traveling beyond the land of Zarahemla in "a land among **many waters**, having discovered a land which was covered with *bones* of men, and of beasts" (Mosiah 8:8, emphasis added) If Limhi's expedition traveled northward beyond the land of Zarahemla in a land among "many waters," perhaps a "sea north" is implied. It is interesting that in 1 Nephi 17:5 we find the following: "And we beheld the **sea** which we called Irreantum, which, being interpreted, is **many waters**" (emphasis added).

Thus, in spite of Clark's statement to the contrary, the reader does at least have allusions, if not specific references, for both a "sea south" and a "sea north."

24. Ibid., p. 67.

25. In his critique of John Sorenson's approach to Book of Mormon geography (John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, SLC: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), Brent Metcalfe

("Apologetic and Critical Assumptions About Book of Mormon Historicity," in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 26, No. 3, p. 155-184) writes the following:

> On the one hand Sorenson insists that "[t]he crucial information for determining [Book of Mormon geographical] dimensions is how long it took people to get from one place to another." (Sorenson, p. 8) Yet in the sole Book of Mormon passage where specific points of departure (Jerusalem) and arrival (the Red Sea) are identifiable with any degree of certainty (1 Nephi 2:4-7), the length of the journey (three days) seems to depend on a literary motif from Exodus.

He then notes the following:

1 Nephi 2:6-7	Exodus 3:18b	Exodus 5:3b	Exodus 8:27
he . . . three days	we . . . three days'	we . . . three days'	We . . . three days'
, , , wilderness . . .	. . . wilderness . . .	. . . desert . . .	. . . wilderness . . .
offering . . . Lord	sacrifice . . . Lord	sacrifice . . . Lord	sacrifice . . . Lord
our God.	our God.	our God . . .	our God.

Cf. Exodus 15:22; Numbers 10:33; 33:8. Reliance on the motific "three days" is further suggested by the unlikelihood of Lehi's party traveling the approximately 180-mile stretch between Jerusalem and the Gulf of Aqaba so rapidly. Evidently, "a normal days' journey in the biblical world covered between 17 and 23 miles" (Barry J. Beitzel, "Bible Lands: How to Draw Ancient Highways on Biblical Maps," *Bible Review* 4 [Oct. 1988]: 37, passim). Suggesting that the "three days" refers to an interim phase (eg., Lynn M. Hilton and Hope Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 18, 49) only accentuates difficulties in interpreting Book of Mormon travel durations.

What Metcalfe here doesn't fully inform the reader about are the possible reasons that the Hiltons (and others) do not interpret 1 Nephi 2:6-7 in the same way that Metcalfe does. 1 Nephi 2:4-6 reads as follows:

4. And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness.

5. And he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea; and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea; and he did travel in the wilderness with his family . . .

6. And it came to pass that when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water.

Notice that the reference to traveling "three days in the wilderness" comes in sequence after Lehi (1) "departed into the wilderness"; (2) "departed into the wilderness"; (3) "came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea"; (4) "traveled in wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea"; and (5) "traveled in the wilderness with his family." Thus, contrary to what Metcalfe proposes, the specific point of departure ("Jerusalem"-which is not specifically mentioned here) and the specific point of arrival ("Red Sea"-mentioned only in relation to "borders") are NOT defined with certainty. Additionally, it is not certain whether the "wilderness" referred to many times was mean't to be synonymous with the wilderness associated with three days travel. But that is not the main point that I want to make here. What I want to stress is the fact that any author (in this case Metcalfe) has a right to bring figurative language (and not "literal" language) into the determination of distance. This is perfectly acceptable reasoning as long as that author makes his scriptural reasoning clear, and also makes it clear that his figurative language only applies to his own geographical theory. The sad thing here is that in attempting to impose his scriptural interpretation on others, Metcalfe's methodology has become an example of what not to do.

26. A prime example of this "internal bias" is found in John Sorenson"s internal geographical analysis of Alma 20:1-2:

> And it came to pass that when they had established a church in that land [the land of Ishmael], that king Lamoni desired that Ammon should go with him to the land of Nephi, that he might show him unto his father.
>
> And the voice of the Lord came to Ammon, saying: Thou shalt not go **up** to the land of Nephi, for behold, the king will seek thy life; but thou shalt go to the land of Middoni. (emphasis added).

Sorenson says the following, strictly from an internal focus:

To the local land of Nephi--Lamoni headed "to" the land of Nephi, yet the voice of the Lord said to Ammon "go up to" there. Some elevation difference might exist, although it would appear not marked, given Alma 18:9 [". . . now the king had commanded his servants . . . that they should . . . conduct him **forth** to the land of Nephi . . . " (emphasis added)]. Or just possibly "up" was in this one case in deference to the political eminence of the king's capital. (John Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, F.A.R.M.S., p. 240.)

One would have to ask, In view of all the geographical references to the term "up," why is it necessary right here in Alma 20:2 to start defining exceptions to the rule of elevation ("up" and "down")? Is it really because of the term "forth" in Alma 18:9? If that is the case, why not negate the

fact that the land of Middoni was "down" from the land of Ishmael (see Alma 20:7) and cite Alma 20:2, where it only says, "thou shalt go **to** the land of Middoni" (emphasis added)? Middoni was also a king's capital (Alma 20:4) Why is the elevation difference between the land of Ishmael and the local land of Nephi the only verse where exceptions of "up" are internally noted by Sorenson?

Perhaps what we have here is a case of "internal bias." John Sorenson, in his book, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, correlates the locations of the land of Ishmael and the local land of Nephi with Chimaltenango, Guatemala and Guatemala City, Guatemala respectively (see pp. 225-226). The elevation for the Chimaltenango area (Sorenson's Ishmael) measures at 7600 feet above sea level, while the elevation for Guatemala City (Sorenson's local land of Nephi) measures at only 4800 feet. This means that in an external setting, Sorenson's land of Ishmael is definitely higher than his land of Nephi. Thus with his external geographical model, Sorenson has to make an exception to the idea that the term "up" always means upward in elevation.

So what does this all mean? It means that for Alma 20:2, interpreted in an external setting, the reader can see Sorenson's bias very clearly. One doesn't necessarily have to agree with his external setting nor with his analysis, but at least Sorenson's position is clear. One cannot say the same for Sorenson's internal analysis because his bias has not been made clear.

27. Royal Skousen, Director, Book of Mormon Critical Text Project, personal communication.

28. For an example of a supposed "scribal error" we can turn to Alma 53:6: "the city of Mulek, which was one of the strongest holds of the Lamanites *in the land of Nephi*." (emphasis added).

By combining the geographical facts illustrated in Clark's article in Figure 1, "General Features of Book of Mormon Lands" (p. 24), with the facts illustrated in Figure 3, "The Northern and Eastern Borders of Nephite Lands" (p. 36), we might conclude that the city of Mulek was in the land of Zarahemla. Do we alter our internal model to fit the description in Alma 53:6, or do we declare this "a mistake"? Sorenson assumes a scribal error (see John Sorenson's article "The Significance of the Chronological Discrepancy between Alma 53:22 and Alma 56:9," F.A.R.M.S.).

29. We might also add Lehi's name and Nephi's name to the list. Matthew Brown notes that perhaps something that helped Joseph Smith in translating the Book of Mormon was the fact that he had become personally familiar with those persons who had written it. Wilford Woodruff stated that the Prophet "brought forth [the Book of Mormon] according to the *dictation* of Moroni, Nephi, and Lehi, the angels of God who administered to him" (*JD*, 16:266, emphasis added). Perhaps this piece of information fits together with the report that "at times angels were in the room" in David Whitmer's house where the Book of Mormon was being translated ("History of the Life of Oliver B. Huntington," typescript, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 49-50.) [Matthew B. Brown, *All Things Restored: Confirming the Authenticity of LDS Beliefs,* n. 16, p. 231.]

30. Ibid., p. 21.

31. For an example of how this can happen, see John Sorenson's article "The Significance of the Chronological Discrepancy between Alma 53:22 and Alma 56:9." Among other assertions he states:

1. "I see no alternative to assuming that Helaman misremembered . . ." (p. 7),

2. "A fatigued Helaman erroneously recollected certain dates in writing his field dispatch or epistle to Moroni . . ." (p. 12), and

3. "When Mormon was dealing with the old records, he was puzzled by the conflict between the Zarahemla annal(s) he basically followed and the dates in Helaman's epistle. In trying to work out a reconciliation, he concluded that the Lamanites must have attacked at two distinct times on the west . . . when actually that two year separation, as well as the assumption that Moroni visited there a second time, were erroneous interpretations." (p. 12-13)

For a response, see my article "Additional Insights on the Significance of the Chronological Discrepancy between Alma 53:22 and Alma 56:9," Parts 1-5.

32. It is ironic that Clark, a Limited Mesoamerica "two Cumorah" theorist, should make "no duplication of place names" a foundational assumption in building a Book of Mormon geography model. In a review of works and authors espousing the Limited Great Lakes Theory, Clark implies a duplicate name for the New York hill with the following:

> Names are important things. It would be interesting to know what Cumorah meant in the language of the Nephites. If it meant something like "record depository," then it could have served as a functional label as well as a place name. I have heard such an etymology attributed to the name [Cumorah], but I have not looked for its source or validated this reading. One of the questions here is whether we are seeing the use of an honored name. This is a particularly ironic issue for upstate New York and for Latter-day Saints. We do not think of the Old World Palmyra when we use the name in conjunction with Joseph Smith. Nor is the Old World implicated in the names of neighboring New York towns: Syracuse, Geneva, Greece, Hamburg, Holland, Castile, Rome, and Utica. Likewise, we consider it natural for the early Saints in Utah Territory to use honored names for their towns and natural features: Bountiful, Jordan, Nephi, Lehi, Manti, and Moroni. In both situations, *the reuse of traditional names* was part of colonial expansion into Indian lands and its appropriation by immigrants. Naming was an important part of domesticating the frontier. The New York Cumorah could represent the reuse of a worthy name in a similar manner. (John E. Clark, "Evaluating the Case for a Limited Great Lakes Setting," in *The FARMS Review*, Vol. 15, Num. 1 (2003), p. 28-29.)

While Limited Mesoamericanists might argue that a New York Hill Cumorah should not be included as part of the textual record (Ibid., p. 25-30); see also Hamblin's Review of Metcalfe, "An Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* Vol. 6, Num. 1, Provo: FARMS, p. 478-479.), because the burial of the plates happened after they were sealed and thus the final resting place could not be inscribed in the plates, their arguments still remain a matter of conjecture to other theorists. Paul Hedengren provides good internal reasoning

that Moroni buried the plates in the New York Hill Cumorah. (*The Land of Lehi: A Book of Mormon Geography*, Provo: Tepran, 1999, p. 39-45.) While Clark counters Hedengren's arguments with good arguments of his own, the fact of the matter is that Clark simply has joined the debate, not ended it.

See also Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, "Where Is The Hill Cumorah," Church Section, *The Deseret News*, September 10, 1938, p. 1, 6. This article would be reprinted almost intact in the *Church News*, Saturday, February 27, 1954, p. 2-3 under the title, "Where is the Hill Cumorah?: Book of Mormon Establishes Location of Historic Region. By Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Council of the Twelve." The articles are exactly the same except for the column headings being different and one important change. The 1938 article has the phrase: "Moreover, it must be recognized that while the Prophet Joseph Smith **is not on** record definitely, so far as we have learned, declaring the present hill called Cumorah to be the exact hill spoken of in the Book of Mormon." In the 1954 article this phrase will be changed to read: "Moreover, the Prophet Joseph Smith **is on** record definitely, so far as we have learned, declaring the present hill called Cumorah to be the exact hill spoken of in the Book of Mormon." The article would also appear in a somewhat expanded form in Joseph Fielding Smith's 1956 *Doctrines of Salvation* vol. 3, p. 232-243.

33. See Mosiah 24:24-25. See also Alma 50:8

34. For one example, see Alma 43:32 where the reference point for a directional phrase seems to be a river:

And the remainder he concealed in **the west valley, on the west of the river Sidon,** and so down into the borders of the land Manti. (emphasis added)

For another example where the reference point for a directional phrase seems to be a small neck of land, see Alma 22:32:

. . . and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land **between** the land northward [of the small neck] and the land southward [of the small neck]. (emphasis added)

35. For example, Alma 22:27 says that the land of Nephi was "divided from the land of Zarahemla by a narrow strip of wilderness which ran from the sea east even to the sea west." Alma 50:8 reads, "the land of Nephi did run in a straight course from the east sea to the west."   One has to ask, Is the "sea east" in Alma 22:27 the same as the "east sea" in Alma 50:8? A "no duplication" rule would seemingly imply that only one name would be given a geographical entity. In other words, a sea would tend to have only one "unambiguous" proper name. But in this case we have two terms: a "sea east" and an "east sea."

36. One might ask, Is the place name Bountiful duplicated in Mesoamerica (the area most scholars associate with the lands of the Book of Mormon)? Hunter and Ferguson write:

According to Ixtlilxochitl, the name for "the seat of the kingdom" as of 132 B.C. was *Huehuetlapallan*, which means "ancient Bountiful land." *Hue-hue* is from the Nahua (Mexican) tongue and means "old, old" or "ancient." *Tlapallan (Tula*-pallan) is derived from the primary Maya root *Tul*, meaning "bountiful or abundance."

Hunter and Ferguson also cite Dr. Marcos E. Bercerra of the Mexican Society of Geography, who wrote on the native geographical names of the state of Chiapas. The state of Chiapas is where the ruins of Izapa and "The Tree of Life" stone--Stela 5 are located; it is also where John Sorenson places his proposed land of Zarahemla. Bercerra shows that many of the place names of Chiapas include the important root-name *Tula* or *Tulan* or *Tlan*, meaning "bountiful" or "abounding." He uses the Spanish word *abundancia* to define it. Some 19 place names in which *tula* appears are listed. (Milton R. Hunter and Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *Ancient America and The Book of Mormon*, 1950, p.149-150)

37. According to Hugh Nibley, Near Eastern scholars have stated that the ancient Semites denoted any scene of defeat with the name *Hormah*, which translates as "Destruction" or "Desolation". (Nibley 1976:195.)

According to the Zarahemla Research Foundation Staff:

The Hebrew word *samem* and its derivatives are translated "desolate" or "desolation." The meaning is "a barren, empty land, wasted and made bleak by some disaster. The disaster may be natural or a result of war. But usually this word group is associated with divine judgment." It usually applies to places and things (Richards 1985:222).

This is a precise description of the land of Desolation in the Book of Mormon. (Zarahemla Research Foundation Staff, "Why Bountiful? Why Desolation?" in *Recent Book of Mormon Developments, Vol. 2, p. 148.)*

38. The situation of regions extending over specific "possessed" lands or boundaries rather than being specific boundaried lands is similar to national parks, or the "plains area," or even the "desert Southwest" in the United States which spreads across state lines. (See "Why Bountiful? Why Desolation?," in *Recent Book of Mormon Developments*, Vol. 2, p. 148.)

39. See Alvin K. Benson, "Geological Upheaval and Darkness in 3 Nephi 8-10," in *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This is My Gospel*, p. 63-67.

40. While the intention of the author has always been to create a more understanding approach to building and communicating Book of Mormon geographical models, and not necessarily to judge them as correct or incorrect, the following comments might give the reader some understanding of the consequences involved in implying drastic changes to the landscape of the Americas in order to accommodate internal logic. F. Richard Hauck writes:

Researchers cannot advance any theory of the [Book of Mormon's] geography without taking into consideration the archaeological perspectives. To do so understates the archaeological context wherein they placed their models and thus, in my opinion, discredits their theories and invites calamity. I shall cite several examples where the authors with all good intent did not.

Consider the 1975 publication *The Book and the Map: New Insights into Book of Mormon Geography* by Venice Priddis (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft). This author places the Book of Mormon lands in South America and depends on a pass in the Cordillera mountain chain to represent the narrow neck of land. In order to make this model work, the author floods the Amazon lowlands during the time that the Nephite civilization existed. She does not understand the archaeological context for South America, and that gap in her knowledge is fatal to her entire model's veracity. Archaeologists have documented archaeological sites in the flooded lowlands that are contemporary with the time the land should have been submerged. If her model is correct, those sites should not exist. . .

Vaughn Hansen makes a similar mistake in his 1997 publication: *Discovering Book of Mormon Lands* (Springville, Cedar Fort). The setting for Hansen's model is southeastern Mesoamerica, to be specific the Peten region of Yucatan and Guatemala. In order to present a plausible geography, he places the narrow neck of land as an isthmus in the Peten jungle. To create an isthmus so far inland, he is forced to flood both the Gulf lowlands to the west (hence a west sea) and the Caribbean lowlands to the east (hence an east sea) . . . Archaeological sites that were contemporaneous with the Nephite occupation period exist in both of Hansen's flooded lowland areas.

(F. Richard Hauck, "Sorry Folks That's Not Geography," unpublished manuscript, p. 21)

41. Mormon apparently includes in his account on Zeniff's group a first-person account by Zeniff himself (Mosiah 9:1-10:22). This section apparently came directly from the Large Plates which Mormon was abridging.

42. John Sorenson notes:

Directions and how they are referred to are cultural products, not givens in nature. Both the conceptual frameworks which define directions and the languages of reference for them differ dramatically from culture to culture and throughout history. . . . A person may say that "east is obvious," it is "where the sun comes up." But as I write, in Utah in December, the sun is rising in the southeast, . . . while in, say, Norway or northern Canada the sun is coming up only in what we call the south. . . . In the tropics, sunrise is at astronomical "east" on only two mornings per year. On every other day its rising point at the horizon is either to the north or south of astronomical "east," for much of the year by many degrees of arc.

Clearly, Old World civilizations held many ideas about how directions were to be determined, assigned significance, and labeled. The cardinal points were only a relatively late,

technical answer to the question "what directions are there?" From a survey of ideas such as these that were known in the part of the world where Book of Mormon peoples originated we see some possibilities that enlighten us about how the Nephites may have oriented themselves, but by no means do exclusive answers to what their conceptions actually were leap out at us.

(John L. Sorenson, *A Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, F.A.R.M.S., p. 401,407. For an extended discussion on cultural disparities in directional systems, see p. 401-415.)

43. The terms "south" + "east" are two terms of an implied four-part system (north-south-east-west); the term "southeast" implies eight divisions of direction; and the term "south-southeast" implies a division of those parts into roughly sixteen sectors.

44. Even though it might be argued that the Liahona was referred to in Alma's time by the term "compass" (see Alma 37:38,43,44), which might give added support to "compass-like" directions, it can also be argued that these same verses in Alma 37 are the last reference to a "compass" (or a "Liahona") in the Book of Mormon. Moreover, these verses refer to the Liahona in the historical past during the time of Lehi in the Old World. Whether the "compass" principle of the original Liahona was similar to other compasses, ancient or modern, or whether it was duplicated in the New World and used by the prophets until the time of Mormon and Moroni, is not specified in the text.

45. See F. Richard Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*, 1988, p. 29-31.

46. The Hiltons suggest that from the point of their journey near the northern tip of the Red Sea until they reached Bountiful, Lehi's group was probably traveling on what was called the "Frankincense Trail." The highly valued frankincense came from certain locations in the southern part of Saudi Arabia. It was shipped overland along major trails that soon became major highways of commerce. Because water was the determining factor of any travel in Arabia, these trails connected hand-dug wells all along the way.

The Hiltons found that there existed a well-traveled, south-southeastern route along the Red Sea coast. They believe that Lehi would not have left an established path to roam on waterless mountains and deserts. The Book of Mormon does not say he was hiding on his journey, nor does it say he was fleeing pursuit, as some have thought; so it is likely that he kept to the known highways of the day. Further evidence for this supposition is Nephi's statement that they traveled in the borders of the Red Sea (1 Nephi 2:5), right where the frankincense trail has existed from ancient times. (Lynn and Hope Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail*, p. 32-33, 77.)

In an interesting note regarding directions, Lynn Hilton writes that the south-southeast direction in the borders of the Red Sea is very close to the actual direction. The actual reading averaged over the Red Sea coast is a bearing of 149 degrees, whereas the true direction of south-southeast is a bearing of 157.5 degrees, or a deviation of only 8.5 degrees to the east or left. But this direction of travel, 149 degrees, is much closer to "south-southeast" than to southeast, where the deviation is 14 degrees, or to

any other cardinal point of the compass. (Lynn M. Hilton, "Nephi's 'Eastward' Journey," in Ancient America Foundation (AAF) Newsletter, Num. 5, August 1995, p. 1-2.)

47. It should be noted that Ishmael was buried in the place "which was called Nahom" (1 Nephi 16:34). Thus we find that Nahom probably existed many years before Lehi ever arrived. According to the Astons, one of the most interesting discoveries in recent years is an ancient city of Nehem, located on the Frankincense Trail in the general location necessary for Lehi's reference. The distance from Jiddah ("broken bow"), which is near the modern holy city of Mecca, to Nahom is about 160 miles. As such, this distance qualifies as the "many days'" journey dictated by the Book of Mormon. (Note: The term "many days" is used at different times and places in the Book of Mormon, and seems to be quite variable in its meaning of distance and time.) (p. 22)

The Book of Mormon does not state that Ishmael *died* at Nahom, only that he was *buried* there. Likely the Lehite encampment was in the Jawf valley and Ishmael was carried up into the hills for burial. . . . Since the Book of Mormon Nahom was a burial ground, we were excited to discover on a later visit to Sana'a that an ancient burial ground had recently been located in the hills of Nehem itself. Warren [Aston] met with the leader of the French archaeological team that made the find and has worked in the area many years and was informed that the circular rock tombs may date to 3000 B.C. or earlier (p. 13, 19).

The name *NHM* (in any of its variant spellings, Nehem/Nihm/Nahm, and so on) is not found *anywhere* else in Arabia as a place-name. It is unique. It is known to appear only once in southern Arabian writings (as a personal name) and a handful of times in northern Arabian Safaitic texts. . . .

This verse also is the clearest evidence in the text that Lehi's family had contact with other peoples during the journey; they could only have known about Nahom from someone outside the group. (p. 10-12) (Warren and Michaela Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*.)

Hugh Nibley claims that when Ishmael died on the journey, he "was buried in the place which was called Nahom." Note that this is not "a place which we called Nahom," but the place which was so called, a desert burial ground. Jaussen reports (*Rev. Biblilque* X, 607) that though Bedouins sometimes bury the dead where they die, many carry the remains great distances to bury them. The Arabic root NHM has the basic meaning of "to sigh or moan," and occurs nearly always in the third form, "to sigh or moan with another." The Hebrew *Nahum*, "comfort," is related, but that is not the form given in the Book of Mormon. At this place, we are told, "the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly," and are reminded that among the desert Arabs mourning rites are a monopoly of the women. (Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, F.A.R.M.S., p. 90-91.)

According to an article by Alan Goff, a connection with the Hebrew verb *naham* is suggested in a footnote to this verse in the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon. The Hebrew word means "to mourn or to be consoled." But a much stronger connection with biblical tradition unfolds in the account that follows the verse. The scholar Damrosch says this about the word: "It [the root for *naham*] appears twenty-five times in the narrative books of the Bible, and in every case it is associated with death."

(Alan Goff, "Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom" in John W. Welch ed., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, F.A.R.M.S., p. 92)

The Astons explain that probably the strongest evidence . . . that identifies Nahom (and therefore Lehi's easterly turning point -- 1 Nephi 17:1) can be found in a study of the incense trade routes. The trade routes represent, of course, the available water sources, but they also must follow terrain suitable for camel caravans to use. . . . Since water holes do not move, the advent of modern mapping allows us to reconstruct these ancient desert highways with a fairly high degree of certainty. No one in 1830 could do so.

It is of the greatest interest to the student of the Book of Mormon to note that the major trunk of the trade route passed through the Jawf valley within a few miles of Nehem. And it is here--and nowhere else--that the trade route branched *eastward* toward the Hadhramaut coast and the ancient port of Qana, the modern Bir Ali, to which most of the incense was shipped. Some minor trade routes did branch off to the south, but the major route was to the east. (Warren and Michaela Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, p. 22.)

48. The mention by Nephi of going "nearly eastward" from Nahom (1 Nephi 17:1) is a significant building block for establishing a standard of directions in the Book of Mormon. Like the previous situation, in which we plotted a line going "south-southeast" from the tip of the Red Sea to Nahom, we now have substantive data in order to plot a possible line from Nahom (Nehem, Sana'a, Yemen) "nearly eastward" to Bountiful (Dhofar Region, Oman, see the commentary on 1 Nephi 17:5). While these site correlations might be tentative, they are plausible, and thus they give us an opportunity to test a directional standard. The pathway from the tip of the Red Sea to Nehem, and from that point to the Dhofar region can be represented by the letter "L" overlaid on the Saudi Arabian Peninsula. By changing the directional standard, or in other words by rotating this letter "L" about an axis at the tip of the Red Sea, a cultural and geographical correlation for Lehi's trip to Bountiful becomes more difficult to explain the more the letter is rotated. Thus, without eliminating other directional options out of hand, the proposed pathway of Lehi leading "south-southeast" along the Red Sea and then "nearly eastward" from the ancient site of Nehem, Sana'a, Yemen to the Dhofar region of Oman provides a plausible directional standard similar to our cardinal directions.

John Tvedtnes notes that the basis of the [ancient Israelite] directional system was the path of the sun. Some might find this as additional support cardinal directions, and for Lehi's journey along the Frankincense Trail, traveling "nearly eastward" from the ancient site of Nehem in Yemen to the Dhofar region of Oman. John Sorenson cites Morgenstern as maintaining that the first and second temples at Jerusalem were aligned so that the first rays of the sun on the morning of the fall equinox (Israelite New Year's Day) shone directly in through the eastern gate and down the long axis of the court and building into the holy of holies. Nevertheless, Sorenson also cites multiple other cultural deviations of direction from this norm. (Sorenson, *A Source Book,* p. 401-407)

It would seem, from the above discussion, that while the term "nearly eastward" does not absolutely certify a standard of cardinal directions, those who propose an altered directional standard

for the Book of Mormon must reconcile their standard with Lehi's trip from the tip of the Red Sea "south-southeast" to Nahom, and then "nearly eastward" to Bountiful.

49. Nephi explains very precisely that "we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey" (1 Nephi 17:5). In a recent study, the Astons presented evidence that according to all the mentioned requirements for the location of Bountiful (fruit, honey, ore, mountains, timber for a ship, etc.), the most likely site of "Bountiful" was the Wadi Sayq.

The Astons say that the text makes it clear that the place to which the Liahona had led [Lehi's group] was more than just a welcome contrast to the almost waterless desert wastes encountered after Nahom. . . . When we closely examine the direct and implied references about Bountiful in the First Book of Nephi, a surprisingly detailed profile of the place emerges.

1. First, of course there is a clear relationship between the locations of Bountiful and Nahom. Bountiful was "*nearly eastward*" of Nahom (1 Nephi 17:1). Given the Nephites' ability to determine direction with great accuracy, we should expect Bountiful to lie close to the 16th degree north latitude, just as Nehem does.

2. The terrain and water sources from Nahom onward permitted reasonable *access from the interior* deserts to the coast.

3. Nephi's usage of the term *Bountiful* appears to indicate that *both the general area (1 Nephi 17:5, 7) and the particular location where the Lehites camped (1 Nephi 17:6) were fertile.*

4. Bountiful was a *coastal location* (1 Nephi 17:5) (it would logically have to be on the east coast of Arabia), suitable for a seashore encampment (1 Nephi 17:6) and the construction and launching of a sizable ship (1 Nephi 18:8).

5. It was *very fertile*, notable for its "much fruit" and honey (1 Nephi 17:5, 6; 18:6) and perhaps small game that could be hunted (1 Nephi 18:6). Agricultural and fishing pursuits are additional possible food sources, although not mentioned in the text.

6. Enough *timber* of types and sizes to permit the construction of a vessel able to carry several dozen persons and remain seaworthy for at least a year was readily available (1 Nephi 18:1, 2, 6).

7. *Freshwater* supplies available year-round would have been necessary for the extended stay required for the building of the ship.

8. There was a *mountain* prominent enough to justify Nephi's reference to it as "the mount" (1 Nephi 17:7, 18:3) and also near enough to the coastal encampment that he could go there to "pray oft" (1 Nephi 18:3).

9. The incident of Nephi's brothers' attempting to throw him into the depths of the sea (1 Nephi 17:48) makes sense only if there were *substantial cliffs* overlooking the ocean.

10. *Ore* from which metal could be smelted and tools fashioned was available in the vicinity (1 Nephi 17:9-11,16) together with *flint* (verse 11), seemingly near the ore source.

11. That Nephi required a specific revelation and great effort to locate ore and fashion tools indicates that, despite the attractiveness of the place, Bountiful may have had *little or no resident population* that could contribute tools and manpower to the ship-building process.

12. Suitable *winds and ocean currents* were required to carry the vessel out into the ocean (1 Nephi 18:8, 9) (pp. 27-29).

The Aston's program of exploration, undertaken over several years, attempted in a systematic manner to develop a body of objective, reliable, and complete data on the Arabian coast in order to evaluate possible sites for Bountiful. With completion of the coastal exploration in April 1992, they determined that only six locations approached even minimal requirements for Bountiful (defined as an accessible coastal location with a freshwater source) in any degree (p. 37).

Five of them fell short of reflecting the picture Nephi gives us of Bountiful. However, hidden from the outside world and largely unknown even within its own country today, the last candidate not only met the criteria unusually well but provided new insights into the story of Lehi. This remarkable place is Wadi Sayq (River Valley), a valley some sixteen miles long leading from the desert to the ocean on the Qamar coast of Oman. The coastal mouth of this valley, Khor Kharfot (Fort Inlet), is the most fertile coastal location on the Arabian Peninsula, with abundant freshwater, large trees, fruit, and vegetation (p. 43).

The following is a summary of the qualifications of Wadi Sayq, as listed by the Astons:

1. Wadi Sayq is "nearly eastward" or about a half a degree latitude north of Nahom/Jawf (Wadi Sayq is at 16 degrees 44 minutes) (p. 54).

2. Apart from narrow and difficult foot trails along the coast or down the mountain sides, the wadi itself offers the only proper land access to the coast at this point (p. 49).

3. Only the three Qamar candidates (of which Wadi Sayq is one), lying on a ten-mile strip of coastline, can be described as being part of a larger area fertile enough to also be called Bountiful. The area of these three places fits the description of the "land of Bountiful," with Wadi Sayq as the "place Bountiful" (p. 54).

4. Coastal access is possible (p. 54).

5. Only Wadi Sayq has such natural fertility that an arriving traveler would find uncultivated "fruit" already available near the ocean as Nephi indicates, the prime factor giving rise to the descriptive name given the place. The fruit referred to (and it was noteworthy for its abundance, not necessarily its variety) was probably the date palm, a tree that requires huge quantities of water. The mention of honey may not only refer to the obvious bee honey, which can readily be found in Wadi Sayq, but can also refer to the syrup extracted from such fruits as figs, dates, and grapes (p. 54).

6. Only the three candidates on the Qamar coast (of which Wadi Sayq is one) have accessible timber trees. Timber and vegetation approach the ocean closer at Wadi Sayq than elsewhere and in greater abundance (p. 55).

7. Wadi Sayq incorporates the largest freshwater source on the Arabian coast (p. 54).

8. Rakhyut and Wadi Sayq are alone in having a coastal mount upon which Nephi could retire to pray oft (p. 55).

9. High cliffs are found at the western extremities of Khor Kharfot (Wadi Sayq) and at several points on the Salalah coast, but not elsewhere (p. 55).

10. Inland from Wadi Sayq and Dhalqut are the only known flint deposits in the vicinity (p. 55).

 The most likely metal that Nephi could have located is copper or a copper-based alloy; significant quantities of copper have been mined in northern Oman for thousands of years, whereas iron is almost unknown. Excavated sites indicate that a pear-shaped furnace about two feet high was used with skin bellows (1 Nephi 17:11), allowing a temperature of 1,150 degrees C to be reached. Small pieces of sulphidic ore mixed with charcoal were introduced into the furnace and the process repeated until a fairly pure copper resulted. This was poured into a hole in the ground to cool. Nephi may have used the same or a similar method (p. 55-56).

11. The unique geography of Wadi Sayq effectively isolates any coastal community from the surrounding region. We cannot be sure that the Lehites were alone while at Bountiful; the coastal area, Khor Kharfot, has periodically been home to communities from well before Lehi's time. If, however, the coastal delta was uninhabited during their brief stay (perhaps three years), we can understand why Nephi had to seek specific revelations to locate ore and fashion his own tools (p. 56).

12. Departing from any of the candidate areas would allow travel east across the Indian Ocean utilizing the various monsoon winds (p. 56).

In conclusion, the well-watered and uniquely fertile Wadi Sayq is the candidate that most closely fits the Book of Mormon Bountiful. The highly specific details recorded in scripture, coupled with the essentially unchanging physical nature of the Arabian coast, make it possible to propose this with greater confidence than would usually be justified. (Warren and Michaela Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*)

Note* It is worth noting here that although I have used the Aston's approach as as an example, it does not necessarily mean I agree with them on the location of Bountiful. Potter and Wellington have presented an extremely good argument for Khor Rori.

50. For example, there are some terms that create difficulties for interpreting a directional orientation relative to a point of reference: the terms "came" and "went." As far as I know, while many have

proposed geographical models "according to the text," there has not been any published study completely correlating or explaining these terms relative to their geographical point(s) of reference for any model.

51. One of my favorite stories from dental school was of the student who came up to the instructor complaining that the crown ("cap") he had fabricated on the laboratory model (molded to exactly duplicate the size and shape of the tooth) wouldn't fit down correctly on the real tooth in his patient's mouth. The student told the instructor that he just couldn't come up with a solution and asked the instructor for advice. The instructor, with a smirk, replied, "Cement the crown on the model!"

52. Clark himself runs into this difficulty in associating the narrow (or small) neck of land with an isthmus. On page 27-28 of his article he says:

> As noted above, the Book of Mormon apparently specifies precise travel times for this area [the narrow neck]. But the short distances involved (one to one-and-a-half days) cannot be squared with any known isthmus (without special conditions or travel rates being specified).

Clark makes an additional assumption of increased travel speed ("war speed" p. 27) for phrases such as " a day and a half's journey for a Nephite " (Alma 22:32). One is left to wonder whether such thinking was an attempt to justify the distance across his isthmus-defined narrow neck of land.

Alma 22:32 only states the following:

> And now it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.

53. For example, at the end of his article Clark writes: "All that this really means, of course is that I have apparently interpreted the Book of Mormon passages in a manner similar to Sorenson" (Ibid., p. 69). The irony of this statement is that Sorenson makes **one** huge additional assumption in order to fit his model on the real map of the American Continent. He proposes that Nephite "north" was not the north of cardinal directions. Sorenson rotates his hourglass model in a northwest-southeast orientation, citing differences in culture. By so doing, the whole map of Mesoamerica is drastically turned on its end. Cities of the "east wilderness" which would normally be placed near the Gulf of Honduras are moved hundreds of miles to be situated near the Gulf of Mexico. Without agreeing or disagreeing with Sorenson's approach, all I am pointing out is that in this particular case, one additional assumption causes changes in almost every external geographical relationship for the Promised Land relative to the Book of Mormon text.

54. John H. Gilbert, Jr., a typesetter and pressman for the first printing of the Book of Mormon, wrote a statement on that process of the printing work when he was 90 years old, in 1892 in Palmyra. The following is an extract from that statement:

Cowdery held and looked over the manuscript when most of the proofs were read. Martin Harris once or twice, and Hyrum Smith once, Grandin supposing these men could read their own writing as well, if not better, than any one else; and if there are any discrepancies between the Palmyra edition and the manuscript, these men should be held responsible.

"Joseph Smith, Jr. had nothing to do whatever with the printing or furnishing copy for the printers, being but once in the office during the printing of the Bible, and then not over 15 or 20 minutes."

". . . Names of persons and places were generally capitalized, but sentences had no end." (Wilford C. Wood, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work*, Salt Lake City: Wilford C. Wood, 1958, introductory pages)

(Taken from "The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon," in *The Ensign*, December 1983, p. 42-43.)

Stan Larson states the following:

It should be mentioned that a peculiarity of both the original manuscript and the printer's manuscript was the absence of *any* punctuation--there were no paragraphs, and sentences had no formal end. Actually, this is strong substantiation of the claim that the Book of Mormon was one long, dictated translation from beginning to end, particularly since all "samples of [Oliver] Cowdery's writing show consistent punctuation with the single exception of revelations that were apparently dictated to him" by Joseph Smith. (Dean Jessee, "The Original Book of Mormon Manuscript," *BYU Studies* 10 [Spring 1970]: 277.)

John H. Gilbert, the typesetter for Mr. Grandin, added punctuation to make the manuscript, as he said, "read as I *supposed* the Author intended." (John H. Gilbert, "Memorandum," September 8, 1892. Palmyra, New York; reprinted in Wilford Wood, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work*, p. 26.) Generally his punctuation helped, but it certainly was not infallible and was consequently improved by later editors as they saw the need. Because of the punctuation that this typesetter imposed upon the text, the meaning of some passages was unfortunately obscured. This resulted either in later punctuation and word changes to clarify the original meaning or in the minor inaccuracy continuing unchanged to the present.

(Stan Larson, "Changes in Early Texts of the Book of Mormon," *The Ensign*, September 1976, p. 79.)

For additional information, see Royal Skousen, "Piecing Together the Original Manuscript," in *BYU Today*, 1992. Reprinted by F.A.R.M.S., Provo, Utah. See also F.A.R.M.S. Staff, *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference*, edited by Robert F. Smith, 3 volumes, Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1984-1987, Second ed. 1986-1987.) See also The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,

150th Year Anniversary Facsimile of the 1830 Edition of the Book of Mormon. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, <u>1980.</u>

55. See my website (<u>www.alancminer.com</u>), and more specifically the volumes of *A Covenant Record of Christ's People.*

56. I will cite the following example from Alma 22:32:

32 **And** <u>now</u>   *it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey*
         for   **a   Nephite**
                  on   the line* between   the land Bountiful
                                   and   the land Desolation
                                                    from   the   east
                                                    to   the   west sea

[Note: Royal Skousen has added (by conjecture) the phrase "between the land." This phrase is absent in the O, P, and 1830 edition. – see <u>The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text</u>, 2009, p. 362, 765.]

[Note: The word "sea" is placed after the word "west." Whether that is significant can't be determined by this verse alone. The word "sea" is also absent from the line above. Whether that line should read "east sea" or not is still a question at this point, but parallelism and the principle of "omission" tend to imply that it should.]

[Note* The following are other instances in the Book of Mormon where the words "the line" is used:
         Alma 50:11 And thus he cut off all the strongholds of the Lamanites in the east wilderness, yea, and also on the west, fortifying **the line** <u>between the Nephites and the Lamanites, between the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi</u>, <u>from the west sea</u>, running by the head of the river Sidon—the Nephites possessing all the land northward, yea, even all the land which was northward of the land Bountiful, according to their pleasure.

         Alma 50:13 And it came to pass that the Nephites began the foundation of a city, and they called the name of the city Moroni; and it was by the east sea; and it was <u>on the south</u> by **the line** <u>of the possessions of the Lamanites</u>.

         Helaman 4:7 And there they did fortify against the Lamanites, <u>from the west sea, even unto the east</u>; it being a day's journey for a Nephite, **on the line** <u>which they had fortified and stationed their armies to defend their north country.</u>

         *3 Nephi 3:23 And the land which was appointed was the land of Zarahemla, and the land which was between the land Zarahemla and the land Bountiful, yea, to **the line** <u>which was between the land Bountiful and the land Desolation.</u>*

     Thus, the phrase "the line between the land Bountiful and the land Desolation" appears to be a boundary line and seems to run in an east/west direction.]

57. Clate W. Mask, "10 Criteria or 206 Mini-Tests?," Unpublished Manuscript, 1996. Clate W. Mask, *El Rompecabezas de Zarahemla: Ficcion, Fabula O Realidad?*, Unpublished manuscript, 2000. Clate Mask uses forty-one different background maps to detail 206 movements in the Book of Mormon with explanations and scriptural references.

58. For a complete list of all such phrases, see my book *Step by Step through the Book of Mormon: The Covenant Story*, Appendix A.

59. For example, the phrase "Moroni and Lehi and Teancum did encamp with their armies" (Alma 62:34) might imply to some that all the action described previously (Alma 62:30-34) took place during the same day. However, if this is the logic, then one might also imply that because we read that "when [Moroni and Pahoran] had come to the city of Nephihah they did pitch their tents" (Alma 62:18), all the action previously described [a march from the city of Zarahemla (see Alma 62:7) to the city of Nephihah (Alma 62:18)] also took place in one day.

60. The title of my multi-volume collection of authoritative statements is entitled *A Chronology of LDS Thought on Book of Mormon Geography & Culture.* In my collection the time periods have been shaped around certain major editions of the Book of Mormon--the first in 1830, a second one at the end of 1920, and another in 1981. Each time period has begun with a new edition, and ended (or at least the first two) with an authoritative Church review of scholarly and authoritative positions preparatory to a new edition. Thus the time periods are chronologically arranged as follows:

    A. Beginnings ---> 1920

    B. 1921---> 1980

    C. 1981---> 2004

    D. 2005---> Present

    E. Internet Listings (Articles with no apparent publication date)

I have also found it useful to approach the ideas from the following thematic perspectives:

    1. Indian Origins and the House of Israel (including Pre-1830 ideas from over 240 writers)

    2. The Geography of Lehi's Travels to the New World

        A. The Chronology of Lehi's Travel's to the New World (including the date of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and visit to the New World)

    3. Book of Mormon Geography of the New World (including related chronology)

4. The Geography of the Jaredite Journey to the New World (including related chronology; also extensive quotes on the location of the Garden of Eden)

5. The Geography of the Mulekite Journey to the New World (including related chronology).

6. Polynesian Origins

7. External Evidences of Book of Mormon Geography and Culture (including Pre-1830 ideas)

Appendix: An Annotated Chronological List of LDS Periodicals in Which Articles on Book of Mormon Geography and Culture Appeared.
                   A Series of Biographical Sketches of Selected LDS Writers involved with Book of Mormon Geography and Culture

As of this update there are a total of about 5200 referenced quotes or multi-page textual excerpts from all three time periods (including pre-1830 sources) and all seven thematic perspectives along with approximately 400 maps (plus variations). I have also included enough notes, thematic lists, cross-references, endnotes and appendixes so that each volume reads as a very understandable and revealing chronological report.   When all these perspectives are combined they offer a panorama of LDS geographical and cultural thought regarding the Book of Mormon narrative that has never been achieved before.