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## Authenticity of the Book of Mormon

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**Abstract:** "The intent of this book is to add to the body of knowledge relating to science in the Book of Mormon using my paleontological and geological background. At some point I realized that my own study and research could provide information helpful in answering questions, and hopefully alleviating some doubts. I will discuss the animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon in greater depth than other scientific aspects. These other aspects which have caused concern will only be briefly discussed as others have treated them at length."

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## Authenticity of the Book of Mormon

**I**t surprised me when I learned that apparently many thousands of people have contacted the Smithsonian Institution, asking whether they had information confirming or refuting the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Those asking have been both members and non-members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Most of the questions asked recently are of an archeological or anthropological nature. Examples of these questions are: Could Native Americans have arrived in America by boat? Were they from the Middle East? Did they really possess the ability to make steel and glass? Did they have linen and silk? Were there actually horses in America when they arrived? The list goes on.

The head of the Smithsonian's Anthropology Outreach Office used to routinely send out a formal written response of several pages to those requesting information regarding scientific aspects of the Book of Mormon. Currently this office provides a shorter version that can be obtained by contacting them. In the lengthy 1979 version of their official statement, which was used for many years, they would essentially refute Book of Mormon claims of an archeological or anthropological nature.

Examples given in their earlier statement are: "The physical type of the American Indian is basically Mongoloid in origin." "The first people to reach North America by sea were the Norse around 1000 A.D." "None of the Old World domesticated food plants or animals (except the dog) were in the Americas before the arrival of the Spaniards." "Camels and horses were in the Americas with the bison, mammoth, and mastodon, but all these animals became extinct around 10,000 years ago." "Items such as iron, steel, glass, and silk were not in the New World before 1492." I

wrote to the Anthropological Outreach Office at the Smithsonian Institution requesting any current statement that they had regarding these issues concerning the Book of Mormon. The following is a quote of the response that I received:

*“This letter from the Smithsonian’s Department of Anthropology is in response to your inquiry regarding the Book of Mormon. The Smithsonian considers the Book of Mormon a religious document and not a scientific guide. The Smithsonian Institution has never used it in archaeological research and has found no archaeological evidence to support its claims.”* Dated February 15, 2006.

This last, more recent statement, is somewhat “toned down” from the earlier ones. But it certainly is not an endorsement for the Book of Mormon. John L. Sorenson, highly respected archaeologist at Brigham Young University, with many scholarly works on Mesoamerica, responded to the Smithsonian pointing out their many mistakes on earlier statements as described above (2007, Pers. Comm.).

This is probably one good reason why the Smithsonian’s Anthropology Outreach Office greatly shortened their response to inquires about the Book of Mormon. Scientific finds over the past three decades have also done much to cause the Smithsonian Institution to back away from their earlier statements critical of Book of Mormon claims. In fairness to those responsible for the Smithsonian statements, they now do include a list of publications which have a bearing on Book of Mormon archaeology. Some of the references they provide give favorable reports.

The intent of this book is to add to the body of knowledge relating to science in the Book of Mormon using my paleontological and geological background. At some point I realized that my

own study and research could provide information helpful in answering questions, and hopefully alleviating some doubts. I will discuss the animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon in greater depth than other scientific aspects. These other aspects which have caused concern will only be briefly discussed as others have treated them at length.