Strategic Fortifications in Nephite Wars

by

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1.0 Approach

Human history is a history of war. So it was played out in the Pre-Existence and so it continues today. There are but two sides. As Joseph was told, "the enemy is combined" (D&C 38:12). The Nephite's enemy was always called Lamanite, but this was rarely the case. The Nephites were often their own worst enemy. It was the Zoramites and dissenting Nephites combined with the Gadianton Robbers (of whatever ethnic origins) that caused the greatest problems (4 Nephi 1:37-38, Mormon 1:9).

Mormon wrote extensively about the wars — so why not take advantage of this information? Six of the Book of Mormon geography models available today will be evaluated for strategic, tactical, and logistical merits and conformity to chapter and verse in the source. The six models are by: 1) Joseph L. Allen, 2) John L. Sorenson, 3) F. Richard Hauck, 4) V. Garth Norman, 5) Robert A. Pate, and 6) Rod L. Meldrum/Wayne N. May. Pate's pattern recognition map can be found at the web site mormontopics.com.

In this evaluation, every effort has been made to not interpret Mormons words, but rather to quote them directly. It is the interpretation thereof that gets model developers into trouble. A healthy dose of realism will be applied to help assess the merits of the models. The objective is to expose the underbelly of some deficient models.

2.0 Points of Consideration

2.1 Nephi 1

Lehi's boat landed from the west sea, the Pacific Ocean (Alma 22:28). The preferred location is the west coast of Mesoamerica. Allen and Sorenson place it on the Pacific Coast, Hauck places it more specifically near Tapachula, Mexico, Norman and Pate place it in El Salvador, specifically Pate places it at Acajutla, El Salvador. Rod Meldrum places it near the Mississippi Delta region on the Gulf of Mexico.

The land and city of Nephi-1 remained a viable civilization after Nephi left and it was a credible threat to the Nephites after they settled in the Zarahemla area. It appears that the sons of Ishmael remained (see Lamoni and his father as descendants of Ishmael – Alma 17). The documented towns on the western side of the mountains were Nephi-1, Midian, Ishmael, Ani-anti, Middoni, Siron, and possibly Onihah/Onidah. Allen, Sorenson, Hauck, and Norman do not include Nephi-1 on their maps, indicating that, according to their models, it did not play any significant extended role in the Nephite wars.

Pate's model is the only one that carries Nephi-1 forward as a viable city center and as a credible threat to Zarahemla. Ignoring the Nephi-1 presence confounds many aspects of the subsequent wars. Plus it adds 21 days of travel time.

2.2 Nephi-2

Nephi and his followers journeyed in the wilderness for the space of many days and founded a new land Nephi-2 (later called Lehi-Nephi). They must have crossed the Sierra Madre mountains since Nephi-1 was near the west seashore (Pacific Ocean), as was Zarahemla, Bountiful, and Desolation (Alma 22:28). The multiple, subsequent trips from Nephi-2 to Zarahemla did not pass through Nephi-1. Therefore, since Nephi-1 definitely was on the rather narrow Pacific costal piedmont, Nephi-2 was probably not on the narrow coastal plain and piedmont further south of Nephi-1, but rather over the mountains eastward. The longest leg of the triangle formed with Nephi-1, Nephi-2, and Zarahemla appears to be the 21-day journey of Alma and his followers from Nephi-2 to Zarahemla.

It appears that the Lamanites eventually followed the Nephites. Thirty years after leaving Jerusalem, the Nephites were still living "after the manner of happiness" (2 Nephi 5:27, 28, 34). By the close of the next ten years they had already had wars and contentions with their brethren. Wars were quite continual from that time forward.

Jacob said, "we did mourn out our days" (Jacob 7:26) because of the wars and contentions. Enos 1:24, Jarom 1:8, 9, 13, and Omni 1:3.10 all documented wars but with no detail or usable clues. No cities are mentioned and based on the frequency of the wars, they must have been convenient – meaning they were in close proximity to Nephi-2 and not many days journey away in Nephi-1. Mosiah was told to leave and he and his followers fled to Zarahemla.

The documented cities and lands that eventually developed in the Nephi-2 area include: Nephi-2 or Lehi-Nephi, Shilom, Shemlon, Shimnilom, Mormon (waters of), Helam, Jerusalem, Amulon, and Lemuel.

The wars mentioned with significant detail in this Nephi-2 area come later and involved the people of Zeniff, Noah, and Limhi (Mosiah 7:9 through Mosiah 24:25). The first documented attack was, "away on the south of the land of Shilom (Mosiah 9:14). In one day and a night 3043 Lamanites and 279 Nephites were slain (Mosiah 9:18). The next attack, 22 years later, came "up upon the north of Shilom" (Mosiah 10:8). King Noah built a very high tower near the temple in Shilom to overlook the land of Shilom and Shemlon (Mosiah 11:12). It did not appear to overlook the land or city of Nephi-2. A second tower was built on the hill north of Shilom, which had been a resort for the Nephites as they fled in Mosiah's day (Mosiah 11:13). This would probably be adjacent to the city Nephi-2 (Omni 1:12) as only a "place" named Nephi is mentioned (2 Nephi 5:8).

Strategically it appears that the Lamanites living in the land of Shemlon could attack from the south as well as on the north of the city Shilom. The tower at Shilom could overlook the land of Shilom and the land of Shemlon and troop movements could be detected. That places

the tower very near the interface of the two lands and separated by about a mile or two for visual detection of troop movement.

Allen groups all the cities, lands, and events in the Guatemala City area (Kaminal Juyú) with no detailed resolution. Sorenson places them in a reasonable orientation but separated by about 40 miles, which is not consistent with the towers functionality. Hauck provides a reasonable relationship in his model, but distances are not provided. Norman does not provide sufficient resolution to add to this party. Meldrum does not place these cities so an evaluation cannot be determined. The Allen, Sorenson, Hauck, and Normon models do not maintain separate identities for Nephi-1 and Nephi-2 (land of first inheritance and Lehi-Nephi respectively). This confounds their models severely. Meldrum's does not provide any resolution at this level. His placement of Nephi-2 so much closer to Zarahemla than is Nephi-1 makes Nephi-1 quite irrelevant for the subsequent wars. Meldrum's model has a complete disregard for Alma 22:28.

Pate has discovered these cities just using pattern recognition applied to all available data. They are in the Comayagua Valley of Honduras. This was the capitol of Honduras until the Spaniards discovered silver in Tegucigalpa in 1880. Of course they fit Mormon's description in every way. The temple at Shilom and Noah's tower still exist at the ruins called Lomo de Vaca, just 1.5 miles straight north of the present town of Yarumela (Jerusalem). Noah's tower does give a commanding view of the valley for four miles in all directions. The fortification at Yarumela is still visible just north of the cemetery. Lehi-Nephi (Leha-mani meaning "those of Lehi" in the Lenca language) is about four miles east-northeast of the temple, next to the mountains (and yes, there is a back pass into the mountains for a place of resort, Alma 11:13). Noah's second tower would have been up the mountain a bit. The stones from this tower are probably the stones that now spell out LEJAMANI in huge white letters on the mountain above the town. There is also a cross there today and a Via Dolorosa for the Easter season.

2.3 Relevance of Nephi-1 and Nephi-2

The Book of Mormon makes it very clear that there was a land of Nephi, the land of their father's first inheritance, and a second land of Nephi later called Lehi-Nephi. The Allen, Sorenson, Hauck and Norman models do not appear to capture the fact that Nephi-1 remained viable throughout the Book of Mormon. See Alma 22:28 and note that both Zarahemla and Nephi-1 were bordering on the west sea and viable in Alma's day. The word west is used three times in the verse. But where did the wars come from? Nephi-2 was 21 days travel from Zarahemla – a great distance to pack your lunch. Nephi-1 was much closer, possibly five days from Zarahemla.

Visualize the siege at Cumeni (Cuajini) as documented in Alma 57:7-12: They desired to retake the fortress protecting the city Cumeni. They did surround, by night, the city Cumeni, a little before they were to receive a supply of provisions. They did camp round about the city for many nights; they did sleep upon their swords, and kept guards. Many times the army came out and their blood was spilt. At length their provisions did arrive, and they were about to

enter the city by night. And they did take the Lamanites and their provisions. The Lamanites were cut off from their support.

All supplies must be foraged, stolen, or packed in by man or beast. To wage a war from 21 days distance would be near impossible. Supply trains are very necessary and very vulnerable. We could not do it today on foot with their technology or our technology. We can't even get BYU to come to Logan for a basketball game. It appears that all the wars were waged from Nephi-1 with some possible support from Nephi-2.

The late Pre-classic (400 BC to 300 AD) archaeological footprints are readily available in both locations: the western end of El Salvador as the land of Nephi-1 (the land of the Lenca -- Lehites) and the Comayagua Valley of Honduras as Nephi-2 (also inhabited by the Lenca). The archaeological footprint is much greater in western El Salvador and much more commensurate with the land of Nephi-1 being the headquarters for the wars. The great ruins of Tazumal, in Chalchuapa, El Salvador is about 75 miles from the contemporary Maya city Kaminal Juyú (Ammonihah, Guatemala City). And, close by are the ruins of Cara Sucia, Casa Blanca, Joya de Cerén and San Andrés. In Nephi-2, the temple at Shilom (Lomo de Vaca) and the fortress in Jerusalem (Yarumela) do not compare in magnitude with Nephi-1 in western El Salvador.

2.4 Ammonihah

The sons of Mosiah were having great success among the Lamanites which caused some of the more hard-hearted to take offense. They started killing the believers who laid down and took it as they praised God. Then the hard hearted came to themselves and thought: What the heck are we doing killing our brethren? It is the Nephites we hate! Let's go kill some Nephites! Ammonihah, became the target. Ammonihah had to be the closest, easiest, strike at the Nephites.

This was before the Lamanites were kicked out of the east wilderness and the fortress cities protecting Jershon were established. The Lamanites made a quick and lethal strike on Ammonihah and Noah before the Nephites could raise their troops (Alma 16:1-3). The Lamanites speedily traveled directly from Nephi-1 to Ammonihah before the Nephites could be alerted – arriving at Ammonihah on the wilderness side. Let's see how the models do.

Allen's has the angered Lamanites traveling about 300 miles to hit Ammonihah and Noah — very deep into Nephite lands with plenty of time to cool down and get hungry. They would have passed Zarahemla in their journey or bypassed it by staying on the coastal plain side of the mountains which are known to have been continuously occupied from Jaredite times. Hardly a surgical attack. Sorenson has them also traveling 300 miles past Manti, Minon, Zarahemla, and Sidom to Ammonihah or taking the coastal route, known to have continuous occupation in these years. Norman has them passing Manti, then Noah, traveling 220 miles from Guatemala City through the Peten jungle to Tikal and then back 75 miles to catch Noah on the way home. Hauck has them traveling only about 100 miles through very mountainous terrain, deep into Nephite lands, but with no obstructing cities in the way.

Guessing is so destructive of logical reasoning. Their locations are guesses and are long on distance traveled and short on reality.

Pate has a direct, shot of about 75 miles following Carrerra 8 out of El Salvador and then joining the Pan-American Highway (Carrerra 1) into Guatemala City (Ammonihah) — unobstructed because the Judea (Jutia-pa overlook fortress) and the Cumeni (Cuajini) fortress had not yet been built. Meldrum does not provide sufficient resolution for Ammoniah and Noah, but Zarahemla and Nephi-2 are separated by about 500 miles as the crow flies -- but, as everyone knows, barefoot warriors don't have that option.

2.5 Zarahemla

In the most capital parts of the land, Zarahemla, was surrounded by fortress cities (Helaman 1:26). The most noted battle was when Coriantumr attacked Zarahemla directly. Coriantumr has a Jaredite name and was a descendant of Zarahemla. Initially he was a Nephite by politics, but not blood. He was an apostate who left the area and came back at the head of a large Lamanite and Zoramite army. He was sent by Tubaloth, a Zoramite (son of Ammoron and Amalickiah was his uncle). He was a mighty man (with strength and great wisdom, Helaman 1:16) and possibly of residual Jaredite blood.

Coriantum knew the area, being raised in Zarahemla. The Zoramite land, Antionum, was immediately adjacent to Zarahemla on the east, also bordering on the west sea (Alma 31:3), and, based on Alma's missionary trip, it extended to the land of Nephi-1 (also on the west sea), to Siron, where Alma's son Corianton got messed up with the harlot Isabel (Alma 39:3).

A significant part of the Zoramites was opposed to the Nephites at this time. The political atmosphere, with a Zoramite on the Lamanite throne in Nephi-1, left Zarahemla vulnerable to a direct attack on the coastal route from Nephi-1, through Antionum, straight to Zarahemla. The only fortress city in their path was Antiparah (Atiquipaque) and possibly an un-named city by the west sea (Alma 56:31).

Coriantumr's army arrived at Zarahemla unopposed. They took Zarahemla and did not tarry but went straight toward Bountiful (also bordering the west seashore, Alma 22:30-33). Moronihah pulled in troops and put an end to Coriantumr's foolishness.

Now let's see how the various models perform with a coastal attack from Nephi-1, through Antionum, to Zarahemla and then on towards Bountiful, all bordering on the west shore. They come up short because they ignored Nephi-1 as viable. But let's fight the battles to show the absurdity of their scenarios.

Allen and Sorenson place Zarahemla in the central Depression of Chiapas, Mexico with the Grijalva as the Sidon River. Norman places it over by Palenque, further east in the Yucatan with the Usumacinta River as Sidon. Hauck places it further south in the Nine Hills ruins area on the Usumacinta River. Meldrum places it across the river from Nauvoo with the Mississippi as the Sidon – a complete lack of credibility for wading the Mississippi River during Amlici's war.

Model developers can possibly place a single city wherever they want, but as soon as they place a second city, they have to answer to Mormon. Following Sorenson's map, Coriantumr would start in the south near the west sea (Pacific Ocean) at Nephi-2. Going northward he would pass Ishmael, Helem, Manti, Minon, and arrive at Zarahemla in the central depression 200 miles north of Nephi-2. Siron and Antionum are yet another 150 miles northward on the Atlantic Coast. That is a problem with Mormon (Alma 22:28). Not tarrying in Zarahemla, Coriantumr would have to rush on another 200 miles to Bountiful on the Atlantic Coast, passing Sidom, Aaron, Nephihah, Lehi, Morianton, Omner, Gid, and Mulek on the way. This additional confusion is caused by assuming the east sea is the Atlantic Ocean rather than just an inland east sea -- of which there are many. Allen's model has similar problems softened only by the lack of specificity in the model.

The city Bountiful is over 600 miles from Desolation – that is a big problem with Mormon (Alma 22:30-33). The Hauck model has similar problems and violates the 21 days travel between Nephi-2 and Zarahemla. The land Bountiful is placed on the Pacific Coast of southern Mexico while the city Bountiful is placed on the Atlantic Coast of Belize. This is a major twisting of the facts to suit a theory. Every land has its capitol at the most capital part of the land. This splitting of the baby Bountiful was not occasioned by Solomon's wisdom but by not entertaining the fact that the east sea was an inland sea, not the Atlantic Ocean. This one incorrect assumption turns their models into nonsense – what are all these fortress cities in the borders by the east seashore (Alma 51:26) protecting? Nothing! Meldrum avoids the problem by not having a west sea within 2500 miles to the west, nor an east sea within 700 miles to the east. But then that model does not have any relevance to any version of the Book of Mormon yet available.

2.6 Fortress Cities

Most of the remaining wars, prior to Mormon's great wars, were fought around the perimeter of Zarahemla. One exception is Amlici's last battle which, on final approach, came from the north and upon defeat retreated back to the north. This poses a problem for Allen, Sorenson, Hauck, Norman, and Meldrum. Amlici's army and/or the Lamanite army would have had to cross completely through the Nephite lands coming from the south and then turn back attacking Zarahemla from the north and then fleeing back into the north. This battle is nonsense in their models.

The Mulekites landed on the Pacific Coast of the land Desolation. They went from there up into the wilderness the Nephites called Bountiful (Alma 22:30-33) and built a city Zarahemla and dwelt there from that time forth (Omni 1:16). It appears that the greater land Zarahemla includes Bountiful and the greater land Bountiful includes Zarahemla – city Bountiful at one end and city Zarahemla near the other end, and an unnamed land is in between (possibly a third land Nephi, see Alma 22:28,32 Alma 53:6, Helaman 4:5, and 3 Nephi 3:23).

Desolation, Bountiful, Antionum, and Nephi-1 are all aligned along the Pacific Coast. In Helaman 1:26 we read: "For behold, Moronihah had supposed that the Lamanites durst not come into the **center of the land**, but that they would attack the **cities round about in the**

borders as they had hitherto done; therefore Moronihah had caused that **their strong armies should maintain those parts round about by the borders**. This clearly states that the perimeter cities, "round about", were fortified to protect the center of the land which was Bountiful, the un-named land (Nephi-3), and Zarahemla. The west sea would probably not need protecting and the 30 mile interface between Bountiful and Desolation would not need protecting. The rest of the perimeter was accessible to the Lamanites as Amalickiah demonstrated and needed protecting.

The basic Book of Mormon geography is actually simple in the extreme. It is just the land Bountiful/Zarahemla completely surrounded by fortress cities on all sides but the west sea. The skill most useful in finding all the cities is reading, not digging.

So, what are the fortress cities? They are Mulek (Mukulic), Gid, Omner (Immer, date palm, El Palmar), Camp of Mormon (Moloni, Almolonga), Morianton (San Antonio los Cerritos), Lehi (Xe-Lahu), Moronihah (Chui Mekená, Quiché for Moloni), Nephihah (Nahualá), Moroni (Moloni, now Ciudad Vieja), Noah (Chi-Nautla), Ammonihah (Kaminal Juyú, a modern name), Manti (A-Mati-tlan), Zeezrom (Utzumazate), Cumemi (Cuajini-Cuilapa), Judea (Jutia-pa), Antiparah (Atiquipaque), and possibly an un-named city by the west sea (Alma 56:31).

Where are they located? They *are* surrounding the lands Bountiful/Zarahemla, starting at Mulek, near cities Bountiful and Desolation on the north, and going clockwise in the respective order listed around to the south wilderness and the Pacific Coast. Recall that the Nephites were nearly surrounded by Lamanites (Alma 22:29).

Lest anyone think there was a plethora of names from which to select a toponym match, be assured that was not the case. To this day, villages are very sparse in the old Book of Mormon "wilderness" areas. While traversing the road maps in the mountains around the Cotzumalguapa area, very often the next village found for Mormon's map was the only village or ruins in the whole area; and yet the phonetics or meaning of the place names matched as well as you have just seen. The uniqueness of this sequential pattern in such a sparsely populated area adds greatly to the credibility of the find.

2.7 Roads in the Book of Mormon

"And there were many highways cast up, and many roads made, which led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place (3 Nephi 6:8)." So where are they? Right where they always were. Roads and fortress cities were built for a reason – that being to protect the travel corridors into the greater land Zarahemla/Bountiful. Modern roads follow the paths of the ancient past. To the model developers: if your postulated city and fortress locations are not connected by roads in the simplest and most appropriate manner/network, you do not have Mormon's map. Those 200, 300, 400, 500, and 600 mile stretches between Nephite cities are ridiculous.

Recall when they starved-out the Gadianton robbers (3 Nephi 3:22 - 25), they marched forth by tens of thousands to the land of Zarahemla, the land Bountiful and the land between to the line between Bountiful and Desolation. Lachoneus had them gather in the land southward,

because of the great curse upon the land northward. They fortified themselves and dwelled in one land and in one body. The cities needing protection were Bountiful, the un-named city, and Zarahemla, all very close together. End to end, city to city it was 40 miles – all other fortifications and cities were vacated.

Sixteen fortified cities are mentioned in captain Moroni's day – close enough that the Nephites would flee on foot from fortress to fortress as Amalickiah took over. Compare that with the nonsense published by Allen, Sorenson, Hauck, and Norman – first they scattered Zarahemla, Bountiful, and the line between Bountiful and Desolation, to the four winds with separation distances of as much as 600 miles. They don't even talk of the un-named land between (it must have fallen off the wagon somewhere in the middle of the Yucatán – maybe it got thrown into the Sidon river with all the bodies). They distribute the protective fortress cities beyond the ability to protect anything. There are no "most capital parts of the land." There is no "center" to their lands (Helaman 1:25-27).

How do the models stack up? The battles started by Amalickiah show the taking and retaking of all the fortress cities. Allen gets trapped on the east sea problem and what specificity he does provide does not surround the lands Bountiful/Zarahemla with fortress cities. Nor does he have the Nephites nearly surrounded by the Lamanites. Sorenson has all the marbles in a neat little bag up by Bountiful, about 200 miles from Zarahemla with not a chance of defending Zarahemla. He has the Lamanites more surrounded by Nephites, rather than as Mormon stated (Alma 22:29). Norman's model provides very general lands to which he has added significant specificity for cities. Even so, no accommodations are provided for the Lamanites to "nearly surround" the Nephites. His 500 mile separation between city Bountiful and Land Bountiful makes the "east seashore trap" obvious (Alma 51:26).

The location of the land of Jershon is missing or misplaced in most models. Specifically, Mormon drove the Lamanites out of the east wilderness and sent them back to their own lands which were south of Zarahemla (Alma 50:7-11) and caused people from Zarahemla to move in. The fortress cities that surrounded Jershon were the ones where the 2000 sons of Helaman fought. These are Manti, Cumeni, Judea, and Antiparah. These fortress cities were supported by the people of Jershon. This is the Santa Rosa Department of Guatemala and the people who occupied this area are called the Xinca.

The only good thing about Amalickiah is that he circled the lands Bountiful/Zarahemla with a bold marker and an exclamation point identifying the lands of the Book of Mormon!

The model developers are waiting for some archaeologist to prove the identity of one single Book of Mormon city and then they can collocate their models around it. **They don't know where a single city is and they know they don't know**.

It would be very interesting for Hauck to apply the rigor of his mathematical simulation to Pate's model – then Hauck would get on board. Allen does not apply rigor to his model, keeping everything quite vague and trying to keep from sticking his neck out too far by adding convicting specificity to his model. Norman is a great guy in need of an anchor point to build his

model around – the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is not it. Meldrum needs to forget the Hamelin game plan (Pied Piper) and read the Book of Mormon.

The objective of this evaluation was to blow some deficient models out of the water. Mormon did it best with four short verses in Alma 22:30-33. The final great Mormon wars will wait until they are needed to lay to rest more formidable foes.

Without specific Book of Mormon <u>place names</u>, and their <u>current location by name</u>, and a <u>set of ruins of appropriate size and time</u>, one does not have a legitimate model to send forward as a model, let alone the correct model. Without these three things one just has wishful thinking or pie in the sky. It was found to be very difficult to find out what actually constituted each of the models. Some appeared timid to actually lay it all out in a single map or matrix. Put something forward with enough specificity that it can actually be tested by Mormon's standard.

3.0 Concluding Comments

The deficient models are readily exposed when you walk the land through Mormon's wars. The lack of realism is insulting. You should be justly offended that they have not followed the Book of Mormon. They simply do not stand-up to Mormon's map when observed through the eyes of reality. Rather than the academic walk of "publish or perish" they should have been raised on a farm where it is "produce or perish."

Model developers are in a frustrating position. The "would be" Indiana Joneses have the desire and are motivated, but while their research has been helpful, it has not produced the solution to Mormon's puzzle. Their approach of finding Book of Mormon linkages and trying to overlay them onto the topography and archeological tracks in Mesoamerica is quite like selecting numbers trying to win the lottery. The main difference being that someone usually wins the lottery every week.

The approach of finding clues in the Book of Mormon and sprinkling place names across the landscape has failed and will continue to do so. A much easier approach is available. We live in a world quite well covered with people and this covering of people has been quite continuous for many millennia. People have felt the need to name the places where they lived. Once named, these names tend to stick like Super-Glue. While some names have and do change, these are the exception rather than the rule. The rule is that place names do not change.

Recognizing the continuity of occupation and the intransigence of place names, Robert A. Pate has searched the Mesoamerican histories for the enduring place names. Some very fortunate pattern recognition using historical place names and archaeological maps quickly focused the effort on a very small area in southern Guatemala, western El Salvador, and western Honduras. The smallness of the area has helped keep it hidden from the world. Only 230,000 Nephite souls dressed for battle that fateful day in the year 385 AD at Cumorah (K'umarkáh). It doesn't take a very large geography to support only 230,000 Nephites. Today, ten times that number live in just Guatemala City alone.

The puzzle has been solved. The most useful skill was reading, not digging. It is now time to focus the talents, skills, and interests of all parties, to learn all that can be learned, and present to the world the cogent, credible, map of the Book of Mormon and let them know that it is real history and real geography. As we enter the Millennium, it is time to dispel the critics (give them no leg to stand on) and cause the world to take a more objective look at that Book of Mormon.

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