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Archaeological Testimony of the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: Draws parallels between Book of Mormon peoples and ancient civilizations in Central and South America. Twelve reasons are given why Catlin, in the work entitled *North American Indians*, thought that the American Indians were descendants of the Hebrews

15. What can you say about the descendants of the pioneers and temple work?

16. What is peculiar about Brigham Young's prophecy concerning the electric current in 1854?

LESSON II.

WORK AND BUSINESS.

Second Week in December.

LESSON III.

BOOK OF MORMON.

Third Week in December.

(Optional.)

Archaeological Testimony.

Subject: Positions of the Book Sustained by Archaeological Testimony.

Text: (See body of the lesson.)

Aim: The first reward of truth is persecution, but it will triumph in spite of error.

The purpose of this, the final lesson of the course, is the consideration of the seven statements (positions of the "Book of Mormon") as set up in our last lesson given in the third week of November.

Very little comment will be indulged in owing to the fact that space will not permit, as we will have to quote extensively because the books are not generally accessible. Because the subject is so comprehensive and to save space the "positions" will not be treated chronologically.

First, second, fourth and sixth positions: Three civilizations have existed, flourished, and decayed, upon parts of the continent, and one on nearly every part. Tersely stated, the book contends that upon this continent there were different civilizations by different peoples, namely: there was the Jaredite era, the oldest, then the Nephite era which absorbed the people of Mulek, after which the Lamanites reigned undisputed. The Jaredites confined themselves principally to North America, while the Nephites occupied both South and North America, as did also their conquerors, the Lamanites.

Leading authorities on American antiquities and archaeology do not hesitate to declare that there were different peoples and correspondingly different periods of civilization preceding the Aztec and the Inca period which dominated the

southern division of the continent at the time of the invasion by the Spanish party headed by Cortez.

Now as to corroborative evidences of this contention the following is submitted:

"The most ancient civilization on this continent, judging from the combined testimony of tradition, records, and architectural remains, was that which grew up under the favorable climate and geographical surroundings which the Central American region southward of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec afforded." "Short's North Americans of Antiquity," page 203). Baldwin says:

"To find the chief seats and most abundant remains of the most remarkable civilization of this old American race, we must go still further south into Central America and some of the more southern states of Mexico. Here, ruins of ancient cities have been discovered, cities which must have been deserted and left to decay in ages previous to the beginning of the Aztec supremacy."—"Ancient America," page 93.)

Bancroft declares, "The oldest civilization in America which has left any traces for our consideration, whatever may have been its prehistoric origin, was that in the Usumacinta (Central American region) represented by the Palenque group of Guinn." ("Bancroft's Native Races," vol. 5, page 158, also page 230). We could go on multiplying the evidence in this particular, but it is not necessary. The foregoing is sufficient to show that archaeology definitely fixes the oldest civilization of America where the "Book of Mormon" just as definitely describes it to have flourished.

As to the Nephite era, coming centuries later than that of the Jaredites, it is almost universally agreed by noted writers on American antiquities and archaeology, that the semi-civilized peoples, the Incas and the Aztecs, reflected a civilization antedating their time. Prescott asserts that the source of this civilization (the Nephite) "is traced to the Valley of Cuzco, the central region of Peru;" a conclusion that is confirmed by "nearly every tradition," he says, and "by the imposing architectural remains which still endure, after the lapse of so many years," on the borders of Lake Titicaca, South America.

Baldwin says: "The uniform and constant report of Peruvian tradition places the beginning of this old civilization in the Valley of Cuzco, near Lake Titicaca. There appeared the first civilizers and the first civilized communities." ("Ancient America," page 236.) The evidence of repeated reconstructions in some of the cities before they were deserted has been pointed out by explorers. At Palenque, as at Mitla, the old-

est work is the most artistic and admirable. Over this feature of the monuments and the manifest signs of their difference in age, the attention of the investigators has lingered in speculation. They find in them a significance which is stated as follows by Brasseur de Bourbourg:

“Among the edifices forgotten by time in the forests of Mexico and Central America, we find architectural characteristics so different from each other, that it is as impossible to attribute them all to the same people as to believe they were all built at the same epoch.” In this view, the substructions of Mayapan, some of those of Tulha, and a great part of those at Palenque, are among the older remains. These are not the oldest cities whose remains are still visible, but they may have been built in part, upon the foundations of cities much more ancient.” (Baldwin’s “Ancient America,” page 156.)

Here, then, are the two different and distinct civilizations, both of a high order of development, not one barbarous nation coming after and occupying the land where a highly civilized nation had builded, but one highly cultivated and enlightened at the outset following and building upon the ruins of another. Again, in a work entitled, “Mound Builders’ Works and Relics,” by S. D. Peet, page 21, we read: “We may say that the evidences are numerous, that the people who built the mounds in the Mississippi valley belonged to different races and occupied the country at different periods, and may have come from different sources. Traditions of the Indians prove that the lands have been inhabited by different races and at different periods. Nowhere, however, is it claimed that the Indians were the first people who occupied the country, or that their ancestors were the first race who built the mounds.”

This evidence is supported by Bandelier, “Archaeological Tour in Mexico,” page 261; Prof. H. W. Hayes, page 329; “Narrative, Critical and Historical,” vol. 1, by Justin Winsor, and many other reliable authorities. Here, then, we have evidences of two or more civilizations, established by archaeological research and in harmony with the “Book of Mormon.” This fact was never known or published to the world until many years after the publication of the “Book of Mormon.”

Third—One of the most striking positions taken by the book is that the earliest civilization, as well as the other which followed, was originally of a high order of excellence. They did not begin low and end high, but on the contrary, they are described by the book to have been at their best in their earlier history, and to have declined until they no

longer could successfully resist their enemies and finally were overcome and superceded by a savage people. This fact confronts the student of history at the outset and gives him not a little anxiety and confusion as he seeks the solution for such an arbitrary condition. When he analyzes the situation in Europe he comes to a conclusion diametrically opposed to the book's position. In every land, except those probably where a higher civilization has influenced and directed the natives, as in the case of colonization, the course of the progress of civilization has without exception been from the lower to the higher.

In this connection Short says: "The eras or ages which have been observed to mark the different stages of the development of prehistoric man in Europe are apparently reversed in America." ("North Americans of Antiquity," page 27.)

Fourth—As to the arts and sciences possessed by these early civilizations, Baldwin says: "They had a standard of measurement and had a means of determining angles"; "made use of astronomical instruments"; "they were agriculturists and also engaged in spinning and weaving"; "possessed a knowledge of the science, and metals, and used tools of porphyry." ("Ancient America," pages 24-42.)

Prescott says in speaking of the Peruvians: "Husbandry was pursued by them on principles that may be truly called scientific." The Peruvians showed great skill in the manufacture of different articles for the royal household from this delicate material, which, under the name of "vigonia" wool, is now familiar to the looms of Europe. It was wrought into shawls, robes, and other articles of dress for the monarch, and into carpets, coverlets, and hangings for the imperial palaces and temples. The cloth was finished on both sides alike; the delicacy of the texture was such as to give it the lustre of silk; and the brilliancy of the dyes excited the admiration and the envy of the European artisans." They manufactured jewelry and ornaments; "utensils of every description, some of fine clay, and many more of copper; mirrors of a hard polished stone, or burnished silver, with a great variety of other articles." ("Conquest of Peru," vol. 1, page 31.) "They had great skill in the art of working metals, especially gold and silver. Besides these precious metals, they had copper, tin, lead, and quicksilver." "Their goldsmiths and silversmiths had attained very great proficiency. They could melt the metals in furnaces, cast them in molds of clay or gypsum, hammer their work with remarkable dexterity, inlay

it, and solder it with great perfection." ("Ancient America," pages 248, 249.)

Fifth—The book asserts, "And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants and cureloms and cumoms, etc., etc." (Ether 9:18 and 19.)

For many years the book was viciously attacked on this point; but of recent years so much evidence has been found of the domestic animals, of the ox, the sheep, the swine, the goat, and the horse, that it is not necessary here to utilize space to reproduce them. Regarding the horse we introduce the testimony of Prof. O. C. Marsh, in an address before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Nashville, Tenn., August 30, 1877, page 30: "When a student in Germany, some twelve years ago, I heard a world-renowned professor of zoology gravely inform his pupils that the horse was a gift of the old world to the new; and was entirely unknown in America until introduced by the Spaniards. After the lecture I asked him whether no earlier remains of horses had been found on this continent, and was told in reply that the reports to that effect were too unsatisfactory to be presented as facts in science. This remark led me on my return to examine the subject myself, and I have since unearthed with my own hands not less than thirty distinct species of the horse tribe in the tertiary deposits of the west alone." For years after the critics of the book had been silenced as far as the more common domestic animals are concerned by just such testimony as the above, these same skeptics ridiculed the idea that the elephant had ever been coexistent with prehistoric man on this continent as the book emphatically declared. It is probable, too, that even a few members of the Church were more or less skeptical in this particular. For the benefit of these the following is offered: "In the United States we detect also some evidences of the coexistence of man and extinct species of quadrupeds. Doctor Koch, in the reconstruction of the "Tertiary Zenglodin," insisted long ago that he had found in Missouri such an association of mastadon and Indian remains as to prove that the two had lived contemporaneously. I have myself observed the bones of the mastodon and elephant imbedded in peat at depths so shallow that I could readily believe the animals to have occupied the country during its possession by the Indian; and gave publication to this conviction in 1862. More recently, Prof. Holmes, of Charlestown, has informed the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia that he finds upon the banks of the Ashley river (Utah) a remarkable conglomeration of fossil remains, in deposits of post-tertiary age. Remains of the hog, the

horse, and other animals of recent date, together with human bones, stones and arrow heads, hatchets and fragments of pottery, are there lying mingled with the bones of the mastodon (elephant) and extinct gigantic lizards." ("Sketches of Creation," by Winchell, page 356, edition of 1874.)

Seventh—Now as to the nativity of the last civilized people who inhabited America, the following conclusions from Mr. George Catlin, are here given: "The North American Indians and all the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, speaking some two or three hundred different languages entirely dissimilar, may have all sprung from one people. I believe with many others that the North American Indians are a mixed people. That they have Jewish blood in their veins, though I would not assert as some have undertaken to prove, that they are Jews, or that they are the ten lost tribes of Israel. From the character and composition of their heads, I am compelled to look upon them as an amalgam race, but still savages, and from many of their customs, which seem to me peculiarly Jewish, as well as from the character of their heads, I am forced to believe that some part of those ancient tribes who have been dispersed by Christians in so many ways, and in so many different eras, have found their way to this country where they have entered among the native stock." ("North American Indians," vol. 2, pages 231 to 235.)

Mr. Catlin then offers the following twelve reasons why he accepted the idea that the American Indians are descended from the Israelites:

1. "The Jews had their Sanctum Sanctorum, and so it may be said the Indians have, in their council, or medicine houses, which are always held as sacred places."

2. "As the Jews had, they have their high priests and their prophets."

3. "Among the Indians as among the ancient Hebrews, the women are not allowed to worship with the men, and in all cases also, they eat separately."

4. "The Indians everywhere believe that they are certainly like those ancient people, persecuted, as every man's hand seemed raised against them."

5. "In their marriages, the Indians, as did the ancient Jews, uniformly buy their wives by giving presents, and in many tribes, very closely resemble them in other forms and ceremonies of their marriages."

6. "In their preparation for war, and in peacemaking, they are strikingly similar."

7. "In their treatment of the sick, burial of the dead and mourning, they are also similar."

8. "In their bathing and ablutions, at all seasons of the year, as a part of their religious observances—having separate places for men and women to perform these immersions—they resemble again."

9. "The custom among the women of absenting themselves during the lunar influences, is exactly consonant to the Mosaic law."

10. "After this season of separation, purification in running water and anointing, precisely in accordance with the Jewish command, is required before she can enter the family lodge."

11. "Many of them have a feast closely resembling the annual feasts of the Jewish Passover, and amongst others, an occasion much like the Israelitish feast of the tabernacle, which lasted eight days (when history tells us they carried bundles of willow boughs and fasted several days and nights), making sacrifices of the first fruits and best of everything, closely resembling the sin offering and peace offering of the Hebrews."

12. "Amongst the list of their customs, however, we meet a number which had their origin, it would seem, in the 'Jewish Ceremonial Code,' and which are so very peculiar in their forms that it would seem quite improbable, and almost impossible that two different peoples should have hit upon them alike, without some knowledge of each other. These I consider go further than anything else as evidence, and carry in my mind, conclusive proof that these people are tinctured with Jewish blood."

In keeping with the above conclusions comes the following evidence:

On October 13, 1902, in company with T. E. Pomeroy, then president of the Mexican Mission, and Dr. Clarence Snow, I visited Dr. Augustus Le Plongeon at his residence, 18 Sidney Place, Brooklyn, New York. I knew that he had spent about fifteen years in Mexico and Central America studying the archaeology of the country and that the better part of his life had been devoted to the study of the races which inhabited this continent prior to the discovery by Columbus. We were anxious, therefore, to learn from him, his opinion or estimate of the historical data as given in the "Book of Mormon." In response to my question, he said, "The author of the 'Book of Mormon' knew more about Ancient America than all of the scientific men of today." He also said, in response to a question from Dr. Snow, that the facts contained in the book could not have been guessed or reasoned out. Its author, he thought, might have been clairvoyant. He used this term instead of "inspired" because Mrs. Le Plongeon was at that time making a study of spiritualism.

John G. McQuarrie.