



Type: Book Chapter

Classification of Evidences

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CHAPTER XIV.

CLASSIFICATION OF EVIDENCES.

The evidence to be presented for the truth of the Book of Mormon naturally separate into two great divisions, each of which will admit of a number of subdivisions. The two great divisions of the evidence are:

1. External Evidences.
2. Internal Evidences.

Of course, by evidences in general I mean those facts or things which either directly or indirectly, considered separately or collectively, constitute proof of the truth to be contended for in these pages—the truth of the Book of Mormon.

By external evidences I mean those facts outside the book itself, which tend to establish its truth; such as the testimony of the Special Witnesses whom God raised up and qualified by direct revelation to testify of the truth of the book. Also the testimony of those who by reason of seeing and handling the Nephite plates, were made competent to testify of their existence and appearance. This evidence will include the agreement between the Book of Mormon location of ancient American centres of civilization and the existence of the ruins of temples, pyramids, mounds, works of old fortifications, roadways and cities—in a word, the evidence of American archæology. The evidences of the traditions and customs of the inhabitants of America found in possession of the land at the advent of the Europeans, and who are in large part the descendants of the enlightened people of whom the Book of Mormon is an abridged history.

The evidences to be found in the revelations, prophecies, and promises of the Hebrew scriptures—the evidence of the Bible, in other words, to the truth of the book. The institutions to which the book may be said to have given birth—the testimony which the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bears to its truth.

By Internal Evidence I mean those facts which may be gathered from the book itself, from its structure, and its consistency with the theory of its construction; from its doctrines and their agreement with the revelations of God in the Jewish scriptures; from its moral tone and spiritual influence; from the manner in which it interlocks with the history of the past, and is entwined with the future purposes of God as made known in the revelations of God to man; from the fulfillment of its prophecies and promises; from the general character of its contents, the truths it emphasizes, and the importance of its message to mankind.

I shall have occasion to speak of direct and indirect evidences; of positive and presumptive evidences; but all this will be developed as the statement of the evidences and the argument proceed. I would say, however, before closing these preliminary remarks, that it is not my intention to rely upon any one branch of the evidence to establish the truth of the Book of Mormon; it is intended that the evidence shall be cumulative; and I certainly hope, by a careful consideration of all the evidence, external and internal, direct and indirect, under each division, to so establish the truth of the Book of Mormon that all fair-minded people will see reasonable grounds for faith in it as an additional volume of Holy Scripture, another Witness for the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord.